

## 10 health stories that mattered this week: Jan. 25–30

- The first human case of H7N9 (avian flu) in North America has been confirmed in British Columbia by the Public Health Agency of Canada, but the risks to Canadians is “very low.” The Canadian resident, who had recently returned from China, is recovering and did not require hospitalization.
- Wait times for people ages 55 and older to see primary or specialist care providers are longer in Canada than in 11 comparable countries, according to a survey from the Commonwealth Fund. More than half of survey respondents waited more than two days to see a family physician or nurse; 30% waited six or more days.
- Winnipeg issues a precautionary boil-water advisory after low levels of *E. coli* and coliform bacteria are detected in six samples of the city’s water supply. There are no reported illnesses.
- Alberta Health Services reports more flu deaths than usual this season. The *Edmonton Journal* notes that 52 people have died of influenza in the province this flu season; there are normally between 30 and 40.
- New guidelines for family physicians to address obesity in adults were released by the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care and published in *CMAJ*. Adult obesity in Canada has tripled over the past 40 years; 67% of men and 54% of women are now considered overweight or obese.
- Medical marijuana producer CEN Biotech quoted a fake employee in a press release, reports *The Globe and Mail*. The release was in response to a *Globe* investigation showing the company had misrepresented itself to the public and was making inaccurate claims about its business. A public relations firm in Toronto has cut ties with the company over its “questionable conduct.”
- The government spent just over \$7 million on an ad campaign to warn youth of the harms of marijuana and prescription drug abuse. That is almost \$2 million more than Health Canada spent to advertise all its programs and services in fiscal 2013/14.
- The Thalidomide Victims Association of Canada is “very disappointed” that the government has not yet announced how much financial support will be provided to Canadians harmed by the drug. In a statement for *The Globe and Mail*, Health Canada said its senior officials “have been working around the clock and remain committed to working collaboratively to ensure survivors’ health needs are supported.”
- The Ontario Medical Association continues to express its disappointment with the provincial government following failed contract negotiations. In an open letter to Premier Kathleen Wynne, association President Dr. Ved Tandan wrote that negotiations should be about “a partnership of big ideas, sharing common ground in health care and finding solutions for patients,” but it actually “seemed to be all about the government’s budget.”
- Vancouver Coastal Health is advising that all residents visiting Disneyland in the “anti-vaccination hotbed of California” to get two doses of the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine. At least 73 cases of measles have been reported in California, most linked to an outbreak at Disneyland that also affected six other US states. — Roger Collier, *CMAJ*

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