

## 10 health stories that mattered: Sept. 27–Oct. 3

- Health Canada ordered an import ban of pharmaceutical products from three plants in India, citing “data integrity problems.” The sanction on all products from the IPCA Laboratories and Apotex plants is precautionary, and there have been no recalls of products made at the plants.
- The federal government is appealing a Federal Court decision that struck down cuts to refugee health care. Immigration Minister Chris Alexander also filed for a stay of judgment, which means refugee access to Canadian health care will be limited until the case is resolved.
- Federal Health Minister Rona Ambrose proposed to extend the ban on flavoured “little cigars” to include other cigar types. Tobacco companies have taken advantage of regulatory loopholes with regard to cigar weights and filters to continue marketing products in “kiddie” flavours.
- The federal government will give Canadian Blood Services \$10.7 million over three years to improve Canada’s organ and tissue donation and transplantation system. The organization will work with provinces and territories to develop a better system for coordinating organ listing and allocation.
- Medical marijuana sales are subject to federal sales tax, the Tax Court of Canada ruled. Justice Campbell Miller said that, for tax purposes, marijuana is more like an over-the-counter drug than a prescription medication, and therefore is subject to the Goods and Services Tax.
- Provincial and territorial health ministers reassured the public that Canada is prepared to combat Ebola, after United States officials announced that the first case diagnosed on North American soil had been identified in Dallas, Texas.
- Nova Scotia fast-tracked legislation to merge nine district health authorities into one and bring drastic changes to collective bargaining for health workers. Public sector unions have vowed to fight the bill, which is expected to pass into law Oct. 3.
- Patient groups demanded a seat at the table on proposed health reforms in Quebec. They want a patients’ committee that will have direct input on health system restructuring, and warned that there will be “elements for opening a class-action suit” if their demand is denied.
- Alberta would save millions in health costs by closing coal power plants, an American air pollution expert told members of the provincial legislature. Dr. Alan Lockwood, past president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, said the US saves \$2 trillion in health care costs annually by reducing pollution from coal-burning plants.
- A Saskatchewan research team warned that so-called green fertilizers may leach arsenic into soil, water and crops. Newberyite, a decomposition product of the popular fertilizer struvite, initially prevents the release of arsenic. But over the long-term, newberyite can dissolve, releasing a more toxic form of arsenic. — Lauren Vogel, *CMAJ*

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