

# The Growing Imperative for Patient and Caregiver Partnership

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This special edition of *Healthcare Quarterly (HQ)* has been developed through a novel partnership between the Ontario Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR) SUPPORT Unit (OSSU) and Longwoods Publishing. The concept for this edition emerged from an alignment of interests between the partners. OSSU's mandate is to support patient-oriented health and health services research in Ontario and to facilitate the uptake of research evidence to improve health policy and decision making. *HQ*'s mission is to recognize, nurture and champion excellence in the Canadian healthcare system by sharing leading practices in health services delivery and policy development. As we look toward the future of healthcare and health system transformation, leading practices will be increasingly defined by the degree to which they are designed and implemented in full partnership with patients and caregivers. This perspective, shared by both OSSU and Longwoods, is at the heart of this publication.

OSSU's Engaging Multi-stakeholders for Patient Oriented-research Wider Effects and Reach (EMPOWER) Awards support patient- and caregiver-oriented research that has had a wide impact in Ontario. The 15 EMPOWER grant winners featured in this edition exemplify patient and caregiver empowerment and co-design. Growing evidence underscores the imperative for patient and caregiver partnership not just in research but in every aspect of healthcare design and implementation, from the development of individual patient care plans to macro-level policy and governance of health systems. Longwoods' recent edition of *HQ* on "Resetting the Future of Healthcare Leadership" (Wojtak and Stuart 2021)

emphasized this construct, including perspectives on what true patient partnership looks like and how it changes our systems.

The common learnings across the EMPOWER research projects, including the importance of addressing health equity, being flexible in tackling new challenges and evaluating patient engagement, do not only apply to research. Furthermore, the application of integrated knowledge translation, as discussed in the Introduction (Gill et al. 2022), can guide the broader spheres of healthcare policy and leadership, whereby end-users of the system are engaged in policy, strategy and governance to optimize system performance and achieve improvements in healthcare outcomes. In other words, while the focus of OSSU's EMPOWER Awards is patient-oriented research, what is highlighted in these articles extends well beyond that.

In creating this special edition of *HQ*, the combined editorial team from OSSU and Longwoods worked collaboratively over several months to review the submissions, discuss the findings and identify the core themes. Patients and caregivers were equal partners in all aspects of this effort as members of the individual research teams, co-authors, participants in the editorial board and commentary providers. This partnership was important not only because it was aligned with the EMPOWER approach but also because it markedly improved our editorial process and outcome. It is our hope that readers of this special edition, whether they are researchers, policy makers, clinicians or patients, can apply the tools and knowledge on partnership and co-design from these pages to help improve our health system regardless of where they sit within it.

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## References

- Gill, P.J., D. Urajnik and R. Ganann. 2022. Empowering and Accelerating Impacts of Patient-Oriented Research. *Healthcare Quarterly* 24(Special Issue): 5–9. doi:10.12927/hcq.2022.26781.
- Wojtak, A. and N. Stuart. 2021. Resetting the Future of Healthcare Leadership. *Healthcare Quarterly* 24(3): 1–3. doi:10.12927/hcq.2021.26627.

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## About the author

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