

10 health stories that mattered: Jan. 3–9

- Alberta should consider bringing back health premiums to shore up provincial coffers, said Alberta Medical Association President Dr. Richard Johnston. Before the government scrapped the scheme in 2009, health premiums generated about \$1 billion annually.
- The Collège des médecins du Québec prohibited doctors from benefiting from prescribing medication, devices or testing. The new rules are part of a revised code of ethics, and exempt physicians who directly contribute to the development of medical products.
- The 2015 flu outbreak in British Columbia is already approaching a 10-year peak for medical visits, warned epidemiologists. According to the BC Centre for Disease Control, there has been a “huge number” of long-term care outbreaks consistent with a mutated H3N2 season, for which this year’s flu vaccine does not offer full protection.
- Sodium levels in Canadian chain restaurant meals haven’t changed much since 2010, despite food industry commitments to bring levels down, according to a *CMAJ Open* study. As of 2013, sodium levels in 54% of foods were unchanged; there were marginal decreases in sodium in 30% of meals, while levels rose in 16%.
- The British Columbia New Democrats called for a public inquiry into the 2012 firings of seven researchers from the Ministry of Health, after the government withheld the complete findings of an independent review. The review outlines a number of serious shortcomings.
- Nunavut’s Department of Health will undertake a review of three recent deaths related to acetaminophen and alcohol. According to Chief of Staff Dr. Sandy MacDonald, cases of adults dying from acetaminophen overdoses are “very, very rare,” and a review could identify “something we could do differently as caregivers.”
- Women make up 72% of patients with Alzheimer disease in Canada and nearly the same percentage care for someone with the disease, reported the Alzheimer’s Society of Canada. The organization warned that women face unique risks for the degenerative disease and should watch for early signs, including memory loss and difficulty performing everyday tasks.
- Female inmates need specific treatment for the physical and sexual abuse they endured as children and adults, urged a study by researchers at Toronto’s St. Michael’s Hospital published Jan. 6 in *Women and Criminal Justice*. According to the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies about 80% of women in federal custody have experienced abuse. That proportion increases to 91% among Aboriginal women.
- The Ontario Health Innovation Council recommended the government establish a four-year, \$20-million fund to speed the adoption of technologies developed in the province. The council was created to provide advice on how Ontario can improve health services through technological innovation.
- Canadian scientists testing an Ebola vaccine told *CBC News* they are ready to call the dosage safe. The IWK Health Centre in Halifax reported “no adverse events of concern” among the 40 volunteers who received the shot in November and December; the trial is continuing as planned. A Swiss trial of the same drug was briefly halted in December after some volunteers experienced joint pain, but the dose administered was three times higher than what was given in Halifax. — Lauren Vogel, *CMAJ*

CMAJ 2015. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.109-4973