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Description

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ABSTRACT: Background: The emerging disease-modifying Alzheimer's treatments present a health system challenge because of the combination of a large prevalent patient pool and a complex diagnostic process. Analyses of system preparedness have projected Canada to have the longest and most protracted wait times for access among G7 countries. Methods: Policy analysis study using comparative health system data and 17 semi-structured interviews with experts in Canada. Results: Compared to other G7 countries, Canada has a high number of family physicians, but low numbers of dementia specialists and imaging equipment per capita, leading to wait times even today. The capacity constraints result from limited investment in infrastructure and deliberate use of supply side restrictions for cost containment. Several options exist to alleviate those constraints in the short run, such as building on existing primary-led memory care models, more flexible use of existing imaging devices, and utilization of novel diagnostic technology like digital and blood-based biomarker tests. Conclusions: Canada faces a unique challenge to make a disease-modifying Alzheimer's treatment accessible because of limited capacity for memory care. While opportunities exist to improve access, they are not likely to be realized fast enough in the absence of a deliberate planning effort.

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