

# Health Education Resource Project Proposal

for The B.C. Centre of Excellence for Women's Health

prepared by the WHIN Committee  
of the VWHC Women's Health Information Centre  
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## Introduction

The VWHC Women's Health Information Centre has been involved in the provision and exchange of women's health information since 1972. We believe that empowering women to make their own health care choices allows them the confidence to take control over their health and subsequently prevents violence toward women in the health care system. We also understand that in order for those health choices to be honoured, the health care system and the research and policy that feeds the system must be changed.

In 1992, after an extensive review of our organization and the services we provide we came to the conclusion that our services needed to be updated to better meet the needs of the women of B.C. Accessibility and the marriage of information provision with advocacy became our main focus. Given this mission, we began creating a province-wide system of health information delivery that was dynamic and could be used as a community development tool.

The Women's Health Information Network (WHIN) is such a system. It started as a collection of women's health information with the intention that a database would be designed and distributed to locations throughout British Columbia. After several changes within the collective the project was shelved until a staff person could be hired to concentrate solely on the creation and promotion of WHIN. During this time the collective gained access to better computer technology and thus decided that it was an appropriate step to create a system to be combined with a health advocate program that would be accessible through the internet.

The WHIN system is now comprised of two components, the Community Health Advocate Program (CHA) and the Health Education Resource (HER). The CHA program is already underway, having received funding from the Vancouver Richmond Health Board. This component of WHIN will have health advocates trained and working in a variety of communities in the Vancouver Richmond region. These CHA's will advocate for safe, respectful and appropriate health care for the women in their communities. The HER component of WHIN, for which we are seeking funding from the B.C. Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, would be a database resource for these community health advocates, containing information on specific health topics and advocacy guidelines. Without the HER component of this system, the volunteer health advocates would have difficulty gaining access to the information they need to efficiently promote safe health practices for women in their communities.

We believe that this project has come at a very appropriate time. Recently there have been a number articles written about the lack of good health information on the internet as well as large increase in the amount of women seeking resources and information from the collective. Combined with the interest and support we have received for the WHIN project from organizations such as the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities, REACH Community Health Centre, Mount Pleasant Family Centre, Vancouver /Richmond Mental Health Network, The Centre (LGBT), The South Asian Women's Centre, The Richmond Women's Resource Centre and SheWay, these factors lead us to believe that the creation and implementation of our webpage database is a very necessary and important step for the future of women's health care.

## **Women's Health Information Network Health Education Resource (HER)**

### **A Voice for Women**

The Health Education Resource gives authority to the voices of women by using women's opinions about priority health issues and experiences with health practitioners as a basis for the system. Much of the information included in the database will be gathered from our files containing input and opinions from women in our community. As a partner to the Community Health Advocate Program, it promotes women working as health advocates within their community by offering women an accessible collection of health information and resources upon which they will build their own advocacy program. This will ensure that the issues that are most important to women in each community will be addressed by the health advocate for that area. These issues and concerns will then be offered back into the system to create an accurate and comprehensive body of information.

### **What is It?**

The Health Education Resource (HER) is a user friendly, well rounded database of women's health information accessible as a webpage over the internet. It will allow women to investigate alternatives or supplements to regular treatment by offering resources for general practitioner's and specialists in their area. The HER system will also allow access to specific women's health topics while operating as a resource for the Community Health Advocate program by offering advocacy guidelines. The HER system will present information in a women centred way which reflects our philosophy that treatment, prevention and total health care choices belong to women.

### **WHY the Internet?**

A webpage is an excellent way of providing health information to women because it can be accessed from almost any community. The webpage design will allow us to pilot the project as a resource for community health advocates while giving us the option to easily expand and reorganize information as we assess the needs and requests of women across the province. The website will also enable us to efficiently gather input and suggestions from our community health advocates and women across the country. Through linking to different sites from our homepage we hope to eliminate the duplication of research around popular women's health topics such as menopause or breast feeding. As a part of the community health advocate training we will incorporate workshops for women on how to use the internet. This will not only make our system easier to use but will also follow the mission of the VWHC which is to empower women to make their own choices for health care.

### **How will it Work?**

HER will work as a partner to the Community Health Advocate Program which will train volunteers how to advocate for women's health, retrieve information from the system and subsequently teach other women how to access the internet system. The funding for this first training will be provided by the Community Health Advocate program budget which has been providing by a grant from the Vancouver Richmond Health Board. The budget includes an Honoraria fund of \$4725.00 for the CHA's who will learn how to operate the system and teach other women.

In addition to the basic equipment and hardware we will require to set up the HER system, (see budget attached) we will also need funding for researchers and website developers. These project staff would work with the WHIN Committee to develop the parameters of the project in the development phase.

**Researchers :** Work with the WHIN Committee and the CHA's to determine which health issues are most important to women. They would then investigate the health files at the information centre, make updates and additions to these files, and decide on other topics which are not included in these files. They would develop a comprehensive summary of the health topics and all the alternatives available to women. Included is where to go for more information.

**Website Developers :** Would work with the WHIN Committee and the Researchers to develop a website that best suits the needs of the project. It must be user friendly and laid out in a very accessible way. They would also be responsible for promotion of the website thorough the search engines, women centres, health practitioners, and any organization that would find this information useful.

**Health Education Resource Coordinator :** Would liaise with the project staff and seek funding for the continuation of the project. The HER coordinator would also be responsible for liaising with other organizations and incorporating their information and resources into the system. The HER Coordinator would work closely with the CHA coordinator to ensure the database is maintained and used efficiently by the community health advocates.

**Volunteers :** The committees and the project staff would need to develop a simple process of up-dating and maintaining the website by volunteers. There needs to be a strategy for what type of information is included in the website so that volunteers can easily select key information from a pile of articles. Volunteering on the project will also offer women a chance to get familiar with the internet for free.

Although not a typical database design the HER webpage will work as a database through a series of connected webpages. Each page will offer topics for women to choose and link to information pages and other similar sites.

#### **HER Information**

The first draft of the webpage/database will include the following main topics and their sub topics:

##### **Women's rights in the health care system**

- How to find a health practitioner
- How you should be treated
- What kind of questions you should ask your doctor
- How to file a complaint about a doctor

##### **\* Doctors and Therapists**

- General Practitioners by area
- Alphabetical Listing
- Listing by Specialty
- Alternative Practices i.e holistic, naturopathic
- 

##### **\*What practitioners should know about women's health issues**

- Sensitivity around the health issues for various communities of women (i.e. lesbians,

Muslim women, women in poverty, etc.)

- Workshops on Women's Health
- Questions asked by G.P's

#### **What you need to Know: Community Health Advocacy**

- Project Works
- Feedback from Health Advocates
- How to get started: becoming a volunteer health advocate
- Community Links: health organizations in your community

#### **Community Resources**

- Women's Groups
- Community Centres
- Health Clinics and Resource Centres
- Internet links i.e. Canadian Women's Health Network

#### **\*Health Information**

- General to specific health issues for women (menopause, birth control, abortion, etc.) This would be a heavy section because it would have to follow the philosophy of the VWHC that women have the right to be presented with all types of information to empower them in making safe and appropriate health choices that are right for them. These topics would be listed alphabetically.

#### **VWHC Women's Health Information Centre: Who We Are**

- Mission Statement: Our Vision
- Our Herstory
- What our Centre offers: Resources and Committees
- Our Five Year Plan
- Current Staff and Volunteers

#### **Voices of Women**

- Various women's health issues sorted by region or community (from CHA's input)
- Women's comments about practitioners and the health care system
- Where to find women's health articles and books
- Quotes from women who have experienced violence in the system

\*To protect those who may be in risk of danger from public access to their information (i.e. abortion doctors), we will only give this information to women who come into the centre. Our link to information about practitioners and specialists will only include information such as area of practice, location etc.. VWHC Women's Health Information Centre reserves the right to choose who will be included in our database of practitioners. All input into the system will first pass through the WHIN Committee to ensure that it respects our feminist mandate.

\*A graphic layout of the system is included as appendix 2.

#### **HER and other organizations**

The system will have the ability to interface with the Canadian Women's Health Network but will be set up on a separate server. We are very interested in pooling information and resources with the CWHN and are

planning to create a link to the CWHN on our homepage. This link will allow us to use the CWHN as a resource for specifically Canadian health information while also providing us with a direct connection to like organizations across the country. This will promote the sharing of our ideas and hopefully generate new ideas about women's health advocacy across Canada.

### Looking Ahead

Currently, we are researching our funding possibilities for the next two years. We are applying to the Ministry of Women's Equality for a grant from the Safer Futures program which will be used to maintain the system once it is established. The grant from the Ministry of Women's equality will up to triple the funding we receive from the B.C. Centre of Excellence. Since it is not possible to complete the entire project with only the 15,000 we are requesting from the B.C. Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, we have reassessed our initial needs so that the website can at least be set up with that funding.

In order to get the system up and running we require a coordinator, website developer and hardware. Through the Community Health Advocate Program we will be able to gather enough information to start the database as a basic resource. The creation of the webpage and the entry of this information can be completed by the coordinator and developer. The developer will only be required for the initial set up of the system with researchers and volunteers responsible for data input and upkeep. Once the system is established we will rely on the funding from the Ministry of Women's Equality to hire a full time researcher to gather, sort and input information into the system.

Initially we assumed that our basic budget would amount to the estimated \$15,000. After calculating the total costs for hardware, staff, and operations overhead our budget came to \$17,413.00. We believe that this is an accurate estimate for funding needed to get the project up and running. We are requesting 17,413.00 from the B.C. Centre of Excellence for Women's Health for the Health Education Resource component of our Women's Health Information Network.

A budget outlining our initial and ongoing expenses is contained as Appendix 1.

## Appendix 1

Health Education Resource Budget      VWHC	
1 Year Plan (ongoing)	
<b>Setup and Maintenance</b>	
Website Developer (fixed rate)	4000.00
Researcher (\$19.00 hr x 20 hrs. a week x 52 weeks) *	19760.00
+ 10% payroll tax *	1976.00
Coordinator (\$19.00 hr x 20 hrs. a week x 52 weeks) *	19760.00
+ 10% payroll tax *	1976.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>47472.00</b>
<b>Hardware and Equipment</b>	
Pentium	2000.00
Back up zip drive	300.00
Printer	500.00
Scanner	500.00
Website setup	500.00
Dedicated internet line	150.00
Internet charges	600.00
ISP charges	250.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4800.00</b>
<b>Operation Expenses</b>	
Rent & Parking	12300.00
Equipment Rent and Service	2250.00
Telephone/Fax	1200.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>15750.00</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>68022.00</b>
<p>* To ensure that we can at least set up the project on the funding provided, we have combined the positions of researcher and coordinator for the first phase of the project and estimated 16 weeks @ 20 hrs. a week to set up the system. With a 16 week set up plan the reassessed budget would be as follows:</p>	
Website Developer (fixed rate)	4000.00
Researcher / Coordinator	6080.00
+ 10% payroll tax	608.00
Hardware	4100.00
Operations	2625.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>17413.00</b>

## Appendix 2

### Layout

The HER system will have the following layout. Each headline represents a main page with each title representing an area of information that can be accessed through that main page. I.e. If a women was searching for menopause she would first go to health information.

Women's Rights	Doctors Therapists	What Practitioners should know	What you need to Know: Community Health Advocacy Project Works	Community Resources	Health Information	VWHC Who We Are	Voices of Women
How to find a practitioner: health, holistic and therapists	GPs by Area	The sensitivity of women's health issues		Women's Groups	List of Health Topics Alphabetical	Mission Statement Vision Advocacy	Women's issues by region or community
How you should be treated	Alphabetical Listing	Questions	Feedback	Community Centers	i.e. Abortion Birth Control Menopause	Our Herstory	Women's comments and opinions about practitioners and the health care system
Question you should ask	Listing by Specialty	Workshops	How to get started: becoming a volunteer health advocate	Health clinics and Resource Centers	Issues: i.e. abuse and harassment	What our centre offers: Resources Committees Our 5 Year Plan	Resources of women's health articles and magazines Quotes from women who have experienced violence
How to file a complaint	Alternative practices i.e. holistic, naturopathic		Community Links: health organizations in your community	Internet links CWHC Hospitals, Libraries Magazines			