

## Healthcare Leadership Conference: Strengthening Ties Between Healthcare and Leadership: October 12, 2023, Vancouver, BC Canada Threads Brief

On October 12, 2023, almost 80 health leaders, learners, patients, practitioners, and educators from around the world gathered in Vancouver, British Columbia, all interested in enhancing leadership in health systems. Held in conjunction with the [International Leadership Association Conference](#), a focus on the evidence-informed capabilities leaders needed to effectively steward garnered rich discussion. This thinktank coalesced into 8 common threads or themes for future practice.

### 1. Transform Health Systems Through Leadership

Leaders hold a pivotal role in guiding individuals toward common objectives, especially around patient care, and safety within complex health systems. We must build the next generation of leaders and accelerate 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership practices such as the use of technology/AI, systems leadership, evidence informed/data driven decision making, complexity, creativity, belonging and inclusivity, and effective ways to partners that cross boundaries and sectors. Leaders must foster dialogue, meet individuals at their current standpoint, and appreciate and listen to individual perspectives. "What matters to you rather than what is the matter?" Strategic leadership must be used to reshape health systems where leaders serve as both a "co-champion" but also a "co-disruptor" for change.

### 2. Reframe Approaches to Prioritize Wellness

We must re-evaluate perspectives and adopt a comprehensive approach to transformation; one that shifts from treating diseases to prioritizing health and well-being of patients and the health workforce. A holistic perspective advocates for moving beyond the conventional Western healthcare model, which concentrates on diseases, towards a more encompassing approach of wellness. Two-Eyed Seeing, used in Indigenous communities deepens the significance of incorporating diverse viewpoints and perspectives into health and wellness strategies, leading to new and more well-rounded approaches to transformation and change.

### 3. Build Trust to Foster Powerful Partnerships

Trust and relationship building are key to forming effective partnerships, achieving shared goals, and addressing complex challenges. "We can only move forward at the speed of trust" but "we must meet people where they are at." Respecting others' knowledge and emphasizing co-design and co-production of knowledge, shared learning, belonging, and collaborative information exchange are necessary ingredients. Managing misinformation underlines the challenges in maintaining trust and credibility in decision-making. "Leadership Character" explores redefining leadership and finding joy in work, often linked to leaders' character and values.

### 4. Pioneer Innovative Methods for Leadership Education and Growth

Building leaders requires a mix of interprofessional learning, experiential learning, lived experience, mentoring, and coaching. Leadership development must occur early and throughout one's career. A "common leadership language" such as the [LEADS framework](#) can facilitate a shared understanding and vocabulary around leadership, which is critical for effective communication and collaboration. Role modeling behaviours such as work-life balance are required to build flexibility and avoid

burnout. Interprofessional learning and creating dedicated time/space for such educational endeavors must be emphasized for both formal and informal leadership development. These perspectives accentuate the pivotal role of education and development in fostering effective health leadership. We must create more opportunities for leadership to be developed and redefine it to include non-titled leaders, nurturing leadership skills across different organizational roles and throughout one's career journey.

#### **5. Cultivate Essential Dialogues to Advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**

Open dialogue when addressing critical societal issues such as diversity, equity and inclusion must be fostered. The message here is clear: leaders and practitioners cannot drive meaningful change within the system without addressing the root causes of DEI, with a specific emphasis on acknowledging confronting racism (see British Columbia's report on racism "[In Plain Sight](#)"). The creation of a culture and safe spaces that encourages speaking out is a fundamental necessity for transformation. There is a strong call to establish anti-racism as a standard practice in an evidence-informed world, emphasizing the urgency of integrating anti-racist measures into established norms. This goes hand in hand with concerns about tokenism and the exhaustion experienced by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) individuals. The concept of co-championing is a more engaged and supportive approach, diverging from mere allyship.

#### **6. Emphasize Indigenous Self-determination, Cultural Sensitivity, and Collaboration**

There is a crucial need for Indigenous communities to have the authority to shape their health care and overall well-being. We must emphasize Indigenous self-determination, cultural sensitivity, and collaboration in addressing Indigenous health concerns and establish a health system that is more inclusive and supportive. Increasing representation of Indigenous people and promoting diverse leadership within the healthcare system creates more resilient and culturally sensitive health care. The importance of delivering culturally safe health care that honours and integrates Indigenous cultural traditions and traditional healing practices into Western medical approaches is needed.

#### **7. Grasp the Urgency of Climate Change and Create a Sustainable Health System**

Leaders must address climate change and sustainability within the context of health systems and its supply chains. Sustainable procurement practices should be promoted that minimizing waste. Single-use products so prevalent in healthcare clashes with adverse environmental effects, sparking a search for solutions that harmonize these contradictions with eco-friendly measures. Leaders must initiate vital conversations to drive improvements, reduce waste, and prioritize sustainability and local sourcing in healthcare decision-making. The idea of resource sharing among institutions and countries can be tied to principles of social justice, emphasizing the necessity of considering vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by climate change.

#### **8. Revolutionize Health Workforce Systems**

Fundamental rethinking around the health workforce is needed. Leaders are part of the health workforce and play a critical role in addressing burnout, establishing psychologically supportive workplaces, restoring a sense of joy, humanity, and compassion in the workplace. The bureaucratic nature of health systems stifles innovation; leaders must create better spaces to encourage it. Health providers must adopt a lifelong learning approach to leadership and engage in networks to share knowledge and ideas. There is an urgent need to revolutionize health workforce systems, modernize work environments, promote more team-based care, and undertake collaborative education. Leaders must infuse innovation, joy, and compassion into health systems. "Move and stay" rather than traditional recruitment and retention practices can help in succession planning and attrition.