

NEWS RELEASE

More than 45,000 Canadians estimated to have left the country for medical care in 2015

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For Immediate Release

VANCOUVER—Tens of thousands of Canadians continue to venture abroad for medical care, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

The study, *Leaving Canada for Medical Care, 2016*, estimates that 45,619 Canadians in 2015 received non-emergency medical treatment outside the country.

“A large number of Canadians clearly feel they have to leave the country to obtain needed and timely medical care,” said Bacchus Barua, study co-author and senior economist for health-care studies at the Fraser Institute.

So why are Canadians leaving the country for treatment?

Reasons may include Canada’s long wait times. In 2015, according to the Fraser Institute’s annual measurement of health-care wait times, patients waited 9.8 weeks for medically necessary treatment after seeing a specialist—almost three weeks longer than what physicians consider clinically “reasonable.”

In 2015, among different types of physicians in Canada, urologists reported the highest proportion (1.6 per cent) of patients travelling abroad for treatment. And according to study estimates, more patients (4,974) travelled abroad for urology procedures than any other treatment.

High numbers of Canadians also left the country for ophthalmology treatment (4,635), general surgery (4,495) and internal medicine procedures such as colonoscopies, gastroscopies and angiographies (3,959).

Among provinces, physicians in British Columbia reported the highest proportion of patients receiving treatment abroad (1.5 per cent) in 2015. However, Ontario saw the largest number of patients (22,352) leave the country for treatment.

“Considering Canada’s long health-care wait times and their potential negative effects, it’s not surprising that so many Canadians are travelling abroad for medical treatment,” Barua said.

Estimated number of patients that received treatment outside of Canada, 2015 (by province):

1. British Columbia: 10,315
2. Alberta: 4,616
3. Saskatchewan: 712
4. Manitoba: 702
5. Ontario: 22,352
6. Quebec: 3,360
7. New Brunswick: 894
8. Nova Scotia: 1,466
9. Prince Edward Island: 52
10. Newfoundland and Labrador: 1,151

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