

Briefly

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Diabetes explosion: More than 285 million people worldwide have diabetes, an increase of 150 million over the past decade, according to a report by the International Diabetes Federation. At the current growth rate, the number of people with diabetes will exceed 435 million in 2030, the federation said. India has the most people with diabetes (50.8 million), followed by China (43.2 million), the United States (26.8 million), the Russian Federation (9.6 million) and Brazil (7.6 million). Nauru has the world's highest rate of diabetes, with 30.9% of its adult population living with the disease. That's followed by the United Arab Emirates (18.7%), Saudi Arabia (16.8%), Mauritius (16.2%), Bahrain (15.4%), Reunion (15.3%) and Kuwait (14.6%).

World hunger: For the first time since 1970, more than 1.02 billion of the world's people are undernourished, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's annual report on world hunger (www.fao.org/docrep/012/i0876e/i0876e00.htm). But as a percentage of the world's population, the number of hungry people is smaller because the world's population is now seven billion, as compared to four billion in 1970. The report indicates that the largest population of undernourished people is in the Asia-Pacific region (642 million), followed by sub-Saharan Africa (265 million), Latin America (53 million), and the Middle East and North Africa (42 million).

Diabetes guidelines: The International Diabetes Federation has unveiled global diabetes guidelines for pregnancy, oral health and blood glucose self-monitoring (www.idf.org/clinical-practice-guidelines). The guidelines are intended to "cover important but

often neglected areas of diabetes care," said Dr. Stephen Colagiuri, chair of the federation's task force on clinical guidelines. They appear very broad — the oral care guidelines, for example, urge regular dental checkups and annual examinations for evidence of gum disease.

Rising fees: Tuition at Canada's medical schools rose an average of 4% for undergraduate medical students in the 2009/10 academic year, Statistics Canada reports. The average fee was \$10 216, trailing only dentistry at \$13 988. Tuition fees for pharmacy rose 5.1% to \$8792, while those for veterinary medicine rose 15.6% to \$5110 and those for nursing rose 3.1% to \$4558.

Ageism: Age discrimination will be banned in the United Kingdom's National Health Service by 2012, Health secretary Andy Burnham announced in the wake of a government review which indicated that the elderly faced systemic, institutional barriers to health and mental health services. "The age discrimination ban in the Equality Bill should apply for health and social care across England, Wales and Scotland at the same time as other sectors — in 2012. Meeting that deadline is ambitious, but achievable — and it's vital if a central tenet of the National Care Service, the pursuit of fairness and equity, is to be upheld," Burnham said in a speech to a national children and adult services conference (www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Speeches/DH_107455).

Fast-tracking: The United Kingdom's National Health Service (NHS) shelled out more than £1.5 million over three years, including £828 413 in fiscal 2008/09, to provide private health treatment for more than 3000 staff, according to Freedom of Information figures released to Liberal Democrat health spokesman Norman Lamb (www.libdems.org.uk/news_detail.aspx?title=NHS_paid_%C2%A31.5m_on_staff_private_health

[care_says_Norman_Lamb&pPK=18b089bd-4600-40e7-8bdc-2b99f31441f8](http://www.libdems.org.uk/news_detail.aspx?title=NHS_paid_%C2%A31.5m_on_staff_private_health)). The NHS said that allowing doctors, nurses, administrative staff and paramedics to skirt lengthy waiting lists for treatment was necessary to get them back to work but Lamb countered that is "little comfort for those people stuck on waiting lists trying to get access to treatment."

Global health risks: Childhood underweight, unsafe sex, alcohol use, lack of safe water and sanitation and hygiene, and high blood pressure are the cause of one-quarter of the world's 60 million annual deaths, according a World Health Organization report (www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/global_health_risks/en/index.html). The *Global Health Risks* report also indicates that global life expectancy could increase by five years if those factors were addressed.

Alberta Health Act: The government of Alberta should add "sustainability and accountability" to the five principles of the Canada Health Act (comprehensiveness, accessibility, universality, portability and public administration) and write them into an Alberta Health Act to govern operations of the province's health care system, the Alberta Medical Association says. In a brief to the Minister's Advisory Committee on Health, AMA President Dr. Christopher Doig also urged that the definitions of comprehensiveness and accessibility be modernized ([www.albertadoctors.org/bcm/ama/ama-website.nsf/AllIDoc/6BDF70FA916324FD87257655006FC0BB/\\$File/AMA_Presents_AdvisoryComm_Oct09.pdf](http://www.albertadoctors.org/bcm/ama/ama-website.nsf/AllIDoc/6BDF70FA916324FD87257655006FC0BB/$File/AMA_Presents_AdvisoryComm_Oct09.pdf)).

Mixed grades: Auditor General of Canada Sheila Fraser says the federal government has failed to develop an overall plan for handling emergencies such as pandemics, terrorist attacks, earthquakes, floods or other natural disasters (www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_200911_07_e_33208

.html). “Until it is clearly established how Public Safety Canada will work with other departments, it will be difficult for it to truly coordinate the federal response to emergency situations,” Fraser told a press conference following the release of the *2009 November Report of the Auditor General of Canada*. Meanwhile, Fraser gave passing grades to Canada Health Infoway for its management of \$1.6 billion spent to date on the development of electronic health

records, although she noted that there is a need to tighten up processes for awarding contracts and to improve transparency (www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_200911_04_e_33205.html).

Pneumonia action plan: The World Health Organization and UNICEF have unveiled a US\$39-billion Global Action Plan to reduce the number of child deaths caused by pneumonia in 68 high prevalence countries. The organizations

estimate the plan could save five million children by 2015. It’s now estimated that 4000 children under age 5 die daily from pneumonia. The plan recommends vaccinations against diseases that place children at higher risk of pneumonia, as well as more aggressive use of antibiotics as a treatment (www.unicef.org/media/files/GAPP3_web.pdf). — Wayne Kondro, *CMAJ*

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