

10 health stories that mattered: Nov. 18–22

- An estimated 111 800 Canadians aged 14–79 (0.4%) are infected with the hepatitis B virus and about 138 600 (0.5%) have hepatitis C infections, according to Statistics Canada. About half of people with hepatitis B and 70% of those with hepatitis C were unaware of their infections, states the report.
- Canada needs national performance benchmarks to reduce emergency department wait times, according to a position statement from the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians. Emergency department overcrowding is not caused by unnecessary visits, states the paper, but rather by the inability to access enough inpatient beds.
- Canada performs poorly in patient safety, lung cancer, obesity and diabetes compared to other member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, states a report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Canada ranks high, however, in consumption of fruits and vegetables, and has low smoking rates.
- Many users of medical marijuana fear their privacy has been violated by Health Canada, which sent some 40 000 people letters in envelopes that contained the words “Marijuana Medical Access Program.” Previous correspondence about the program came by registered mail in plain envelopes, a licensed grower told the CBC.
- The number of Ontarians with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is increasing, according to the Ontario Lung Association. Newly released statistics indicate there were 85 000 new cases between 2008 and 2011.
- British Columbia will invest \$20 million to improve health services for patients with severe addiction and mental illness. The money will fund an “action plan” for people with complex needs that includes developing a psychiatric assessment and stabilization unit and creating an outreach team to help people in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.
- Alberta is establishing a health charter and a health advocate’s office. The charter will set out the government’s commitment to the Alberta Health Act, which comes into effect Jan. 1, 2014. The health advocate’s office will help patients navigate the health care system.
- The Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario took the top spot for pediatric care in a patient satisfaction report released by the National Research Corporation and the Ontario Hospital Association. The hospital received the highest ranking, compared to 26 other hospitals, on patient and parent satisfaction with overall inpatient care.
- New Brunswick youth are facing a number of challenging physical and mental health issues, according to *The 2013 New Brunswick State of the Child Report*. The teenage obesity rate is 28%, hospital admission rates related to behavioural and learning disorders are three times the national average and 58% of youth in grades 6–12 report having been bullied.
- New support workers in the emergency department of the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba, will help youth suspected to be victims of violence. A two-year pilot project called the Emergency Department Violence Intervention Program has received funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. — Roger Collier, *CMAJ*

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