

Want to Run a For-Profit MRI: Donate to Provincial Tories

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The Medical Reform Group has accused Ontario's provincial government of selling out Ontario citizens to pad their campaign coffers. The government has announced the companies that will run four investor-owned for-profit community diagnostic facilities offering MRI and CT services. Two have donated substantial funds to the provincial Conservative party. "There are a number of reasons why investor-owned for-profit clinics are bad news for the people of Ontario," said MRG spokesperson Dr. Gordon Guyatt. "First, they open the door to two-tier access to scarce diagnostic services."

The government has declared that only those who do not need the services can buy themselves to the front of the line. "If clinics adhere to the government rules, it means that people wanting scans for unproven indications, like 'yuppie' screening for cancer, will get the procedure first," said another MRG spokesperson, Dr. P.J. Devereaux. People who really need it will wait longer. But they probably won't stick to the rules. Either way, it means that those who can't pay will stay at the back of the line."

Another problem is that the for-profit clinics will suck scarce radiologists and technicians from hospital MRI and CT facilities. Opposition to yuppie scans, to two-tiered care, and to bleeding the hospitals has led the Ontario Association of Radiologists to strongly oppose the for-profit clinics. Finally, evidence from the US suggests that diverting money from patient care to profit decreases quality of care, and can increase death rates.

"All rational arguments indicate that these facilities should operate on a not-for-profit basis," Dr. Guyatt concluded. "But to our government, the company money speaks louder."

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For more information see Dr. Guyatt's Hamilton Spectator and Straightgoods columns: www.hwcn.org/link/mrg/guyatt2002.3col.html

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