Addressing Gaps in Health Research

A call to action for Governments and Businesses

Championing Public Health Nutrition
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Canada’s Health-Care Future

• Health care is consuming an ever-increasing share of the budgets of Canada’s governments

• Businesses too will need to address the growing pressures on firm level performance from an aging workforce

• Canadians are increasingly aware that
  – The publicly funded health-care system is facing severe financial challenges
  – Something needs to be done to make the health system more sustainable
The Conference Board Approach

• Governments and businesses have a vital role in helping address the burden of chronic diseases
• Strategies to reduce modifiable risk factors are key to make the health system more sustainable
• But these strategies can be expensive and the return on investment to society and the firm is not always clear
  – Research in the U.S. is creating a better understanding of the long-term financial implications
  – This research is increasingly relevant in a Canadian context
  – A healthier, more productive workforce brings significant financial benefit to society and businesses
Nutrition in the Quantitative Framework

Local Industry Labour Force Model:

- Fertility rates, death rates, immigration and emigration, including foreign immigration and emigration, provincial inter and intra immigration, returns and temporary workers

Risk Factor Sub-Model:

- Risk factor targets:
  - Nutrition
  - Smoking
  - Obesity
  - Physical activity
  - Hypertension

Disease Prevalence Sub-Model:

- CVDs
- Respiratory
- Musculoskeletal
- Mental health

Benefit Sub-Model (potential cost savings):

- Society:
  - Direct
  - Mortality
  - Fiscal

- Local Industry:
  - Lt disability
  - St disability
  - Mortality

Cost Sub-Model:

- Industry:
  - Health improvement initiatives
Prevalence of Chronic Diseases

• Beyond aging, relative risk ratios drive results
  – Research on impact of nutrition is a cornerstone

• Benefits are defined as cost differences between
  – Scenario with minimum impact of initiatives on risk factors
  – Scenario with larger impact of initiatives on risk factors

• This approach highlights areas of highest impact from reduction in risk factors
Is Cost/Benefit Relevant?

• Cost/benefit needs to be reconsider in the public policy context
  – Particularly true when dealing with specific diseases
  – Makes all policies comparable while in reality they are not
    – For example: air pollution standards vs recommended daily salt consumption
  – Costs can be grossly overestimated

• Comparing costs with benefits and including ROI makes sense for businesses
  – Costs are well defined
The Canadian Heart Health Strategy & Action Plan

- The Canadian Heart Health Strategy & Action Plan (CHHS-AP) established risk factor targets which could be achieved via:
  - Education
  - Legislation
  - Regulation
  - Policy

- Relationship between modifiable risk factors, cardiovascular diseases and future health care expenditures can help policy development
  - Support risk factor reduction initiatives
  - Prioritize actions with an assessment of the impact of efforts
Impact of CHHS-AP Targets are Large and…

Sources: Canadian Community Health Survey; The Conference Board of Canada.
Substantial Cost Savings for Health System, Governments and Economy

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.
What Strategy for a Call to Action?

• Health-care is a complex industry
  – Supply chain difficult to identify
  – A vast array of organizations that focus on one or more research themes

• Overall strategic alignment challenging
  – The system has a large number of players with various priorities that are not necessarily complementary

• Filling gaps in the health research market would help
  – Build a common vision of sustainable health care among key stakeholders
  – Identify policies, strategies, and practices that contribute to ongoing transformation of the healthcare system
Conclusion

• There is no agreement on how to address
  – Fiscal pressure from the health-care system on budgets of Canada’s governments
  – Competitiveness of firms in a context of slowing labour productivity due to an aging work force
• Comprehensive research is required to delineate both
  – the challenge to the sustainability of the Canadian health care system
  – the impact of various interventions that have been proposed
• A neutral venue is needed where stakeholders can discuss areas for reform and action
• The Conference Board of Canada is proposing the Canadian Alliance for Sustainable Health Care (CASHC)