

U of T Policython Public Health Stream

Challenge the System

Welcome!

Analysis of Last Year's Winning Policy Brief:
**"Equitable Vaccine Distribution in
Ontario: Reaching the Unreachable
and Most At-Risk Populations"**



Today we will analyze...

“Equitable Vaccine Distribution in Ontario: Reaching the Unreachable and Most At-Risk Populations”

Last year's prompt:

With recent vaccine approval, many countries must now develop coherent plans to distribute the Covid-19 vaccine to their large populations. Government and healthcare officials must integrate ideas of ethics and science to account for the differing needs of various groups throughout Canada. Construct a policy brief that addresses how the Canadian government can ensure equal distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. Consider the social, economic, political, and geographic impacts of vaccines. An example is considering how areas that have low capacity clinics and how that impacts the distribution of vaccines in that area.

How to write a policy brief:

Writing Template

- a) Title
- b) Executive summary
- c) Introduction
- d) Approach & Results
- e) Policy Recommendations
- f) Conclusion

Executive Summary

Currently, Ontario has a limited vaccine supply and is struggling to provide adequate vaccination services to its population. As the province begins its initial steps in administering vaccinations, it is essential that the process is equitable and ensures the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups of the population, as well as those located in remote areas. The current plan fails to consider access to individuals in rural communities or those with disabilities who may have difficulty traveling to hospitals or alternative healthcare services. In light of these concerns, it is proposed that the government of Ontario evaluate and consider the use of mobile health units to target elderly populations and remote communities.

Executive Summary

An executive summary encapsulates a policy brief in a quick and engaging manner to provide clarity to readers. Typically, it is one to two short paragraphs long. An executive summary should aim to do 5 things:

- Distil the essence of the brief
 - As the province begins its initial steps in administering vaccinations, it is essential that the process is equitable and ensures the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups of the population, as well as those located in remote areas.
- Provide an overview (problem, findings, recommendations)
 - In light of these concerns, it is proposed that the government of Ontario evaluate and consider the use of mobile health units to target elderly populations and remote communities.
- Entice readers to go further
- Appear on cover or top of first page
- Be written last
 - Writing the executive section as the last step of the process of formulating a policy brief will allow writers to gain clarity on each section of the brief and ensure it matches the analysis, findings, and recommendations.

Introduction

1) Background

Although the Canadian federal government advised a vaccine distribution plan, each province has adopted their own. The COVID-19 task force in Ontario has created a three-phase approach which equitably distributes vaccines throughout the province. The current plan considers the age and pre-existing health conditions of the population, while also accounting for densely populated areas, frontline workers, and communities with higher rates of COVID-19 transmission, morbidity, mortality, and hospitalization (“Ontario’s COVID-19 vaccination plan”, 2021). However, despite this framework’s ability to address the social determinants that affect an individual’s vulnerability to developing COVID-19 (i.e. low-income and racialized identities), it does not adequately address distribution of the vaccine to remote communities or the complications that individuals with disabilities may have when faced with the need to travel long distances for care. Thus, a plan which provides equitable care to these populations is extremely urgent.

2) Problem

Cause and Effect of the problem?

Research Findings/Approach & Results

- What sources were utilized in synthesizing the policy recommendations?
- What are the results of previous or current movements towards addressing this issue? How can they be improved upon?
- Explains necessary background info and useful facts that are applied later when recommending policies
- Note: While this section deals in facts, one does not want to get too specific

Policy Recommendations

- Recap of Policy Recommendation Writing
 - Be specific, keep recommendations **short, concise, and clear**
 - Often times **Less is More**, focus on 2-3 recommendations
 - Be **Practical**, the recommendation should be feasible
 - What are the Benefits? Costs?

Looking closely

Mobile health units have been used by organizations to bring disaster relief and access to healthcare around the world (Khanna & Narula, 2016). It is to be proposed that these mobile units be utilized and implemented as vaccination sites for elderly in densely-populated regions and adults in rural communities. According to a report published by Ontario epidemiologists, the most effective way to reduce transmission and hospital University of Toronto Policython, 2021 2 capacities is to target by both age and high rates of COVID-19 because seniors are more at risk for COVID19 due to pre-existing health conditions (Brown, et. al, 2021). While Phase One of Ontario's plan is largely age-based, it emphasizes seniors living in long-term care homes ("Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination plan", 2021). This excludes major communities of elderly people who make up the approximate 489 naturally occurring retirement communities, 259 of which have been affected by high rates of COVID-19 (Huynh et. al, 2021, p. 2). Thus, it is suggested that targeting these communities because of their vulnerability to COVID-19 would enable a decrease in COVID-19 transmission, hospitalization, and death. These mobile units would also seek to improve the difficulties senior citizens face in cases of mobility. The mobile units would enable senior citizens to have readily available access to the care they need and would shorten wait times in hospitals and other vaccination centers.

Conclusion

Although the implementation of mobile vaccine clinics have a range of benefits, there are some lingering political and social implications that should be addressed. Namely, targeting certain areas before others could be cause for social conflict between communities (Evans, 2020). This may result in ongoing tension between vaccine organizers and citizens as it may appear that some communities are prioritized over others (Evans, 2020). However, through research and analysis it is clear that densely populated older communities and rural areas are in dire need of care and targeting these communities is vital to ensure case numbers and death counts decline and every Canadian receives equitable access to care. Another risk that requires attention, is that of the widespread coordination and cooperation between various levels of leadership and government. However, despite this, it would be both politically and socially beneficial to demonstrate nonpartisan work ethic and unity throughout leadership in order to provide the best care to citizens. Conclusively, the overarching benefits to this plan outweigh its potential and hypothetical costs. Mobile clinics provide accessible, cost effective, and equitable ways in which all communities and individuals can receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Conclusion

The author summarizes what has been said and, by doing so, reinforces what the reader has been presented with. Having a subheading outlining where the conclusion paragraph begins is good practice. Checklist for a good conclusion paragraph:

- Use section to interpret data
- Aim for concrete conclusions
- Express ideas using strong assertions
- Ensure ideas are balanced and defensible

Thanks for Coming!

Any Questions?