

NEWS RELEASE

Canadians wait more than 450 days longer for access to new medicines than Americans and Europeans

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—Canadian patients are waiting, on average, more than 450 days longer than Americans and Europeans to access new, potentially life-saving drugs, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan, Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Innovative new medicines can have a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of those suffering from illness. Unfortunately, Canadians are often denied these benefits for months, if not years, waiting for government to approve drugs already deemed safe and effective by regulators in the European Union and United States,” said Bacchus Barua, Associate Director of Health Policy Studies at the Fraser Institute and author of *Timely Access to New Pharmaceuticals in Canada, the United States, and the European Union*.

The study finds that of the 218 drugs approved in both Canada and the United States between 2012/13 and 2018/19, approval was granted an average of 469 days earlier in the United States.

And of the 205 drugs approved in both Canada and Europe during the same period, approval was granted an average of 468 days earlier in Europe.

The main reason for this delay stems from differences in the dates on which manufacturers submitted new drugs to Health Canada for approval.

The resulting lag suggests drug companies are reluctant to launch new drugs in Canada because of a number of factors that range from Canada’s smaller market size, weaker intellectual property protections, and the federal government’s strict pricing policies.

“In some cases, pharmaceutical companies will wait up to a year after a drug has been approved in the U.S. or Europe before submitting that same drug for approval in Canada,” Barua said.

The study suggests that had Canada agreed to recognize the approval of new drugs by comparable international agencies, patients could have received access to 223 new pharmaceutical therapies (of the 224 in our sample) a median 383 (average 742) days earlier.

“Canada’s current approach, which duplicates approval processes undertaken in the U.S. and Europe, imposes considerable delays on Canadians struggling with illness. In the absence of international agreements to recognize drug approvals, policymakers should carefully consider how Canada’s drug policies attract or discourage drug companies from entering the Canadian market.”

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