

10 health stories that mattered May 12–16

- British Columbia is the first province to release HIV testing guidelines that encourage all adults to get tested for the virus. The province argues that regular testing will reduce stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS and enable earlier diagnoses so patients can receive treatment more quickly.
- A doctor visiting Canada who had contact with a patient with Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) in Florida shows no symptoms of the illness. It can take up to 16 days to develop MERS, so health authorities have asked the man to remain in Canada until they are certain it is safe for him to travel.
- Several drugs used to treat nausea and vomiting during cancer treatment have been linked by Health Canada to the risk of serotonin syndrome, a potentially fatal condition that occurs when serotonin accumulates in the body to a dangerously high level. The drugs listed in the safety review, which increase the risk of the syndrome when used in combination with other drugs that affect serotonin levels, are dolasetron (Anzemet, recently withdrawn from the market), granisetron (Kytril and generics), ondansetron (Zofran and generics) and palonestron (Aloxi).
- Cancer drug manufacturer Biolyse Pharma is considering taking legal action against the government for shutting down its plant in St. Catharines, Ontario. Health Canada suspended the company's licence over concerns with its manufacturing process, but Biolyse, which produces 80% of Canada's supply of the lung and breast cancer drug paclitaxel, claims the regulator's inspection process is inconsistent.
- Health ministers from Alberta and Yukon met with US-based Vertex Pharmaceuticals to question the high price of its cystic fibrosis drug Kalydeco. The medication costs \$350 000 a year in Canada but is cheaper by tens of thousands of dollars in the US.
- Alberta Health Services launched a campaign to reduce the risk of cancer in the province by 50% through education about "accessible and achievable" lifestyle choices. The choices, listed on a new website, include limiting or avoiding certain things (including tobacco and alcohol) and taking up healthy habits (including eating healthily and increasing physical activity).
- The number of nurses in Manitoba reached an all-time high of 17 795 in 2013, an increase of 143 over the year before. Still, the number of vacant nursing positions increased from 1494 in 2012 to 1777 in 2013.
- The Capital District Health Authority in New Brunswick will no longer accept blood samples from Atlantic Blood Collection because of concerns about patient safety and blood quality. Blood collection will come to an end at 11 locations; home visits to collect samples have also been cancelled.
- Health workers are being asked to take polygraph tests at a hospital in Baie Verte, Newfoundland and Labrador, as part of a police investigation over the missing life savings (about \$22 000) of a deceased patient. The hospital had stored the money in its safe for the patient, who didn't have a bank account. Hospital workers have been urged by a union leader to refuse the test.
- A medical student at McGill University in Montréal, has been drafted to play in the National Football League. In addition to his athletic and academic work, Laurent Duvernay-Tardif, 6-foot-5 and 315 pounds, is also working with Shockbox, a company that makes sensors for sports helmets to detect concussions. He plans to continue his medical studies during the NFL's off-seasons and graduate in 2017 or 2018. — Roger Collier, *CMAJ*

CMAJ 2014. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.109-4810