

10 health stories that mattered: Sept. 6–12

- Many Canadian pharmaceutical companies have hidden, altered or destroyed negative test data, failed to report adverse effects, or knowingly sold defective products, according to an investigation by the *Toronto Star*. In reports obtained from the US Food and Drug Administration, the *Star* found that more than 40 companies have been cited for serious manufacturing violations since 2008.
- Canada is experiencing a shortage of the bladder cancer drug bacillus Calmette-Guérin strain Tice, which may lead to an increase in bladder-removal surgeries. The dwindling supply stems from manufacturing problems at plants run by Merck (product name: OncoTICE) and Sanofi Pasteur (product name: ImmuCyst).
- Federal Health Minister Rona Ambrose announced the launch of the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging, which will bring together experts to research dementia and related illnesses. The initiative will receive \$31.5 million over five years from the federal government and partners in the public and private sectors.
- The federal government has proposed reducing paid sick leave for public servants from 15 days a year to 5 days, with no yearly carry-over. It also announced plans for an unpaid seven-day waiting period before short-term disability benefits kick in. This amounts to a “go-to-work-sick” plan, according to Robyn Benson, president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, which opposes the proposal to overhaul existing sick-leave policies.
- Half of Canadian students in grades 9–12 who used tobacco in the previous 30 days consumed flavoured products, according to a survey by the Propel Centre for Population Health Impact at the University of Waterloo. In a press release, the Canadian Cancer Society said it was “very concerned that fruit-and-candy-flavoured tobacco make it easier for youth to become addicted to tobacco. New legislation is needed as soon as possible to ban all flavoured tobacco products.”
- Free sugars should account for no more than 10% of a person’s daily calorie intake, and ideally less than 5%, according to a new position statement from The Heart and Stroke Foundation. It estimates that 13% of Canadians’ calories come from added sugars. The broader category of free sugars includes not only added sugars but also those found in honey, syrups and fruit juices.
- Suicide is the leading cause of death outside of natural causes in Canadian federal prisons, with about 10 inmates taking their own lives each year, according to a report by the Office of the Correctional Investigator. Recommendations to prevent prison suicides include removing all known suspension points in segregation cells and prohibiting long-term segregation of inmates with serious mental illnesses.
- A Vancouver task force released its first report on how to improve the health and housing needs of city residents living with mental health issues and addictions. The report identifies several “action areas,” including focusing on youth and wellness for Aboriginal peoples, destigmatization and enhancing knowledge about addiction.
- Montréal will soon have supervised drug injection sites, says the city’s mayor, Denis Coderre. Though he expects some people to oppose the idea, Coderre announced that three locations will be unveiled in the near future, and some sites may be mobile.
- Holland College in Prince Edward Island has banned electronic cigarettes. Though the province has no regulations for electronic cigarettes, a school official said the college wanted to be proactive on the issue. — Roger Collier, *CMAJ*

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