

10 health stories that mattered: Nov.11–15

- Ontario is increasing its efforts to reduce smoking. The government is proposing regulatory changes to ban the sale of flavoured tobacco products, increase penalties for selling tobacco to youth and prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sports fields and patios of bars and restaurants.
- Health Canada's inability to recall drugs came under scrutiny this week. The federal agency approves drugs for sale but can only request that unsafe drugs be recalled. The decision whether to pull drugs from the market is left to manufacturers and distributors.
- A legal challenge to the federal ban on prescription heroin has been launched in British Columbia. Five patients who received heroin as part of the Study to Assess Longer-term Opioid Medication Effectiveness are behind the challenge.
- Patient-safety concerns regarding increased powers for naturopaths have been raised by the Ontario Medical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. Naturopaths in Ontario have proposed new powers, including the right to prescribe drugs and order lab tests, as part of their transition to becoming a self-governing health profession.
- More than 1150 family doctors and nurses who work in rural and remote areas have benefited from a student loan forgiveness program since April 2013, announced the federal government. Under the program, family doctors can receive as much as \$40 000 in loan forgiveness and nurses up to \$20 000.
- There have been 28 confirmed cases of measles in southern Alberta. The province is opening more immunization clinics in an attempt to prevent the outbreak from spreading.
- Halifax, Nova Scotia, has been chosen as a test site of an international clinical trial for a vaccine for *Clostridium difficile*. The trial will involve 15 000 volunteers in 17 countries and will last about five years.
- Growing a moustache for prostate cancer awareness or "liking" charities on Facebook are forms of "slacktivism" and are less effective than private commitments to causes, according to academics from the University of British Columbia. Token public displays of support do not appear to increase likelihood of future donations or volunteering.
- A 70-bed field hospital will be set up in the Philippines by the Canadian Red Cross to treat victims of Typhoon Haiyan. A team of 12 Red Cross staff will man the hospital, which will be in place for four months and can treat 300 people a day.
- Lung cancer is underaddressed as a public health threat because of the stigma of being associated with smoking, according to Lung Cancer Canada. The disease accounts for more than 28% of cancer deaths in Canada, yet receives only 7% of cancer-specific research funding and less than 1% of cancer donations. — Roger Collier, *CMAJ*

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