

Medicare improved Canadian doctors' salaries: study

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U.S. doctors might find that their incomes start to rise – not decline – when Barack Obama's healthcare reforms are put in place says a Queen's University School of Medicine professor.

"The medical-income argument in the United States against moving toward a Canadian-style system is feeble," says Jacalyn Duffin, a medical doctor who specializes in the history of medicine. "Physicians' incomes grew more quickly than those of other Canadian professions following Medicare. The universal, single-payer system has been good not only for Canadians but also for Canada's doctors."

Dr. Duffin conducted a study on the average net [income](#) of Canadian doctors over a 155-year span (1850 to 2005) and found that physicians enjoyed a windfall in earnings during the early years of Medicare from 1950 to 1970 and that, after a decade of adjustment, Medicare continued to enhance physician [income](#).

Health care in Canada does mean that doctors in Canada generally charge lower fees for services and earn less than their American counterparts, but so do most Canadians, and [doctors](#) are still the top-earning profession in Canada. But Canada's government-run system has resulted in lower practice expenses for a variety of reasons, including the lesser costs of billing, administration, and malpractice coverage. [Medicare](#) also ensures that all bills are paid in full.

The findings contradict what many critics of 'Obamacare' say will

happen in the U.S.

The study also points out that gathering data on MD income is difficult. Dr. Duffin recommends that to bring the MD income portion of the Canadian health care package into proper light that physician after tax before expenses income be published – just as it is for all public servants earning more than 100K.

The study will be published in the July issue of *American Journal of Public Health*.

Provided by Queen's University

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