

## **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:**

### **1/ BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT.**

### **2/ GOOD EXPLANATIONS IN WORDS YOU CAN UNDERSTAND**

- about what the doctor is doing and why.
- about the purpose and results of any tests ordered.
- about your condition, treatment plan, and prognosis.
- about the purpose and side effects of any prescribed medications.

### **3/ SAY NO AND REFUSE TREATMENT**

And you have the right to a clear explanation of the consequences of refusing the treatment. In extreme circumstances, a court may order you to undergo treatment to save your life. And a doctor can commit you to a psychiatric ward if s/he believes that you are a threat either to yourself or others.

### **4/ CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY**

Your doctor must have your permission before talking about you to others not directly involved in your care. You have the right to say No.

### **5/ BE REALLY LISTENED TO AND TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.**

### **6/ ENOUGH TIME FOR YOU.**

Good doctors take the time to ask questions, really listen, and to explain things to you. You have the right to think things over before agreeing to any treatment plan.

### **7/ NOT TO WAIT FOR AN HOUR AT THE DOCTORS OFFICE.**

Your time is just as valuable as the doctor's.

### **8/ READ YOUR MEDICAL RECORDS.**

In some situations, you can read sections of your records only if the person who wrote these sections is present to explain them to you.

### **9/ FREEDOM FROM VERBAL, PHYSICAL, OR SEXUAL ABUSE**

You shouldn't be abused by the doctor, nurse, receptionist, or anyone else.

### **1/ TALK WITH YOUR DOCTOR**

Tell him/her that you are unhappy and what it is that you want them to do differently. Example: "I'd like you to explain my test results in everyday language that I can understand, rather than in medical jargon. I want to know what's going on and what my choices are."

### **2/ GETTING A HAND FROM A FRIEND.**

You might like a friend to go with you as a support person. Tell your doctor about why you want the person there. "I felt overwhelmed last time. My friend here is going to take notes as we talk so I'll be able to remember everything later when I'm deciding what I want to do."

### **3/ A WRITTEN COMPLAINT**

Make a written complaint. Perhaps you'd like a hand with this from a tutor of the learning group here at the women's center. Example: "I've asked to see my medical records but Dr. R. said that I have no right to this information. Please tell me how I can access my records and if my doctor's response is part of this clinic's policy."

### **4/ GET A NEW DOCTOR**

Tell your doctor about why you are going to see someone else. Have your medical records transferred once you have found a new doctor. Tell the new doctor what your needs and expectations are. If you want, say the specific problems you had with the old doctor. For ideas of how to find a doctor, look below.

### **5/ BEING ABUSED? REPORT THE DOCTOR.**

Be assertive and say no to your doctor. If the doctor persists, get a new doctor. Report the abuse to the College of Physicians and Surgeons free of charge by calling 1-800-661-9701. Reporting the doctor is a choice not a necessity. It can be a very difficult process. If you take this step, make sure you have lots of support from family, friends or a counsellor. These professional associations, like the College of Physicians & Surgeons, aren't always open to hearing or believing women's complaints. You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Finding a good doctor takes work. There are things you can do to save you time and energy in your search. Carefully think about what it is you want and need from a doctor. You may find it helpful to make notes for quick and easy reference. After you have decided on what it is you want, list these things in order of importance to you. Talk with family and friends to find out their experiences and suggestions. Ask a public health nurse if she knows of any doctors for you to try. These are just some of the things to make your doctor search easier.

## **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO LOOK:**

### **1/ A GOOD LOCATION**

What area of town would you like the doctor's office to be in? What would cost the least busfare and be easiest for you?

### **2/ SENSE OF AUTHORITY**

Do you want a doctor who is parent-like and tells you what to do? Or would you like a non-authoritarian doctor who really listens and is open to your ideas?

### **3/ FLEXIBLE HOURS**

Some doctors will see you in the evenings or on the weekends, if you want that. If you ask, others may be able to offer appointment times good for you, like first or last thing in the day.

Be sure to show up on time for appointments. If you can't make it, cancel your appointment 24 hours in advance. These things show that you give - and expect - considerate, respectful, and prompt care.

### **4/ APPROACHES**

Do you want a doctor who is very traditional and scientific. Or one who is also open to holistic or naturopathic options being used along with traditional medical approaches.

### **5/ WOULD YOU LIKE A DOCTOR WHO IS FEMALE? OR MALE?**

### **6/ GOOD DOCTORS EXPLAIN WHAT THEY ARE DOING AND WHY.**

### **7/ GOOD DOCTORS TAKE THE TIME TO ASK QUESTIONS, REALLY LISTEN, AND EXPLAIN THINGS.**

If there just isn't enough time for everything in one visit, you can book another appointment to finish things up.

### **8/ SENSITIVITY AND RESPECT**

Women who have been sexually assaulted often find pap smears and throat exams very stressful. What do you need in order to be more comfortable during these kinds of exams? Your needs are important. You deserve to be treated with sensitivity & respect.

### **9/ THEIR ATTITUDE ABOUT PEOPLE ON WELFARE**

Being on welfare is no sin. Living in the downtown eastside is nothing to be ashamed of. Although hard to find, there are a few doctors who aren't prejudiced against people living on welfare.

**10/ SPECIAL NEEDS**

Are you hard of hearing? Do you have poor eyesight? What form of communication is easiest for you? Be sure to tell the doctor of any special needs during the first appointment to see if the doctor can accommodate you.

**11/ HOW FAST DO YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO GET AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR NEW DOCTOR?**

**12/ YOUR PAST EXPERIENCES WITH DOCTORS**

What did you like or not like about doctors you have seen in the past? What would you like your new doctor to be like?

**13/ DO YOU HAVE A CARE CARD OR OTHER MEDICAL COVERAGE?**

Most doctors require that you have a care card or other medical coverage. On the other hand, the Downtown Community Health Clinic on Cordova will only see you if you don't have a care card etc. Be sure to ask about this before booking your first appointment.

**14/ GET THE NAMES OF A FEW DOCTORS**

Some doctors are no longer accepting new patients. It is a good idea to get the names and phone numbers of a few doctors you think might be good for you. List them in order of preference. You may want to make helpful memory notes about what impression you have about each of the doctors from what you have heard or read.