

## **8. How to interpret the Index Results**

The first and most important consideration on how to treat the results is with great care, and not to leap to drastic conclusions!

Our indexes are an attempt to measure and rank the performances of healthcare systems from a consumer viewpoint. The results definitely contain information quality problems. There is a shortage of multi-country uniform procedures for data gathering.

Again, we find it far better to present our results to the public and to promote constructive discussion rather than to stay with the very common opinion that as long as healthcare information is not 100 per cent complete one had better keep it in the closet. Again, we want to stress that the index displays consumer information, not medically or individually sensitive data.

It is clear, though, that Canada has much room for improvement. The first change, and the one which will enable improvements in all other indicators, is in the area of patients' rights. Without a culture that encourages healthcare consumers to demand and receive the best, outcomes, accessibility, and generosity are unlikely to improve. A crucial first step will be the provision of meaningful guarantees. Patients' Bills of Rights can be a useful approach to this, but only if the bills include remedies for situations wherein consumers cannot access appropriate care. There are some attempts underway in Canada to create such legislation, and this will be well worth following in both the interprovincial index and in future editions of the Euro-Canada Index.

A consumer-sensitive culture would also be more transparent. Canadians must have the right to access their own medical records (which should be in electronic format), and they should have ready access to specialists, diagnostics and treatment.

Given Canada's abysmal rating for value for money in the Bang-for-the-Buck exercise, a simple increase in health budgets is not the answer. Much more can be done with the money being spent on healthcare in Canada. Accessibility and Generosity, especially as it pertains to the preventative measure of vaccination, are two areas that are particularly ripe for reform.