

Steve Lurie's letter to the Toronto Star, November 13, 2011, in response to "The health-care sky is not falling"

Michael Rachlis is correct in pointing out that health care spending is actually declining as a percentage of provincial spending. However most of the spending focuses on acute care in hospitals and physician services, rather than care in the community which has been shown to reduce pressures on hospitals. In mental health, the waits for core community services are staggering. According to Ministry of Health statistics, there are now 16,479 people waiting for case management (up from 7,857 in 2007) and 42,534 people waiting for access to supportive housing, up from 6,199 in 2007. According to the recently published Public Accounts provincial government spending on community mental health in 2010/11 represents 1.31% of health spending, which may explain why services are in such short supply. An investment of \$160 million per year would greatly improve access to community mental health services and add less than 0.34% to health spending, reducing costly hospital stays and improving lives. While we talk about fixing the provincial deficit, we need to fix the deficit in community care.

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