

# The G7 Primary Health Care Universal Knowledge Initiative

## A welcome step for patient-centred health care

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Last update: 29 January 2020

**On 17 May, health ministers from the G7 countries met in Paris and reinforced their commitment to strengthen primary health care systems. They launched the G7 Primary Health Care Universal Knowledge Initiative (see the G7 declaration). It is a welcome step.**

Quite simply, from low to high income countries, people-centred primary health care systems are becoming more important.

There are three main reasons for this. First, a people-centred approach helps keep health inequalities low. It is the one part of current health systems that delivers this, with little difference in the proportion of high or low income groups seeing a GP. Second, being people-centred can help keep costs down. By treating people early at a local level, costly hospital admissions can be reduced, saving the equivalent of 6% of total bed days. And third, the approach is well-suited for addressing the health needs of the future, including a greater emphasis on preventive services, and for coping with the increasing complexity and care needs of ageing populations.

But to meet these future challenges, primary health care services will need to transform. In fact, in too many OECD countries, primary health care is failing to deliver its full potential. While primary health care teams are in a unique position to advise patients on lifestyles, deliver preventive care, and manage the progress of chronic diseases, as low as one person in four suffering from some chronic conditions did not receive any of the recommended preventive tests in the past 12 months, according to latest available data. Hospital admissions for chronic conditions, which could be averted by better prevention and diseases management, are also too high—equivalent to at least US\$ 835 million on average across OECD countries. Moreover, inappropriate use of antibiotics, another

marker of poor primary health care quality, ranges between 45% and 90% of reported cases—a higher share compared to other health care services.

The good news is that policy makers can change things, particularly if they harness the best of what innovation around the world has to offer. There are many significant and useful innovative developments to draw inspiration from in primary health care services, such as Ma Santé 2022 (My Health) in France, My Health Teams in Canada, or the Friend and Family Test in the United Kingdom. By sharing experiences such as these, policy makers can identify the reforms they need, evaluate them, and help each other to make progress.

Five international organisations, the OECD, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the Global Fund and GAVI, a vaccine alliance, have issued a statement to work together to produce a joint report. The report will include among other things an identification of the need for a universal knowledge exchange platform, a mapping of existing expert platforms, and an identification of the current shortcomings regarding knowledge dissemination and the exchange of good practices in the area of people-centred primary health care. The joint report should help to accelerate progress among all our countries, and will be a key step towards achieving and sustaining universal health coverage.

Future health care challenges are already mounting, and a drive towards people-centred primary health care is the best way forward for policy makers in all our countries, which is why we welcome the G7 Primary Health Care Universal Knowledge Initiative.

Last update: 18 May 2019.

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