



Réseau des services
de santé en français
de l'Est de l'Ontario

Better Data for Better Planning

**The Challenge of Evidence-Based Data for
Sound Planning of French-Language
Health Services in Ontario**

Spring 2013

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Santé



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Background

The Ontario health-care system relies on data to make informed decisions on issues that affect the health of the population.

As such, health services planning takes into account the state of health of Ontarians as well as their use of health-care services.

At present however, health information on one of the largest communities in the province is currently virtually nonexistent. In fact, little or none of the information currently used for the planning of the healthcare system documents the state of health or the services offered to Ontario Francophones.¹

Questions such as the following remain unanswered:

- How many Francophones have a family physician? A physician who speaks French?
- Are some illnesses more prevalent among Francophones?
- Do Francophones wait longer for: diagnostic imaging, surgery, long-term care, emergency care? What is the length of their stay?
- Are Francophones who are hospitalized less likely to have previously received CCAC services?
- Is the rate of hospital re-admission higher among Francophones?

The lack of evidence-based data on Francophones is problematic because it significantly limits health-care planners' ability to analyze the health needs of Francophone individuals and communities, and hinders sound planning of health services that meet the needs of this population.

¹ French Language Health Services Network of Eastern Ontario (the *Réseau*) (2012); *Consortium national de formation en santé* and *Société Santé en français* (2010); Gaboury (2009)



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Issues

- Availability and quality of information on the health of Ontario Francophones
- Planning of health services that relies on evidence-based data which is accessible to the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), to French-Language Health Planning Entities and to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, for the fulfilment of their respective responsibilities and mandates
- Better understanding of the health-care needs of the Francophone community and increased capacity to efficiently and demonstrably meet those needs

Challenges

There are three systemic challenges to obtaining health data on Francophones:

1. Consistent and systematic linguistic identification of Francophones

- Data collection at all entry points to the health-care system (administrative databases, contact points for obtaining health services) and in population surveys (on needs, on health)
- Reliable method of identifying Francophone clients or respondents
- Introduction of a neutral and quality linguistic variable

2. Data collection

- Alignment of collection and archiving methods in order to compile information on Francophones
- Integration of linguistic data into the variables captured during information collection for databases
- Transferability of data or association of linguistic data to administrative databases
- Adaptation of information technology infrastructure used by service providers

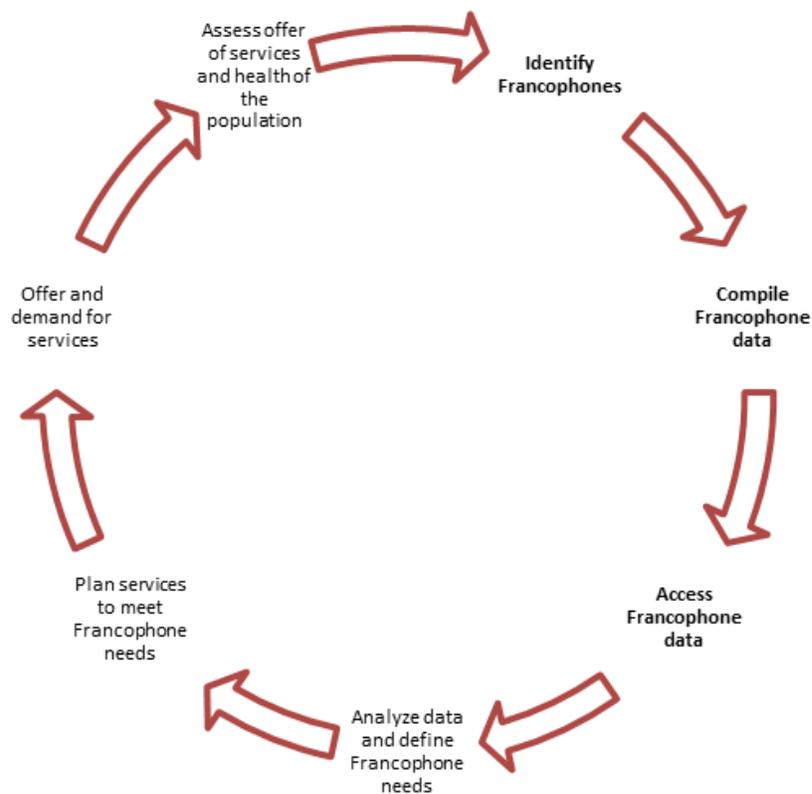


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3. Access to information

- Access portals that include linguistic data to enable manipulation of data and generation of statistical reports
(E.g.: Ministry, *Intellihealth*, CIHI)

Figure: Data use cycle





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Components of proposed solutions

- Collaborative approach
- Recommendation on the practical application of the Inclusive Definition of Francophone (IDF) in the health-care context for the LHINs and service providers (*Réseau*, 2012)
- Regional pilot project: process for collecting linguistic identity data of Francophone individuals by Champlain and South-East hospitals and CCACs (*Réseau*, 2012), in collaboration with the Champlain LHIN
- Awareness of provincial stakeholders on the importance of evidence-based data on Francophones to research and planning initiatives
- Dialogue among key provincial stakeholders in order to coordinate efforts to establish a process to capture the linguistic identity of Francophone individuals: a process to be applied systematically and consistently in a neutral context — that is, in a non-emergency setting that is not tied to any offer of services, and under conditions where individuals need not be concerned about the potential impact of declaring their linguistic identity.



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Our objective

The *Réseau des services de santé en français de l'Est de l'Ontario* / French Language Health Services Network of Eastern Ontario is a Francophone organization that engages the health-care community and the Francophone community to improve the offer and the quality of French-language health services in Eastern and South-Eastern Ontario.

As Province-appointed French-Language Health Planning Entity, we advise the Champlain and South East LHINs on all health matters that affect the region's Francophone community.

The *Réseau* and the LHINs have agreed that obtaining evidence-based Francophone data is a priority. This priority is set out in the outcomes of the *Réseau* Strategic Plan 2011-2016; the *Réseau*-LHINs Joint Action Plan for 2013-2014; the 2013-2016 Integrated Health Service Plans of the two LHINs, and the resulting business plans.

In partnership with its LHINs and with the province's other French-Language Health Planning Entities, the *Réseau* hopes to engage key stakeholders so that they can all contribute to a viable and sustainable solution for evidence-based data in the health-care system and for the Francophone community.



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