

For-Profit Nursing Homes Short-change Patients

Medical Reform Group

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The Medical Reform Group of Ontario is drawing attention to an article published today in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. This important research study documents decreased staffing levels in for-profit nursing homes in British Columbia in comparison to not-for-profit nursing homes.

“This research demonstrates how for-profit facilities allocate public dollars to shareholder profits instead of patient care,” said MRG spokesperson Dr. PJ Devereaux. “When public dollars go to for-profit facilities, Canadians pay more, and receive less.”

The study published today in the CMAJ documented 0.34 fewer hours per-resident day of direct staff care, and 0.23 fewer hours per-resident day of support staffs care in for-profit versus not-for-profit nursing homes.

“Previous research has demonstrated that the level of staffing is associated with quality of care,” said another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Gordon Guyatt. “That, of course, is no surprise. The differences in staffing documented in the current research are certainly enough to lead to important deficits in patient care in British Columbia for-profit nursing homes.”

The results are completely consistent with prior research documenting higher death rates in for-profit versus not-for-profit hospitals, and higher death rates in for-profit versus not-for-profit dialysis facilities.

“It’s hard to miss the pattern,” said Dr. Devereaux. “For-profit health care facilities, whether they be hospitals, dialysis facilities, or nursing homes, must allocate approximately 10 to 15 per cent of their income to shareholder profits. That means less money for patient care. As a result, for-profit facilities must cut corners, and they typically do so in the most expensive aspect of health care, provider salaries. In hospitals that means less skilled personnel, in nursing homes it means less direct care for patients.”

“The bottom line is not in doubt,” concluded Dr. Devereaux, “for-profit health care, including for-profit nursing homes, is a bad deal for the Canadian public.”