**PURPOSE:** To evaluate leadership/ models in Canadian cancer centres, and assess leadership development programs.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:** A mixed methods study was conducted between August and October, 2015. It used a literature review, pan Canadian survey and structured interviews to identify perceptions of leadership. Administrative leads of free standing cancer centres registered with the Canadian Association of Provincial Cancer Agencies (40 invited to complete a written survey; 10 phone interviews) were the target population. The survey was organized into categories to evaluate: current leadership; important elements of leadership; traits that identify emerging leaders; competency frameworks to evaluate leaders and the availability of programs to improve skills in leaders.

**RESULTS:** Twenty three of 50 potential participants (46%) provided responses, with representation from all provinces. Synthesis of responses provided the following insights:

1. **There is strong consensus about the effectiveness of current leaders and which elements of leadership are considered important.**
2. **There is agreement on the traits to identify emerging leaders.**
3. **Leadership Competency** is measured infrequently, with inconsistent frameworks. Less than 70% of respondents use LEADS. 85% of the respondents do not use formal succession planning tools. 77% of organizations do not offer skill development programs to their emerging leaders; 30% offer executive coaching for senior leads.

**CONCLUSION:** Current leaders are perceived as doing well at leading, but there are several gaps needing attention.

- Collaborative leadership is popular, but a bureaucratic model pervades many provinces
- There does not appear to be a consistent expectation that leaders should be evaluated with objective tools.
- Many administrative and medical leaders within a significant number of centres fail to acknowledge the importance of maximizing the skills of all levels of leaders, and emerging leaders are affected the most. This will impact on the ability to build superior teams and drive innovative change.

**Development of potential leaders has to become a top priority if cancer programs are to be healthy and able to confront the issues associated with publicly funded health care.** Continued funding for cancer control is contingent on future leaders who are capable of understanding health care complexities and who possess the emotional intelligence/skills to collaborate and advocate appropriately.

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