



Veterinarians' suggested fees may leave physicians feeling ill

Physicians who take a close look at fees charged by veterinarians can't be faulted for thinking that medicine is going to the dogs.



The *Ottawa Citizen* recently looked at what pet owners pay for veterinary care. "On average," said the article, "Canadians spent \$479 on their pets in 1990, the latest year for which data were available from Statistics Canada. That's more than double what families spent on pharmaceuticals for themselves and just slightly more than what humans pay on average to care for their own teeth."

The charges are only guidelines, since the voluntary veterinary association

is not allowed to set fees. The following table, which accompanied the article, compares veterinarians' fees with those paid to physicians by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP).

Table 1: What veterinarians charge to provide medical care for dogs/cats and how much physicians receive from OHIP for human patients

Medical service	Ontario Veterinary Fee Guide	What OHIP pays to MDs
Diagnostic ultrasound		
Pregnancy	\$104.00	\$ 77.90
Abdominal scan	\$144.40	\$ 77.90
Diagnostic x-ray		
Colon, barium enema	\$136.20	\$ 70.77
Urethrogram	\$159.20	\$ 24.32
Femur, 1 joint (2 views)	\$ 84.20	\$ 20.25
Intravenous pyelogram	\$128.10	\$ 71.23
Other services		
Electrocardiogram	\$ 66.30	\$ 15.50
Annual physical exam	\$ 39.30	\$ 48.20
Mileage (house call)	\$ 1.70/km	\$ 0.00
House call (normal hours)	\$ 52.50 + exam	\$ 16.70 + exam
Injection (outpatient)	\$ 18.20 + drug/vaccine	\$ 8.00 + drug/vaccine
Blood test (hemoglobin)	\$ 10.60	\$ 2.07
Abdominocentesis	\$ 30.60	\$ 23.20
Urinalysis (complete)	\$ 32.90	\$ 4.14
Amputation (foreleg, at elbow)	\$363.80	\$266.40

Source: *Ottawa Citizen*

"Show us the money," OMA tells province

Ontario's doctors have turned a jaundiced eye on government claims that the amount of money being spent on health care has increased. "If you compare apples to apples, the amount of money being spent on patient care has been increased by \$1 million," OMA President Gerry Rowland said after the Ontario government released its budget in May. "That's about the same amount the government spent on TV ads to tell Ontarians not to worry about their health care system. I see nothing in this budget to reassure patients that access to care will be any better this year."

The government, feeling heat because of criticism over cuts to the health care system, had claimed it was putting more money into the system. However, Rowland pointed out that the government was including restructuring and capital costs in the total budget. Traditionally, only operating expenditures have been included in the budget.

Murder charge shocks Halifaxians

A date for a preliminary hearing involving a Halifax respirologist charged with first-degree murder will be set this month. The case will be followed closely by physicians across the country because it is believed to be the first charge of this type involving a patient death. Paul Mills, 65, had terminal throat cancer and died Nov. 10 at the Victoria General Hospital. Dr. Nancy Morrison was charged May 7; about 60 police officers, who seized documents, were involved in the arrest at the hospital. There is currently a publication ban on evidence presented at a bail hearing, but *CMAJ* will present detailed coverage of issues raised as the case develops.

Residents can practise in underserved areas in NS

Physicians in training at Dalhousie University will be able to obtain a "defined licence"