

## Viewpoint — A Pandemic's Influence on Future Priorities

### Key Messages

- The global COVID-19 pandemic has changed our perspective on what is possible when it comes to health system transformation.
- Governments, decision-makers, and patients need the best available evidence to help identify health system priorities and inform discussions surrounding value, equity, access, affordability, investment, disinvestment, and risk.
- Against this backdrop, CADTH has embarked on the process of developing a new strategic plan to guide our priorities and help us meet the evolving needs of our stakeholders.

Almost a year into Canada's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, we have observed the strengths and limitations of our health care system. As I reflect on these past months, I am proud of the exceptional commitment of our health care professionals, our robust regulatory system, the high levels of cooperation across the country, and our willingness to adapt in the face of new information. I am also encouraged by a renewed commitment to the importance of evidence in decision-making.

An additional side effect of these extraordinary times is a new perspective on what is possible when it comes to health system transformation. I am optimistic that we can maintain the momentum in areas like virtual care and digital health. And I believe that, together, we can use lessons from the past year to strengthen the delivery of care and address longstanding social disparities and issues of discrimination, racism, and inequitable access to care.

Finding the path forward — to economic recovery, stability, and a better future — amid significant uncertainty is the next great challenge. I believe CADTH can contribute by helping governments, decision-makers, and patients use the best available evidence to identify health system priorities and then use this information to confront the complex trade-offs needed around value, equity, access, affordability, investment, disinvestment, and risk.

Looking ahead, priority-setting and value determination around health technologies will go hand in hand. To inform difficult decisions, we will need explicit and transparent processes for setting priorities, systematic and critical assessments of evidence, and the collaboration of all stakeholders. Managing uncertainty will remain a challenge, for both producers and users of evidence. There will be limitations to acknowledge as well as demands for different considerations in methods, wider perspectives, and more nuanced interpretations. Decision-makers may have new expectations based on their use of evidence during the pandemic and need different forms of evidence appraisal and implementation support to address gaps when evidence is weak.

It is against this backdrop that CADTH has embarked on the process of developing a new strategic plan to guide our priorities over the next 2 to 3 years. This timing affords us the opportunity to think critically about the shifting health care landscape, the changing roles of health technology assessment and management, and how CADTH can evolve to meet the emerging needs of our stakeholders.

I look forward to sharing future updates about our progress here in the *Canadian Journal of Health Technologies*, the newly established online home for CADTH's scientific publications.

Suzanne McGurn  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
CADTH