

Special health-care programs for elderly and other age-specific persons

There is no Canada-wide insurance plan to cover the costs of drugs, dental care, eyeglasses and other appliances, although in most provinces, as noted above, some or all of these are benefits (cost-shared under the Canada Assistance Plan Act) for residents in receipt of welfare and related income-support allowances. The trend during 1973 and 1974 in certain provinces was to broaden services made available on the basis not only of income but of age.

In addition to amending its drug program for social-assistance recipients by increasing the number of medicaments to 2,015 from 1,808, and by eliminating deterrent charges on certain drugs, the Province of Quebec extended its coverage to include persons 65 years of age and over who were in receipt of the Old Age Security pension and were also receiving the maximum amount of guaranteed monthly income supplement. The "maximum" provision was abandoned on January 1, 1975.

In 1973, Manitoba introduced a prescribed-drug benefit program for Old Age Security pensioners 65 years of age and over; under this program, reimbursement is 80 per cent of expenditures in excess of \$50 a year. British Columbia initiated a program in 1974 for pensioners 65 and over that covers the full cost of drugs. This province already had a program covering the full cost of drugs for welfare recipients and another, which is optional, for low-income but self-supporting residents; this second program pays half the cost of each prescription beyond an initial \$2 payable by the subscriber.

Alberta made an extended range of health-care benefits available in 1973 without charge to all pensioners 65 or over. This program covers the cost of drugs in full (after the pensioner has paid the first \$20 in any year), and the cost of glasses, hearing-aids, dental work and certain appliances. Persons under 65 continue to be eligible for these and other services on an optional basis by paying a reduced premium.

Several provinces began or expanded dental-care programs covering all children in specified age groups. In 1974, Saskatchewan introduced a province-wide program, centred on school clinics, that makes use of the services of dental therapists and dentists who are on referral to provide all care needed by six-year-olds in the first year of the scheme. New age groups are to be added every year until all children from three to 12 are covered.

The Quebec program pays for dental care for children under eight, which is provided on a fee-for-service basis, mainly in dentists' offices. Manitoba is developing a program for children that is to