Understanding and Advancing Canadian Policies for Equitable Access to Assistive Technology

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Results and Discussion

AT access system in Canada
- 14 jurisdictions (federal, 13 provincial/territorial): 86 government, 134 charitable organization AT funding and service programs
- Characteristics of AT system: Lacks national leadership and minimum standards; has variable legislation, policies, and programs across jurisdictions; lacks system integration between main providers; offers poor access to funding
- Reports of user experiences of inequitable AT access; disparities for certain groups, system navigation issues, unmet AT needs; universal lack of awareness and knowledge regarding AT and how to access AT
- Need to transform approaches to meet population needs and values for community-based solutions
- Need for rights-based, person-centred, and co-creation approaches for policy development and implementation

Developing a policy vision
- Stakeholder dialogue identified need for policy vision with clear set of short- and long-term priorities, principles to underpin policy actions can guide AT system transformation
- Significant leadership and collaboration needed to drive policy action
- Vision document can facilitate system champions to identify action plans to advance priorities in their jurisdictions

Opportunities
- CRPD obligation to make AT available/affordable and to support AT use
- Linking universal AT access with Accessible Canada Act, National Pharmacare

In Progress
- Acting on recommendations to create policy vision which includes short- and long-term priorities and guiding principles to underpin action
- Co-creating national vision document and action plans to provide guidance to drive policy action and system transformation

Canadian Context
- Federated nation with universal health coverage
- Population of aged 65+ is growing: 17.2% (2018) → 20% (2024)
- Population aged 15+ living with disability: 22.3% (2017)
- Canadians with disability aged 15+ with unmet disability support need (e.g., aids, devices, medications): 26% (2017)
- Despite being ratifying state, no comprehensive legislation or policy framework to facilitate implementation of UN CRPD
- No universal access to AT

Objective
- To present insights from a Canadian initiative to support equitable access to assistive technology (AT), highlighting
  - Comprehensive study findings of AT access issues;
  - Need to transform approaches to meet needs of aging population and values for community-based solutions;
  - Need to adopt a rights-based, person-centred, and co-creation approach to advance access
  - Opportunities for enhancing access using a social model of disability and better alignment with CRPD

Overview of Approach
- Practices for policy innovation centered on enhancing collaboration and knowledge mobilization across disciplines, sectors, organizations, and jurisdictions
- Integrated knowledge mobilization: meaningful engagement of citizens, policymakers, stakeholders, and researchers in guiding all phases of initiative

Research Initiative

AT policy symposium
- National citizen survey
- Policymaker, stakeholder, and researcher interviews
- Web-based database for AT programs
- Jurisdictional scan

Taking action
- Citizen panels
- Stakeholder dialogue
- Scoping review
- Policymaker, stakeholder, and researcher interviews

Partnerships

Understanding

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