

HOW PATIENT ACCESS AND EXPECTATIONS HAVE EVOLVED OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS



FEBRUARY 18, 2026 | 11 AM ET

This report has been prepared for the exclusive use of registrants to the 2026 Winter Webinar, and provides an overview of the Webinar

Twenty years ago, paper health records were the norm, patient support programs were in their infancy, and most Canadians could turn to a trusted family physician.

Today's healthcare landscape looks markedly different. While innovations such as telehealth have expanded care delivery options, many of the basic services Canadians once took for granted—timely access to primary care, for example—have become increasingly difficult to access.

The 2026 Winter Webinar, marking the kickoff of the 20th anniversary of the National Pharmaceutical Congress (NPC), brings experts together to reflect on the changes over the past two decades—where progress has been made, where it has been reversed, and what can be done moving forward. The NPC Winter Webinar 2026 takes place on February 18 at 11 a.m. ET.

Great expectations, mixed results. 20 years after reform

It was one of the most widely publicized proposals in Canadian healthcare history.

Just over 20 years ago, then Prime Minister Paul Martin and Canada's premiers signed a \$41.3 billion Health agreement, hailed as a ["fix for a generation"](#)—a landmark deal meant to transform Canada's ailing healthcare system.

The plan promised reduced surgical wait times, improved access to primary and home care, and the creation of both a national health human resource and pharmaceutical strategy.

Now, two decades later, few of these challenges can be considered fixed. In many cases, the challenges have only grown more acute, contributing to rising public skepticism toward the healthcare industry, particularly pharmaceutical companies.

Trust issues

"Pharma ranks among the lowest in consumer trust indexes of all industries and even our own customers are starting to trust us less," said Robin Hunter, Founder and CEO of LaunchHunter Life Sciences Consulting.

For Kevin Hewitt, Director of Sales and Marketing at Sun Pharma, this skepticism may be fueled by a broader sense of uncertainty in many areas of people's lives. "Whether it's politics, finances, or employment, it's human nature to trust less when information sources don't always make sense and contradict each other," he said.

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ROBIN HUNTER
FOUNDER AND CEO OF
LAUNCHHUNTER LIFE SCIENCES CONSULTING



Despite frustrations, patient expectations have risen sharply

Following the surge of digital adoption during Covid-19, Canadians now expect convenient access to virtual care, digital health information, and electronic records. The [2023 Canadian Digital Health Survey](#) found that more than **four in five Canadians agree their personal health information should be shared electronically among all healthcare providers** when making decisions about their care.

Hunter noted that this level of connectedness is long overdue. “One of the biggest gaps right now is the lack of availability or accessibility to a patient’s entire health data set. When physicians are making decisions without a complete view of a patient’s health—especially when key factors aren’t obvious or easily available—it creates barriers. Patients may have difficulty understanding the rationale behind clinical recommendations when they don’t have access to the full ecosystem of their health information.”

Can privatization address current problems?

Although privatization has historically been a sensitive issue in Canada, triggering fears of U.S.-style inequality, public openness to private involvement in care is growing.

A 2023 Ipsos poll conducted exclusively for *Global News* found that 59% of Canadians surveyed supported the private delivery of publicly-funded health services.

Roughly 60% also said they would favour private healthcare options for those who can afford them.

“Whether it’s politics, finances, or employment, it’s human nature to trust less when information sources don’t always make sense and contradict each other”



KEVIN HEWITT
DIRECTOR, SALES & MARKETING
SUN PHARMA

Leandra Wells, a pharmaceutical executive and principal at Bright Hive Innovation Group, suggested that a hybrid model could offer a possible path forward, although the public would need to understand how such an approach would function within the Canadian system. “Hybrid doesn’t have to mean a binary system, or that we lose anything in offering universal care,” she said. “It works well in many European countries, and a good Canadian example is the Shouldice Hospital for hernia repair [in Toronto].”

Dr. ChatBot will see you now

One of the most significant advances in healthcare has been the rise of digital platforms—from the web to ChatGPT—that are empowering patients, according to Hunter.

“Today’s patient can arm themselves with as much information as possible in order to engage in more collaborative and informed decision-making with their physician,” he said. “As long as that information is accurate, up-to-date and aligned with Canadian practice, I think it’s a really great thing for patients and clinicians alike.”

So where do we go from here?

Twenty years after the landmark accord, the question remains: How can Canada’s healthcare system move beyond short-term fixes to truly sustainable solutions?

For Wells, it could require a major disruption in our current healthcare delivery models. “No politician or bureaucrat will want to take on this risk, but in many cases, this is the only way we’ll see real progress made. This applies to the integration of data, the referral pathways, and networks that support care delivery.”

Hewitt however, remains optimistic. “When we find a bottleneck in our ability to provide healthcare, people will find new ways to solve it. Examples are everywhere if you look for them—from telemedicine to expanded prescribing roles for pharmacists and nurses to FELIX to AI. I’m excited to see what’s next that will make our current state better.”

“Hybrid doesn’t have to mean a binary system, or that we lose anything in offering universal care.”

LEANDRA WELLS
PHARMACEUTICAL EXECUTIVE AND PRINCIPAL
BRIGHT HIVE INNOVATION GROUP



NPC Institute 2026 Winter Webinar

HOW PATIENT ACCESS AND EXPECTATIONS HAVE EVOLVED OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

February 18, 2026

11:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ET

2026 WINTER WEBINAR FACULTY



KEVIN HEWITT
DIRECTOR, SALES & MARKETING
SUN PHARMA

Kevin's pharmaceutical experience spans more than two decades and many therapeutic areas. He has held many roles in sales and marketing for several companies, including AstraZeneca, Roche, Amgen, Sanofi, and currently with Sun Pharma. He has also held leadership roles in Strategy and Portfolio and built a team focused on digital strategy, launch excellence, and portfolio planning. When Kevin joined Sun Pharma in early 2023, he built a new hybrid GP/Specialty commercial team, successfully launching several new products in Canada. His genuine curiosity and goal-oriented team approach adds to his leadership style. Kevin has spent most of his pharmaceutical career in Canada, but has also worked in global marketing in Switzerland.



ROBIN HUNTER
FOUNDER AND CEO
LAUNCHHUNTER LIFE SCIENCES CONSULTING

Robin is the Founder and CEO of LaunchHunter Life Sciences Consulting and currently serves as a strategic advisor to The BIZCom Group and Invero Pharma. One of Robin's most notable achievements was founding the Tolmar Canadian affiliate, where he spearheaded its growth into a recognized force in oncology. Under Robin's leadership, Tolmar earned a prestigious ranking as the 4th best oncology company in Canada by IQVIA—an accolade that reflects both commercial success and patient impact. Earlier in his career, Robin held senior executive roles including President and General Manager of Elvium Canada, and General Manager of Ikaria and Mallinckrodt Canada. He also serves on the Board of the Canadian Premature Babies Foundation, supporting innovation and advocacy in neonatal care.



LEANDRA WELLS
PRINCIPAL
BRIGHTHIVE INNOVATION GROUP

Leandra Wells is a Pharmaceutical Executive with General Management experience, and is now Principal at BrightHive Innovation Group. Leandra is a visionary leader with a track-record of driving large-scale transformation and building high-performing, data-driven teams. She is known for rapidly building trust, aligning organizations to what matters most, and inspiring and empowering teams to continuously improve by challenging the status quo. She fosters a culture of inclusion, innovation, accountability, and competitiveness—all anchored in a shared commitment to improving patient lives.

Prior to BrightHive, Leandra was the Country General Manager at Galderma Canada Inc. Her diverse career journey includes leadership roles across both small start-ups and large multinationals including GSK, Janssen and Allergan. Her experience spans roles in Market Access, Medical Affairs, and Commercial, as well as various therapeutic areas including oncology, hematology, dermatology, and respirology.

Leandra holds a PhD in Molecular Developmental Biology from the University of Toronto, an MBA from the Schulich School of Business, and an HBS in Genetics from Western University.



NATIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL CONGRESS

NOVEMBER 4, 2026
MISSISSAUGA CONVENTION CENTRE



Date
November 4, 2026

The 20th Annual National Pharmaceutical Congress will bring the best of Canadian Pharma together. The Congress will be held on November 4, 2026 at the Mississauga Convention Centre.



Type
In-Person

As Canada's largest stage for leaders in the pharmaceutical industry, the Congress presents industry reflections, ideas, and innovations.



Time
7 AM - 6 PM ET

The Congress is attended by over 200 delegates every year and is an opportunity to learn, reflect, and network with the industry's most prominent thought leaders and visionaries.



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For more information on the NPC Institute, please get in touch with us at health@chronicle.org or visit pharmacongress.info.



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11:00 AM	WELCOME	BEN PARRY & MITCH SHANNON
11:10 AM	PANELIST INTRODUCTIONS & PRESENTATIONS	KEVIN HEWITT, ROBIN HUNTER & LEANDRA WELLS
11:40 AM	LIVE PANEL DISCUSSION	
11:55 AM	CONCLUSION	BEN PARRY & MITCH SHANNON

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