The Challenge: Reducing Wait Times for Healthcare Systems in Canada

Canada has some of the longest wait times for medical care in the developed world. Getting same-day or next-day appointments with a doctor are difficult – evenings or weekends are much harder. Waits in the ER (emergency room) are just seemingly endless just to see a doctor but waiting to be admitted could potentially take a few days. Referrals to specialists result in lengthy waits. The wait for an elective surgery is often painfully long. Such example of an elective surgery could be a knee replacement, hip replacement etc.

The wait for home care services usually stretches for a couple of months and a patient needing long-term care can languish in limbo for years. Nursing home beds are almost always full and the staff are always short-handed in these places. Home care hours are limited. As a result, thousands of patients who no longer need care provided at the hospital can't leave to a long-term facility, thus occupying a bed at the hospital. Because these patients are not discharged and beds are scarce, elective surgeries are cancelled, and those waiting for admission spend days on gurneys in the ER.

Switching from hospitals, long-term facilities to another institution that requires importance to reduce wait times is university. Students at universities have to wait weeks or months to get appointments for psychiatrists. Because of how much stress and pressure university students are under, such wait times should not cease to exist.

Canada's health-care system suffers from what experts call "code gridlock" – provision of care moves at a glacial rhythm because of clogs in the system. From a patient perspective, **code gridlock** can mean that patients who no longer require acute care continue to occupy hospital beds because of a lack of access to more appropriate community-based resources, such as their home (with the necessary supports) or a residential care facility.

Health Care Challenge 2019

When addressing the issues of wait times in Canada's health care system, there are many interlocking factors that can be addressed to reduce this issue. The challenge this year is to frame an idea on how to reduce the wait times to a specific sector, and explain why the approach is creates the largest and most effective benefit.

Possible References to Use:

All references are Canadian-based:
https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/reducing-wait-times-for-health-care.pdf

https://www.conferenceboard.ca/CASHC/research/2012/inconvenient_truths.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1

http://theconversation.com/how-healthy-is-the-canadian-health-care-system-82674