

Toward a Policy Framework for Sustainable Rural Obstetrics and Surgical Care in Canada

Description

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Abstract

A national policy framework is needed to support high quality, sustainable rural healthcare in Canada. There is a particular need for improvement of obstetric and surgery services in the rural and remote communities of Canada. Using a scoping review, existing policies across Canada were examined and learnings were distilled to inform a discussion of the elements of an appropriate framework. Long-term vision, planning, and sustained funding were identified as missing essential strategic elements from the current policy approaches. A “plan, recruit and retain” framework proposed by an international collaboration of researchers including Canadians in a project funded by the European Union, is recommended as a starting point for a made-in-Canada strategy to support improvements in remote and rural healthcare services. Additional recommendations are gleaned from several reports published by a variety of Canadian sources. Conclusion: A directed federal-provincial process, possibly via a Royal Commission and initially supported provincial and federal rural healthcare transfer payments, is required as the three functional process areas (plan, recruit, retain) must be approved and in place for the long-term success of rural obstetrics and surgery care needs. The principal elements of any framework strategy must include equitable, supportive, and sustainable health care provider agreements with directed but necessary redundant human resource requirements; rural patient focused access and quality care; and clear political – clinical care policy.

Key Words: Canada, rural, healthcare, obstetrics, policy.

Citation: Wilson, R Douglas (2023). Toward a Policy Framework for Sustainable Rural Obstetrics and Surgical Care in Canada. *Canadian Health Policy*, FEB 2023. <https://doi.org/10.54194/GTEX1486>, www.canadianhealthpolicy.com