

Choosing Wisely Canada

# Annual Report



Highlights  
from

2022  
2023

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## **2022-2023**

With funding support from federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as the Canadian Medical Association, Choosing Wisely Canada has been able to advance efforts on reducing unnecessary tests and treatments with the goal of driving meaningful change in Canada's health care system.

This report summarizes our activities and impact for fiscal year 2022-23.

2022-2023

# Highlights

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted health care delivery in Canada. Global shortages and overburdened health systems further illustrate the finite and precious nature of health care resources in Canada.

In 2022-2023, Choosing Wisely Canada's activities placed a strong emphasis on the role of reducing overuse in alleviating pressures on Canadian health systems. This included concerted efforts to mobilize hospital participation in quality improvement programs as well as raising awareness on issues affecting health system sustainability.

## This report shares 2022-23 highlights on:

<b>Regional Campaigns</b>	Tackling overuse locally	<b>4</b>
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# Regional Hubs

Choosing Wisely Canada continued to fund hubs in provinces and territories across the country. Hub activities helped to accelerate implementation of locally-led Choosing Wisely initiatives tackling a variety of low-value tests and treatments.

In addition, regional hubs supported the adoption of Choosing Wisely Canada's national quality improvement programs like Using Blood Wisely and Using Labs Wisely.



🌐 [www.cumming.ucalgary.ca/cme/resources/choosing-wisely](http://www.cumming.ucalgary.ca/cme/resources/choosing-wisely)



🌐 [www.choosingwiselymanitoba.ca](http://www.choosingwiselymanitoba.ca)



🌐 [www.choosingwiselynb.ca](http://www.choosingwiselynb.ca)



🌐 [www.qualityofcarenl.ca](http://www.qualityofcarenl.ca)



🌐 [www.doctorsns.com/advocate/choosing-wisely-ns](http://www.doctorsns.com/advocate/choosing-wisely-ns)



🌐 [www.nthssa.ca/en/choosing-wisely](http://www.nthssa.ca/en/choosing-wisely)



🌐 [www.hqontario.ca/Quality-Improvement/Quality-Improvement-in-Action/Choosing-Wisely-Canada](http://www.hqontario.ca/Quality-Improvement/Quality-Improvement-in-Action/Choosing-Wisely-Canada)



🌐 [www.cqmf.qc.ca/soutien-a-la-pratique/choisir-avec-soin-quebec/](http://www.cqmf.qc.ca/soutien-a-la-pratique/choisir-avec-soin-quebec/)



🌐 [www.saskhealthauthority.ca/your-health/conditions-diseases-services/choosing-wisely-saskatchewan](http://www.saskhealthauthority.ca/your-health/conditions-diseases-services/choosing-wisely-saskatchewan)



🌐 [www.yukondoctors.ca/choosing-wisely](http://www.yukondoctors.ca/choosing-wisely)

# Clinician Engagement



Collaboration with clinician societies (representing physicians, nursing, pharmacists, and other health professions) remains foundational to Choosing Wisely Canada. To date, Choosing Wisely Canada has partnered with **90** specialties to develop over **450** recommendations that are reviewed on an annual basis.

## 2022-23 Highlights

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### NEW RECOMMENDATION LISTS

- **8** recommendations in [Addiction Medicine](#)
- **5** recommendations in [Pediatric Emergency Medicine](#)
- **8** recommendations in [Pediatric Sports and Exercise Medicine](#)
- **5** recommendations in [Pediatric Orthopaedics](#)

### ADDITIONS TO EXISTING LISTS:

- **3** recommendations in [Geriatrics \(#6,7,8\)](#)
  - **2** recommendations in [Rheumatology \(#8,9\)](#)
  - **1** recommendation in [Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation \(#5\)](#)
  - **6** recommendations in [Orthopaedics \(#11-16\)](#)
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### NATIONAL MEETING

Choosing Wisely Canada's annual National Meeting was held virtually on May 25 and 26 with close to **1000** participants registered. Timely topics on redesigning health care systems, tackling the climate crisis, and preventing burnout were included as keynote addresses.

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### WEBINARS

**14 virtual offerings** were held on pressing Canadian health system issues through our Choosing Wisely Talks and De/Implement webinar series. Topics included appropriate prescribing, reducing overuse of tests and treatments, and addressing backlogs. Over **1200 participants** joined our webinars in 2022-23.

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### PUBLICATIONS

Choosing Wisely Canada's core team published **26** articles in peer-reviewed journals, continuing our contribution to the growing body of evidence on overuse in health care.

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# Education & Training

From undergraduate medical training to practising clinicians, Choosing Wisely Canada continued efforts to foster a community of leaders interested in advancing the knowledge and practices of reducing unnecessary testing and treatments in Canada.

## Students & Trainees Advocating for Resource Stewardship (STARS)



**STARS** is a grassroots medical education campaign that supports student-led efforts to advance resource stewardship into undergraduate medical curriculums.

## 2022-23 Highlights

STARS is supporting its **8<sup>th</sup> cohort** of medical student leaders representing all **17** medical schools in Canada. The program continues efforts to advance resource stewardship awareness and education in pre-clinical training.

The program is currently focused on expanding its scope to offer mentorship, research, and networking opportunities to students.

## Choosing Wisely Canada Fellows

Pairing quality improvement & implementation science to find solutions in clinical practice.

In 2022, Choosing Wisely Canada, in collaboration with the Centre for Quality Improvement and Patient Safety (CQuIPS), launched a fellowship program designed for clinician leaders with an academic interest in resource stewardship.

The one-year program combines a core curriculum on quality improvement in reducing overuse and de-implementation research methodologies. Four fellows were selected to receive in-depth training and mentorship on scholarly projects aligned with their academic interest areas.

# National QI Programs

Integral to the success and momentum of Choosing Wisely Canada is the focus on implementation efforts that encourage clinicians to adopt recommendations and make them part of routine practice. In 2022-23, Choosing Wisely Canada mobilized hospitals to participate in national quality improvement programs with high participation rates, demonstrating the value of a unified, scaled approach to implementation.

## 2022-23 Highlights

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### CHOOSING WISELY CANADA'S HOSPITAL DESIGNATION PROGRAM

Choosing Wisely Canada refined its Hospital Designation Program to place greater emphasis on long-term sustainment of implementation efforts and defined two new designation streams - Quality Improvement and Leadership Status. In January 2023, two Ontario hospital systems were first in Canada to achieve the Leadership Status designation, the highest level of recognition in the program.

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### INTRODUCING USING LABS WISELY

In May 2022, Choosing Wisely Canada invited hospitals to join Using Labs Wisely, a national consortium that aims to make a measurable impact on reducing low-value lab testing. Participating hospitals identify areas where they'd like to make improvements, share data, and learn with others in the consortium. To date, over **100 hospitals** across Canada have joined. As the program expands, hospitals will contribute to the creation of a national reporting system for appropriate lab utilization in Canada.

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### USING BLOOD WISELY: TWO YEARS LATER

In September 2020, Choosing Wisely Canada and Canadian Blood Services challenged hospitals to audit their red blood cell transfusions against national appropriateness benchmarks. Choosing Wisely Canada regional hubs have met major milestones - with every hospital that performs transfusions in Nova Scotia and Manitoba achieving Using Blood Wisely Hospital designation status.



### Using Blood Wisely Milestones

**242**

Participating hospitals  
across Canada

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Representing

**74%**

of all blood transfused  
in Canada

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**123**

designated Using Blood  
Wisely Hospitals

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# Measuring Overuse


## Is Canada Making Progress?

In 2022, the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) and Choosing Wisely Canada released a new report ***Overuse of Tests and Treatments in Canada***. The report examined the overuse of 12 selected tests and treatments by looking at trends and variation in use across the country.

While some areas show reductions, variation among provinces and territories shows there's still room for improvement. Featured in each section of the report are examples of successful initiatives that are tackling this long-standing problem in Canadian health systems. Below are key findings from the report.





Over a five-year period, the overuse of **8** out of the **12** tests and treatments decreased by **10% or more**.



Across Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia



**24% to 31%**

of patients with lower-back pain without red flags (certain worrisome symptoms) received diagnostic imaging.





**42%**


of Canadians with a cervix age 18 to 24 reported receiving a Pap test in the previous 3 years.




The total volume of antibiotics, measured by the World Health Organization's standardized defined daily dose, was **13 per 1,000 population per day** (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia).





**1 in 12 older adults** used benzodiazepines and other sedative-hypnotics regularly (all provinces except Quebec).








**1 in 5 long-term care residents** were taking antipsychotics without a diagnosis of psychosis (Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Yukon).


**Daily physical restraints in long-term care occurred in fewer than 1 in 20 residents** (Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Yukon).



**3 in 10 children who visited the emergency department** for asthma or bronchiolitis received a chest X-ray (Ontario, Alberta and Yukon).




The rate of diagnostic imaging for adults who visited emergency departments for **minor head trauma without red flags was 1 in 3 patients** (Ontario, Alberta and Yukon).




The rate of knee arthroscopies in **adults age 60 and older was 99 per 100,000** across Canada, except Quebec, even though most are inappropriate regardless of the diagnosis.



**The Caesarean section rate among low-risk deliveries was 1 in 6** (Canada, except Quebec).



**The red blood cell transfusion rate in hospitalized patients was 6.3%** (New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan).




**1 in 5 patients who had low-risk surgery had a preoperative test** (Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia).

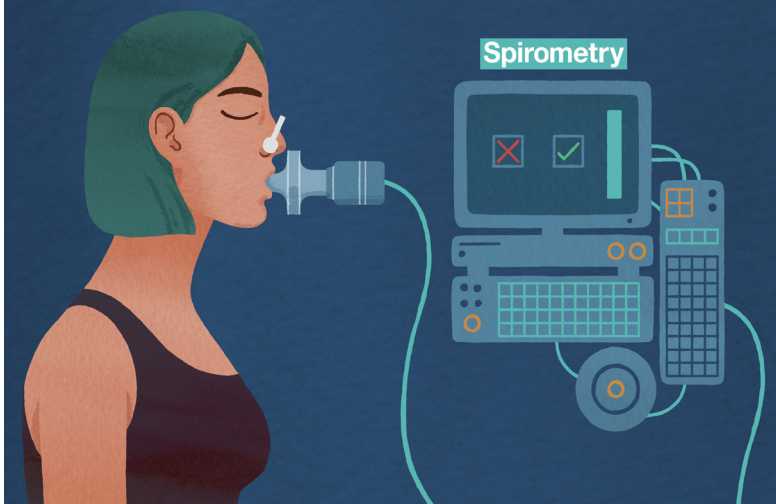
Key findings from *Overuse of Tests and Treatments in Canada* report with CIHI

# Primary Care

Choosing Wisely Canada continued to foster awareness and uptake of Choosing Wisely Canada recommendations in primary care. This includes a focus on developing tools and resources to help alleviate administrative burden and stimulate conversations between clinicians and patients.

## Let's clear the air.

Encouraging thoughtful conversations between clinicians and patients who have received a diagnosis of asthma or COPD.



## New Campaign

Studies show that more than 30% diagnosed with asthma or COPD do not actually have the condition when formally tested—meaning many Canadians are taking inhalers when not needed.

In 2022, Choosing Wisely Canada co-led the campaign **Let's Clear the Air** focused on the importance of breathing tests (spirometry) for individuals with suspected asthma and COPD.

### Resources Developed:


- Animated educational video
- Patient information on COPD and asthma
- Clinician education on spirometry testing
- Community webinars and online education

## 2022-23 Highlights

- Ongoing work with College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) to embed Choosing Wisely Canada in family medicine including a series in the Canadian Family Physician Journal.
- Choosing Wisely Canada embedded an overuse alert in Patient Oriented Evidence that Matters (POEMs) through the Canadian Medical Association, providing timely, practice-changing clinical updates.
- Choosing Wisely Canada created a serious illness conversation module for Practising Wisely, a continuing professional development program of the Ontario College of Family Physicians. This module assists physicians in recognizing the importance of having serious illness conversations and provides evidence-based techniques and approaches to facilitate practice change.

# Patient & Public Engagement

Choosing Wisely Canada continues efforts to engage, educate, empower, and partner with patients and the Canadian public.


 **Healthing**

Home / Healthy Living / Brain Health

**Opinion: It's time to address the misconceptions about concussion care**

*Science has shown that concussions don't always require imaging tests and kids don't need to stay in a dark room.*

by **Laura Purcell and Erika Persson**

Apr 20 2022 ⌚ 3 minute read 

 **TORONTO STAR**

**Reducing unnecessary testing may improve access to care**

By Sarah Ward Contributors: Jesse Wolfstadt, Corwyn Rowsell  
Thu., Aug. 25, 2022 ⌚ 2 min. read



 **THE SPEC**

**Canada must reduce the number of needless medical tests and treatments**

By David O'Toole  
Wendy Levinson  
Mon., Dec. 26, 2022 ⌚ 3 min. read



 **Hospital News**  
CANADA'S HEALTH CARE NEWS AND BEST PRACTICES

**Conversations are critical when it comes to breast cancer screening**



## 2022-23 Highlights

- The campaign published **four opinion editorials** in Canadian newspapers on issues affecting health system sustainability, reducing imaging for concussions, and breast cancer screening conversations between clinicians and patients.
- Choosing Wisely Canada websites ([www.choosingwiselycanada.org](http://www.choosingwiselycanada.org) and [www.choisiravecsoin.org](http://www.choisiravecsoin.org)) continued to experience high traffic volumes on a monthly basis. In 2022-23, we had **1.2 million pageviews**, most of which relate to our patient-oriented content.
- Choosing Wisely Canada has developed **48 patient pamphlets** that offer plain language information and encourage conversations about the harms of unnecessary tests and treatments.

2024+

# Future Directions

Next year will mark a decade since the official launch of Choosing Wisely Canada. While we recognize and celebrate our significant achievements to date, we also acknowledge the changing landscape of Canada's health care system. This calls for us to look forward and embark on a new set of strategic directions for the next ten years.

Central to our future endeavours is the recognition that overuse is a product of both individual choices and system-level structures and processes that nudge people toward doing more than what is necessary. To make a lasting and meaningful impact on reducing overuse, we need the contributions of multiple stakeholders, from clinicians and patients to administrators, policymakers, and members of the public.

**Choosing Wisely Canada will continue to engage the broader clinician community in eliminating the overuse of tests, treatments and medications. In addition, over the next ten years, it will:**

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- Deepen efforts to make resource stewardship part of clinician culture—taught from the very beginning of one's training and reinforced over a career through ongoing professional development.
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- Expand large-scale implementation strategies that have been successfully implemented in hospitals to primary care and long-term care settings, tailored to their unique practice environments.
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- Evolve and strengthen Choosing Wisely Canada regional hubs to drive change at the provincial and territorial levels through policy, implementation, and awareness efforts.
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- Advocate for systemic and policy changes to make it easier for frontline clinicians to do the right things and to decrease clinician burnout.
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- Work with patients, the health care system, and researchers to better understand and limit the disproportionate impact of overuse on diverse populations.
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[www.choosingwiselycanada.org](http://www.choosingwiselycanada.org)

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