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## Accreditation



ACCREDITATION CANADA  
AGRÉMENT CANADA

*Driving Quality Health Services  
Force motrice de la qualité des services de santé*



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# Implementing Accreditation Canada's Program in Brazil



**F**or the past few years, Brazilian health organizations have been pursuing quality improvement and better patient safety in their services and processes. This has been motivated by economic factors related to insufficient remuneration to cover costs, changes to the doctor-patient relationship in an era of globalization where patients have easier access to information about available treatment and care, and legal issues as patient safety and patient rights increasingly come to the forefront.

Health organizations began to look to accreditation and quality management programs to improve their processes and manage risk, as well as to prevent and reduce the occurrence of adverse events. Through the dissemination and methodological improvement of the accreditation system in Brazil, organizations have been able to gradually focus their attention on improving the quality of their services by providing safe, cost-effective service.

Brazilian health care evaluations are predominantly quantitative and focused on technological fields. These evaluations, which issue excellence rankings to health organizations, have proven insufficient for verifying quality improvement in health services.

Discussions about mechanisms to effectively assess services have gone hand in hand with the development of programs and accreditation systems. As quality improvement programs are implemented, health care organizations are developing greater visibility, transparency, and efficiency, as well as more effective processes in both professional and care environments.

## History

In recent decades, nationalist economic attitudes have been declining and barriers to global knowledge, commerce, and investment opportunities have all but disappeared. These changes led forward-looking Brazilian health organizations to seek out management practices that are used internationally.

This movement is challenging the management practices of many Brazilian health organizations that often operate as though “good” was good enough. Although a vision of international excellence still only reaches a few of them, more and more are slowly starting to realize that their position and performance can be substantially improved by consciously applying international quality management and patient safety processes.

In Brazil today there are more than 6,000 hospitals. About 200 of these have sought to define practices and processes to produce excellent and sustainable results, thus transforming what were just “good” facilities into excellent ones. These visionary organizations believe that excellence in health care consists of a willingness to do well and to operate in harmony within domestic and foreign contexts. Maintaining best practices requires constant renewal, starting with a transition to a culture where information from outside Brazil cannot be ignored and where people have the opportunity to be heard. Focusing on improving institutional communication and information sharing is a new way of thinking about and practicing medicine in Brazil, and this needs to be facilitated by national or international external accreditation methodologies.

Accreditation Canada’s international accreditation program, centred on a holistic and patient-focused vision, paves the way for Brazilian health organizations seeking a new

conceptual positioning of their business and their livelihood. Accreditation Canada worked closely with its Brazilian partner, Instituto Qualisa de Gestão (IQG), to develop an awareness of Brazil’s culture and the realities of its health system, and to create the conditions necessary to provide health care in accordance with internationally recognized standards of excellence. Accreditation Canada, with its knowledge of international practices, and IQG, one of Brazil’s largest accreditation organizations, were able to develop over three years a quality management and accreditation model adapted to the Brazilian market.

Brazilian organizations that have adopted Accreditation Canada’s international program are adjusting their management practices to stimulate debate, to encourage the exchange of ideas among accredited

organizations, and to develop best practices for patient care and safety. The alignment with international quality improvement strategies creates a results-based process that uses systematic analysis of defined protocols, scientific evidence, the organizational model, and structures designed to support their business.

## Unique Features of Accreditation Canada’s Program in Brazil

For the accreditation program to be successful in Brazil, it must take into account political and technical context, function as part of the institutional culture, and be built on consensus about existing capabilities and priorities in risk areas. Recognizing the technical and political context helps ensure an ongoing positive attitude towards developing and advancing quality within the health care organizations that join the accreditation program. The focus of accreditation in the Brazilian market is to monitor what is planned and what is executed. This is done not only by assessing established standards, but also by carrying out ongoing comparisons between theory and practice and between documentation and action taken.

Despite the need to adjust to the realities of Brazil being a large developing country with both constitutional public and supplementary private health systems, there was agreement on the need to improve the quality of the Brazilian health system by focusing on quality improvement and prioritizing patient safety. Since its very beginning, this accreditation initiative has relied on a close collaboration between Canadian and

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Brazilian experts who worked to develop and disseminate the proposal and create consensus on the accreditation process, which is based on Accreditation Canada's Client-Centred Accreditation Program (CCAP).

There are some aspects of the program that needed to be strengthened in Brazil prior to its implementation:

- It is up to the community to set goals and prioritize action according to the needs of the population.
- It is the responsibility of institutions to stimulate reflection and analysis about their experiences, and offer skills that contribute to improvement.
- The accreditation process empowers health care organizations by encouraging them to overcome obstacles, conduct ongoing self-assessment, and validate the actions they undertake.

Another important concept is that the accreditation system is only truly implemented when everyone in the organization, including medical and other professional staff, understand and apply the principles of accreditation on a daily basis. To make this happen, the organization needs to

- know its processes, products, and users
- understand that cooperation on ongoing improvement projects is vital

- establish strategic goals and objectives
- know how to identify the cause and effect relationship of its own processes
- develop indicators that are used and improved as necessary, and recognize their operational value

It took a few years, but the result is the implementation of the Canadian accreditation program, fully adapted to the Brazilian context.

## Conclusion

It is well-known in health care that the first phase of quality management was "Quality Assurance," which was based on ensuring minimum standards of quality and monitoring performance of individual cases. In Brazil, as in a number of countries where the model of health care is being discussed and developed, the majority of organizations are still using this model from the 1960s.

Accreditation Canada's international program offers a new and innovative approach to quality improvement and management. While there is still much to be done to implement the international accreditation program in Brazil, the major innovation of this model presupposes a new institutional culture and will result in a new model of care.

Today, after three years of work, Brazil now has four hospitals accredited by Accreditation Canada and twenty-two hospitals (four of which are public) that are currently undergoing accreditation.

Initial results are encouraging. Patients and health professionals recognize that medical care could be better, and accreditation initiatives to reform the management systems of health care organizations are successful in heightening the attention on quality and increasing the confidence of clients and patients. These factors are key to ensuring the sustainability and long-term success of Brazilian health care organizations. Q

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