

Editorial Letter Sent to the Toronto Star

Re: The Death (and Rebirth) of the House Call (September 4, 2011)

I read with astonishment Sunday's front page story which reports the return of house calls by physicians along with the Liberal government's commitment to extending the services described. While I am ecstatic that much needed health care for frail seniors has finally become a priority, I have to wonder why, in a time when health care costs, shortages of family physicians, and long wait times for medical services are still problematic, the chosen solution is to utilize physicians, the most expensive human resource in the health care system, for the purpose of monitoring the health of elders in their homes. It was only a few short years ago that public health nurses visited elders in their home for the purposes of promoting health. That practice fell into disfavor with the Public Health Branch of Ontario so that by 1999, with a few exceptions, home visiting of elders by public health nurses had virtually disappeared across the province. Often, in those visits, nurses identified health issues that required the services of other health providers, whether home care nursing, occupational therapy, or medical services, and made those referrals as appropriate. It seems to me, that if we want sustainable solutions to the gaps that have arisen since "health care reform" and the rise of the business model obliterated many services in the 1990s, we should be looking beyond a return of physician's house calls.

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