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Preface: A message from the ECHO Ontario Superhub

The ECHO Ontario Superhub is a collaboration between the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the University Health Network (UHN). Working with the ECHO Institute in New Mexico and the Ontario Ministry of Health, the Superhub promotes high-quality implementation of the ECHO model, and supports alignment and integration across the ECHO community and within Ontario’s health care system.

ECHO programs throughout Ontario connect diverse primary care providers in every corner of the province, and are building a learning community that improves knowledge, confidence, practice and outcomes. The ECHO model helps meet important provincial priorities, including using innovation to efficiently integrate and align primary and specialty care, and to build provincial capacity to support equitable optimal care for patients in Ontario.

In 2018/19, there were 25 ECHO programs in Ontario, in the areas of autism, bariatric care, chronic pain, epilepsy, geriatric care, mental health, opioid use and pediatric care. These programs were delivered through nine organizations: Baycrest, CAMH, CHEO, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, The Hospital for Sick Children, Ontario Bariatric Network, Ontario Epilepsy Network, St. Joseph’s Care Group and UHN. This year, ECHO programs in Ontario collectively reached 1,891 diverse health care providers at 651 organizations (increases from 2017/18 of 118 per cent and 103 per cent respectively), showing significant adoption and integration of the ECHO model in the province. Additionally, this year the ECHO Ontario Superhub had the pleasure of delivering three separate trainings to 20 different ECHO teams from Ontario, and internationally.

We thank our funder, the Ministry of Health, for its support and dedication to continuous improvements within our health care system, and its commitment to equity of care for patients. The Ministry’s funding of the ECHO project means that more health care providers will be empowered to provide the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Dr. Allison Crawford, MD, PhD
Co-Chair | ECHO Ontario Superhub

Dr. John Flannery, MD
Co-Chair | ECHO Ontario Superhub

Eva Serhal, MBA
Director | ECHO Ontario Superhub

Rhonda Mostyn, DC
Member | ECHO Ontario Superhub
With the ECHO movement spreading quickly, Superhub sites have been developed with the support of the ECHO Institute to train and support the implementation of new ECHO projects, and connect existing ECHO projects. The ECHO Ontario Superhub, a collaboration between CAMH and UHN, serves new ECHO projects in Ontario and across Canada. In 2018/19, the ECHO Ontario Superhub supported the launch of 9 ECHOs within Ontario, 3 ECHOs outside the province, and 2 ECHOs outside Canada.

Along with training, the Superhub:

- leads provincial ECHO initiatives:
  - monthly ECHO Ontario collaborative meetings
  - an annual ECHO Ontario conference
  - strategic planning support for the growth of the ECHO model in Ontario

- provides all existing, new and potential ECHO programs in Ontario with ongoing mentorship

- leads the development and implementation of quality assurance and quality improvement frameworks for ECHO programs in Ontario

- acts as an agent of the ECHO Institute to expand the ECHO model in Ontario
Project ECHO in Ontario

SECTION 1
What is Project ECHO?

**Project ECHO** (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) is an innovative “hub and spoke” education model that aims to help health care providers build capacity in the treatment and management of complex health conditions. The model leverages videoconferencing technology to connect specialists with primary care providers, increasing their knowledge and skills and enabling them to manage complex challenges in their communities.

Currently there are over 675 ECHO projects being delivered in 37 countries, and the model has recently been recognized by the American Medical Association as an innovative tool to build capacity within the health care system and improve patients’ health outcomes. This year the **ECHO (Expanding Capacity for Health Outcomes) 2019 Act** was introduced in the U.S. Senate, building on the **ECHO Act** of 2016. The Act will establish a grant program to evaluate, develop and expand the use of technology-enabled collaborative learning and capacity building models.

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**People need access to specialty care for their complex health conditions.**

**There aren’t enough specialists to treat everyone who needs care, especially in rural and underserved communities.**

**ECHO trains primary care clinicians to provide specialty care services. This means more people can get the care they need.**

**Patients get the right care when they need it, close to home. This improves outcomes and reduces costs.**

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**Project ECHO**

- empowers health care providers to use best practices
- reduces the need for specialist visits
- improves the quality of specialty care in Ontario’s primary and community care settings
ECHO Ontario
Dedicated to building a sustainable health care system

**Mission**
To build capacity through virtual communities of practice for health care providers in Ontario that will increase access to specialized health care, improve patient outcomes and create health equity.

**Vision**
A virtual community advancing the best health care in Ontario.
How we are building a high-quality, connected health care system

**ENGAGE**

ECHO Ontario *engages* system leaders, patients and health care providers to build a community of practice. Through this community we share knowledge to improve the health care of Ontarians.

**INTEGRATE**

ECHO Ontario co-ordinates the *integration* of the ECHO model into the Ontario health care system to create equitable health care access and efficiencies.

**IMPACT**

ECHO *impacts* the lives of patients, the practice of providers and the quality of the health system. ECHO Ontario achieves improved, measurable health care and patient outcomes through research, quality improvement and education.
ECHO was started in New Mexico by Dr. Sanjeev Arora.

Ontario’s first ECHO program was launched at UHN and Queen’s University, focusing on chronic pain and opioid stewardship. CAMH received funding shortly thereafter to implement a Mental Health ECHO in partnership with the University of Toronto.

25 ECHO programs across 9 organizations are now operating in Ontario, and reached 1,891 health care providers in 2018/19.

8 ECHO programs across 4 organizations were funded and launched in Ontario. 2 of the organizations (UHN and CAMH) collaborated in launching the ECHO Ontario Superhub to support new and existing ECHOs in Ontario.
ECHO programs in Ontario

**Organization:** Baycrest (in collaboration with North East Specialized Geriatric Centre)

**ECHO Programs:**
- Care of the Elderly
- Care of the Elderly—Long-Term Care

ECHO Care of the Elderly focuses on improving the quality of care of older adults in Ontario, by increasing the knowledge and skills of primary care providers in meeting this population’s health care needs.

**Organization:** Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

**ECHO Programs:**
- Mental Health
- First Nations, Inuit and Métis Wellness
- Addiction Medicine and Psychosocial Interventions (in collaboration with St. Michael’s Hospital)
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (in collaboration with Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre)
- Trans and Gender Diverse Healthcare
- Psychotherapy
- Complex Patient Management

ECHO Ontario Mental Health at CAMH and the University of Toronto (ECHO ONMH) is an education and clinical capacity–building model that aims to support evidence-based management and treatment of mental illness and addictions in Ontario, reducing disparities in access to specialty care and variation in quality of care throughout the province.

**Organization:** CHEO

**ECHO Program:** Child and Youth Mental Health

ECHO Ontario Child and Youth Mental Health is a collaborative learning program through which primary care providers (PCPs) and mental health clinicians work together to care more effectively for children and adolescents with mental health problems. The program aims to change the diagnostic, prescribing, treatment and referral practices of PCPs, by providing them with evidence-based best practice guidelines and treatment recommendations, and linking them to community mental health agencies and services in their own regions.
ECHO programs in Ontario

Organization: Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital  
ECHO Program: Autism  
ECHO Ontario Autism aims to build province-wide community capacity and the ability to screen, diagnose and manage children and youth with autism spectrum disorder in Ontario. By doing so, the program hopes to reduce wait times for specialized care by ensuring that access to specialized care is reserved for the most complex cases.

Organization: Ontario Bariatric Network (OBN) (Guelph General Hospital, Humber River Hospital, Kingston Health Sciences Centre, St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton, The Ottawa Hospital, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, Toronto Western Hospital)  
ECHO Program: Ontario Bariatric Network  
ECHO OBN aims to build capacity in primary care providers to provide evidence-based specialty care, by linking them with an interdisciplinary team of specialists from seven Bariatric Centres of Excellence across Ontario to share best practices in post-bariatric care and obesity management.

Organization: Ontario Epilepsy Network (Hamilton Health Sciences and McMaster Children’s Hospital, Kingston Health Sciences Centre and the Children’s Hospital, The Ottawa Hospital, CHEO, The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto Western Hospital)  
ECHO Program: Epilepsy Across the Lifespan  
ECHO Epilepsy Across the Lifespan connects providers in Ontario with interdisciplinary teams that include an epileptologist, a nurse practitioner, a pharmacist, a social worker and a community agency representative to share evidence-informed knowledge that will help in treating and managing patients with epilepsy.
ECHO programs in Ontario

**Organization: St. Joseph's Care Group (in collaboration with The Ottawa Hospital)**

**ECHO Program:** Chronic Pain and Opioid Stewardship (North)

ECHO Chronic Pain and Opioid Stewardship North builds capacity, knowledge, and confidence in primary care in rural and remote communities in Northern Ontario. The ECHO focuses on complex patient management in chronic pain and opioid stewardship.

**Organization: The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids)**

**ECHO Programs:**
- Paediatric Pain
- Paediatric Obesity Management
- Paediatric Complex Care
- Paediatric Palliative Care (in collaboration with CHEO)

Paediatric Project ECHO delivers four programs that build a community of practice to provide educational support and expertise to interdisciplinary health care professionals. The goal of these programs is to improve providers’ knowledge and confidence and to translate learning into practice.

**Organization: University Health Network (UHN)**

**ECHO Programs:**
- Chronic Pain and Opioid Stewardship
- Liver
- Rheumatology

ECHO Ontario at UHN delivers these three programs, which build primary care providers’ capacity to diagnose, treat and manage patients.

To learn more about these ECHOs, visit [www.echoontario.ca](http://www.echoontario.ca)
2018/19 at a glance

SECTION 2
Our collective reach this year

651
Health care organizations
↑ 331 providers
from FY 2017–18

1,891
Health care provider participants
↑ 1,027 providers
from FY 2017–18

14
Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs)
Reached all provincial regions

Note: there may be some duplication across ECHO organizations, as we were only able to account for duplicates within organizations, not across organizations. Therefore, individuals that participated in multiple ECHO organizations might be represented twice in this number.
Participants by profession

The interdisciplinary nature of participants is a key success factor for ECHO programs across Ontario. A wide range of disciplines helps integrate different perspectives to enhance the overall quality of care.
Participants by practice type

2018/19 DISTRIBUTION

- Other (e.g., hospital, Health Canada, university): 54%
- Community Health Centre: 16%
- Family Health Team: 15%
- Private practice: 5%
- Family Health Group / Organization: 4%
- Solo practitioner: 3%
- Nurse Practitioner–Led Clinic: 2%
Participants by practice LHIN

### 2018/19 DISTRIBUTION

- **17%** Toronto Central
- **12%** North West
- **11%** North East
- **10%** Champlain
- **10%** Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant
- **7%** South West
- **6%** Central East
- **5%** Mississauga Halton
- **4%** Central
- **4%** Central West
- **4%** North Simcoe Muskoka
- **4%** Waterloo Wellington
- **3%** Erie St. Clair
- **3%** South East
Working together to support a high-performing health care system in Ontario

SECTION 3
Enabling integration within the health care system: Linking hospitals, communities, organizations and providers

The problems

- Transition of care between health care services in Ontario is fragmented, complex and difficult to navigate.
- Patients are often required to manage various complex treatment plans from diverse providers.

Our impact

- ECHO links providers from various practice settings (e.g., primary and tertiary) to provide diverse recommendations for care.
- Many ECHO programs link providers across the continuum of physical and mental health care, and integrate patient care navigators to help support integrated and relevant recommendations that support optimal patient care.

In 2018/19, ECHO Ontario reached 1,891 providers from 651 organizations across 14 LHINS. ECHO builds a community of practice that links diverse health care providers, to share and build knowledge and reduce feelings of isolation.
“The case showed the practical challenges faced because of the barriers to getting the child help, which actually we see more often than you might think. So often parents have no idea how to navigate the system and often may have challenges themselves. I do see a socioeconomic care gap, where affluent well-educated parents can access help more readily and parents with less education or other challenges may simply be unable to cope and the child falls through the cracks. I’m impressed with how the presenter [a pediatrician] moved quickly to get this child on help lists. I do hope connections to services in their new city will happen quickly. Some of the participants mentioned they could recommend pediatricians there for the family to see, and I thought that was really helpful.”

—Participant, ECHO Ontario Autism
Innovating care delivery: Leveraging technology to deliver more integrated and efficient services

The problems

- Providers are faced with managing prevalent complex medical conditions with limited access to specialist care, updated training or best practices.
- While care from an integrated team is a best practice standard, barriers exist that limit the potential for teams to be co-located.

Our impact

- ECHO uses multi-point videoconferencing to connect specialists to front-line providers around the province, increasing access to high-quality care and training, regardless of location.
- ECHO technology increases the ability for diverse providers all over Ontario to participate simultaneously in learning and sharing.

ECHON'TARIO COLLECTIVELY DELIVERED 17,995 HOURS OF CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION (CME) CREDITS IN 2018/19, AN INCREASE OF 144% ON THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

510 sessions held across all ECHOs
(↑ 117% from FY 2017–18)
Participants are feeling supported and less isolated in this collegial, evidence-based learning environment.

“My favourite part of the program is] having a panel of seasoned experts right there in the most accessible and non-intimidating setting. They were beyond helpful and understanding and supportive. Truly the best CME I have ever done.”
—Participant, ECHO Ontario Epilepsy

“I found this to be an incredibly helpful program—these are sessions I could otherwise not access given my geographic location—kudos!
—Participant, ECHO Ontario Paediatrics

“Really enjoyed the collegiality—it breaks down the isolation and allows us to be aware of environments that are sometimes different from our own, with other challenges.”
—Participant, ECHO Ontario Child and Youth Mental Health

“What a positive difference ECHO Ontario [Mental Health] . . . had on my work supporting clients with complex needs. It was so beneficial to have easy access through video and teleconference to a community of therapists and other allied health professionals in addition to the expert ECHO team of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers. This allowed for rich discussion and practical suggestions to aid in my current work with clients with complex needs.”
—Participant, ECHO Ontario Mental Health
Improving patient experience and outcomes: Enabling better care, locally

The problems

- Patients throughout the province, most notably in underserved communities, have limited access to specialist-level care.
- Patients often have long wait times to see specialists, leading to delays in diagnosis and treatment.

Our impact

- ECHO increases providers’ capacity to deliver care locally, by connecting specialists with providers throughout Ontario to provide comprehensive recommendations for treatment.
- Sessions are delivered regularly, and recommendations are provided in a timely manner to the entire community of practice.

"I FEEL NOW THAT A PATIENT CAN COME INTO MY OFFICE AND I CAN MAKE A REASONABLE ESTIMATE ABOUT THE PROBABILITY [THAT] THIS PERSON HAS AN INFLAMMATORY ARTHRITIC CONDITION, MAYBE EVEN AN ISSUE OF TREATMENT TO MAKE A CLEAR DIAGNOSIS, CERTAINLY [TO] MAKE A MUCH MORE COHERENT ATTEMPT AT DIAGNOSING THEM."

—Participant, ECHO Rheumatology

555 patient cases discussed
↑ 219 cases from FY 2017–18
“I’ve been on medication for a long, long time, and I’ve learned to live with it... There’s an opioid crisis in Canada... and [the government’s] initial solution was... to knock [everybody] off this medication. Maybe this is my opportunity to prove that, hey, listen... I have chronic pain, I need what I’m taking... and I’m not wrongly taking [it]. I’m hoping the ECHO program will go a way to help manage the pain and maybe put me in a better light where people can understand my situation better and I can get better treatment.”

—Patient of Participant, ECHO Ontario Chronic Pain
Generating efficiencies within the health care system: Doing more with less

The problems

- Moving patients from their local communities to access specialist care can be costly and may disrupt daily routine (e.g., missed work, child care needs).
- Direct patient consultation may improve care for one patient, but does not improve capacity for providers to deliver care.

Our impact

- ECHO uses technology to move knowledge, not patients, so the cost to the system is minimal.
- ECHO uses a one-to-many model, so knowledge and information are disseminated to a larger network of individuals—like crowdsourcing for health care.

IN 2018/19, ECHO HELPED MOVE KNOWLEDGE, NOT PATIENTS, POTENTIALLY MINIMIZING TAXPAYER COSTS FOR PATIENT TRAVEL THROUGH PROGRAMS LIKE THE NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT PROGRAM.
Future directions

SECTION 4
Future directions for ECHO Ontario

Focus on quality
Conduct ongoing quality improvement efforts to enhance ECHO programs, further enhancing impact for patients and providers.

Foster growth
Support new and existing organizations in expanding ECHO delivery for in-demand topics, in order to reach more health care providers across the province.

Support transformation
Collaborate with provincial stakeholders to integrate ECHO as a core offering in the transforming Ontario health care system.

Strengthen the ECHO Network
Continue to build a network of ECHO programs in Ontario that share learning, best practices and operational efficiencies in support of our collective impact.

“We used the materials to teach other PCPs and practitioners within our office. We are creating a resource with all of the screening tools for each PCP. We are also piloting some changes in how we use screening tools while clients are in reception to provide more efficient care. We are more confident in our work, more willing to try something ourselves before enlisting a specialized service.”

—Participant, ECHO Ontario Child and Youth Mental Health
Appendix
Leadership teams

Baycrest (in collaboration with North East Specialized Geriatric Centre)
Dr. David Conn – Physician Lead
Dr. James Chau – Physician Lead
Dr. Sid Feldman – Physician Lead
Dr. Andrea Moser – Physician Lead
Lisa Sokoloff – Program Director
Navena Lingum – Program Coordinator (Baycrest)
Shaen Gingrich – Program Coordinator (NESGC)

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Dr. Allison Crawford – Co-Chair
Lina Mohri – Co-Chair
Dr. Sanjeev Sockalingam – Co-Chair
Stephanie Cassin – Co-Lead – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy ECHO
Dr. Wiplove Lamba – Co-Lead – Addiction Medicine & Psychosocial Interventions
Dr. Christopher McIntosh – Co-Lead – Trans & Gender Diverse Healthcare ECHO
Dr. Shelley McMain – Co-Lead – Dialectical Behavioural Therapy ECHO
Dr. Lisa Richardson – Co-Lead – First Nation, Inuit and Métis Wellness ECHO
Dr. Peggy Richter – Co-Lead – Obsessive Compulsive Disorder ECHO
Dr. Kathleen Sheehan – Co-Lead – Complex Patient Management ECHO
Eva Serhal – Program Director

CHEO
Dr. William Gardner – Co-Lead
Dr. Kathleen Pajer – Co-Lead
Josee Blackburn – Program Manager

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital
Dr. Melanie Penner – Lead
Dr. Evdokia Anagnostou – Co-Lead

Ontario Bariatric Network
Dr. Mehran Anvari – Project Lead
Dr. Vanessa Boudreau – Project Co-Lead / Lead – St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton
Dr. Scott Cassie – Lead – Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre
Dr. Stephen Glazer – Lead – Humber River Hospital
Dr. Nicole Kolozsvari – Lead – The Ottawa Hospital
Dr. Natasha Pereira-Hong – Lead – Guelph General Hospital
Julia Sklaadresis – Co-Lead – Toronto Western Hospital
Dr. Sanjeev Sockalingam – Lead – Toronto Western Hospital
Dr. Boris Zevin – Lead – Kingston Health Sciences Centre
Daina Mueller – Clinical Coordinator

Ontario Epilepsy Network
Dr. Carter Sneed – Co-Chair/Lead – Toronto
Dr. Elizabeth Donner – Co-Chair/Lead – Toronto
Dr. Jorge Burneo – Co-Chair/Lead – London
Dr. Kirk Nylen – Co-Chair
Dr. Andrea Andrade – Lead – London
Dr. Esther Bui – Lead – Toronto
Dr. Lysa Boisse Lomax – Lead – Kingston
Dr. Tad Fantaneanu – Lead – Ottawa
Dr. Ayman Hassan – Lead – Thunder Bay
Dr. Kevin Jones – Lead – Hamilton
Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran – Lead – Hamilton
Dr. Areezoo Rezazadeh – Lead – Ottawa
Dr. Michelle Shapiro – Lead – Hamilton
Dr. Sharon Whiting – Lead – Ottawa
Anastasia Vogt – Program Manager

Ontario Pain Network
Dr. Mehran Anvari – Project Lead
Dr. Vanessa Boudreau – Project Co-Lead / Lead
Dr. Scott Cassie – Lead – Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre
Dr. Stephen Glazer – Lead – Humber River Hospital
Dr. Nicole Kolozsvari – Lead – The Ottawa Hospital
Dr. Natasha Pereira-Hong – Lead – Guelph General Hospital

University Health Network
Dr. Ruth Dubin – Co-Lead – ECHO Chronic Pain / Opioid Stewardship
Dr. Andrea Furlan – Co-Lead – ECHO Chronic Pain / Opioid Stewardship
Dr. Jordan Feld – Co-Lead – ECHO Liver
Dr. Hemant Shah – Co-Lead – ECHO Liver
Dr. Claire Bombardier – Co-Lead – ECHO Rheumatology
Dr. Amanda Steiman – Co-Lead – ECHO Rheumatology
Dr. John Flannery – Lead – Operations
Rhonda Mostyn – Project Manager

St. Joseph’s Care Group
Dr. Bryan MacLeod – Medical Co-Lead
Dr. Patricia Poulin – Research Lead
Dr. Tim Larocque – Manager

The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids)
Dr. Jennifer Stinson – Overall Project Lead
Dr. Eyal Cohen – Co-Lead – Paediatric Complex Care ECHO
Michelle Ho – Co-Lead – Paediatric Complex Care ECHO
Dr. Julia Orkin – Co-Lead – Paediatric Complex Care ECHO
Dr. Jill Hamilton – Co-Lead – Paediatric Obesity Management ECHO
Rebecca Noseworthy – Co-Lead – Paediatric Obesity Management ECHO
Dr. Na’iyi Sun – Co-Lead – Paediatric Pain ECHO
Jennifer Tyrrell – Co-Lead – Paediatric Pain ECHO
Dr. Adam Rapoport – Co-Lead – Paediatric Palliative Care ECHO (SickKids)
Dr. Christina Vadeboncoeur – Co-Lead – Paediatric Palliative Care ECHO (CHEO)
Dr. Kevin Weingarten – Co-Lead – Paediatric Palliative Care ECHO (SickKids)
Dr. Chitra Laloo – Research Lead
Dr. Adam McKillop – Program Manager
Annie Jiwan – Project Manager

ECHO Ontario is a collaboration of deeply caring, enthusiastic and engaging teams. We’d like to acknowledge and extend a thank you to all the ECHO Ontario operations and hub teams that have contributed to the ongoing success of this project.
Publications


