

INNOVATIVE MEDICINES CANADA'S 8TH ANNUAL QUEBEC PRIVATE MARKET POLICY SUMMIT

CONCRETE SOLUTIONS TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF DRUG PLANS

November 30, 2021

Nearly 100 people gathered virtually on November 30 for Innovative Medicines Canada's 8th annual Quebec Private Market Policy Summit. Panelists and participants had the opportunity to discuss the future of drug plans and, more specifically, opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

The opening remarks by Conrad Bellehumeur, Vice-President, Communications and Government Affairs at Innovative Medicines Canada, effectively highlighted the journey of innovation that has taken place over the past 30 years—a journey that started with the discovery of drugs for certain common and chronic diseases and that led to precision and personalized medicine. Today, these advances in the life sciences industry have brought us on the cusp of major breakthroughs in gene therapies for rare diseases.

This considerable progress has obviously had many effects, namely on the quality of life of the population, which in turn has helped people to contribute to the social and economic development of their communities. The life sciences industry not only supports 100,000 full-time jobs in Canada, it also helps to provide better opportunities for Canadians to live their life to its fullest and achieve their desired level of productivity.

However, there is a downside: most healthcare systems in Western countries face challenges in terms of cost control, access to care, and quality of care, which are amplified by the accelerated aging of their populations. In this context, one question comes to mind: how can we strike a balance between the sustainability of private drug plans and the need for innovation to address increasingly complex conditions?

Modernizing to ensure sustainability

In an attempt to provide an answer, Frédéric Lavoie, Vice President, Access and Government Relations at Pfizer, set out to demonstrate the relevance of innovative reimbursement agreements based on the effectiveness of innovations. Not only would this type of agreement redefine the criteria for sharing financial risk between the manufacturer and payers, but it would also provide the flexibility to learn about a therapy's value in real care environments.

In other words, this type of agreement would consist of ongoing evaluations and base reimbursements on effectiveness and patient benefits. According to Mr. Lavoie, this option would be all the more interesting for insurers and plan sponsors, given the strong pressure on labour demand in an unfavourable demographic context.

Despite the perceived complexity of implementing this type of agreement, Mr. Lavoie believes that concrete solutions exist. For example, the abundance of talent in Montreal's artificial intelligence cluster seems a like a promising avenue to set up the engineering component that the data management and analysis mechanics behind this type of agreement require.



Lessons in collaboration and agility from the pandemic

Managing chronic diseases effectively is a team effort. This opinion is strongly shared by Dr. Yves Bolduc, former Minister of Health and Social Services who currently practices medicine at the Cité médicale de Québec, and Bertrand Bolduc, President of the Ordre des pharmaciens du Québec.

For both panelists, agility and collaboration remain crucial levers for providing better access to care and medicine. Moreover, the considerable expansion of pharmacists' scope of practice in recent years has allowed the delegation of clinical procedures and increased interprofessional collaboration, and therefore faster access to services for patients. Among other things, pharmacists can prescribe drugs for certain minor conditions and interprofessional agreements can allow pharmacists to initiate or modify drug therapy for a patient group on their own.

Although granting pharmacists the right to administer vaccines was one of the measures quickly put in place by the Quebec government to accelerate the fight against the pandemic, it is far from being the only recent demonstration of agility by Canadian healthcare systems. The panelists hope that this flexibility can be maintained and even increased by all partners in the system in order to encourage the arrival of innovations that will benefit everyone and to break down any persisting—or future—barriers to access.

As Dr. Bolduc pointed out, one such barrier is the long waiting time for the review and approval of reimbursements of new technologies by the public plan, which could become worse with the application of regulatory reforms of the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board (PMPRB) or the introduction of a universal public drug insurance plan (national pharmacare) replacing the current mixed plan, which has proven its worth by promoting access to innovations in Quebec.

In the end, all this engagement on collaboration and the real value of therapies will be pointless if patients cannot get access to innovations due to an unfavorable policy environment.

PARTICIPANT OPINIONS IN NUMBERS

- 97% of participants strongly agreed (71%) or agreed (26%) that **insurers and manufacturers should increase collaboration** to find solutions to ensure innovation and sustainability of the private market.
- 95% of participants strongly agreed (74%) or agreed (21%) that **innovative agreements between insurers and manufacturers should be considered** to provide access to costly innovative drugs in the future.
- 95% of participants feel **there is a need for greater evidence to support the value and return on investment of insurance benefits** being paid by plan sponsors.