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Aligning Optimal Scopes of Practice & Innovative Models of Care to Help Transform Health Care Systems

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Purpose: The purpose of this presentation is to outline the key findings and recommendation of a scoping review of the scientific evidence on how optimal scopes of practice and innovative models of care can enable system-side transformation that better meets the needs of patients, communities and the broader population. The review was commissioned by the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and undertaken by investigators with the Canadian Health Human Resources Network.

Methods: Promising approaches to the optimization of health professional scopes of practice were identified using a systematic methodological approach which involved four elements: 1) the development of a guiding conceptual framework of macro (education and training, economic context, legal and regulatory), meso (institutional, technology and community) and micro (practice level) factors of influence on scopes of practice; 2) a scoping review that identified 125 published and unpublished sources from which key findings were extracted using a tool to systematically map out the state of knowledge; 2) interviews with 50 key informants to augment findings from the literature; and 3) meetings over an 18-month period of an Expert Panel of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences to discuss the state of the evidence and policy implications.

Key Findings: Our analysis of scopes of practice innovations reveals their common characteristic is the circumvention of largely macro level structural barriers. The literature, however, focuses largely on micro over meso and macro system interventions. We did, however, find a consensus that scopes of practice that accommodate evolving models of care represent a significant tool to shift from individual, siloed practice to collaborative care. Clearly defined roles would need to be delineated within the team based on need and ability (training and experience) in order for the collaborative care arrangements to achieve their collective goals and targets. New accountability approaches would be required that combine individual and collaborative accountability and that offer a balance between self-regulation and accreditation of collaborative care arrangements. This will require flexibility in roles and scopes of practice to meet the needs of communities and financial alignment between resources, tasks and outcomes.

Implications: The recommendations identify actions that will lead to the creation of more flexible environments to enable the scalability of promising initiatives around optimal scopes of practice and innovative models of care. We are calling for integrative, structural frameworks that support rather than hinder the development and proliferation of innovative and flexible models of care that optimize health professional scopes of practice.