

10 health stories that mattered: Mar. 17–21

- Canadians must destroy and dispose of medical marijuana obtained under outgoing regulations by Mar. 31, states a memo from Health Canada. Those who had obtained marijuana under the expiring Marijuana Medical Access Regulations have until Apr. 30 to notify Health Canada that they no longer possess the drug or will face “compliance and enforcement action,” which could include a visit from law enforcement.
- New cases of measles are still occurring in regions of British Columbia, warns Fraser Health. The most recent cases include a public school student and a retail employee. Dr. Paul Van Buynder, vice president, public health, and chief medical officer of Fraser Health, recommends that people who have not received the measles vaccine get immunized and says those who have been exposed should isolate themselves until 21 days after exposure (the maximum incubation period).
- The number of Wikipedia citations in peer-reviewed papers published in medical journals is on the rise, according to a study by Canadian researchers in the *British Medical Journal*. “Many publications are citing information from a tertiary source that can be edited by anyone, although permanent, evidence-based sources are available,” the authors conclude. “We encourage journal editors and reviewers to use caution when publishing articles that cite Wikipedia.”
- Health Canada has proposed a \$232 000 contract to a Quebec firm to collect data on e-cigarette sales across the country over the past two years, reports the *Ottawa Citizen*. The agency plans to use the information to monitor the number and types of e-cigarettes sold in retail outlets, the companies offering the products and any sales trends that have emerged.
- Ontario is moving to prohibit payments for blood and plasma through the introduction of the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014. The government states that a ban on payments, including reimbursements or other forms of compensation, will strengthen the current model of voluntary donations and help “protect the integrity of our public blood donor system.”
- Canada’s first seniors advocate has been appointed by British Columbia Health Minister Terry Lake. The Office of the Seniors Advocate will work to improve care for the province’s nearly 700 000 seniors by collaborating with seniors, families, service providers and policy-makers. The appointment follows the passing of the Seniors Advocate Act, the first legislation of its kind in the country.
- Alberta plans to increase its flu immunization rate from 27% to 45%. The province has budgeted \$12.5 million to purchase more than 2 million doses of the flu vaccine, up from 1.3 million doses, and hopes to reduce the number of flu-related hospitalizations by 80%.
- Saskatchewan’s budget promises record health funding of nearly \$5 billion. Highlights include \$16 million to complete a new hospital in Moose Jaw, \$60.5 million to reduce surgical wait times, \$13.15 million for Collaborative Emergency Centres, \$4.5 million for the HomeFirst/Quick Response Homecare program and \$155.7 million for cancer care initiatives. Regional health authorities in the province will receive \$3.25 billion, an increase of 3.4% over last year.
- New Brunswick pharmacists may soon be able to prescribe drugs for 32 minor ailments, including warts, fungal infections, hay fever and muscle strains. The recently proposed Pharmacy Act, which could come into effect by this summer, will allow the pharmacy profession to evolve and better meet patient needs, according to the New Brunswick Pharmaceutical Society.
- The first public residential treatment facility for children and youth with eating disorders in Ontario will open this fall in Whitby. It will have 12 beds and treat about 32 patients a year. Currently, children and youth with eating disorders requiring 24-hour care are referred to programs in the United States. — Roger Collier, *CMAJ*

CMAJ 2014. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.109-4768