

**Mood Disorders Society of Canada**  
Société pour les troubles de l'humeur du Canada

# From Disruption to Empowerment:

*Transforming Mental Illness Medication Reviews for Positive Impact*



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## Executive Summary

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) commissioned a recent data research review report, *System Broken*, with a key finding that medications for mental illnesses face a dramatically higher rate of negative reimbursement recommendations from the Canadian Drug Agency (CDA-AMC, formerly CADTH) compared to those for other disorders. To address this gap, MDSC led a roundtable of health system experts, including the CDA-AMC and other stakeholders, which resulted in three *Roundtable Recommendations*, listed below, for the path forward. Improvement in the front-line voice within the reimbursement review process is at the core of the recommendations. MDSC is actively collaborating with the CDA-AMC to address this gap.

- Increasing and enhancing representation of front-line voice (People With Lived/Living Experience (PWLE) and Psychiatrists) in the reimbursement review process
- Creating guidance and education for reimbursement review expert committees on “clinically meaningful endpoints” for mental illness
- Improving transparency around the reimbursement review process and final decisions

## Problem

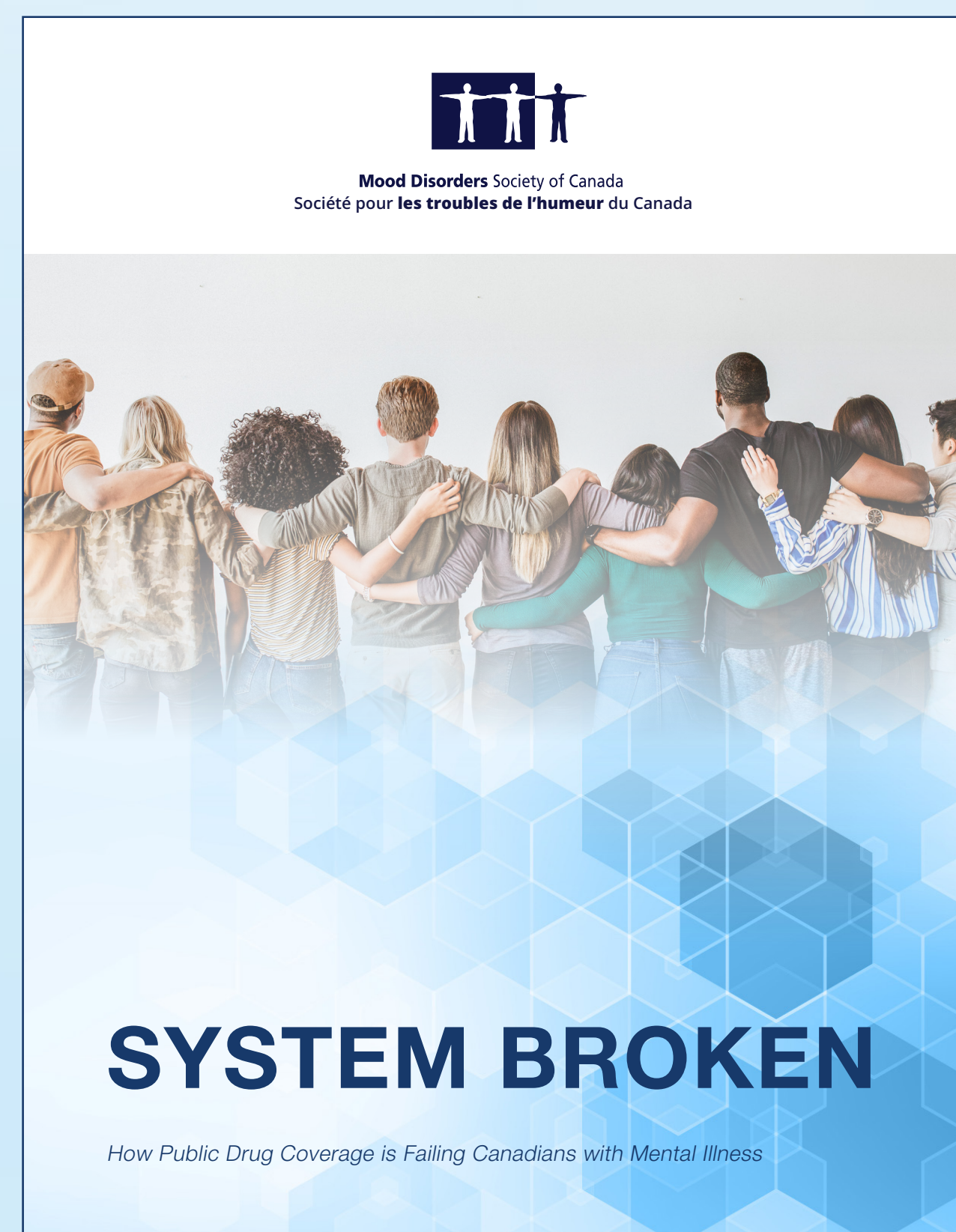
Medication is a crucial part of mental illness recovery (as part of a holistic approach\*), but Canadians face access issues, impacting treatment effectiveness and societal wellbeing. Since mental illnesses vary for each person, successful treatment requires an individualized trial-and-error approach, making accessibility to all medications essential.

\*MDSC emphasizes the importance of timely access to effective medicines alongside holistic care, including psychotherapy, peer support, education, exercise, sleep, nutrition, housing security, and addressing other social determinants of health.

## Solution: MDSC Working Group

MDSC is establishing a pan-Canadian, multi-stakeholder working group (WG) to advance its *Health System Roundtable Recommendations*. MDSC will continue to collaborate with the CDA-AMC in achieving the goals of the WG.

## The Evidence: MDSC Commissioned Report

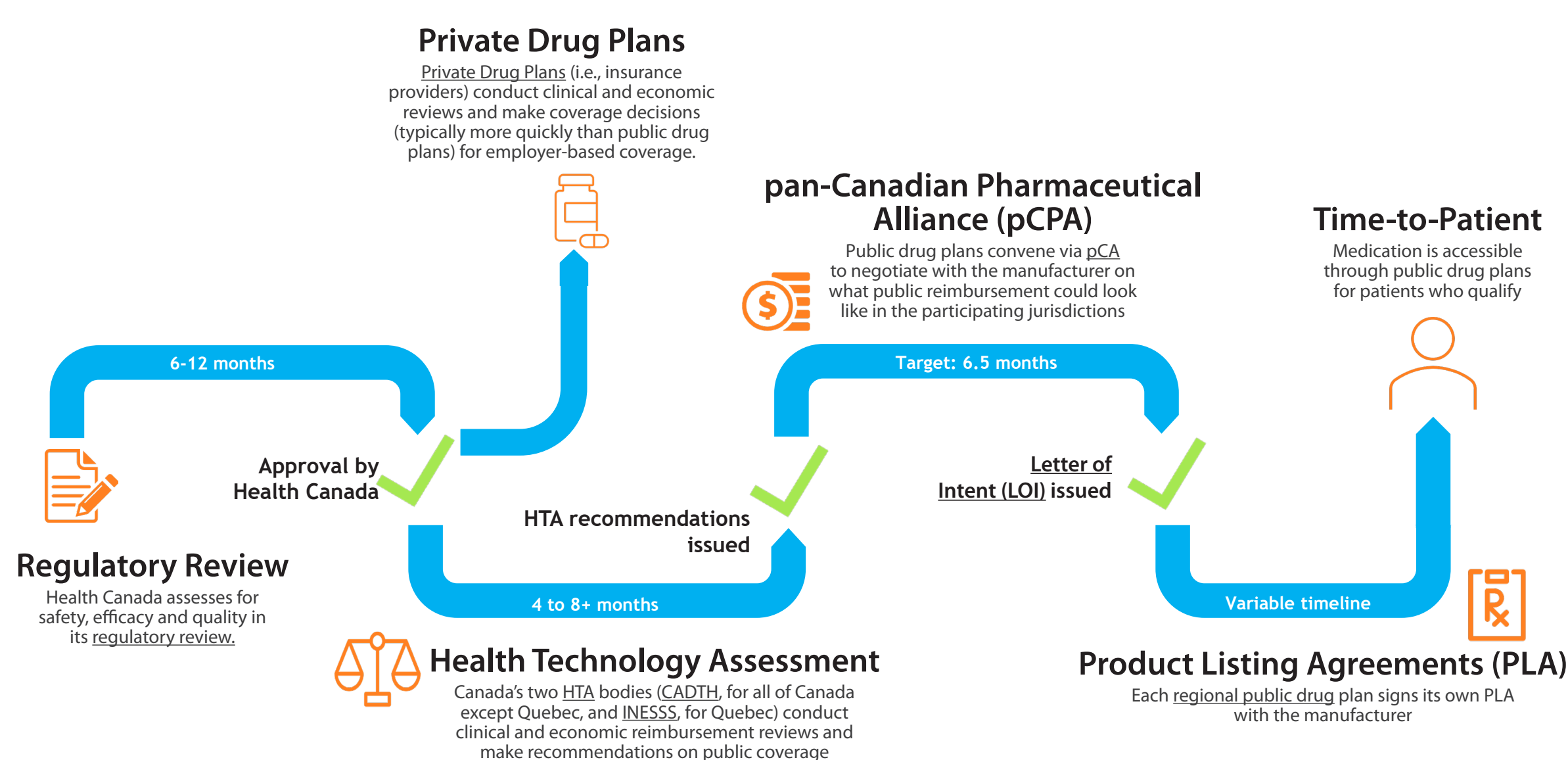


Data analysis: Report, *System Broken: How Public Drug Coverage is Failing Canadians with Mental Illness*, found a significantly higher rate of negative reimbursement recommendations for psychiatric medications compared to medications for other medical disorders (54% vs 17%), substantial delays (average 2.5 years), and an inequality of publicly funded medications (38% not publicly reimbursed) across Canada's most populated provinces (accessmedication.mdsc.ca). Central to these gaps is the need to improve the front-line voice in the reimbursement review process, from PWLE and clinicians that treat them.

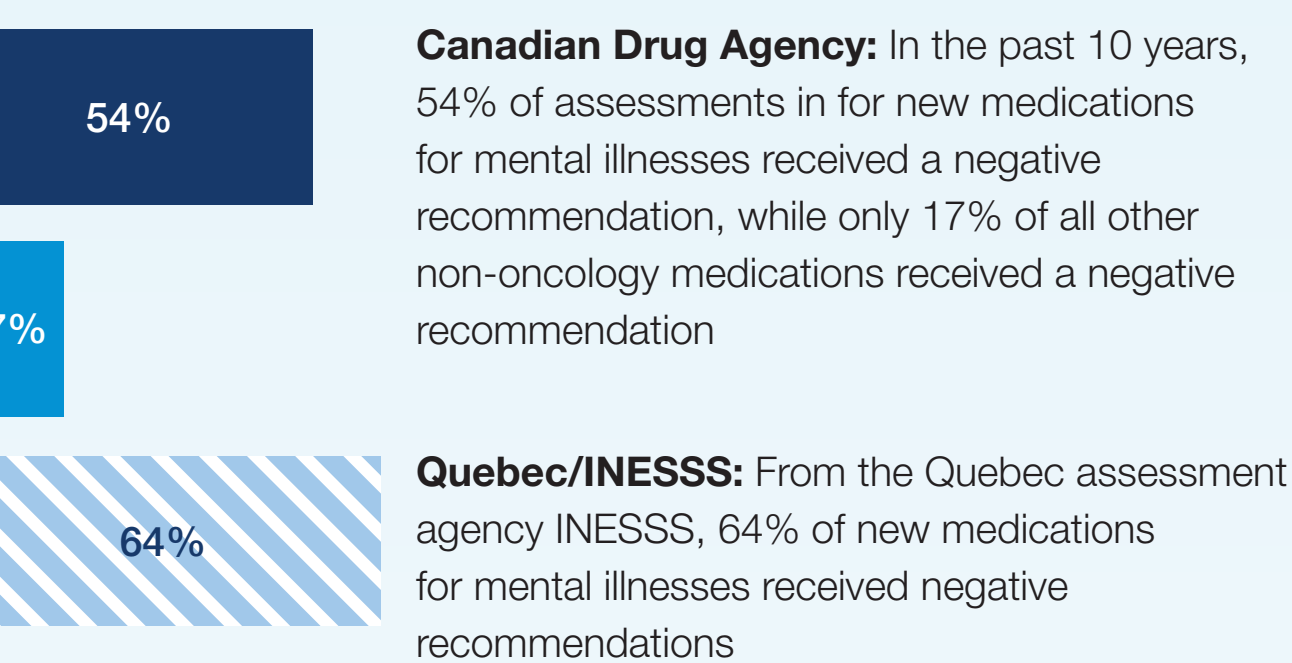
Conducted by an independent third-party life sciences firm, *System Broken* examined Canada's public reimbursement review process for psychiatric drugs approved by Health Canada between 2012 and 2022. The report serves as a pivotal tool in both defining and validating the challenges, contributing to a more nuanced comprehension of the complexities associated with HTA reviews for psychiatric medications; however, the reasons for the variation of the identified HTA reviews remain unclear.

Published in November 2023, *System Broken* was led by a steering committee made up of PWLE, caregivers, physicians, and patient organizations from across Canada representing mental illness and non-mental illness diseases. The steering committee also represented both official languages as well as diverse perspectives, including lived experience, and background with dimensions that took into consideration race, ethnicity, gender, ability, age, geography, role within the health system, nationality, and socioeconomic status, among others. The steering committee guided work to draft the objectives, parameters of data collection, and reviewed and edited the final report. Steering committee members also participated in knowledge translation activities within their communities and nationally. Two of the knowledge translation team (Dr. Khullar and Aimée Tran Ba Huy) are co-authors for this poster.

## Canada's Regulatory and Reimbursement Pathway (for Non-oncology Drugs)



## Canadian HTA Drug Reimbursement Recommendations



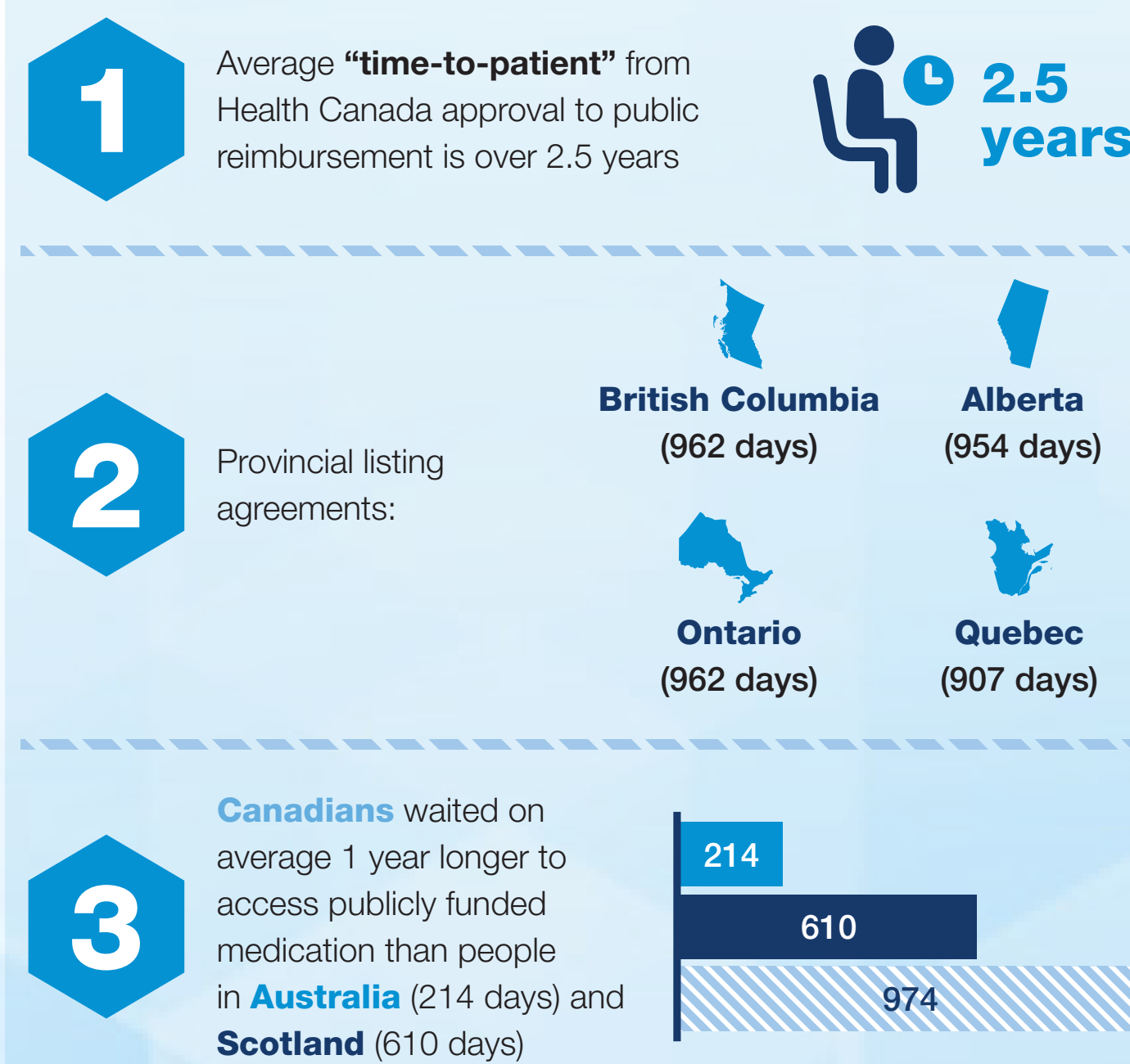
Comparison of CDA-AMC HTAs for mental illness medications vs non-mental illness (non-oncology) medications, undergoing HTA review between 2012-2022.

	CDA-AMC HTAs for selected mental health indications in System Broken report	CDA-AMC HTAs for non-mental health indications*
Total number of assessments	13	384
Number of negative recommendations	7	67
Percentage of assessments that received a negative recommendation	54%	17%

\*Excluding oncology  
NB: This table only looked at if there were differences between HTA recommendations for mental illness vs. other non-oncology disorders – it did not explore the reasons why those differences may exist.

## Untimely Access

- Unacceptable delays
- Average time in 4 key provinces
- Longer than other similar countries



Overview of reimbursement outcomes for mental illness medications in Canada compared to three other countries with similar HTA processes, 2012-2022.

HTA assessment	Canada						Australia	Scotland	UK
	CDA-AMC	INESSS	BC	AB	ON	QC			
Number of HTA reviews conducted	13	13	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12	8	4
Negative HTA recommendations given (#)	7	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	3	2
Negative HTA recommendations given (%)	54%	62%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	33%	38%	50%
<b>Reimbursement</b>									
# of medications that underwent HTA and were not reimbursed	7	7	6	8	4	3	2		
% of medications that underwent HTA and were not reimbursed	54%	54%	42%	62%	33%	38%	50%		
Time-to-patient for medications undergoing HTA review (# of days from regulatory approval to public reimbursement)	962	954	962	907	214	610	1,414		

## Addressing Gaps: MDSC Health System Roundtable

MDSC hosted a first-of-its-kind health system roundtable in May 2024 where participants from different points of view within the reimbursement review system (CDA-AMC, other government, industry, patient organizations, PWLE, caregivers, students, health researchers, health economists) discussed ways to amplify the front-line voices of PWLE and clinicians within the reimbursement review process to ensure equitable access to publicly funded medications for mental illnesses. A set of three clear recommendations stemmed from the roundtable – as shown in the Executive Summary.

**Pathways to Equity Roundtable**  
Read the Report Here:  
[AccessToMedication.mdsc.ca](https://www.accessmedication.mdsc.ca)

## Mental Illness by the Numbers

- In any given year, **1 in 5** Canadians experiences a mental illness.<sup>20</sup>
- 1 in 3** Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime.<sup>21</sup>
- Nearly **50%** of caregivers to loved ones living with mental health problems and illnesses report their role has a negative impact on their own mental health.<sup>22</sup>
- An estimated **3 million** Canadians have a mood (such as depression) and/or anxiety disorder, making these disorders among the most common in the country.<sup>23</sup>
- 5%** of Canadians report having received a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosis.<sup>24</sup>
- 2.2%** of Canadians will experience bipolar disorder at some point in their lifetime.<sup>25</sup>
- More than **360,000** Canadians have some form of schizophrenia and 3% of the population will experience psychosis at some time in their lives.<sup>26</sup>
- Up to **80%** of people with mental illnesses are affected by poor sleep, including falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up earlier than intended.<sup>27</sup>
- By the time Canadians reach 40 years of age, **1 in 2** have – or have had – a mental illness.<sup>28</sup>

References 20-27 can be found in the System Broken report. 28. Smetana et al. (2011). The life and economic impact of major mental illnesses in Canada: 2011-2041. Prepared for the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Toronto: RiskAnalytics.

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) is a national, not-for-profit, Lived Experience driven, health charity committed to ensuring Canadians impacted by mental illness, their family members and caregivers are heard on issues relating to mental illness and mental health. MDSC advocates to improve access to treatment, inform research, and shape program development and government policies to improve the quality of life for people affected by mood disorders.

Due to the heterogeneity of mental illnesses, successful treatment often requires an individualized trial-and-error approach, making access to all medications essential. This is precisely why it's crucial to have psychiatrists with specific expertise in the drug being reviewed and the particular mental illness in question involved in the reimbursement review process. Our insights are vital to ensure a comprehensive range of accessible treatment options for our patients.

DR. KHULLAR

