

Wait Time Alliance

PRESS RELEASE

Wait Time Hot Spots Highlight Work to be Done

Ottawa, June 17, 2010 – A Wait Time Alliance (WTA) report card released today reveals troubling wait time hot spots in the five clinical areas deemed priorities by governments and more problems across a broader range of medical care.

“The WTA report card shows that many Canadian patients still face long waits for needed medical care, six years after governments promised to get the job done,” said WTA co-chair Dr. Lorne Bellan. “Canadians deserve timely access to health care and accurate information about the wait they can expect.”

The WTA’s fifth annual report card — entitled *No Time for Complacency* to highlight the fact that much more work remains to be done to cut wait times — grades provinces on wait times in the initial 5 priority areas set by governments in 2004 and across additional areas of specialty care. This year, the WTA has raised the bar by using its own benchmarks — rather than weaker government benchmarks — to grade performance in many areas.

The WTA found that wait time data for procedures outside of the five priority areas are a virtual “black hole” where information is scarce or non-existent. Grades outside the priority areas are dismally low, with an average grade of ‘D,’ or nearly half of all patients waiting longer than medically acceptable.

“This is no time to rest, governments must work harder to eliminate unnecessary waits for all types of medical care” said Dr. Bellan. “Patients should be concerned that far too much of the wait-times picture remains clouded in mystery.

For the first time, the report includes wait time information on pediatric surgery. In 2009, more than 17,000 Canadian children waited longer for their surgery than medical experts recommend. Delays in performing surgery on children can have a lifelong impact. Grades of ‘D’ in ophthalmology and dentistry mean nearly half of all children wait longer than medically acceptable for these areas, jeopardizing normal vision and speech and brain development. Also new this year, the WTA has assessed provincial wait time reporting by grading provincial wait time websites.

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Gynaecologists of Canada

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The Wait Time Alliance (WTA) was formed out of concern among Canada's doctors over delayed access to care for their patients, and an interest in working collaboratively with stakeholders to improve wait times. The WTA continues to work to hold governments accountable for addressing lengthy wait times endured by patients throughout the health care system. The WTA comprises 14 national organizations whose members are directly involved in providing a wide range of specialty medical care to patients.

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Media can access the 2010 Report Card and background materials at
www.waittimealliance.ca

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