

# Canadians should demand commitments for pharmacare program, says CMAJ

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Canada needs a national pharmacare program and federal leaders must commit adequate funding, states an editorial in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

Unlike many countries in Europe and Australia and New Zealand, Canada lacks a national pharmacare program that provides consistent coverage across all regions of the country. Currently, drugs that are covered in some provinces may not be in others.

"The inevitable consequence is that some people are prevented from getting the drugs they need, and others do not take all the medications as prescribed," writes Dr. Paul Hébert, Editor-in-Chief with coauthors.

As well, there is no national formulary or system to assess drugs which could save the country billions of dollars annually.

Drug costs are rising more rapidly in Canada, almost 10% per year, compared with other members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. "Although Canada spends more per capita on drugs than most other countries, including the United States, many of our scarce health dollars are misdirected to "me-too" drugs supplied by pharmaceutical companies that supply private coverage," state the authors. "The money that goes to them is not available to support equitable, accessible high-quality care across the country."

"Canada's multiplicity of illogical and outdated programs, which pay for

drugs administered to patients within health care institutions while often failing to pay for the same patients to receive the same drugs as outpatients or at home, make a mockery of the principles of medicare — universality, portability, accessibility, comprehensiveness and public administration — that Canadians cherish," write the authors. "We cannot pretend to have universal public health care or expect the benefits inherent in such a system while it excludes the medications necessary to prevent and treat illnesses."

The authors call upon federal politicians to make clear commitments to address this [health care](#) issue.

**More information:** <http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/doi/10.1503/cmaj.110643>

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