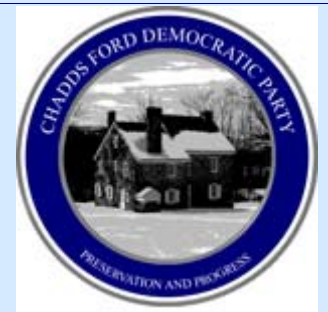


# CHADDS FORD DEMOCRATIC PARTY

CHADDS FORD TOWNSHIP, DELAWARE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



[News](#)

[Campaign 2009](#)

[Home](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Elected Officials](#)

[Officers](#)

[Join-Donate](#)

[Links](#)

[Contact Us](#)

## I Canada, health care reform, and you

Jon Cohn addresses the latter part of Ponnuru's argument over at The New Republic's blog, [the Plank](#), and dug into the stats on waiting lists:

Here's the summary findings from an [exhaustive survey](#) by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

The health system in France is regarded as delivering high quality services, with freedom of choice and generally no *waiting lists* for treatments.  
--Page 69, sourced to a 2000 study by a trio of academics

And: In Germany, "Waiting lists and explicit rationing decisions are virtually unknown."  
--Page 70, citing a World Health Organization study.

I'm going to throw myself into the fight here, and [debunk](#) another favored myth of the Right, which is that the Canadian health system is so bad, millions of Canadians come *here* for their health care.

[A 2002 Health Affairs paper](#) examined hospitals near the border, as well as national surveys to tease out how many Canadians actually visit the U.S. to receive elective procedures.

In terms of hospitals along the border offering advanced treatments or special diagnostic technology (i.e. CT scans and MRIs), about 640 Canadians were seen, along with 270 for procedures like cataract surgery. They compare this to about 375,000 and 44,000 similar procedures in the region of Quebec alone during the same period. If you divide the *total* number of Canadians seeking those treatments in the US, divided by the number in Quebec *alone* that's about 0.09%. Not even a tenth of a percent.

But the most striking stats come from the Canadian National Population Health Survey (NPHS). From the article:

Only 90 of 18,000 respondents to the 1996 Canadian NPHS indicated that they had received care in the United States during the previous twelve months, and only twenty had indicated that they had gone to the United States expressly for the purpose of getting that care.

Only 20 of 18,000 sought care in the United States. I can't believe how many people are coming over here! Their system but be *truly* awful.

But let's give this number some context. We've all heard about seniors getting their prescriptions from Canada. (Hell, even driving to visit my sister at college in rural Kansas, I saw a billboard for "Canada Drug of Topeka!") But how many seniors really do that? Is it exaggerated, like the claims of Canadians coming stateside?

[Polling data](#) from 2003 (approximately a year after the Health Affairs article) indicates that 8% answered YES to the following question:

"Have you ever bought prescription drugs from Canada or other countries outside the United States in order to pay a lower price?"

If 8% of the 18,000 Canadians polled in NPHS had expressly sought care in the United States, that would be 1,440. Not 20, as the survey showed.

In other words, we have *72 times* the number of Canadians seeking care in the US going to Canada (or at least calling there) to get prescriptions.

What angers me so much about the Right's rhetoric on health care reform is that their arguments are so weak that they're now essentially questioning the definition of "is".

Universal health care has been achieved in dozens of nations on this planet. One of which has some waiting lists, while others have essentially none. According to surveys, *less than 0.1% of Canadians are expressly seeking care in the U.S.*

The bottom line is our health care is twice as expensive, fails to cover 46 million people, has questionable quality, kills around 100,000 people a year from error, and for all this we have worse health indicators (i.e. lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, etc). Other countries do it better, and they do it with the help of government to pay for health costs.

We can at least move to a system where everyone has health insurance. Or, you can believe the folks over at the Corner who are arguing that universal coverage doesn't exist.

What do you want?

April 26, 2006 in [Health Care Reform](#) | [Permalink](#)

## II Comments

*In other words, we have 72 times as many Americans going to Canada to get prescriptions as Canadians seeking healthcare in the USA*

The number will actually come out to be bigger than that due to our bigger population (you're working with percentages of total populations up there, not raw quantities).

Maybe the thing to say here is that Americans are *72 times more likely* to get prescription drugs from Canada than Canadians are to come here for operations.

Posted by: [Neil the Ethical Werewolf](#) | [April 26, 2006 at 01:25 PM](#)

I live in Washington State. Our neighbor province of British Columbia has established a land-office business in laser eye surgery, marketing extensively to U.S. patients. I don't know the numbers, but apparently a significant number of people in this region travel to BC for their laser surgery; I gather it's cheaper (but still high-quality) up there. Waiting lists don't seem to be an issue. Funny, you don't hear the right wing talk about this either.

Posted by: [jpm100](#) | [April 26, 2006 at 10:41 PM](#)

Wow. Who knew that lawsuit costs of less than 3% of all health spending in the US made such a difference? And that drug marketing costs, which in the US are comparable to "R&D" costs, weren't an issue? (I say "R&D" because it is extraordinarily expensive to bring to market a newly-patented variation on an existing drug that extends the life of a monopoly but offers only a tiny increment in quality of care for patients; drugs that offer clear and convincing improvements are typically rather cheaper to study.)

Oh, and let's forget completely that the fraction of each health-care dollar spent on administration in Canada is roughly half of similar spending in the US. Couldn't possibly have any effect on costs.

Whenever I see something about waiting lists in other countries, I'm reminded that the US simply doesn't gather comparable data. All the people who can't afford decent care in the US have are on a waiting list marked "forever", but no one bothers to count them.

Posted by: [justadoc](#) | [April 27, 2006 at 01:10 PM](#)

Lucky that we have geni like JPM100 to tell us that Bob Evans and Maurice Barer and their team which did the study on cross border medicine don't know squat--I mean I thought they were the two best health services researchers I've ever met, but what the hell did I know. I'm glad he corrected me.

And then he tells us that many provinces have a US style system. Good to know. But I'm a little surprised that the shysters at Fraser and PRI haven't found the many uninsured Canadians that must live in those forward thinking provinces and splashed their name all over the op-ed pages.

And the reason that the Ontario government pulled that program was that the costs were going out of control. One reason was that US hospitals were sending buses up to Toronto, pulling drunks off skid-row, taking them down to their hospitals and sending the Ontario government the bill. As a responsible conservative Canadian taxpayer, I'd assume that JPM100 would be happy that the Ontario government wanted to stop that waste of its money.

Posted by: [Nate Ogden](#) | [April 27, 2006 at 08:56 PM](#)

Sabutai reports: "I remember the weekends when CTV news reported 36 hour wait times for a hospital bed to open up" in Canada. This anecdote makes me snicker, because I've waited with my very sick husband on an emergency room cot for 48 hours for a hospital bed to open up here in the U.S. However, we didn't make the news.

Posted by: [Joyful Alternative](#) | [April 28, 2006 at 12:15 AM](#)

[News](#)

[Campaign 2009](#)

[Home](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Elected Officials](#)

[Officers](#)

[Join-Donate](#)

[Links](#)

[Contact Us](#)