



## Profile November 2011

# Accreditation Canada: Leading the Way Toward Improving Quality in Health Care

### At a Glance

- ◆ Accreditation Canada is a not-for-profit institution that is focused on providing accreditation programs to health-care services providers in Canada.
- ◆ The organization plays a leading role in transferring knowledge through research and development initiatives.
- ◆ Accreditation Canada has proven to be a health-care services sector leader that can guide the way toward progress in improving the quality of health care in the country.

*This profile was prepared with funding from The Conference Board of Canada's Centre for Health System Design and Management (CHSDM). The profile's purpose is to showcase an organization whose activities are improving the effectiveness of Canada's health system. It is based on information gathered through a literature review and interviews with organizational leaders.*

### ABOUT ACCREDITATION CANADA

Accreditation Canada, founded in 1958, is a not-for-profit, independent organization that offers a rigorous and comprehensive accreditation process to health organizations in Canada and abroad. With the input of experts from across the country, Accreditation Canada develops research-based

standards and provides on-site survey visits. The visits are conducted by accreditation peer-surveyor professionals to validate compliance with the standards as they are applied by health-care providers and decision-makers. Through the accreditation process, Accreditation Canada provides national and international health-care organizations and professionals with an “effective way to regularly and consistently examine and improve the quality of services offered to their clients.”<sup>1</sup>

---

**All of Accreditation Canada’s programs are available to the health-care leaders and professionals of health-care organizations and can be tailored to the unique needs of individual client organizations.**

---

Accreditation Canada is recognized for providing an accreditation program (Qmentum) that is designed to integrate with the organization’s quality improvement program. This integration contributes to the improvement of the organization’s care and services quality and the achievement of its priorities. Accreditation is an enabler.

For over 15 years, Accreditation Canada has been accredited by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua). ISQua provides programs for accreditation organizations. It works to improve health care in a number of countries through “quality practice and performance improvement [as it] underpins the work of the health-care team across the entire continuum of care.”<sup>2</sup> ISQua has taken an active role in encouraging quality and patient safety research, and in transferring knowledge in health care. The president and CEO of Accreditation Canada is a member of the ISQua board of directors, and Accreditation Canada senior staff participate actively in many aspects of ISQua’s activities.

---

1 Accreditation Canada, *Client Satisfaction Survey*.

2 ISQua, *ISQUA: Improving Health Care*.

## HOW ACCREDITATION CANADA’S PROGRAMS CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVING HEALTH-CARE SERVICES

Accreditation Canada conducts activities in the following four major categories:

- ◆ **Development of an accreditation program and standards.** Developing and improving an accreditation program based on feedback from clients and health-care trends; developing and updating standards using input from experts in various specialty areas.
- ◆ **Accreditation of health and social services organizations.** Supporting and guiding organizations preparing for site visits and scheduling site visits to organizations.
- ◆ **Research and development.** Compiling and analyzing data to identify trends or correlations in the health services sector as well as collaborating with researchers in quality-related projects.
- ◆ **Evaluation and reporting.** Evaluating the impact of accreditation programs and reporting on key findings.<sup>3</sup>

All of Accreditation Canada’s programs are available to the health-care leaders and professionals of health-care organizations and can be tailored to the unique needs of individual client organizations. Prior to developing standards for accreditation programs, Accreditation Canada conducts research and engages in consultation with key stakeholders. This process includes literature reviews, interviews with experts, focus groups, and web-based consultations. The appropriate and rigorous standards are then developed. Accreditation Canada tests the standards extensively within health-care and social services organizations across Canada—including regional authorities, hospitals, primary-care facilities, and long-term care facilities, among others—to ensure efficiency, feasibility and client fit. Accreditation Canada will release the standards for use only if the testing is successful.

---

3 Dorschner, interview by Zeina Sleiman.

The following eight dimensions of quality care inform Accreditation Canada's development of the standards. Each one represents an essential component of quality in the operational performance of an organization.<sup>4</sup> To achieve quality, it is essential that all dimensions are considered.

- ◆ **Relevance.** The services being provided must be relevant to the group of people being served.
- ◆ **Accessibility.** The services must be timely and equitable.
- ◆ **Safety.** The services must place a premium on patient safety.
- ◆ **Work-life balance.** The services should respect employee wellness, recognizing that a healthy workplace is an important element of the quality of care.
- ◆ **Client-centredness.** The services must prioritize the perspective and experience of clients and their families.
- ◆ **Continuity.** The services must be coordinated and seamless.
- ◆ **Effectiveness.** The services must lead to the best possible results.
- ◆ **Efficiency.** The services must achieve the best results using the fewest resources feasible.

Using these dimensions ensures that the standards are comprehensive and will contribute most effectively to decision-making and the delivery of quality care.

Accreditation Canada recognizes that organizations differ in management style, circumstances, and needs (depending, for example, on the health-care sector and provincial structure), and offers different sets of standards accordingly. (Public and private organizations both participate in its accreditation programs.) Accreditation Canada offers a broad range of customized standards specific to many client organizations. For example, an organization serving cancer patients will apply standards that are appropriate to the needs of cancer patients and their care providers.

Accreditation Canada publishes a quarterly journal (*Qmentum Quarterly*) that features articles by health-care providers, scholars, and other experts in health care. The aim is to create a space for health-care services

professionals to share knowledge and experience. Through these activities, Accreditation Canada is further enabling the transfer of knowledge. It has also helped health-care organizations benefit from one another and from the progress and innovations within the field.

## ENSURING SAFETY THROUGH ACCREDITATION

### RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Accreditation Canada's work focuses on enabling quality and patient safety. It recently conducted multiple surveys to measure the impact of the Qmentum program in different health and social services organizations. Additionally, in 2010, Accreditation Canada conducted research on the relationship between patient safety and quality of work life. The subsequent report concluded that the overall quality of the workplace for health-care staff has an impact on the quality of services they provide. The report lists several recommendations for organizations to improve the safety and quality of their services. One of these recommendations is that health-care and social services organizations may need to consider increasing the number of staff members, such as nurses and doctors, to reduce the workload and improve the work environment for care providers. Accreditation Canada continues to develop projects aimed at gathering data and research to provide insights for developing improved working conditions and greater safety in health services.<sup>5</sup>

### REQUIRED ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

Patient safety is fundamental to the accreditation program offered by Accreditation Canada. Required Organizational Practices (ROPs) in patient safety are essential practices that organizations must have in place to enhance patient and client safety. ROPs are necessary to minimize risks in the provision of health care and in the environment. Accreditation Canada offers patient safety education sessions that are on-site workshops developed in consultation with client organizations and delivered by Accreditation Canada staff. Accreditation Canada also partners with other patient safety organizations, such as the Canadian Patient Safety Institute, to jointly offer programs and share new developments.

4 Accreditation Canada, *Qmentum Program Standards*.

5 Accreditation Canada, *2010 Canadian Health Accreditation Report*.

### PATIENT SAFETY CULTURE TOOL

The Patient Safety Culture Tool is a survey instrument that provides important information about patient safety within health-care organizations. To measure the safety culture, organizations are provided with this tool, which measures the following three components:

- ◆ Staff perceptions of safety.
- ◆ What happens after an event.
- ◆ Individual action.<sup>6</sup>

### MEASURING SUCCESS AND IMPROVED QUALITY AND SAFETY OF CARE

Current programs must be measured to understand the impact and effectiveness of current programs and to advance Accreditation Canada's mandate of facilitating quality in health care. The organization assesses compliance with the Required Organizational Practices as part of the on-site survey visit. Accreditation Canada also assesses the number of sectors that are participating in its accreditation programs in order to develop strategies for implementing standards in new sectors. In addition, Accreditation Canada conducts annual satisfaction surveys to gather feedback from clients, surveyors, and Accreditation Canada's own staff members.

---

#### **Eighty-two per cent of respondents reported that Accreditation Canada's accreditation program contributed to improved safety throughout their organizations' services.**

---

In the most recent survey, conducted in 2010, 70 per cent of respondents reported overall satisfaction with Accreditation Canada's services—an increase of 8 per cent over the previous year. Respondents ranked a number of items in the survey very highly. Eighty-four per cent of respondents considered Accreditation Canada's contribution to improved quality of service to be very satisfactory. Eighty-two per cent of respondents reported that the accreditation program contributed

to improved safety throughout their organizations' services. Respondents also noted that Qmentum assisted in identifying specific areas for improvement.<sup>7</sup>

Several organizations reported specific examples of improved standards of quality as a result of the accreditation program. The Prairie North Health Region (PNHR), for example, worked with Accreditation Canada on the development and implementation of an occupational health and safety plan. This three-year plan has impacted PNHR in several ways. It ensures that PNHR's health and safety committees are functioning in accordance with provincial legislation, policies, and procedures. Moreover, having an entire region participate in the same program improves staff awareness and adherence to a uniform performance standard. The plan also helps PNHR achieve a greater culture of safety, both for patients and employees. Finally, it creates a greater understanding of the relationship between patients and employees, as improving health-care safety must include efforts from patients as well as health-care providers.<sup>8</sup>

### ACCREDITATION CANADA: A LEADER IN HEALTH CARE

In Canada, Accreditation Canada plays a central role in the health-care system. Ninety-nine per cent of Canada's acute-care hospitals participate in the organization's accreditation programs,<sup>9</sup> and the majority of health-care regions across Canada participate. The Qmentum program and standards apply to organizations across the health-care continuum—from emergency medical services (ambulance) to public health, primary care, acute care, rehabilitation, long-term care, hospice-palliative care, and more.

Accreditation Canada has made progress in contributing to the improvement of Canadian health care through accreditation programs, and it has become a model for health-care providers and other accreditation programs around the globe.

---

7 Accreditation Canada, *Client Satisfaction Survey*.

8 Prairie North Health Region 2009, *Accreditation Canada*.

9 InterHealth Canada: Global Healthcare Solutions, "Global Healthcare."

6 Accreditation Canada, *2009 Canadian Health Accreditation Report*.

In addition to being a leader in Canadian health-care services, Accreditation Canada is recognized internationally through Accreditation Canada International, which works with over 30 institutions in nine countries. Qmentum International is the “first international accreditation program that provides a step-by-step approach toward meeting the highest standards.”<sup>10</sup> Accreditation Canada’s international program—in countries such as Kuwait and Italy—exemplifies its commitment to improving health care worldwide, by being a leader in the development of efficient and safe health care across the globe.

---

**In addition to being a leader in Canadian health-care services, Accreditation Canada is recognized internationally through Accreditation Canada International.**

---

Overall, accreditation programs are an important and essential part of the Canadian health-care system. In 2008, Accreditation Canada published a report on the value and impact of accreditation in the health-care system. An updated version of the report was subsequently published in July 2011.<sup>11</sup> Accreditation Canada’s report highlights the areas in which accreditation programs are fundamental to the improvement of quality care in the Canadian health-care system. Accreditation programs facilitate increased transparency and accountability on the part of health-care providers. This is an important factor, especially within a government-funded health-care system. The other beneficial contribution that Accreditation Canada brings to the health-care system is a resource for evaluation and, subsequently, improved progress in quality and safety. Through accreditation, Accreditation Canada measures and assesses the current state of health care, and then makes recommendations for improvements. Essentially, Accreditation Canada is an important element in this complex health-care system in working toward risk mitigation and improving the quality of health care in Canada.

---

10 Accreditation Canada International, *History*.

11 Nicklin, *The Value and Impact*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Accreditation Canada. *2010 Canadian Health Accreditation Report: Through the Lens of Qmentum—Exploring the Connection Between Patient Safety and Quality of Worklife*. Ottawa: Accreditation Canada, 2010.

—. *2009 Canadian Health Accreditation Report: A Focus on Patient Safety*. Ottawa: Accreditation Canada, 2009.

—. *Client Satisfaction Survey*. Ottawa: Accreditation Canada, 2011.

—. *Qmentum Program Standards: Long Term Care Services*. Ottawa: Accreditation Canada, 2010.

—. *Driving Quality Health Services*. [www.accreditation.ca/en/default.aspx](http://www.accreditation.ca/en/default.aspx) (accessed June 2011).

Accreditation Canada International. *History*. 2011. [www.internationalaccreditation.ca/aboutus/history.aspx](http://www.internationalaccreditation.ca/aboutus/history.aspx) (accessed August 16, 2011).

Dorschner, Danielle (Director and Executive Lead, Quebec, Accreditation Canada), interview by Zeina Sleiman. (July 25, 2011).

InterHealth Canada: Global Healthcare Solutions. “Global Healthcare—Global Challenges.” 2009.

ISQua. *ISQua: Improving Health Care Worldwide*. 2011. [www.isqua.org/about-isqua/about-isqua.htm](http://www.isqua.org/about-isqua/about-isqua.htm) (accessed August 2011).

Nicklin, Wendy. *The Value and Impact of Health Care Accreditation: A Literature Review*. Accreditation Canada, 2011.

Prairie North Health Region. *Accreditation Canada: Leading Practice*. 2009. [www.accreditation.ca/en/LeadingPractice.aspx?id=2242](http://www.accreditation.ca/en/LeadingPractice.aspx?id=2242) (accessed August 2011).

## Acknowledgements

This profile was prepared by Zeina Sleiman. It was made possible through the financial support of The Conference Board of Canada's Centre for Health System Design and Management

The author would like to thank Wendy Nicklin and Danielle Dorschner of Accreditation Canada for sharing their insights and perspectives.

The author is also grateful to the internal and external reviewers for thoughtful feedback—including Tamara Brown, Feng Liu, and Chris Power.

## ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR HEALTH SYSTEM DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

The Centre for Health System Design and Management is an executive network that brings together senior decision-makers from across Canada and focuses on seeking evidence of what works in health care, and how to implement it. The Centre examines the types of organizational management and systems that can best address the specific challenges confronting Canadian health-care systems. It conducts in-depth research on how current system design and management can be improved, and holds biannual meetings to allow members to engage in focused discussions that guide the research agenda and effect knowledge transfer between members and leading experts in the field.

For more information about CHSDM, please visit: [www.conferenceboard.ca/networks/chsdm/default.aspx](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/networks/chsdm/default.aspx).

## Accreditation Canada: Leading the Way Toward Improving Quality in Health Care

by *Zeina Sleiman*

### About The Conference Board of Canada

#### We are:

- The foremost independent, not-for-profit, applied research organization in Canada.
- Objective and non-partisan. We do not lobby for specific interests.
- Funded exclusively through the fees we charge for services to the private and public sectors.
- Experts in running conferences but also at conducting, publishing, and disseminating research; helping people network; developing individual leadership skills; and building organizational capacity.
- Specialists in economic trends, as well as organizational performance and public policy issues.
- Not a government department or agency, although we are often hired to provide services for all levels of government.
- Independent from, but affiliated with, The Conference Board, Inc. of New York, which serves nearly 2,000 companies in 60 nations and has offices in Brussels and Hong Kong.

## The Conference Board of Canada Insights You Can Count On



255 Smyth Road, Ottawa ON K1H 8M7 Canada

Tel. 613-526-3280 • Fax 613-526-4857 • Inquiries 1-866-711-2262

The Conference Board, Inc. 845 Third Avenue, New York NY 10022-6679 USA Tel. 212-759-0900 • Fax 212-980-7014 • [www.conference-board.org](http://www.conference-board.org)

The Conference Board Europe Chaussée de La Hulpe 130, Box 11, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium Tel. +32 2 675 54 05 • Fax +32 2 675 03 95

The Conference Board Asia-Pacific 2802 Admiralty Centre, Tower 1, 18 Harcourt Road, Admiralty Hong Kong SAR Tel. +852 2511 1630 • Fax +852 2869 1403

©2011 The Conference Board of Canada\*  
Published in Canada • All rights reserved  
Agreement No. 40063028  
\*Incorporated as AERIC Inc.

For more information about this case study,  
please contact us at the numbers listed above.

Case studies summarize the key findings  
of Conference Board research and outline the  
implications for member organizations.

Forecasts and research often involve numerous  
assumptions and data sources, and are subject  
to inherent risks and uncertainties. This  
information is not intended as specific  
investment, accounting, legal, or tax advice.

