

Kenneth Lee

The Medical Post

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Canada in brief

December 04, 2007 | Pierre Lachaine

B.C. | Vancouver Island calls for smoking ban in cars with children present

Vancouver Island's chief medical health officer has called for a ban on smoking in cars when kids are present, reports Canada.com. "It's probably the worst place to smoke. If we're going to put kids in booster seats . . . part of that(safety)package should be clean air," said Richard Stanwick.

The statement came the day after Wolfville, N.S., approved their own similar ban, becoming the first jurisdiction in Canada to do so. According to B.C. health minister George Abbott, the government will consider a ban in the future. "We did bring forward an ambitious legislative package . . . but we know over time the societal acceptance of smoking has changed dramatically," he said.

Canada | Public supports electronic health records, survey shows

Canadians overwhelmingly support the use of electronic health records and expect their privacy to be respected in their use, according to a recently released survey. "The government is committed to pursuing new technologies that improve health-care delivery, while ensuring the privacy of personal information. Once fully implemented, private and secure electronic health records will increase efficiencies," said federal health minister Tony Clement. Ekos Research Associates surveyed 2,469 Canadians in June and July and found 88% of respondents support electronic health records. Nearly two-thirds of respondents said there are few types of personal information more important for privacy laws to protect than health information. "It is clear Canadians want the protection of their privacy to be a key factor as we consider both how these highly sensitive records are managed, as well as potential secondary uses for this information, including research," said Jennifer Stoddart, Canada's privacy commissioner.

Ontario | Parental fears blamed for low rate of HPV vaccinations

A prominent health official said Ontario's HPV vaccination program is off to a less than promising start, the CanWest News Service reports. Speaking at a Montreal conference on public health, Dr. Ian Gemmill, medical officer of health at Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health in Kingston, Ont., said less than 50% of parents agreed to vaccinate their girls due to safety fears. "This is a huge disappointment. There are lessons to be learned from the Ontario experience. You don't want to undermine the program before you start," said Dr. Gemmill, referring to the negative press the vaccine received.

Alberta | Edmonton named STD capital

The medical officer of health at Capital Health called Edmonton "probably the sexually transmitted disease capital of Canada," according to the Edmonton Sun. Speaking at a symposium on public health at the University of Alberta, Dr. Gerry Preddy went on to say: "We saw a dip in the STD numbers some years ago and thought we had it beat . . . but we've recently gone from zero to 100 cases of syphilis per year and our HIV infection rate has doubled." He went on to say the biggest issues facing health officials in the area are emergency preparedness, and communicable and chronic diseases.

Ontario | Physicians praise pesticide ban

The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment praised the Ontario government's ban on non-essential pesticides, which will take effect in the spring. "We knew the government had promised this, but we had no idea it would come so quickly," said executive director Dr. Gideon Forman. "The pesticide ban will be among the new government's first pieces of legislation. I think that's a measure of its importance."

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