

CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP (CAG)

CAG Meeting Report: Stakeholder Engagement and Building Inclusive Collaboration

DATE: Saturday, October 22, 2022
TIME: 8:30—11:00 am
LOCATION: Virtual (Zoom)
FACILITATOR: Cate Creede, The Potential Group

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INTRODUCTION:

Health regulators (“Colleges”) regulate Ontario’s health professions in the public interest.

Colleges represent one piece of the patient care system and by working with others in the health and long-term care sector and the public, there is opportunity for greater collective impact. In the public interest, it is critical to create processes that are inclusive and represent diverse values, lived experiences, and expertise of the public we serve.

We are looking for CAG Members to help us understand how we can develop meaningful, respectful, and inclusive opportunities with the public, patients, and their caregivers to inform our regulatory work and decisions. We want to learn how we can both engage and communicate information to the public, patients, and their caregivers in a clear, transparent, readily available, and accessible way.

PARTICIPATING PARTNER COLLEGES:

- [College of Nurses of Ontario \(CNO\)](#)
- [Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario \(RCDSO\)](#)
- [College of Massage Therapists of Ontario \(CMTO\)](#)
- [College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario \(COTO\)](#)
- [College of Physiotherapists of Ontario \(CPO\)](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The session was called to order at 8:30 am with welcoming comments, a land acknowledgment, and an outline of the morning’s agenda. Members introduced themselves and shared reasons why it is important to be able to communicate and be connected with Colleges: challenges navigating Ontario’s health care system, creating a more compassionate and connected system, and communicating well with each other, regulators, and health care professionals.

Q. What makes it easier or fulfilling for you to access information from Colleges?

Members convened into small groups (“breakout rooms”) and were asked to think of a *good* experience where they needed or wanted to interact with an institution or organization to better understand a complex issue or to access important information. Suggestions from Members to make accessing information from Colleges easier or fulfilling included the following:

- Have a patient navigator to help patients and caregivers navigate College processes;
- Create public-facing resources (e.g., infographics, pamphlets, or posters) and translated into multiple languages;
- Respect patients’ thoughts and opinions and ensure that they are heard, including recognising that there is a difference between being *understood* versus being *heard*;
- Acknowledge the importance of partnership, respect, and collaboration between health care professionals and patients to build trust and equity; and
- Health care professionals need to earn patients’ or caregivers’ respect and trust rather than assuming they have it (i.e., “health professionals should not have a god complex”).

One Member felt that the term “patient-centered care” is not accurate (i.e., if the patient is at the *centre* then they are not part of the team and decision-making, whereas when a patient is a *partner* they are sitting at the table where discussions and decisions are happening).

Another Member highlighted that the private sector is more customer service-oriented than the health care sector and suggested that Colleges adopt this approach (i.e., “how can I help?”).

Overall, Members agreed that good, accessible communication happens when everyone is treated as an equal; there is dialogue and collaboration; and there is mutual trust and respect.

Q. What do you want to know from Colleges?

Members suggested that Colleges actively communicate and educate the public around their role and how they serve in the public’s interest (i.e., their mandates), including what to expect from each profession and contact information with next steps in case something goes wrong.

Additional information from Colleges that was requested by Members included: how Colleges ensure that health professionals’ knowledge and skills are up to date; what organisational and system improvements Colleges are making around their regulatory work and processes (e.g., public complaints and investigations); and how to become involved in engagement initiatives.

Q. How would you want to hear about this information from Colleges?

Members recommended the following methods to actively communicate to the public:

- Redesign websites to be more public-focused (e.g., provide necessary information at the public’s level of understanding, ensure it is plain language, and make it easy to find);
- Create a centralised patient engagement team (or “conciierge”) with a dedicated helpline to serve as a single point of contact for the public to answer questions, receive feedback, or assist with navigating various College processes (e.g., complaints or investigations);
- Undertake a public advertising or communications campaign that includes a variety of formats (e.g., videos, special event invitations, or a newsletter tailored to the public); and
- Encourage health care professionals themselves to provide this information (e.g., in-office brochures or “welcome packages” about the respective profession and College) to enhance public awareness of the Colleges’ roles in order to build trust and transparency.

Q. Why is it important to have patients and caregivers involved in Colleges’ work?

Members suggested that patients and caregivers serve an important role by helping to ensure that the language and information used by Colleges is meaningful to the average person.

Carrying out this collaborative work can help improve existing communication and navigation challenges throughout the system to better assist those who may experience barriers (e.g., immigrants, ESL, or individuals with disabilities).

For example, patient and caregiver representation on College Committees and Councils ensures that their voices are included in decision-making and using public partners to review all public-facing College documents would confirm that they are accessible and understandable.

Q: What topics or changes in health regulation do you want to be more involved in and what would make that engagement process inclusive to you?

Members enthusiastically felt that there isn't a *specific* regulatory topic to focus on, but that Colleges should involve patients and caregivers in *everything* that they do. Members reiterated that meaningful and collaborative engagement partnerships are a "two-way dialogue" and an opportunity to share ideas (i.e., compared to just "pushing out" information to the public).

Public engagement needs to be embedded in the whole health system ("woven into its fabric") and not just as a "token," "checkbox," or afterthought. One key Member suggestion was for Colleges to start asking how involving citizens in their work could help improve health outcomes.

While each College has different capacities and available resources for public engagement, Members recommended that Colleges engage the public *wherever possible* to help shape the future of Ontario's health care system. Members felt that breaking down health silos is crucial and that there are common themes and approaches that don't need to be reinvented.

Patients and caregivers should assist in developing shared communication strategies, be directly involved in decision-making (i.e., "at the table"), and consulted on policies, standards, and guidelines on an ongoing basis. Another suggestion was that Colleges should have easily accessible mechanisms to receive public feedback and comments (i.e., not just for complaints).

Patients and caregivers experience *all* parts of our health care system—not just one piece—and have experienced multiple perspectives as a patient, caregiver, family support (among many other roles). It is important to recognise that lived experience is as important as any other experience or expertise and patients and caregivers should be compensated accordingly.

One Member highlighted that the CAG's work to date is an evolution: the more that Colleges collaborate and engage, the more that patients' and caregivers' voices will become entrenched in everything Colleges do. It is an ongoing process, but this group has made the starting impact.

REFLECTIONS ON THE DAY:

Members discussed some areas that went well and what could have been done differently.

Q. What went well?

- Members were excited and encouraged that five Colleges came together to discuss this important topic and appreciated the wide-ranging ideas and perspectives shared.

Q. What could be done differently?

- One Member felt that the CAG's current Membership is Greater Toronto Area (GTA)-centric and hopes to see more Members from Northern Ontario in the future.

Adjournment

Members were thanked for their input and feedback and the meeting adjourned at 11:00 am.