

OHTN Quarterly Report: Q2 July 1 – Sept 30, 2018



STRATEGIC DIRECTION ONE: Gather and Analyze Data on the HIV Epidemic and HIV Programs and Services

Analysis of New Diagnosis Data

Over the past several years, new diagnoses of HIV in Ontario have appeared to increase – while many other jurisdictions have seen a drop in new infections. In Q2, the Ontario HIV Epidemiology and Surveillance Initiative (OHESI) conducted an in-depth analysis of these numbers. Using information collected on the public health lab forms, they were able to identify and eliminate duplicate tests done within Ontario and also to identify people who had tested positive for HIV prior to their first HIV test in Ontario. This analysis provides a process to make future reporting more accurate and offers important insights for service providers. The analysis shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of people living with HIV moving to Ontario, highlighting the need for specific support services. It also shows that, although we are not seeing an increase in new infections occurring in Ontario, we are also not seeing a significant decline. OHESI published a [blog post](#) explaining these findings.

Short-term outcomes:

More accurate data about new HIV diagnoses. This analysis will ensure that future reports:

- Quantify the number of people with HIV moving to Ontario and highlight the need for supports for new immigrants and refugees
- More accurately measure the number of people being infected with HIV in Ontario, providing a better assessment of where Ontario needs to target its prevention efforts

This analysis will help guide Ontario's HIV response as per goal 5.2a of the OACHA strategy for HIV/AIDS in Ontario.

OCS Patient Experience Module

The OHTN is working to redesign the OHTN Cohort Study to be a more effective tool to monitor HIV outcomes in the province, complementing the systems-level data we gather from the Public Health Lab and the Institute for Clinical and Evaluative Studies. The cohort can provide nuanced data about how individuals are faring within our care systems. The OHTN has redesigned the OCS questionnaire for 2019, based on advice from a multidisciplinary advisory committee. It now includes several additional modules related to bodily pain, relationship seeking, criminalization, social support and disability. In Q2, the OHTN hosted a community event that brought together people involved in the cohort study and others from affected communities to talk about how to ask questions on quality of care. The result is a new patient experiences module, which will also be incorporated into the 2019 OCS questionnaire.

Short-term outcomes:

- A new resource for collecting information about HIV outcomes in Ontario rooted in the experiences of people living with HIV

This data will help guide Ontario's HIV response as per goal 5.2a of the OACHA strategy and in keeping with our rapid learning and improvement strategies.

Follow-up from Previous Reporting

- 50% of OCASE agencies have agreed to be involved in the beta testing of the new integrated OCHART/OCASE system; this will give us robust feedback on the performance of the new system
- A [plain language fact sheet](#) summarizing Ontario's Cascade of Care was published
- A Key Performance Indicators/Performance Measurements Trends report was submitted to the Ministry about outcomes in the AIDS Service sector

- The OCS continues to expand the number of clinics participating in the cohort to better reflect the population of people living with HIV in Ontario. Agreements were signed with Women’s Health in Women’s Hands in Toronto and Elevate NWO in Thunder Bay and an agreement with the Hamilton clinic is pending. Discussions have also begun with the clinic at Kingston Hotel Dieu.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION TWO: Conduct Targeted High-Impact HIV Research

Developed the Endgame Funding Research Program

Building on the outcomes of the evaluation of the OHTN Impact Focused Research Program, the OHTN has designed a new funding program. The OHTN Endgame Funding Program aims to build stronger and more collaborative relationships between funded researchers and our collective impact efforts in the HIV sector. The new program will launch early in the third quarter (Oct 15) with a diverse, large-scale open call for applications – the first multi-award call in four years. Applications will be solicited to the:

- **The HIV Endgame Leader Awards** – a selection of salary awards for researchers at different stages of their careers including student awards and support for investigators in front line service environments (community fellows)
- **Game Changer Awards** – investigator-driven awards that will build on the innovation and engagement of Ontario’s HIV research community to generate game-changing knowledge, and pilot and scale up game-changing interventions
- **Community-based Research (CBR) and Evaluation Awards** – to support community-based agencies, their staff, and people living with HIV/AIDS to undertake research and evaluation activities that help develop and modify effective programs, services and policy or generate data to make the case for additional CBR relevant to Ontario’s needs.
- **Emerging Issues Awards** – to support research in areas where OHTN, in consultation with our stakeholders, have defined clear gaps in knowledge and where we will issue a directed call for proposals, targeting researchers with a strong track record in related research/issues and the potential to conduct rapid research.

Short-term outcomes:

- New funding tools for OHTN that allow us to channel research capacity and expertise in Ontario to drive improvements in HIV care and services

This is consistent with goal 5.2d of the OACHA strategy for HIV/AIDS in Ontario to “support and conduct research into interventions to change the course of the prevention, engagement and care cascade.”

This new funding program sets clear expectations for how researchers will work with the OHTN and its network and identifies seven rapid learning areas (see page 3), where researchers will be funded to work with the OHTN network to create systems-level improvement. The program will support research that has the potential to:

- meet the needs of populations in Ontario most affected by HIV
- drive changes in policy and practice across the HIV prevention, engagement, and care cascade
- lead to more integrated health and social services
- identify effective ways to address the social determinants that have a negative impact on the health of communities most affected by HIV
- contribute to a rapid learning HIV health and social system.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION THREE: Support the Use of the Best Available Data and Research Evidence

Ontario HIV Common Curriculum

AIDS Service Organizations in Ontario require skills development training, which is easily accessible, streamlined, current and meets the needs of organizations that have high onboarding burdens, as is common in our sector. The OHTN has been working with other capacity-building agencies in the sector under the common umbrella of HIV Resources Ontario to develop a core curriculum for all sector employees. The curriculum working group has developed a proposal for a standard tool kit to drive training for all new staff. The kit will include key areas relevant to all staff, a pathway to deeper learning in specific topic areas, and a process guide for training supervision. It will draw on the expertise of all of Ontario’s capacity building organizations and facilitate timely training. The proposal will be presented at the OAN Leadership Symposium in early Q3. OHTN will offer its services in producing the kit.

Short-term outcome:

- Consistent training for all AIDS service workers in Ontario drawing on the expertise of each of Ontario’s capacity building organizations
- Ready access to this training as needed by ASOs

This is consistent with goal 1.1b of the OACHA strategy for HIV/AIDS in Ontario to enhance the capacity of HIV/AIDS service organizations to provide culturally appropriate, responsive and welcoming care to populations most affected by HIV in their catchment areas. It is also part of the OHTN effort to create a culture of rapid learning and improvement in our sector.

Rapid Learning Areas

Through the strategic planning process and consultations with our stakeholders, the OHTN has identified seven priority areas for rapid learning and improvement.

- Effective PrEP scale-up in Ontario
- Population-focused prevention and health promotion
- HIV testing
- Linkage, adherence, and retention in care
- Clinical care standards and capacity
- Integration of services
- Mental health and well-being of people living with and at risk of HIV (including stigma reduction)

Rapid learning and improvement plans are now being developed for each of these areas to define our activities. The rapid learning areas are also being used to shape our research funding priorities and to help determine our engagement in proposed activities.

Short-term outcomes:

- Clearly identified priorities for rapid learning and improvement in our sector

This is consistent with goal 5.2d of the OACHA strategy for HIV/AIDS in Ontario to “support and conduct research into interventions to change the course of the prevention, engagement and care cascade.”



STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOUR: Help Create the Backbone for Collective Impact in the HIV Sector

Clinical Initiatives

A Case-based Primary Care Workshop for Primary Care Physicians

In association with the Endgame 3: Breakthrough Initiatives (see follow-up reports below), the OHTN is working with Dr. Gordon Arbess and other clinicians at St. Michael’s Hospital to

Short-term outcome:

- Access to skills-building training for less experienced primary care providers

This is consistent with goals 2.2b and 4.1c of the OACHA Strategy.

plan a primary care training day to run as a concurrent specialist session on the second day of the conference. (A similar day for pharmacists is also planned). This workshop is designed for primary care providers new to HIV care and will offer CME credits from the College of Family Physicians. It will help primary care physicians:

- Recognize patients at risk for HIV, and build confidence in managing these patients appropriately and using PrEP and PEP
- Care for a small volume of HIV patients reviewing necessary investigations and interpreting test results
- Explore issues related to HIV including substance use and mental health and issues specific to HIV+ women

Follow-up from Previous Reporting

- Registration for the Endgame Conference is now open, with a program focused on innovations in care and support planned in conjunction with the Ontario HIV Clinic Network and HIV pharmacists. Over 75 abstracts have been received, and the plenaries are in place. [An overview of the program](#) was posted on our website early in Q3.
- The linkage to care coordinator is now in place at OHTN and working closely with Toronto Public Health on the pilot.
- The first evaluation cycle has begun in the Maple Leaf Medical Clinic evaluation of nurse-managed care for HIV retention and ongoing management of PrEP patients.
- The Patient Reported Outcomes system is almost ready to be implemented at the St. Michael's Hospital Clinic with funding from ViiV. The OHTN is developing a cloud platform to host data. The system will then be adapted for the needs of the two community-based clinics participating in the pilot.

ASO and Community Initiatives

Engagement in Care Workshop for ASO Workers

To create holistic integrated health care and support for people living with HIV, Ontario's AIDS Service Organizations must play a greater role in supporting adherence and engagement in care. To help ASO workers understand this role and consider the interventions that they might viably pursue with local clinics, the OHTN has secured Jane Fox of Abt Associates in Boston for a two-hour workshop on evidence-based interventions in engagement in care currently implemented in the US. This workshop will take place at the Endgame conference and will be mandatory for ASO participants, and highly promoted to clinic staff attending the conference. The session will focus on the integration of community support workers into the clinical team to increase linkage and retention in care, best practices for this model of care, and strategies for finding people who have fallen out of care. To further support ASO workers attending an OHTN conference for the first time, a new mentorship initiative will also be implemented to help these individuals best use the learning opportunities available to them.

Short-term outcome:

- Evidence and training about supporting engagement in care for Ontario ASO workers and an opportunity to reflect on enhanced services

This supports goals 3.2c of the OACHA Strategy to explore a range of mechanisms to support individual care pathways to support people diagnosed with HIV and will provide appropriate decision supports in this area for people working in the AIDS service sector.

Follow-up from Previous Reporting

- The Provincial Indigenous Knowledge Coordinator role has now been filled at Oahas and is beginning to work with staff at OHTN and elsewhere to support Indigenous programs and services in Ontario with needed evidence and data

Policy and Systems Initiatives

Gay Men's Leadership Forum

In July, this two-day invitation only symposium brought together more than 30 leaders in gay men's health in Toronto to talk about strategies to improve gay men's physical, mental and sexual health in the context of the research which is now revealing how syndemic factors (childhood events, depression, isolation and substance use) are impacting health in this community. The event explored access to services to help men address these challenges. The symposium was explicit in its effort to engage a new generation of leaders in this conversation. The group identified priority topics for action including:

- Develop a gay men's health hub
- Access to mental health services
- Access to health care for immigrants, refugees and non-status LGBTQ people including people living with HIV
- Access to HIV testing
- Physical, mental health and wellness for people living with HIV
- Harm reduction supports for guys in the party 'n play crowd
- Healthcare support for GBTQ men with disabilities
- Supporting the health of "hard to reach" guys
- Racism and sexual racism
- A status neutral approach to reduce HIV stigma
- Creating opportunities to support the professional engagement and development of younger GBTQ guys
- Resources and alternative funding for more gay men's health spaces and services
- New sustainable partnerships and collaboration models

This work will help inform the development of a gay men's health hub in Toronto. Working groups on some of these topics will become part of the Fast Track City initiative in Toronto.

Short-term outcome:

- New momentum and broader engagement around gay men's health issues in Toronto
- Additional engagement in both Fast Track City and the development of a gay men's health hub

This work around GBTQ men's health resources supports specific objectives in goal 1.1 of the OACHA strategy and will help ground the development of two key Toronto initiatives in the needs of service users.

Follow-up from Previous Reporting

- The Fast Track City proposal for Toronto continues to gain momentum with a Champion's meeting late in Q2 to approve the draft plan and discuss strategy to engage with the mayor after the municipal election. Members have been proposed for the task groups and these groups will be convened in stages depending on the capacity to support them. An initial community consultation on the Fast Track initiative is scheduled for November 1.
- A working group on prevention and access to care initiatives for newcomers has been formed and has conducted a survey about the care gap for student visa holders subsequently diagnosed with HIV while in school in Ontario. We anticipate recommendations from this group in Q3.