Briefly

Pathogens: Researchers and all others responsible for activities involving toxins or human pathogens, such as mumps virus or *Clostridium difficile*, must register with the Public Health Agency of Canada by Sept. 21 under a new Human Pathogens and Toxins Act approved by Parliament before it recessed for the summer. The act also establishes a new licensing and regulatory regime that, once fully implemented, will enforce safe laboratory practices for handling of human pathogens and toxins, a list of which is available at: www.parl.gc.ca.

Information-less: The National Research Council of Canada says widespread reports that it is about to slash up to 70% of the budget of its Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information are entirely premature. "Through our Strategic Review process, NRC is realigning some resources and programs to support government priorities and the needs of industry and other critical research partners. As changes from Strategic Review are phased in over the next 12 to 18 months, plans for these activities are not yet finalized and still currently being developed," spokesperson Marc Hudon said in an email.

Appointment: Dr. Wendy S. Levinson, the University of Toronto Sir John and Lady Eaton Professor and Chair of the Department of Medicine has been named Chair of the Board of Directors of the American Board of Internal Medicine. The independent not-for-profit organization grants certification to internists and subspecialists.

Patient adherence: Three large pharmaceutical companies are contributing a total of \$1.2 million to fund a University of Saskatchewan research chair to study why many patients don't take

drugs as prescribed. Patient non-adherence to drug therapy is "one of the biggest issues facing health care today," Dr. Dennis Gorecki, dean of the college of pharmacy and nutrition, stated in a press release announcing the new chair. But Wendy Armstrong, a spokesperson for Vancouver-based PharmaWatch, dismissed the creation of the chair as "a marketing study for the drug companies." Non-compliance is often a legitimate difference of opinion that reflects the consistent failure of prescribers to acknowledge side effects reported by patients, she says. Inappropriate and overzealous prescribing, drug industry influence on prescribing protocols and lack of full disclosure of clinical trial results are "more pressing health care issues."

Fertility treatment tourism: A study of cross-border migration within Europe for fertility treatment found that almost two-thirds of the migrants came from Italy. The main reason for going abroad for treatment was to avoid legal restrictions at home, according to the survey, though access to care was an issue for women from the United Kingdom. The survey was of 1230 patients from clinics in 6 countries over a one month period. The average age of treatment-seekers was 37.5. Study coordinator Dr. Françoise Shenfield presented results at the 35th annual conference of the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology.

Studying children: In almost all medical specialties, randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of adults are increasing at a faster rate than pediatric trials, according to research from the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. The exceptions are immunology and tropical medicine, where the rise in trials of children outpaces that of adults. "If RCTs are considered the gold standard for assess-

ing safety and efficacy of interventions, this has implications for the quality of evidence-based care delivered to children." Dr. Eyal Cohen was lead author of the research, presented in June, as an abstract at the Canadian Pediatric Society conference in Ottawa.

Antipsychotics for seniors: An increasing proportion of senior citizens in Canada are being prescribed antipsychotic medication, according to study of 6 provincial public drug programs by the Canadian Institutes for Health Information (CIHI). The drugs were developed to treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder but are increasingly being prescribed to treat "symptoms associated with dementia" which include agitation, aggression and delusions, according to the CIHI study. The proportion of seniors prescribed the drugs increased to 5% in 2006-7 from 4.3% in 2001-2, the study states..

Tamiflu for infants: Canada's doctors have been given a green light to treat infants with tamiflu because of their heightened vulnerability to the pandemic H1N1 virus. No antiviral has been authorized for treatment of this age group, but federal Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq signed an interim order this week allowing for tamiflu use among children under the age of one. Canadian epidemiological data shows higher rates of hospitalization and death from influenza in this group, and "there is an urgent need for recommendations to treat this population," Dr. David Butler-Jones, Canada's chief public health officer told a press conference yesterday. The United Kingdom and the United States have already taken the step. — Roger Collier, Ann Silversides and Wayne Kondro, CMAJ

DOI:10.1503/cmaj.091237