

10 health stories that mattered this week: Oct. 27–31

- The federal government has released a framework for fighting antimicrobial resistance. Key areas of focus include strengthening surveillance systems, promoting the appropriate use of antimicrobials in human and veterinary medicine, and funding research on antimicrobial resistance in Canada and abroad.
- Fewer older Canadians should use sleeping pills, warns Choosing Wisely Canada. About a third of older people take sleeping pills, which don't provide enough extra sleep to justify the potential deadly adverse effects, such as an increased risk of falls, the group says in a statement.
- Health Canada has approved the sale of a device for conducting quick DNA tests in doctors' offices and pharmacies. The tests, intended to identify if certain medications such as clopidogrel are suitable for particular patients, return results within an hour.
- An investigation has been launched in British Columbia to determine if a six-year-old girl was potentially exposed to HIV while receiving a vaccine. The family of the girl says the needle used had accidentally punctured the hand of a nurse who was HIV positive, during administration of the vaccine.
- Alberta has purchased new protective equipment and provided additional training to handle potential cases of Ebola. About 1700 health workers have received training over the past two weeks, and more sessions will be offered in the future.
- A hospital in Regina, Saskatchewan, closed its emergency department and implemented its Ebola protocol in what turned out to be a false alarm. A language barrier had created confusion about the travel history of a patient with flu-like symptoms.
- Some health groups in Ontario have called for a ban on medical tourism, but Health Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins touted the benefits of the practice. It generates millions in revenue that can be reinvested in the province's health system to benefit Ontarians, said Hoskins.
- The Quebec government's proposal to replace local health agencies with 19 regional "mega-establishments" poses major risks, according to Raymonde Saint-Germain, the province's ombudsman. These risks include reduced quality assurance of health services and inefficient management in highly populated areas.
- The scope of practice has been expanded for pharmacists in Newfoundland and Labrador. Pharmacists will be allowed to administer medications, such as flu vaccines, by injection and inhalation.
- Nova Scotia plans to ban the use of e-cigarettes in all indoor public places. The province will also ban stores from selling e-cigarettes to minors and from displaying and advertising the products. — Roger Collier, *CMAJ*

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