



Advisory Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation of the Canadian Institute for Health Information

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KPMG LLP
160 Elgin Street, Suite 2000
Ottawa, ON K2P 2P8



Executive Summary

The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), a federally chartered, independent, not-for-profit organization, was established in 1994 to help fill the gaps that existed at that time in information on Canada's health system and the health of Canadians. Canadians wanted to know how well our health system worked, how it could be improved, and how healthy we were as a nation. CIHI was set up by the provinces, territories, and federal government to help address these questions by filling gaps in health information.

CIHI's mandate is:

- To serve as the national mechanism to coordinate the development and maintenance of a comprehensive and integrated health information system for Canada; and
- To provide and coordinate the provision of accurate and timely information required for
 - the establishment of sound health policy;
 - the effective management of the Canadian health system, and
 - the generation of public awareness about factors affecting good health.

The evaluation of CIHI was carried out over the period mid-January, 2010, through August, 2010, concurrently with a performance audit of CIHI. Technically this was an evaluation of CIHI's "Health Information Initiative," a set of projects funded through a series of grants and special purpose funding that have been provided by the federal government since 1999. However, as a practical matter, the Health Information Initiative is not distinguishable from the work of CIHI as a whole, and so this evaluation was an evaluation of CIHI as a whole.

The evaluation focused on addressing nine evaluation questions. These questions were derived from the 16 possible evaluation questions included in the RFP and the Evaluation Framework¹. The importance of including each of the 16 questions in the evaluation was discussed in a series of planning interviews with CIHI senior staff and members of the Board. During these meetings, the interviewees were also asked to suggest any additional questions they felt were important to CIHI but were not included on the listing provided. Results of these discussions enabled us to reduce the number of evaluation questions to nine, and these became the basis of the detailed Evaluation Design Report². Details of the approach were presented to Health Canada, and the final Evaluation Design Report was approved by the CIHI Steering Committee. The main evaluation methodologies were as follows:

- An extensive review of relevant CIHI documents.
- Interviews of 22 CIHI senior management, staff, and Board members.
- An on-line survey of CIHI's intended clients for CIHI's products and services. Responses were received from 952 clients from a total population of 4,389 respondents, for a response rate of 22%.
- Interviews with five external CIHI stakeholders.
- Five case studies that illustrated the use and usefulness of CIHI's products and services.

¹ *Request for Proposal*, Canadian Institute for Health Information, December, 2009, and *Health Information Initiative Evaluation Framework*, September, 2009.

² *Evaluation Design Report*, KPMG LLP, March 16, 2010.

- The findings related to each of the nine evaluation questions are reported below. On balance, the findings are quite positive and show that CIHI is meeting its intended objectives. In particular:
- The Canadian Institute for Health Information fulfills a unique role within the Canadian landscape of health and health services. In fact, there is no one organization that could contribute the expertise, data and knowledge to healthcare reporting that CIHI can.
- CIHI has made a major contribution to improving the quality, integrity and comparability of healthcare data in Canada. CIHI has also played an important role in increasing the ability of healthcare organizations to track and report on their own performance, as well as producing a number of significant reports dealing with the overall performance of the Canadian health care system.
- CIHI produces a range of products and services that are of use to a broad selection of stakeholders, including researchers, policymakers, healthcare managers, healthcare professionals and the public.
- There is no “one size fits all” approach that is suitable to this diverse set of players across Canada’s healthcare system. Some CIHI products are useful to a broad and diverse range of stakeholders, and some are of interest to a smaller niche or subset of stakeholders. Use of CIHI information varies by region as well.
- Many CIHI products are well recognized by its stakeholders and CIHI data are used regularly across the country. There are several examples where CIHI’s work has had an instrumental impact in the system.
- Although healthcare stakeholders say CIHI’s products and services have met their needs, CIHI’s work could be even more responsive to emerging needs and produced within shorter timelines, where possible.
- Finally, while CIHI’s work has had a major impact in increasing awareness of healthcare system performance, it has had less of an impact on increasing the awareness of factors affecting good health, although there are a few notable examples of this type of impact.
- The main findings related to each of the evaluation questions are as follows.

Question 1: To what extent has CIHI filled an important need throughout its lifecycle (including currently)?

Findings:

- (1) There is a need for a reliable source of standardized pan-Canadian health information that can be compared across provinces and regions, and there is no other organization that can provide this data to nearly the extent that CIHI can.
- (2) The study identified many specific examples in which CIHI data and information were used to fill an important need.

Question 2: What is the extent of awareness and understanding of CIHI data and information among CIHI’s intended clients?

Findings

- (1) The awareness and relevance of CIHI products is high. The awareness of CIHI services is lower, but still fairly high.
- (2) The awareness of specific products varies considerably by the product and also by the region and user group.

Question 3: To what extent has CIHI contributed to increased awareness among its intended clients of health care system performance and factors affecting good health?

Findings

- (1) CIHI has had a major impact on increasing the awareness of health care system performance.
- (2) It has had less of an impact on increasing the awareness of factors affecting good health, but the study identified a number of specific examples of this impact.

Question 4: What is the extent of use of CIHI's data and information by CIHI's intended clients?

Findings

- (1) Four of the eight categories of CIHI products and services have been used by about half to two-thirds of CIHI's intended clients.
- (2) The extent of use of specific products/services varies considerably by the sector of the user. For example, government organizations make more use of analytical products than hospitals, but the reverse is true for data from data holdings.

Question 5: To what extent have CIHI data and information met the needs of CIHI's intended clients?

Findings

- (1) About two-thirds of CIHI's clients who used CIHI products and services in the past 12 months found the products and services they used either "extremely useful" or "very useful."
- (2) However, when asked specifically about information required to make decisions about the management of the health care system, the clients, on average, said that CIHI information had met their needs to only a moderate degree; and they answered similarly when asked about information required for performance reporting.

Question 6: To what extent has CIHI contributed to increased reporting of health care system performance?

Findings

- (1) CIHI has clearly made a major contribution to the increased reporting by health care organizations on their own performance.
- (2) CIHI itself has issued a number of significant reports dealing with the performance of the Canadian health care system.

Question 7: To what extent has CIHI been responsive to emerging health information needs?

Findings

- (1) CIHI products and services have been responsive to emerging health information needs to a moderate extent, on average.
- (2) CIHI's mechanisms for engaging input from the health sector and CIHI's timeliness in reacting to emerging health information needs are also only moderately effective and moderately timely respectively.
- (3) In interpreting these results, however, it should be kept in mind the somewhat contradictory finding reported above that the majority of CIHI's clients feel that CIHI's products and services have met important needs for their organization and still meet important needs to either a "very great extent" or a "significant extent."

Questions 8 and 9: To what extent has CIHI contributed to increased comparability of data and improved quality of data in participating facilities and jurisdictions?

Findings

- (1) CIHI has made a major contribution to the increased comparability of data and the improved quality of data among organizations that collect health information.
- (2) The clarity of CIHI's data quality requirements and the responsiveness of CIHI in resolving data integrity issues are both very good.

Overall conclusion

The overall conclusion from the evaluation is that CIHI has met the objectives of the Health Information Initiative. The five objectives of the Health Information Initiative are shown below together with the evaluation findings that are relevant to each objective.

- (1) Help provide the information necessary for health care providers and managers to measure and report on performance
 - CIHI has made a major contribution to the increased reporting by health care organizations on their performance (finding from Q6).
- (2) Help provide the evidence base necessary for health care providers and managers to make informed decisions about health system renewal
 - Four of the eight categories of CIHI products and services used in this study have been used by about half to two-thirds of CIHI's intended clients (i.e., health care providers and managers) in the past 12 months, and there was significant use of two other categories of products and services (from Q4).
 - About two-thirds of CIHI's intended clients who used CIHI products and services in the past 12 months found them to be either "extremely useful" or "very useful". With regard specifically to information required to make decisions about the management of the health care system, CIHI has met the needs of its intended clients to a moderate degree (from Q5).
 - However, for about 60% of CIHI's intended clients, CIHI has filled and still fulfills an important need either "to a very great extent" or "to a significant extent" (finding from Q1).
- (3) Help create the information necessary for Canadians to make informed decisions about their health and use of health services
 - With regard to decisions about the use of health services, CIHI has had a major impact on increasing the awareness of health care system performance. It has had less of an impact on increasing the awareness of factors affecting good health, but the study identified a number of specific examples of this impact (from Q3).
- (4) Expand the sharing of information through a comprehensive approach to data dissemination that respects the privacy of Canadians
 - CIHI has made a major contribution to the increased comparability of data and the improved quality of data among organizations that collect health information. In addition, the clarity of CIHI's data quality requirements and the responsiveness of CIHI in resolving data integrity issues are both very good (from Q8 and Q9).
- (5) Respond to emerging health information needs
 - CIHI products and services have been responsive to emerging health information needs to a moderate extent (from Q7). However, note that, at the same time, the majority of CIHI's clients feel that CIHI's products and services have met important needs for their organization and still meet important needs (see above re. Q1). Note also that CIHI has recently implemented a number of measures to increase its responsiveness to stakeholder needs.