

practice” into your favourite search engine. As well, background papers/presentations and final report from the conference held on health human resource planning by the Health Council of Canada is no longer available on its website. (World Health Organization, 2010) www.healthcouncilcanada.ca.

* Note: The Health Council of Canada is no longer operating. The archived Web page remains online for reference, research or recordkeeping purposes by Carleton University Library. This page will not be altered or updated.

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decades and will likely continue apace. Costs have been driven by current investments in research and development (in industry and academia alike), insurance coverage for expensive, cutting edge treatments — whether truly beneficial or not — and our demand for longer and better quality lives.

We can't really do anything about costs resulting from our aging population, but we can make choices about what services we provide patients of all ages. These choices might mean rationing care (and, as a result, longevity and quality of life) but also, and preferably, making sure all patients receive essential care, but not unnecessary care. The latter is about reducing “waste” in our health system, interventions that have not been proven to enhance length or quality of life.

So, how do we distinguish necessary from unnecessary care?

We need to build our health system on evidence; we need to know how many years of life and how

much quality of life we buy through the increased volume of services and the flow of new technologies in the health care system. We also need to pay for services and innovation on the basis of what they add to quality and quantity of life (outcome-based payments). Instead we continue paying for technology on the basis of how much it costs to develop, not how much it delivers.

It's time we stop throwing ever more money after the latest and greatest technologies in health services without knowing if we are getting a return on our investment. Our health care system suffers in the process.

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