

10 health stories that mattered: Apr. 18–24

- The federal government's [budget](#) proved a mixed bag for health care and research. Among health-related highlights were \$42 million to create a Canadian Centre for Aging and Brain Health Innovation and extended leave for caregivers under employment insurance compassionate care benefits. The budget also delivered \$14 million over two years to the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement and \$2 million to develop a Canadian Autism Partnership. However, the budget was short on new money for health or social benefits to seniors or low-income groups. Quebec, the Maritime provinces and Ontario had also asked Ottawa to [adjust health care transfer payments](#) to reflect their aging populations. This call went unheard; transfers will continue to grow by 6% per year, as previously promised.
- The federal government [renewed the mandate of the Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) for another 10 years, beginning in 2017. Since its launch in 2007, the commission has issued a [Mental Health Strategy for Canada](#) and the world's first [National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace](#), among other national initiatives.
- The Ontario judge who ruled that a young Aboriginal girl and her family had a [constitutional right to abandon conventional cancer treatment](#) to seek out traditional native healing will revisit his decision. In November 2014, Justice Gethin Edward dismissed the request by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies to force the girl to continue chemotherapy. Now the parties involved will be "seeking clarification" of the ruling, although there are few further details, according to the *National Post*.
- Health Canada [suspended the licence of Filix Mas](#), a homeopathic product that the regulator said contains unsafe levels of male fern — an ingredient traditionally used in doses of 1 gram to 15.5 grams to expel intestinal tapeworms. Health Canada warned that taking such an amount of male fern may cause adverse effects including liver damage, blindness and death. Earlier this month, Health Canada pulled the licence of two other natural health products containing the ingredient.
- The College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia is reviewing its standards for issuing patients the required medical [documents to access marijuana](#) from federally authorized suppliers. In a March memo, the college said doctors should not provide the documents to patients under age 25, those with a history of psychosis or substance-use problems, or anybody with heart or lung disease. Following pushback from members who say the guidelines are overly stringent, the college has since recalled the memo for revisions.
- BC Nurses' Union reported another [violent attack by a patient](#) on a nurse at the Hillside Psychiatric Centre in Kamloops. It's the second such incident at the facility in four months and the latest in a string of unrelated attacks on health workers in the province. Earlier this month, a summit called to address the issue identified the Hillside Centre as one of several high-risk facilities.
- A freedom of information request revealed that Alberta Health Services (AHS) spent [millions relocating employees](#) in recent years, according to Metro News. Between April 2011 and November 2014, the health authority doled out \$3.1 million in moving expenses, including more than \$100 000 in "miscellaneous" expenses to move one executive from Ontario. AHS says it has since introduced a cap on relocation expenses at 10% of an employee's salary, and now limits charges for real-estate fees to \$34 000.
- Alberta cut a health program that provided low-income persons with diabetes some \$4.5 million per year to cover the cost of medical supplies. The [Alberta Monitoring for Health Program](#) will shutter as of June 30, leaving some 16 000 individuals seeking coverage elsewhere.
- Nova Scotia and Ontario are processing [bans on menthol tobacco products](#). Nova Scotia expects to institute a ban by the end of May, while Ontario's bill has passed second reading. Although Health Canada has cracked down on flavoured cigarrillos, menthol tobacco products are currently exempt, and provinces have yet to institute their own restrictions.
- [Six Canadian healthcare luminaries](#) were inducted into the [Canadian Medical Hall of Fame](#). Making the mark were researchers Dr. Judith Hall, Dr. Alan Bernstein and Dr. Julio Montaner, surgical innovator Dr. Bernard Langer, health care reformer Duncan G. Sinclair, and Dr. John McCrae, author of the renowned World War I poem "In Flanders Fields." — Lauren Vogel, *CMAJ*

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