



PRIORITY HEALTH CONCERNS



INTRODUCTION

"Medical schools have the obligation to direct their education, research and service activities towards addressing the priority health concerns of the community, region and/or nation they have a mandate to serve. The priority health concerns are to be identified jointly by governments, healthcare organizations, health professionals and the public" (WHO, 1995).

Centering medical school programming and curriculum content on common pressing social issues that have health implications will enable College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan graduates to respond directly to the health needs of the communities they serve. The Division of Social Accountability created this resource to identify local, regional and national priorities rooted in pressing social issues.

These priorities were identified by consultation with community and reinforced with data from health care organizations, and governments. They are based on health system data and well established inequities in health.

The College of Medicine continues to uphold its social accountability mission by emphasizing health equity and training and supporting health professionals in developing the skills required to meet the unique needs of diverse, marginalized and underserved communities.

The faculty of a medical school ensures that the medical curriculum includes instruction in nonmedical factors that impact health, such as person, social, economic and environmental factors (CACMS, 2024).

A socially accountable curriculum will develop socially accountable physicians. The curriculum must recognize that patients of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, cultures, religions, genders, ages, sexual orientations, abilities and geographic areas experience the world in unique ways; and that, too often, vulnerable and underserved groups experience disparities in health that are neither 'normal' nor 'just'.

PRIORITY HEALTH CONCERNS FOR THE SASKATCHEWAN POPULATION

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BASIC STANDARDS OF LIVING

Did you know the average hospital stay for a person experiencing homelessness in Saskatchewan is two weeks longer than a standard stay? Basic Standards of Living encapsulates an individual's access to food, shelter, and factors like income. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

key topics: housing, income, food insecurity

CHILD & ELDER WELLBEING

Did you know that 26.1% of children in Saskatchewan live in poverty?² On either end of the age spectrum individuals are more vulnerable and require intentional care. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

key topics: prenatal care, postnatal care, childcare elder abuse

ANTI-RACISM & DECOLONIZATION

Research has found that repeated exposure to racism leads to poorer health and conditions like hypertension and cardiovascular disease.³ Canada's legacy of colonialism has led to inequitable health outcomes for Indigenous peoples and racialized Canadians across the country. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

key topics: Indigenous health, cultural safety, trauma-informed care

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Did you know that a lack of accessible transportation leads to greater inefficiencies in the healthcare and social services systems due to delayed treatments and increased transportation costs? ⁴ There are many barriers that prevent patients from walking through the front doors of a clinic. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

key topics: interpreters, transportation, lack of ID, newcomers

HARM REDUCTION

Did you know Saskatchewan had 476 overdose deaths in 2023, the highest number ever recorded? ⁵ Harm Reduction services help to reduce the risks associated with potentially harmful behaviours like unprotected sex and intravenous drug use. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

key topics: needle exchange, safe consumption, PrEP, GBV

SYSTEMS NAVIGATION

According to CIHI, deaths due to treatable causes could be reduced by 18%-35% by working more efficiently, at no extra cost to the healthcare system. In ⁶an increasingly complex healthcare system many patients will face challenge in accessing care. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

key topics: access to primary and secondary care, allied health, two-tiered system

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE

Did you know that Saskatchewan reports the highest rate of mood and anxiety disorders in the country, in addition to the second highest rate of substance use disorders?⁷ Mental health and substance use are deeply interconnected to physical health and require intentional and compassionate care to improve patient outcomes. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

key topics: anxiety, suicide, overdose, stigma

2SLGBTQ+ & SEXUAL HEALTH

In the last Canadian census more than half (52.8%) of lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults surveyed reported having some difficulty in their functional health.⁸ People with diverse sexual and gender identities require access to knowledgeable and non-judgmental healthcare providers. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

key topics: gender affirming care, STBBI screening, abortion

ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE

The World Economic Forum predicts \$1.1 trillion extra costs to healthcare systems globally by 2050, in addition to 14.5 million deaths.⁹ The impacts of a rapidly changing climate create wide ranging adverse health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

key topics: potable water, forest fires, mold, traditional food systems

DISABILITY & ABLEISM

Did you know 29.8% of Saskatchewan residents report having a disability?¹⁰ People who are experiencing disability have the right to access care in a manner that is safe and appropriate. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

key topics: assistive technology, accessible spaces, negative attitudes, plain language



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References:

1. <https://www.cihi.ca/en/homelessness-and-hospital-use>
2. <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Saskatchewan-Report-Card-English-CPR-2021.pdf>
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SURVEY

Thank you for taking the time to use this resource. The Division of Social Accountability is committed to continuous improvement and would appreciate your feedback on the survey's function. Please scan the QR code to the left to complete a short survey.

