

10 health stories that mattered: Aug. 3–Aug. 8

- An experimental Ebola treatment called ZMapp that was given to two American aid workers was jointly developed by Canadian and US researchers. The treatment has been tested only in animals and is made from monoclonal antibodies grown in tobacco plants that have been dubbed “plantibodies.”
- Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Dr. Eric Hoskins has promised to support children in the Middle East who need medical attention as a result of conflict in the area. Though no specifics were provided, Hoskins said in a statement that the province is “pleased to do what we can to help meet the needs of any child, whether Palestinian or Israeli.”
- Health Canada is seeking input from Canadians with rare diseases on the review process for orphan drugs. The pilot project is part of the orphan drug framework the government is developing to “spur innovation and research into new treatments for rare diseases.”
- The synthetic opioid fentanyl is believed to have caused several recent overdoses, including one death, in Abbotsford, British Columbia. Police suspect the drug is being produced in illegal labs and mixed with low-quality heroin to increase potency.
- More Canadian hospitals are allowing people to witness attempts to resuscitate family members. The South Health Campus in Calgary, for example, has implemented a policy that gives family members the option of being present during emergency situations so they can provide emotional support and be better informed about measures taken to save their loved ones’ lives.
- A dam failure has allowed billions of litres of waste water from a copper and gold mine to enter river systems in central British Columbia. The contamination has led to campground evacuations and drinking water bans.
- Several medical marijuana producers are close to going public, reports Reuters Canada. Currently, Tweed is the only licensed grower listed on the Canadian stock market.
- British Columbia will invest \$3 million to expand an addiction-medicine education and research-training program for clinicians. The money will go toward a new addiction-medicine diploma program, a rapid-access addiction-medicine program and clinical trials, including a study of a new formulation (extended-release injectable naltrexone) that blocks the effects of alcohol and heroin.
- The Lung Association of Nova Scotia is receiving complaints about emissions from a pulp mill near the northern town of Pictou. Nearby residents are reporting an increase in smoke, smog and sulfur levels, but the province’s environment minister says there is no imminent risk to human health.
- The CMA will award Chief Public Health Officer Dr. David Butler-Jones its Medal of Service for his contributions to Canadian health care. Butler-Jones has been the face of public health since the creation of the Public Health Agency of Canada in 2004 and has received praise for Canada’s successful response to the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. — Roger Collier, *CMAJ*

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