

Your Money and/or Your Life: For-Profit Care Deadly Proposition

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In a shattering finding reported today in the Canadian Medical Association Journal, top health researchers from McMaster university report that, in comparison to private not-for-profit hospitals, private for-profit hospitals lead to an increased number of deaths.

"The authors took extraordinary care to avoid bias," said MRG spokesperson Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi, himself a health researcher. "The studies span a 15 year period, look at death rates in over 38 million patients in 26,000 hospitals, and the findings are consistent. The results are clear and unequivocal: if Canada moves to private for-profit provision of care, death rates will increase."

While most Canadians think of our hospitals as public, they are actually private not-for-profit institutions owned by communities, religious institutions, regional health authorities, or their boards of directors. Thus, the study results are directly applicable to the Canadian scene. Another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, provided an explanation for the results. "Typically, investors expect a 10-15% return on their investment. Private for-profit hospitals must pay taxes, while private not-for-profit hospital do not. Finally, not-for-profit hospitals can accept tax-free donations, while for-profit hospitals cannot. All this money must be extracted from patient care. This means less skilled personnel, including doctors, nurses and pharmacists. Care suffers, and death rates increase. Federal and provincial governments must act now to stop the drift toward deadly, for-profit care."

"The results suggest that if Canada switched from private not-for-profit hospitals to private for-profit hospitals, the result would be over 2,000 additional deaths each year," Dr. Bayoumi concluded. "This is in the range of the number of Canadians who die each from colon cancer, motor vehicle accidents, and suicide. Switching to for-profit hospital care would have the impact of creating a new cancer. It represents reckless driving for Canadian health care, or even national suicide."