



CAME Voice/Voix

Why Students Should “Choose Wisely”

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During patient rounds one morning, I presented my plan to transfuse one unit of blood, yet my supervisor suggested transfusing two units. We entered a conversation on utilization of clinical decision-making tools and resource stewardship; I was able to successfully advocate for my patient receiving one unit of blood by discussing the Choosing Wisely Canada recommendations (<https://choosingwiselycanada.org/transfusion-medicine>).

However, not all physicians practice using evidence-informed decision making. Recent evidence from the Canadian Institute for Healthcare Information showed that each year more than 1 million Canadians are having a test or treatment that is potentially unnecessary (<https://www.cihi.ca/en/unnecessary-care-in-canada>). Given the potential harms and risks to patients when undergoing unnecessary interventions, and the unsustainable rise of healthcare spending, one of the strategies to mitigate these problems is to educate and build a culture of choosing wisely. Out of this strategy, came the involvement of medical student leaders as advocates for resource stewardship and curriculum review to explore its current future expression in the training of tomorrow’s doctors.

In 2016, two undergraduate medical students from each Canadian medical school took part in Students and Trainees Advocating for Resource Stewardship (STARS), a national medical student-led campaign addressing behaviours leading to unnecessary care. Since then, the University of Manitoba students developed a Choosing Wisely Interest Group, which invites all interested medical students to attend informal sessions on resource stewardship. The College of Medicine and Diagnostic Services Manitoba supported a student-led research project identifying areas for enhanced learning on resource stewardship, incorporation of over 100 Choosing Wisely Canada recommendations and development of new resource stewardship learning materials for the pre-clerkship Undergraduate Medical Education Curriculum. Further work in developing stewardship curricula in the clinical years is in progress.

In recent years, Canadian medical schools have increased training in resource stewardship. It is important to teach medical students resource stewardship because it is during these formative years that students begin developing their attitudes and behaviours. By incorporating training in resource stewardship early, we aim to create a bottom-up approach in reducing unnecessary tests and treatments. Being competent in costs of investigations will also make students cognisant of the financial accountability of physicians. The goal, however, is not to teach financial economy, but to focus attention on providing appropriate and high value care. For undergraduate medical students, it is important perhaps not to learn each Choosing Wisely recommendation individually, but rather to develop a clear understanding of how to be a resource steward, and to think conscientiously about resource stewardship in all aspects of one’s developing practice.

If you are interested in this work and want to learn more, you can initiate change by downloading the universally usable “Toolkits” from Choosing Wisely Canada’s website to implement the evidence-informed recommendations - <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/perspectives/how-tos>

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, College of Family Physicians of Canada, and Choosing Wisely Canada also collaborated on developing several teaching and assessment toolkits - <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/canmeds/resource-stewardship-e>.