

Rural Women and Health

Titbits...on women's health

Rural Women in Canada

- According to Statistics Canada, one in five women live in a rural area, which is about 20% of the female population in Canada
- Living in a rural setting is a major determinant of women's health, and correspondingly, poverty and financial insecurity are key determinants of rural women's health in Canada
- "Women in northern, rural and remote communities in British Columbia live an average of 4 years less than women of similar age and circumstances living in the southern part of the province" (Annual Report of the BC Provincial Health Officer, 2001)
- Rural women report that their health needs are not being met under the current Canadian health care system

Barriers to Rural Women's Health

- Limited access to health care services and health care promotion (such as abortion services)
- Limited choice of primary health care providers, especially in terms of access to female practitioners, and limited or non-existent access to specialists or complementary services
- Isolation, distance, inadequate or limited mental health resources, and the difficulty of ensuring anonymity in small rural communities
- Rural women often must travel long distances, face harsh weather conditions, incur transportation and childcare costs and risk penalties from employers in order to seek medical services
- Part time, seasonal, and unreliable working conditions which create stress and financial insecurity
- Occupational health and safety hazards specific to rural women's employment situations
- Language barriers, racism, poverty, and sexism



Please copy and distribute freely to women you know and work with.

The Vancouver Women's Health Collective's *Titbits* are not intended to endorse or recommend particular treatments, explanations or products but rather to facilitate your own search for health resources. Please see your health practitioner for more information.

Effects of Health Care Cuts to Rural Women's Health

- Closures of rural obstetrics units, cuts to maternity care services, and a short age of family doctors delivering babies in rural communities put women in danger, and will lead to a rise in maternal death rates in Canada, according to a national coalition of doctors, nurses and midwives
- Cuts to services in rural communities compromise women's health and well-being.

What can we do to fight for better health care for rural women?

- Rural women need to be included in policy-making decisions at all levels of government in order to ensure that rural women's health needs are met
- Rural women need to be recognized as health care facilitators in their communities
- Contact your local government and demand that they address rural women's health care needs, including expanding health services to include more diverse health care providers such as public health nurses, nurse practitioners, and midwives

Check out these resources online:

BC Rural Women's Network	www.bcruralwomen.ca
Women North Network	http://www3.telus.net/public/wnn/
PovNet (anti-poverty resource)	www.povnet.org
Women's Health Matters	www.womenshealthmatters.ca

Sources:

Ontario Women's Health Network E-Bulletin, Summer 2004.
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The Vancouver Sun, June 7, 2006.
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Reading Romanow: The Implications of the final report of the commission on the future of health care in Canada for women. Centres of Excellence for Women's Health and the Canadian Women's Health



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