

Community Health Advocate Project
Of the Vancouver Women's Health Collective (VWHC)

The Vancouver Foundation
Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Health Advocate Project (CHA) is an outreach project that focuses on helping women in the Vancouver/Richmond region to educate themselves about their rights within the health care system. CHA was developed to help women protect themselves against disrespect and abuse of any kind within the health care system.

GOALS OF CHA

- Provide information and support for women accessing the health care system
- Identify the main issues and problems within the health care system for women in identified communities.
- Help women become the experts and decision-makers around their own health.

Continually providing the Patient's Rights workshop in identified communities helps us to accomplish these goals. The participants of these workshops gain knowledge about what respectful health care is, and learn the skills to help themselves. The Patient's Rights workshop includes:

- an introduction about the VWHC
- information about what it means to access safe, respectful health care
- self-advocacy skills
- informed consent
- doctor's rights

Results Achievements/Insights/General Observations

CHA is an outreach project that focuses on helping women protect themselves against disrespect and abuse within the health care system through our Patient's Rights workshop. The Patient's Rights workshop is a preventative tool that has been fundamental in the success of the CHA project.

The Patient's Rights workshop is designed to educate women about their rights within the health care system has been over the past year widely received by a host of organizations. From January 2001 to December 2001 eighteen workshops were booked resulting in only two cancellations (due to low numbers). There were a total of 130 participants in attendance from 12 different organizations.

Word of mouth, the VWHC newsletter (HER VOICE), the VWHC brochure and the CHA insert translated into six different languages, has been an effective tool in the promotion of the CHA project.

The following CHA inserts have been distributed:

Chinese inserts – 74 out of 200 handed out
Spanish inserts – 82 out of 200 handed out
Vietnamese inserts – 62 out of 200 handed out
Punjabi inserts – 69 out of 200 handed out
Somali inserts – 55 out of 200 handed out
English inserts – 1200 out of 2100 handed out

The CHA project relies on community organizations serving as “community hosts” for our Patient's Rights workshop. Working with community organizations in this way has contributed significantly to the success of the CHA Project. The community hosts have shared the Patient's Rights workshop within their organizations to women and family programs. Some of the community hosts have included the following organizations: Multilingual Orientation Services Associations for Immigrant Communities (MOSAIC); Pacific Immigration Resources Society (PIRS); The Gathering Place Education Centre; Byng Satellite School; The Centre; the Strathcona Mental Health Team; Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services; and Prostitution Alternatives Counselling and Education (PACE).

The organizations acting as community hosts have broadened the diversity of women who access the VWHC and utilize our services. It has given the VWHC a broader understanding of available community services and where we may refer women.

We have found that utilizing community organizations in this way has made it easier for the Patient's Rights workshop to reach a range of women. Promoting the project through postering and word of mouth by the community host organizations to their community was effective only if a minimum of 5 participants pre-registered.

The CHA Information Kit is resource tool that is being given out at the workshops. The Information Kit gives women 28 pages of health information including where to access clinics in their community and questions to ask their doctor to help determine what the best choices are for their health care. Having the ability to hire a summer student has helped keep the Kit up to date. As well our 2001 summer student was able to do additional research about community resources and the revised adult guardianship legislation which affects mental health consumers.

Our evaluation process, which was put into place September 2001, has shown us that. 86% has told us that they strongly agree or agree that they feel better prepared to ask their doctor a question about their health. As well, all of the 28 women who completed the evaluation stated that the CHA Information Kit would be useful when visiting their doctor.

We have learned that communicating in “clear language” is essential in helping women from a range of cultural backgrounds taking charge of their own health care. We have worked extensively on the CHA Information Kit to ensure that it is written in “clear language” with an equally clear form and design.

The Vancouver Foundation grant gave CHA a greater ability to achieve its goals and objectives by increasing the project Coordinators hours. We were able to provide more workshops, maintain the Information Kit and put in place an evaluation process.

Effects on Community/Organizations

A qualitative result of the CHA project is that it has led to greater advocacy skills within the health care system by women. The VWHC mission statement states “The Vancouver Women’s Health Collective (VWHC) provides information resources and other support for women to empower themselves to take charge of their own health care.” The CHA project does this directly by educating women about how to advocate for themselves which leads to women taking charge of their health care and as well learning how to use services appropriately. By giving women information about the range of options available to them in accessing health care, women will make more informed choices about where and how to access this care. Through information shared at workshops by community hosts and workshop participants we have found women unnecessarily use costly emergency room services as a first choice for minor ailments, as opposed to using a clinic or visiting a doctor. The Patient’s Rights workshop encourages women to access appropriate health services.

The ability to facilitate workshops has greatly improved on the part of the CHA coordinator. Through meeting with community hosts and talking about the issues important to their group the coordinator has learned to design workshops in a clearer and more direct manner. 92% of the 28 respondents indicated they agreed or strongly

agreed on the evaluation forms that the facilitator was well prepared and easy to understand.

The VWHC has also adjusted the job description on the CHA project coordinator as the project has evolved. This has helped to focus the coordinator work thus enhancing the growth of the CHA project.

Collaboration/Partnership/Inclusiveness/Target Group

The CHA project relies on community organizations serving as “Community Hosts” for our Patient’s Rights workshop. Working with community organizations in this way has contributed significantly to the success of the CHA project. And has allowed us to reach a diversity of women. From January 2001 to December 2001 CHA has worked with 12 host organizations. With each host organization the CHA coordinator met with or had made preliminary phone calls to discuss the workshop format. The workshop was then tailored to meet the needs of the specific group. This process ensured that the workshop design was culturally appropriate, sensitive and accessible to the communities served. The CHA coordinator contacted the host organization after each workshop to gain feedback and to schedule a follow up workshop if appropriate.

Our affiliation with these community hosts has broadened the diversity of women who access the VWHC and utilize our services. It also gives the VWHC a broader understanding of available community services and where we may refer women. Having access to the programs available at community host organizations increases the effectiveness of the workshop learning experience and enables us to better promote CHA.

Factors influencing Outcomes/Innovation/Demonstration

As stated previously the CHA project is an outreach project focusing on educating women about taking charge of their health care. The project is set up in a workshop format to educate (train) women on how to advocate for themselves about their health care needs. The greatest support for this project is the involvement of community hosts. Through access to their programs the CHA project has been better able to achieve its goals and objectives.

Consultation with the community host has been fundamental in the growth of CHA. The evolving workshop design, the Information Kit and the relationships with community hosts has influenced the outcomes of this project positively.

Publicity/Media

The CHA project will be doing a press release for the Patient’s Rights workshop in January 2002 in order to thank the Vancouver Foundation for its significant contribution to this worthwhile and innovative project.??

Evaluation Process

The CHA project evaluation process was put into place September 2001. This process consisted of the participants of the Patient's Rights workshop filling out an evaluation. This evaluation form was based on a scale format. The Community Host facilitator also filled out an evaluation that had questions, which required written answers. In this early stage of the evaluation process we had 52 participants with 28 evaluations filled out. 5 Community Host facilitators filled out evaluations. Although the respondents are still few, the responses, which have been highlighted in this report, do support the CHA project and the education it is providing to a diversity of communities.

Advisory Committee Goals

The CHA project meets the following Advisory Committee goals.

- **To encourage initiatives which support the development and facilitation of inter-agency cooperation.**

Continued cooperation between the VWHC and the community host organizations is essential in maintaining the success of the CHA project.

- **To encourage the development of skills and competencies in individuals, agencies and communities that will build self-sufficiency capabilities**

The Patient's Rights workshop purpose is to teach participants skills in advocating for them self. This supports individuals in developing personal skills and also enhances the programming of community organizations.

- **To promote linkages between the social, health, economic and environmental sectors within communities?**

- **To encourage community creativity and responsiveness in developing programs and facilities that will provide new and enhanced services**

The Vancouver Foundation grant has helped the VWHC to further its mission statement by providing this innovative project to the lower mainland.

- **To support seniors in maintaining maximum independence and dignity**

Providing services for seniors has always been apart of the goals and objectives of the CHA project. Although in CHA has not provided any specific workshops for the senior population in the year 2001. We do plan on expanding the Patient's Rights workshop to include senior women.

Future of Project

The VWHC does plan on continuing the project. We have applied to the Canadian Women's Foundation for additional funding to support the Vancouver Coastal Authority funding. To maintain the project at its current level it will be necessary to secure additional funding for our 2002/2003 fiscal year.

Continued work on the evaluation process of the CHA project is important in supporting the growth of the project.

Budget

Patient's Rights Workshops provided between January 1, 2001 – December 31, 2001

- Kurdish Women, M.O.S.A.I.C. – Patient's Rights workshop -- February 2, 2001 – 4 participants
- Vietnamese Women, M.O.S.A.I.C. – Patient's Rights workshop -- February 19, 2001 – 9 participants
- Mental Health Women, Strathcona Park – Patient's Rights workshop -- February 23, 2001 – 6 participants
- Leads Group I, P.I.R.S. – Patient's Rights workshop -- March 14, 2001- 8 participants
- Aids Vancouver – Patient's Rights workshop -- March 15, 2001 (one participant showed, cancelled)
- Women of the Downtown Eastside – Patient's Rights workshop in partnership with Sheree Hudson of the V/RHB –April 4, 2001 – 4 participants
- The Centre, Queer Women's Health Series – Patient's Rights workshop -- April 26, 2001 – 10 participants
- Traditions Program – Burnaby Family Life Institute – Patient's Rights workshop -- May 10, 2001 – 10 participants
- Raycam Community Centre – Patient's Rights workshop -- May 17, 2001 – 10 participants
- Leads Group II, P.I.R.S. – Patient's Rights workshop -- October 10, 2001 – 12 participants
- Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services – Patient's Rights Workshop -- October 31, 2001 – 6 participants
- Vietnamese Women, M.O.S.A.I.C. – Patient's Rights workshop -- November 5, 2001 – 17 participants
- Sex trade workers, P.A.C.E. – Patient's Rights workshop -- November 8, 2001- 4 participants
- Leads Group III, P.I.R.S. – Patient's Rights workshop – November 15, 2001- 9 participants
- Youth and Adults, Gathering Place Education Centre – Patient's Rights workshop -- November 26, 2001 – 7 participants
- Gab Youth Services, the Centre – Patient's Rights workshop – December 11, 2001 - 4 participants
- Youth, Byng Satellite School – Patient's Rights workshop – December 13, 2001

*P.I.R.S. – Pacific Immigration Resource Society
V/RHB – Vancouver/Richmond Health Board

Community Out Reach January 1, 2001 –June 30, 2001

- January 11, 2001 – Positive Women’s Network provided resources for their women’s group around Patient’s Rights
- January 25, 2001 – Ministry of Women’s Equality Meeting on Women of Colour Economic Security
- January 30, 2001 – Aids Vancouver re: Patient’s Rights Workshop
- March 27, 2001 – Sheree Hudson – Clinical Nurse Downtown Eastside re: Patient’s Rights
- May 2, 2001 – P.A.C.E. re: Patient’s Rights
- July 17, 2001 – BC Coalition of Disabilities – re: Patient’s Rights issues of People with disabilities
- July 24, 2001 – BC Coalition of Disabilities – re: planning for Patient’s Rights workshop
- August 5 – 10, 2001- Facilitators Training with Headlines Theatre – involved training and networking
- August 14, 2001 - BC Coalition of Disabilities – re: planning for Patient’s Rights workshop
- September 13, 2001 – Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services – re: Patient’s Rights workshop
- September 20, 2001 – P.A.C.E. – re: Patient’s Rights workshop
- September 26, 2001 – Community Meeting sponsored by the Centre – networking
- September 26, 2001 – Gathering Place Education Centre – re: VWHC services and CHA
- October 18, 2001 – BC Coalition of Disabilities – re:postponement of workshop
- November 10, 2001 – Gathering Place Education Centre – re: Patient’s Rights workshop

Community Outreach in this period also involved calling organizations and informing them about the Patient’s Rights workshop. It also involved faxing out information about the VWHC and the CHA project. And organizing meetings with interested organizations.

Community Host Facilitators responses to the Patient's Rights workshop

What were your expectations of the Patient's Rights workshop?

"To know what Patient's Rights are. To know what doctors Rights are."

"To inform women about their rights and to make them understand that they also must be proactive as far as health is concern"

"Women be more aware and understand better their rights as patients or as parents of sick children. Women to be more assertive to exercise their Patient's Rights. Women know relevant questions to ask health care providers"

"To get info on community medical services. To get info on women's centred medical services (family planning, abortion clinics etc.). To discuss rights of Patient's/Doctors"

"Wanted info on services covered by MSP. Wanted to know how to make a complaint"

Were your expectations met?

All respondents shared they felt there expectations were met.

One respondent also shared that more workshop time would be needed
"because of the women's culture and past experience with a number of health care providers, the women need more workshop time to discuss about assertiveness"

"Yes with the help of useful handouts and explanation from Angela"

Do you have any concerns about the information provided in the workshop or in the CHA (Community Health Advocate) Information Kit?

No concerns were raised about the Information kit.

Additional information was though requested:

"Would you please add in the Lady's Name and telephone number that Angela had mentioned we can ask for advice from when our Request was rejected by our family doctor"

"No looking forward to the follow up info on age of consent for treatment"

Workshop content strengths

“lots of good info”

“information”

“valuable information accessible medical services and clear expectation about Patient/doctor relationship and boundaries”

“very useful information provided our group of women really liked it”

“respectful, organized, fun great advocates”

Workshop content weaknesses:

“short of time – 2 hrs including questions will be ideal”

“some activities to break up the talking would be great”

“level of English”

“did not find any”

Workshop facilitator strengths:

“friendly, patient and well informed”

“stopped to make sure women understood”

“well prepared, with aid of flipchart, discuss topics were clearly showed”

“clear understanding of the topics, respect and good listening skills to the women, flexibility with the agenda”

Workshop facilitator weaknesses:

“speaks too quickly”

“can't pinpoint”

Would you recommend this workshop? Yes No

Four out of five responded yes they would recommend this workshop

Why?

“Important immigrant women understand their rights in Canada. Also need to understand our Health System”

“Very helpful for women. Its good to be aware of their rights, and to be more in control or their health.”

“To let more women know about Patient’s Rights and no more fear about executing their rights”

“Because women in this community are not aware of the Women’s Health Collective and the work they do. If women know what their rights are and what services are available they are more likely to use these services.”