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Alberta homes declared smoke-free

Up to 25 000 Edmonton households could be declared smoke-free thanks to a community-based project sponsored by 21 organizations, including the Alberta Medical Association. Residents are challenged to register their home's smoke-free status in exchange for a resource kit and a chance to win a trip to Disneyland, the AMA's *Alberta Doctors' Digest* reports.

The "Clear the air: Make your home smoke-free" project relies on posters, media advertising and one-on-one reinforcement through physicians and other health professionals. If successful in Edmonton, the program may be expanded across the province.

Brochure explains disability tax credit

Physicians have a new tool to help them work with patients who want to claim the federal Disability Tax Credit. Revenue Canada has produced a patient brochure, *Disability Tax Credit and You*, that clearly outlines eligibility requirements for claiming this credit. "It is the effect of a disability on your ability to perform the basic activities of daily living that qualifies you for the credit, not the ailment or condition itself," says the brochure, which lists 8 screening questions for patients. Physicians who want copies for their offices can

visit www.rc.gc.ca or call Revenue Canada in the Government of Canada section of the telephone book.

Hundreds enrolled in Canadian HIV trials

Canadian volunteers are being enrolled in a protease inhibitor study that is the first large-scale collaborative clinical trial involving the Canadian HIV Trials Network (CTN) and American researchers. According to CTN's *Network Update*, the study hopes to enrol 400 volunteers in Canada within a year. Participants will be randomized to receive either ritonavir or the newer drug, nelfinavir.

Network Update also gave a clear picture of the breadth of HIV trials in Canada, identifying 22 studies that are currently enrolling participants in several cities. CTN clinical trials include studies comparing the usefulness of 2-drug combinations following treatment with AZT and studies seeking the highest dose of etoposide and doxorubicin that can be tolerated when part of VACOP-B combination chemotherapy; for information visit www.hivnet.ubc/ctn.html, or call 800 661-4664. Non-CTN trial information is provided by the Community AIDS Treatment Information Exchange; visit www.catie.ca or call 800 263-1638.

TB incidence declines in US

The number of new tuberculosis cases in the US has dropped to the lowest level since record-keeping began in 1953. Just more than 21 300 new cases were reported in 1995, *American Medical News* reported recently, marking the fourth annual decline. This suggests that the US is recovering from a rise in the number of TB cases from the mid-1980s to 1992. Programs that seek out and diagnose people with infectious TB,

then ensure they take their full course of therapy, are being credited for the turnaround. However, officials warn against relaxing the fight, noting that sporadic outbreaks continue to be reported.

Naturopathy clinic housed in government-funded centre

A community health and social services centre funded by the Ontario government has become the first off-site clinic for naturopathic medical care sponsored by the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine. The project provides patients in the Toronto area with access to naturopathic medicine as well as to family medicine, child and adolescent psychiatry, adult literacy and family-counselling services. One of its goals is to increase awareness about naturopathic medicine among both patients and health care providers.

Funding cuts affect health of patients, staff

Fiscal restraint and funding cuts at hospitals endanger not only the health of seniors but also the health of nurses and other professionals, a study of patient-discharge planning has found. The University of Toronto's *Research Highlights* recently reported that massive hospital restructuring puts intense pressure on health practitioners to discharge patients quickly, putting caregivers in a "highly stressful ethical conflict between their loyalty to the hospital and their loyalty to the patients."

Furthermore, researchers said, it is very difficult to predict how long it will take a senior citizen to recuperate and whether their families are equipped to provide their care once they are discharged. The study recommends that patients be at the centre of the discharge-planning process and that their concerns be heard.