

Briefly

Ontario drug reform: Ontario has launched a review of its prescription drug system that takes aim at pricing of generic drugs and how pharmacies are compensated. Consultations with stakeholders are to be completed in September and legislative changes could follow in early 2010. It's been three years since the Transparent Drug System for Patients Act was passed. The province reported savings as a result of those reforms but Ron Sapsford, deputy minister for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, stated in a July presentation that the professional allowance system introduced in the Act has kept generic drug prices "higher than they should be." As well, he stated that despite increased spending intended to improve services to patients, they are not receiving a higher level of service under the current system.

Stem cell guidelines: The United States' National Institutes of Health (NIH) has released new guidelines for human stem cell research. The guidelines, which came into effect on July 7, implement an executive order (Removing Barriers to Responsible Scientific Research Involving Human Stem Cells) issued by US President Barack Obama on March 9. The order called for support of "responsible, scientifically worthy human stem cell research, including human embryonic stem cell research." The NIH published a draft of the guidelines for comment in April. It received about 49 000 comments from various groups, including patient advocacy groups, scientific societies and religious organizations.

Canadian cancer portal: A new online portal helps Canadians "cut through the clutter" of information on the Internet and access a range of important cancer-related resources, including Canadian clinical trials, community services and palliative care support. The portal, www.cancerview.ca, is the result of collaboration among regional and national

partners and the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. While many Canadians turn to the Web in their search for information about cancer, the volume of information can be overwhelming and difficult to evaluate, notes Heather Logan senior director for cancer control policy and information with the Canadian Cancer Society, a partner in development of the portal. The site "helps Canadians cut through the clutter by acting as a gateway to leading online cancer resources and tools to make information more useable," she says.

Children who survive cancer: Many survivors of childhood cancer in Canada don't have access to clinics that specialize in long-term survivor care, according to a survey published in the July/August issue of *Paediatric & Child Health*. More than 80% of children recently diagnosed with cancer will survive five years or more, but as a result of their disease and its therapy, almost three-quarters will develop one or more chronic health conditions. In Canada, most children are treated in one of 17 pediatric cancer programs, all of which recognize the importance of lifelong care for survivors, the study found. Some centres discharge survivors at 18 years of age while others keep survivors of all ages in the pediatric centre because of a lack of resources for adults. Only one centre has a formal transition program to minimize the loss of follow-up when patients reach adulthood. Canadian pediatric oncology programs could collaborate and create a national network of childhood cancer survivor programs, the authors conclude.

Dyslexia and work injuries: Young people with dyslexia are almost two times more likely to be hurt on the job than those without, according to a new study from the Institute for Work & Health in Toronto (*Am J Public Health* 2009; 99[8]: 1423-30). Dyslexia involves difficulty with the alphabet, reading, writing and spelling in spite of normal or above-normal intelligence. The study

looked at Statistics Canada information on 14 000 Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24 who worked at some point during 2003. It adjusted for factors that could explain higher injury rates such as being male, being out of school and working in a manual job. People with dyslexia do not usually tell their employers, but employers should be aware of the need for different training and communication styles in the workplace, says study author Dr. Curtis Breslin.

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No deal: The United States Department of Justice says that pharmaceutical patent settlements that delay the introduction of generic drugs to market should be presumed unlawful. In a brief to the US Federal appeals court in New York, argues that brand-name drug makers shouldn't be able to pay generic firms to abandon patent challenges as that could limit market entry by competing generic drugs. The appeals court is considering a case involving a US\$398-million patent settlement between Bayer and Teva's Barr unit over the antibiotic Cipro (ciprofloxacin).

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