

10 health stories that mattered: Sept. 20–26

- Health Canada has asked the pharmaceutical company Apotex to quarantine products from its facility in Bangalore, India. Last week, the Toronto Star reported that the United States had banned almost all products from the facility over safety concerns, yet the same drug ingredients appeared in medications sold in Canada.
- Dr. Gregory Taylor has officially been granted the title of Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, a position left vacant since Dr. David Butler-Jones stepped down in June 2013. Among his top priorities, says Taylor, will be to protect Canadians from the Ebola disease virus.
- A little over half of Canadians (52.7%) are at least somewhat satisfied with medical wait times, according to a poll of 1000 people commissioned by the Wait Time Alliance. Still, worries remain high about wait times for specialists, with 64.1% expressing concern, nearly double the percentage concerned about delays in seeing family physicians (33%).
- Doctors should monitor what is being said about them on physician-rating websites and assess negative comments objectively, while resisting any urge to post a reply, recommends the Canadian Medical Protective Association. Physicians can take a number of steps to improve their online reputations, such as encouraging open dialogue with patients and developing formal mechanisms for feedback.
- The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario is taking extra precautions to prevent the spread of respiratory infections. Though there haven't been any more confirmed cases of enterovirus D68 at the hospital, it is seeing an increase in emergency department visits, and three patients were recently diagnosed with hospital-acquired respiratory illnesses.
- Final legal arguments are underway in a \$17.8-billion class-action lawsuit between smokers and tobacco companies in Quebec. It is estimated that a million plaintiffs are involved in the case, which has been ongoing for 16 years.
- A Canadian genetic researcher has been pegged as a possible Nobel Prize winner by Thomson Reuters Intellectual Property & Science, which has correctly predicted 35 winners since 2002. Dr. Stephen Scherer, director of the Centre for Applied Genomics at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, has gained attention for his research on the genetic origins of autism.
- Social assistance cheques will be distributed in smaller amounts to test if it improves money management and health, particularly among users of intravenous drugs, for a pilot project in Vancouver. A recent study conducted in the city found that the risk of overdoses from drug injections doubled during the three days after income-assistance cheques were issued.
- Alberta Premier Jim Prentice has ordered a review of rural health care services in the province. His concerns include the challenge of recruiting health care workers to smaller regions, the long distances many travel to receive care and the need to better coordinate services between communities.
- Quebec finally reached a deal with physicians over salary increases, following lengthy and sometimes testy negotiations. Pay raises originally promised for 2014/15 and 2015/16 will now instead be spread out over eight years to help the government achieve a balanced budget. — Roger Collier, *CMAJ*

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