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STUDY CONFIRMS MEDICARE BEST BANG FOR OUR BUCK, DOCTORS SAY

A study comparing Canadian health care with U.S. care confirms that the Canadian system provides equal or better care at a much lower cost, said board members of Canadian Doctors for Medicare (CDM) today (www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca).

The study - *A systematic review of studies comparing health outcomes in Canada and the United States* - published today in *Open Medicine*, shows it would be a monumental mistake for Canada to move towards privately funded or private-for-profit health care, said Dr. Danielle Martin, Board Chair.

“This study by 17 leading Canadian and U.S. researchers confirms that publicly-funded healthcare leads to health outcomes as good or better at a fraction of the cost,” said Dr. Martin, a family physician who works in both urban and rural Ontario. “In a misguided effort to reduce wait times, some provinces are considering opening their doors to more private care. This study confirms that such a move would not lead to better healthcare and would be far more expensive.”

The study found that in treatment of a number of illnesses, outcomes in Canada were as good, or better, than those in the US. This was despite the fact that Canada spends nearly 50% less on health care per capita.

“Some of the more pernicious effects of privately funded and for-profit clinics is that they recruit health professionals away from the public system, sell unnecessary services, and ‘cream skim’ low risk, low cost patients from the public system; explained Dr. Bob Woollard, CDM Board member and Chair of Family Medicine at the University of British Columbia. “This leaves public hospitals to care for an increasingly more complex patient population with fewer healthcare providers to do so.”

Despite challenges within the Canadian system, this study highlights the basic fairness and efficiency of our universal health care system, Martin added. “We do not abandon people who can’t afford to pay for care; we don’t burden our physicians by asking them to justify every treatment they order to an insurance company; and we save enormous amounts of money on administration because of our single-payer structure. We should be proud that our system produces such good outcomes at such a low cost.”

Now that this comprehensive study has confirmed the findings of previous studies, Woollard and Martin called on governments to focus on improving the Canadian system by expanding on successful initiatives now underway to streamline care, reduce wait lists and promote innovation.

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