

10 stories that mattered: Mar. 21–27

- The world's most widely used [herbicide likely causes cancer](#). The International Agency for Research on Cancer added glyphosate, as well as the insecticides, malathion and diazinon, to its list of probable carcinogens to humans. The new classification sparked alarm across Canada, particularly in [Winnipeg](#), which uses malathion to kill mosquitoes. Even cities like [Vancouver](#) that otherwise ban herbicides use glyphosate to kill weeds in parks.
- Parliament passed legislation that would make opening new [supervised injection sites](#) more onerous, if not impossible, according to critics. However, the federal government gave an [exemption to Vancouver's Insite](#), Canada's first supervised injection site.
- British Columbia, Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick and the Yukon agreed to foot the bill for a [new hepatitis C treatment](#), a combination of ledipasvir and sofosbuvir (Harvoni). The drug is the first once-daily, single tablet regimen for chronic hepatitis C. It boasts cure rates of up to 99%, has fewer side effects, and patients can complete treatment in as little as eight weeks; previous cures required repeated injections for up to 48 weeks. Other provinces and territories are also considering covering the drug.
- Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner Brian Beamish recommended prosecuting two people who allegedly [snooped in the medical files](#) of former Toronto mayor Rob Ford. Humber River Hospital didn't say whether the individuals were staff members, but did say that "appropriate disciplinary action was being taken." Earlier this year, the commissioner's office reported on the [growing problem of privacy breaches by health professionals](#) and urged stronger consequences for those caught.
- The University of Toronto unveiled the [first privately funded indigenous health institute](#). The Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health bears the ceremonial name of Toronto neurosurgeon Dr. Michael Dan, who donated \$10 million to create it, and of a physician who warned that tuberculosis was killing Aboriginal children in residential schools a century ago. The institute operates with input from indigenous people and brings together experts from public health, medicine, social work, anthropology and other disciplines.
- Alberta Premier Jim Prentice announced a [new health care levy](#) to cover the province's \$7-billion budget shortfall due to falling oil revenues. Prentice didn't say how much Albertans would be asked to contribute, but promised the new levy won't look like health premiums of the past. Before 2009, Albertans paid a flat tax of \$1056 for families and \$528 for individuals, with employers covering most of the cost.
- Alberta also proposed a [ban on artificial tanning](#) for people under age 18. The proposed legislation would also require tanning businesses to include health warnings in advertising and on tanning beds. [Except for Saskatchewan](#), all other Canadian provinces already ban minors from using the machines.
- A BC medical marijuana supplier recalled several batches of [pot contaminated with bacteria](#) that may harm users. Nanaimo-based supplier Tilray said it doesn't know where the *enterobacter* came from and hasn't heard any complaints from clients. [Up to 400 people were affected](#) by the recall.
- Newfoundland and Labrador reported a "[tremendous increase](#)" in [syphilis](#) among men in the eastern half of the province. Health officials say there have already been 15 new cases of the disease this year, compared to 26 in all of last year. Most involve men between the ages of 20 and 49 who have had sex with men.
- Dr. Janet Rossant, a pioneer of stem cell biology and chief of research at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, became the [first woman to win the Canada Gairdner Wightman Award](#). The prize is given annually to a Canadian who has shown outstanding leadership in medicine and medical science. Rossant's work on embryos led to the discovery in 1998 of a novel placental stem cell type, and her research on the genes controlling blood vessel development paved the way for new drug interventions in cancer. — Lauren Vogel, *CMAJ*

CMAJ 2015. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.109-5033