

Hospital parking fees are health care user fees

November 28 2011

Hospital parking fees are essentially health care user fees and should be abolished, states an editorial in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

"Using revenue generated from such surrogate user fees for health care is against the health policy objective of the Canada Health Act and could become the subject of a [legal challenge](#)," writes Dr. Rajendra Kale, Interim Editor-in-Chief, [CMAJ](#).

He argues that parking fees are actually a barrier to health care because they can distract patients who are worrying about rising costs as the meter ticks and may result in shortened visits with their doctors. Many patients who visit hospitals in Canada have no option but to drive given the size of the country and that specialists are often located in larger urban centres a distance from home.

"Some patients (who have often waited several weeks to see a doctor) try to end a consultation abruptly when they realize that they will have to pay for an additional hour for parking," writes Dr. Kale. "This is parking-centred health care, which is not compatible with patient-centred health care."

Scotland and Wales have abolished parking fees for patients at [National Health Service](#) hospitals after the efforts of health ministers in those countries.

While parking fees provide revenue for hospitals, the amount is not a significant percentage of overall budgets. For example, parking fees for The Ottawa Hospital are projected to bring in about \$10.8 million out of a \$1.16 billion [revenue stream](#) (excluding revenue from parking).

"Let us start by validating our patients' parking," concludes Dr. Kale. "This would be an important step for patient-centred health care."

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

Citation: Hospital parking fees are health care user fees (2011, November 28) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-11-hospital-fees-health-user.html>

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