

Immediate diffusion

Non-consensual sterilizations of First Nations and Inuit women in Quebec: the Collège des médecins adopts an action plan to restore trust

- In response to the report by researchers at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue on cases of sterilization imposed on First Nations and Inuit women, the Collège des médecins has set up a think tank that elaborated an action plan.
- One of the measures proposed is the addition of a preamble to the Code of Ethics of Physicians to color the understanding of all articles and forbid all discrimination based on culture and identity.
- Training in cultural safety in health care is made mandatory for all professionals working in the investigation and professional inspection departments. The Collège will promote this training to all physicians.

Montreal, June 11, 2024 - In the fall of 2022, UQAT researchers Suzy Basile and Patricia Bouchard revealed in their [report](#) Free and Informed Consent and Forced Sterilizations of First Nations and Inuit Women in Quebec that some 30 aboriginal women had been sterilized without their knowledge, consent or had suffered obstetrical violence between 1980 and 2019. The report made recommendations, notably to the Collège des médecins du Québec (CMQ), to prevent such situations from recurring.

In the months that followed, the CMQ set up a think tank led by its president, Dr. Mauril Gaudreault, and comprising Dr. Chantal Vallée and Dr. Guylaine Larose, both elected members of the CMQ Board of Directors; Professor Suzy Basile of UQAT; Marjolaine Siouï, Executive Director of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC); and surgeon Stanley Vollant. The group's objective was to guide the CMQ Board of Directors' reflection on issues related to cultural safety and free and informed consent, considering the findings of the Basile-Bouchard report.

A seven-point plan

In its report, the think tank put forward seven recommendations to rebuild First Nations women's trust in the healthcare system:

- Deploy an action plan to tackle the issue of sterilizations and terminations of pregnancies imposed on First Nations and Inuit women;
- Add a preamble to the Code of Ethics for Physicians to color the interpretation of all articles and outlaw all discrimination based on culture and identity;

- Make basic training in the cultural safety of health care mandatory for professionals in the CMQ's investigation and professional inspection departments;
- Promote this training among all physicians;
- Review and improve the content of training on consent to care;
- Inform the public and physicians about initiatives implemented by the CMQ;
- Deploy reproductive health awareness tools in collaboration with First Nations and Inuit networks.

Enhanced training

In collaboration with experts representing various marginalized and discriminated populations in healthcare, the CMQ has recently created a basic training course on cultural safety in healthcare (FBSCSS). This training, available to physicians next September, will enable them to become aware of the biases and structures that generate inequalities in healthcare, and to understand how to remedy them.

Regaining trust

"Over the past few years, the College has been committed to fighting systemic racism and any system or structure that reproduces oppression and creates inequalities of power, whether towards the population or within healthcare teams. We are taking concrete action to ensure that no woman ever again undergoes sterilization without her knowledge or against her will. We need to win back their trust," said Dr Mauril Gaudreault, President of the CMQ.

Freeing the word

"Forced sterilizations and obstetric violence have had a huge impact on women, and today there is an immense loss of trust in hospital nursing staff. I accepted the CMQ's invitation to take part in this focus group to be part of the solution, to relay the testimonies of these women and thus contribute to putting an end to these acts. Now is the time to act," said Professor Suzy Basile.

Working group

In the coming weeks, the professional order will set up a permanent advisory task force, made up of members from marginalized and discriminated communities. Its mandate will be to promote the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion, paying particular attention to the realities experienced by First Nations and Inuit.

The report can be consulted [here](#).

About the Collège des médecins du Québec

Founded in 1847, the Collège des médecins du Québec is the professional order that oversees the work of all 25 000 doctors and 4 000 residents who practice medicine in Quebec. It monitors and assesses medical practice, handles complaints from the public and supports doctors in maintaining their competencies and skills. In addition to ensuring the quality of medical education programs in universities and delivering permits, the Collège adjudicates on issues that impact patients. Its mission is to ensure that citizens receive quality medical care no matter their personal situation. Its motto: protect the public by offering high quality medicine.