

Examining Health in the Three-Month Wait

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Executive Summary

Over 80,000 new permanent residents (PRs) arrive in Ontario annually and are required to wait for three months before they are eligible to receive publicly funded health care (OHIP). Researchers and health care providers have raised concerns that the three-month wait creates a barrier to timely and equitable health care and could result in negative health outcomes for newcomers.

Wellesley Institute conducted scoping reviews of peer-reviewed and grey literature to examine the current available evidence on the three-month wait. These scoping reviews aim to answer the following questions: What is the health status of new PRs during the three-month wait for OHIP? What are the experiences of new PRs in the health care system during the three-month wait for OHIP? The reviews synthesize five peer-reviewed articles and five grey literature reports from 2005-2015. The main findings include:

- New PRs are going to hospital emergency departments and walk-in clinics with health concerns during the three-month wait.
- New PRs experience financial barriers to accessing health care during the three-month wait. As a result, new PRs decide not to seek health care despite having health needs, get turned away by health care providers, receive care from community health centres and midwives, or pay out-of-pocket for health care services.
- There is evidence that uninsured populations in Ontario face barriers to adequate and equitable health care. In particular, uninsured pregnant women are not receiving adequate prenatal care.
- Health care providers, who provide publicly covered health care for uninsured populations, do not have the capacity to respond to all the health care needs of uninsured populations.
- There is a significant lack of research examining the health status and health outcomes of new PRs during the three-month.
- Financial barriers to access to timely and adequate health care during the three-month wait may result in poorer health outcomes for newcomers.

New PRs in the three-month wait experience an economic barrier to accessing health care, which may result in unmet health needs, inequitable access to health care, and poor health outcomes for newcomers. A health equity approach to health care includes removing barriers to access for all. Eliminating the three-month wait ensures that Ontario's commitment to excellent care for all is one step closer to fulfillment.