



By Gail Garland

Why Ontario needs a network of Early Adopter Health Organizations

The Government of Ontario is in the early phases of its transformation of Ontario's health care system which includes the creation of Ontario Health and the establishment of Ontario Health Teams.

The challenge of continuing to deliver the quality of health care that Ontarians deserve is well known. As the government embarks on its plan, Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization (OBIO) has published a report, *Achieving Impact Through Adoption of Innovative Technologies: Establishing Early Adopter Health Organizations as an Accelerator for Economic Growth in Ontario*, which describes how the early adoption of novel health technologies can play a critical role in helping to deliver better quality care for patients.

A network of Ontario health organizations engaged with innovators as 'early adopters' will assess novel technologies' ability to improve patient care and enhance health system efficiency. Their engagement, feedback and procurement recommendations will provide our growing health science industry with a global launch pad. Ontarians stand to reap even more benefit as global technologies are attracted here to demonstrate their value and our economy will benefit as capital flows and jobs are created.

In 2017, OBIO's 'Tackling the Anchor Company Challenge' summit brought together industry, academic, government, health system and investment leaders to create a mandate of action to anchor and grow health science companies in Ontario. A key recommendation was to establish a network of early adopter health organizations as an ideal mechanism to create more opportunities for the adoption of innovative technologies. Subsequently, OBIO convened a steering committee of health system and industry leaders to develop a framework and further consulted with both health service providers and companies based on their first-hand experiences to understand what would make a network of early adopter health organizations most effective.

While some health organizations have developed processes for engaging with



At OBIO's 2019 Queen's Park Advocacy Day. Pictured left to right: Amol Karnick, KA Imaging, Gail Garland, OBIO, Brian Courtney, Conavi Medical, Hon. Bill Walker, Minister of Government and Consumer Services, and Zach Fisch-Rothbart, CoHealth

innovators, the landscape is uneven. Even when two willing groups want to work together it is a challenge for both innovators and providers to engage with each other. Better organized U.S. hospital systems attract our promising technologies and the company soon follows.

We need a straightforward way of allowing innovators to engage Ontario's health system. For example, a network of early adopter health organizations can bridge the gap and create much-needed benefits for Ontario and Canada that are also far-reaching:

Better patient care: Early adopter health organizations will be incentivized to seek out novel health technologies and, by directly engaging with innovators to help address these problems, clinical end-users can provide feedback that will further enhance and refine technology solutions to optimize the patient care experience and improve outcomes.

Clear pathway to assessment, integration and adoption: A network of early adopter health organizations lowers barriers and ensures that successful technologies are known early, developed for maximum benefit to patients and are more easily deployed and purchased.

Physician access to novel technologies: Designated early adopter health organizations will attract physicians who want access to the latest health technologies and will build on Ontario's reputation as home to world-class physicians.

Anchoring health sciences economy across Canada: Engaging directly with health organizations and being able to access the local market is essential to ensuring that Canadian health science innovators stay here and grow their companies here.

Attracting global health sciences industry & investment: The clear pathway that a network of early adopter health organizations presents is a signal to the world that Ontario and Canada are strong regions for investment. We will all benefit from having early access to the most innovative technologies anywhere in the world and the capital that will follow.

Right now, Ontario can gain a first-mover advantage by becoming the first jurisdiction in Canada to empower the early adoption of novel health technologies. In addition, this early adopter model creates incentives for health organizations to partner with each other and with innovators, ensuring that both have "skin in the game".

An early adopter health organization network will pull innovation into our health care system, enabling improved care for patients and greater efficiency in the delivery of care while anchoring a growing health science industry here and bringing the world's innovations to our doorstep along with capital to build Ontario into an international destination for the development of novel health technologies.

Building a network of early adoption health organizations in Ontario to create pathways for novel health technologies is a timely mechanism with far-reaching benefits for Ontario, Canada and importantly, the world.



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