About CIMCA

Founded in Vancouver in 2005, the Canadian Independent Medical Clinics Association (CIMCA) is a non-profit organization that represents independent medical clinics and their supporters across the nation in pursuit of improved access to high quality and timely health care for all Canadians.

Our Objectives are:

- To support high quality patient care and the highest professional and ethical standards.
- To nurture cooperation between independent and public health care organizations.
- To improve public policies that impact on access to health care.
- To support innovation and new technology and promote accountability in the Canadian health system.
Introduction

The independent health care sector is a staid and stable feature of Canada’s health care landscape. The purpose of this policy brief is to direct the attention of Canada’s health care decision makers toward the untapped potential of the independent health care sector. The sector should not be viewed as a competition to Medicare, but as an arch of support that can release some of the pressures on the public health system and contribute towards Medicare’s fiscal sustainability.

The private sector has traditionally played a pivotal role in the delivery of health care services in Canada. Medical clinics, staffed by doctors, nurses and health care providers operate as private businesses treating patients and billing government. The emergence of independent surgical clinics provide services to a steady stream of patients from the WCB, RCMP, military and some private-sector insurance companies. Provincial health authorities have taken advantage of private-sector services by sub-contracting patient care to independent health care facilities.

Our sector is meeting patient needs and the expectations of provincial health authorities with timely and quality care. We have, however, only tapped a fraction of the potential for quality patient care available in the independent health care sector. A change in the regulatory framework could widen opportunities for greater public and private health care partnerships that could enhance the sustainability of the public health care system.

Landscape Survey of Health Care in Canada

CIMCA strongly supports Canada’s universal publicly funded health care system and seek reforms to help Medicare overcome its current challenges:

- Approximately two million Canadians are on health care wait lists (92% Increase from 1993).
- 50% of Children wait a medically unacceptable length of time.
- The Supreme Court of Canada stated that patients die due to widespread delays for public health care.
- Health care spending is unsustainable. Nearly 45% of provincial budgets are spent on health care and climbing.
- Under pressure to maintain sustainability, the provinces are rationing healthcare services by restricting access to facilities, physicians, devices, pharmaceuticals and biologics.
Canada trails the world in health care delivery:

- Canada’s health care system is rated 30th in a World Health Organization survey.
- Canada is one of the top three countries in health care costs (Canadian Institute for Health Information).
- Canada is near bottom in access to new technology (OECD).
- Most developed countries - such as France, Germany and Britain - provide universal health care systems complemented by private sector options.
- The WHO’s top six ranked countries have no wait lists and spend less.

Canadians expect and deserve better:

- Supreme Court affirms a citizen's right to protect their own health and to obtain private health insurance in Quebec.
- Over seven out of ten Canadians support the Supreme Court decision allowing supplementary private health insurance and care (COMPAS poll, January 2006).
- Over five out of ten Canadians agree with the option to pay privately for faster treatment (Pollara poll, June 2005).

**CIMCA’s Health Care Objectives**

CIMCA encourages federal and provincial authorities to improve patient care with a renewed universal publicly funded health care system complemented by independent health care facilities. A renewed health care system should highlight the following features:

**Access:** To deliver health care services in a timely manner and eliminate wait lists altogether.

**Quality:** To provide high quality patient care and promote the highest professional and ethical standards.

**Choice:** To give patients the choice of public and private health care delivery, financing and insurance.

**Innovation:** To promote medical innovation and the introduction of new technology.

**Accountability:** To promote the responsible and efficient use of public resources through performance measures of medical procedures and competition with the independent sector.
CIMCA’s Health Care Proposal

CIMCA recommends the following improvements and enhancements to Canada’s health care system:

1. Strengthen the publicly funded system by increasing supply of medical services through independent health care facilities:
   • Support expansion of independent health care clinics specializing in certain high-volume procedures.
   • Maximize the use of existing health care facilities.
   • Encourage hospitals and health authorities to contract out procedures to independent clinics that meet the most stringent professional standards.
   • Improve working conditions, including pay and benefits to health care workers.

2. Structure health care financing through a publicly-insured system complemented by private sector financing and insurance options:
   • Strengthen government funded universal health care coverage.
   • Amend provincial legislation to accommodate private health care insurance.
   • Lift the ban on private insurance by amending the Canada Health Act.
   • Give patients the option to pay for medical procedures through private health care insurance or out-of-pocket.

3. Enhance patient access to new medical technologies and innovations:
   • Support research and development into biologics, devices and pharmaceuticals.
   • Relax restrictions on listing of new pharmaceuticals.
   • Partner with government to enhance development and ensure optimal use of medicines.
   • Encourage private sector investment in clinics to update medical technology.
Improved Health Care Outcomes

Quality care and medical choice for all patients

- Health care would be provided when needed and wait lists would cease to exist.
- Patients would receive the best practices in medical treatment and procedures with the best equipment available.
- The health system would be driven by patient results instead of bureaucratic rationing.

A sustainable health care system driven by innovation

- Restricting healthcare services to maintain sustainability would be replaced by medical innovations such as pharmaceuticals, devices and biologics that release pressure on frontline health services.
- The use of newer drugs would lower non-drug medical spending, resulting in a cost savings for any given treating.
- Increased innovation and technology would become a powerful economic driver in today’s knowledge economy.

A responsive system that meets the needs of patients and health care workers

- Improved working conditions and better utilization of resources would help alleviate the doctor and nursing shortage.
- Opportunity for private clinics to open in underserved communities in Canada and improve access to medical technology, such as MRIs.
- Canada would rise from the bottom to the top of the world best health care systems.