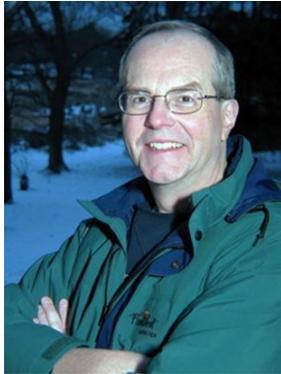


Canadians suffering needlessly from inflammatory bowel diseases, says Cambridge think tank

Report: Canada helps develop cutting-edge biologics, yet doesn't provide equal access

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Dr. Wayne Taylor

Many Canadians are suffering unnecessarily from debilitating inflammatory bowel diseases like Crohn's and colitis due to a lack of access to groundbreaking treatments developed on their doorstep.

According to a report published by The Cameron Institute, 233,000 Canadians are forced to live with painful auto-immune disorders because they can't afford — or aren't even informed of — biologic medicine, which uses engineered living organisms to relieve inflammation by

boosting immunities.

The report, dubbed [IBD Research and Treatment: Canada's Fame and Shame](#), is meant to serve as a call to action for the health industry, politicians who hold the reins to medical legislation and health care costs, but also for patients who often need to advocate for their own care.

Cambridge's Dr. Wayne Taylor, executive director at The Cameron Institute think tank, described the title of the report as sadly apropos, for several reasons.

Canada has the unique distinction of being considered a world leader in developing treatments for those suffering from inflammatory bowel diseases, he said, but also for having the highest number of people suffering from these conditions.

Yet, he argues, Canada does not provide equitable access to these life-changing medications, which have been proven highly effective and have the potential to reduce the need for surgeries.

"There's no better research than what we do in our university hospital and laboratories," Taylor said in an interview with the *Times*. "We just don't buy the product after we create it. It goes to the States. It's just wrong."

While some Canadians have private health insurance, many don't, said Taylor, and that means game-changing treatments like biologics are out of financial reach, leaving many with options including drug-treatments that are less than effective and with surgeries, which have also been proven unsuccessful.

Biologics, which can cost anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000, are government approved and have been found to be highly effective, said Taylor, but are not covered under government health care plans. While the costs seem excessive, so are multiple surgeries that may not even work, he maintains.

The problem underlines another issue prevalent in Canadian health care, according to the report, and it's one that would surprise the average Canadian.

“Most people don't realize that we don't have universal, comprehensive drug care in this country,” said Taylor. “We talk about our health care system, but that's really just physicians and hospitals. When it comes to drugs, most people in this country are really just left on their own.”

Even those with private health insurance feel the financial burden of health care, states the report.

The Cameron Institute, which describes itself as “an honest broker of the facts”, aims to be a catalyst for change in health care, by pointing out that the cheapest, mainstream health care treatments aren't always suitable, nor cost-effective.

“We are Canadians, we don't speak up, we don't complain,” said Taylor. “But the truth is, there are a lot of people out there that are doing without and I think we need to know that.”

It's hoped that those suffering from inflammatory bowel diseases will begin lobbying for better health care options, and that doctors and hospitals will step up to add their support.

There is a way to help those suffering get equal access to biologic treatment, maintains Taylor, but it must also be backed by political will.

“Politicians need to be aware that patients, Canadians are suffering.”

The Cameron Institute was founded in 2009 as an alternative, not-for-profit public policy think tank that sheds light on topics including health, social and economic issues affecting Canadians.

Before retiring in 2013, Taylor was the founding director of the MBA Program in Health Services Management and the Health Leadership Institute at McMaster University.

by [Lisa Rutledge](#)

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