

Pulse

Canada among leaders in OECD health results

The latest data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) indicate that Canada compares favourably with other highly

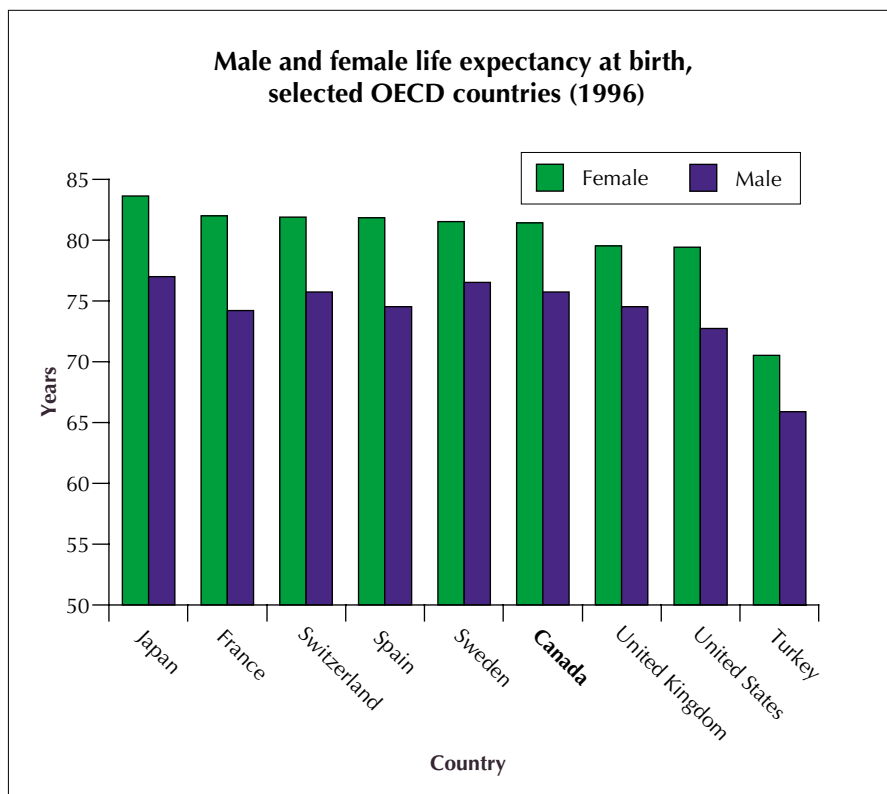
industrialized countries when it comes to life expectancy but is in the middle of the pack in terms of infant mortality.

In 1996, the life expectancy at birth

for a Canadian woman was 81.4 years, which ranked Canada sixth among the 28 countries for which data were available. Only Japan (83.6 years), France (82.0), Switzerland (81.9), Spain (81.8) and Sweden (81.5) have higher life expectancy rates for females. The US, at 79.4 years, ranked 17th, while Turkey had the lowest life expectancy rate for women, 70.5 years.

Canada ranked fourth in life expectancy at birth for men, at 75.7 years. Only Japan (77.0 years), Sweden (76.5), and Iceland (76.2) had superior rates. The US ranked 19th at 72.7 years, while Turkey again had the worst rate, 65.9 years.

In terms of infant mortality, Canada is tied with Belgium and the Czech Republic for 14th place among the 28 countries, with a rate of 6.0 deaths/1000 live births. The United States mirrors Canada, with an infant mortality rate of 6.1/1000. Iceland has the best rate, 3.7/1000 live births, followed closely by Japan (3.8), Finland (3.9) and Norway (4.0). Turkey, at 42.2/1000, had the highest infant mortality rate, with Mexico a distant second at 17/1000. — *Shelley Martin, CMA, martis@cma.ca*



Health promises scarce among US presidential candidates

Unlike 1992, when Bill Clinton rode the promise of universal health care right into the White House, this year's American presidential candidates are much more circumspect about using health care reform as a campaign issue. None is advocating any grand design to throw a safety net over the 44 million Americans who have no health insurance, but all are advocating incre-

mentalism. And none is even hinting at a single-payer national health service like Canada's — especially given the American media focus on ER shutdowns and growing waiting lists in Ontario, Quebec and most other provinces. Yes, these made headlines south of the border this winter.

In their run-up to the primaries, Democratic contenders Al Gore and

Bill Bradley put forward proposals to expand health insurance to children through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), provide tax breaks to small businesses to offer health insurance, add a prescription drug benefit to Medicare (the program that covers the nation's elderly

(Continued on page 1033)