

FHS Spring Seminar Series
March 3, 2010
Time: 4:30 – 5:20pm
Blusson Hall 9660, Mowafaghian Theatre

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Ethical Issues in Medical Tourism

Individuals from wealthy countries increasingly travel to low and middle income countries to seek out medical services. This travel, often called 'medical tourism', is driven by: 1) the relative affordability of these services (primarily for tourists from countries with privately funded healthcare); and 2) long waiting times for and rationing of medical services (primarily for tourists from countries with publicly funded systems). Medical tourism has been praised for allowing low and middle income countries to increase revenues, improve their health infrastructure, increase tourism, and help retain domestic health workers. However, critics charge that medical tourism may undercut access by the poor to scarce medical resources if these resources are used to cater to the needs of wealthy tourists.

In this presentation, I first discuss when and why medical tourism can be unethical. While medical tourism is not inherently unethical, I argue that it can: 1) reduce access to health care and increase inequities in host countries for medical tourism; and 2) exacerbate inequity in the provision of health care in source countries for medical tourists. Second, I discuss an ongoing, CIHR funded project assessing Canadians' ethical attitudes toward medical tourism.