

Productivity and Access to Psychotherapy: Lessons for Canada from the UK

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This paper will examine lessons for Canada from the UK's efforts to improve productivity by increasing public funding for psychotherapy. Improving workforce productivity has been a core element of the original business case, subsequent program design, and on-going performance measurement for the UK's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) program) launched in 2008. The original business case for IAPT was presented by economist Lord Richard Layard and psychologist David Clark, with a cost-benefit analysis showing that the costs of expanded psychotherapy services would be fully recouped within two years through the increased tax revenue and reduced disability benefits that would result from more people being able to work. The IAPT proposal was successful, and IAPT is now offered in every district of England, with targets set by the UK government and program implementation led by NHS England. The focus on productivity was carried through the IAPT program design, with employment support as one of the core elements of the program alongside of cognitive behavioural therapy and other evidence-based psychotherapies. Productivity outcomes will be analyzed drawing on publicly-available IAPT data and reports, with reference to the original business case. The impact of mental health problems and illnesses on productivity is recognized as the main contributor to the estimated \$50B annual impact on the Canadian economy, and formed part of the policy rationale for the new \$5B federal transfer to improve access to mental health services over the next ten years. This paper will analyse how lessons learned from the UK need to be adapted to differences in the Canadian context, including: the role of employment-based insurance in providing access to psychotherapy, federal/provincial dynamics in a more decentralized government structure, and Canada's mental health system.