



## Pulse

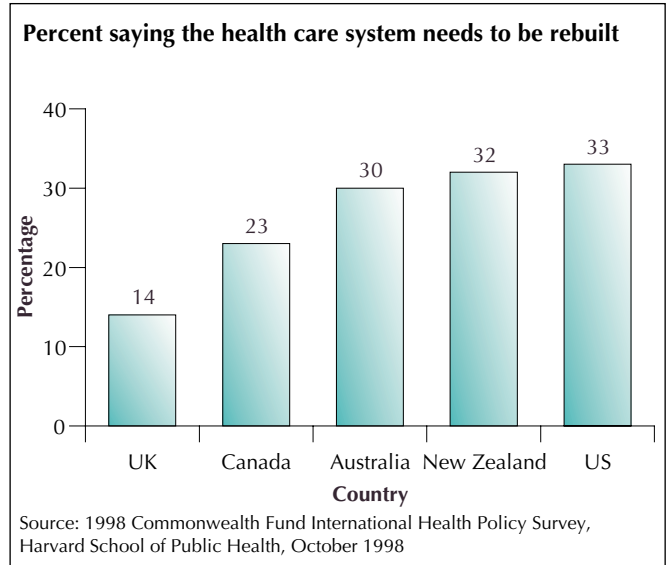
# Canadians not alone in complaining about health care

A solid majority of Canadians believe that the health care system needs either fundamental change or complete reconstruction, a survey reveals. The poll, by the Harvard University School of Public Health, indicates that more than half of Canadians (56%) feel the system requires additional change. Another 23% said the system is functioning so poorly it needs to be rebuilt.

Citizens in other countries had similar concerns about their health care systems. In New Zealand less than 10% of respondents said their system works well and requires only minor changes, compared with 25% of respondents in the United Kingdom and 17% in the United States. In Canada, the percentage of respondents who agreed that only minor changes were required has dropped from 56% of respondents in 1988 to 20% in 1998.

Many respondents — 25% in Canada, 29% in New Zealand and 45% in the United Kingdom — cited the level of government funding as the most important problem facing health care. Almost half of all Canadians polled (47%) reported difficulties seeing specialists and consultants, while 38% identified waiting times as the reason people did not get the medical care they required.

Of the 5 countries compared, Canada had the highest percentage of respondents (46%) who believed that re-



cent changes to the health care system will harm the quality of care.

**This column was written by Lynda Buske, chief, physician resources information planning, CMA. Readers may send potential research topics to Patrick Sullivan (sullip@cma.ca; 613 731-8610 or 800 663-7336, x2126; fax 613 565-2382).**

### Briefly . . .

#### **Injuries cost \$8.7 billion a year**

*Toronto* — More than 2 million Canadians are injured every year at an annual cost of more than \$8.7 billion, SMARTRISK, a national non-profit organization dedicated to injury prevention, reports. Its study, which was funded by Health Canada, Ontario's Ministry of Health and the Kingston, Ont., health unit, provides the first quantifiable data on injuries that includes injuries that did not require hospitalization. For information, contact SMARTRISK at 416 463-9878 or [www.smartrisk.ca](http://www.smartrisk.ca).

#### **New COPD guidelines**

*Toronto* — New *Guidelines for the treatment of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease* are designed to help family

practitioners diagnose and manage this serious illness. The 46-page booklet was developed by the Canadian Respiratory Review Panel, which comprises respirologists, other physicians and pharmacists. About 750 000 Canadians have COPD, which is a leading cause of death. For information contact 416 597-6867 or email [mums@fox.nstn.ca](mailto:mums@fox.nstn.ca).

#### **Heated mugwort turns babies**

*Washington* — A randomized controlled trial has proved the effectiveness of an ancient Chinese remedy used to turn breech babies before birth. In China, the herb mugwort has traditionally been heated next to the little toe of a pregnant woman. *JAMA* recently reported (1998;280:1580-4) on a test involving 130 subjects. There was a 30% difference in the number of cephalic presentations at 35 weeks and term between the intervention and control groups.