

The Vancouver Women's Health Collective

Health Education Resource

-Proposal-

What is It?

The **Health Education Resource (HER)** is a database of women's health information created as a partner to the Community Health Advocate program and (designed to reach women in marginalized communities.) HER will work toward improving women's health by providing accessible health resources for women via the internet. This allows women access to information which they may not otherwise feel comfortable researching- especially if they are new to their community. More specifically, the HER system will offer women resources for general practitioner's and specialists in their area as well as alternative health care resources such as naturopathy and counselling. The HER system will operate as a resource for the Community Health Advocate program -offering both health information and advocacy guidelines for the advocates.

Who Are We?

This project is proposed by the **HER** Committee of the Vancouver Women's Health Collective. It builds on a grass roots service that has been delivered by the Vancouver Women's Health Collective for the past 27 years. The project team includes Elaine Walkden- Coordinator, Brenda Kent - Community Health Advocate, Candice Bennett - Computer Technician, Marion Smith and Erin Elliot - long time collective members and steering committee members. Many organizations have expressed their need for a program like HER. These include:

B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities
REACH Community Health Centre
Mount Pleasant Family Centre
Vancouver /Richmond Mental Health
Network
The Centre(LGBT)
She Way

We also have several volunteers who are interested in helping get the HER system get off the ground.

How will it Work?

The Community Health Advocate will train volunteers on how to retrieve information from the system. The funding will be provided by the Community Health Advocate program budget. The Community Health Advocate budget includes an Honoraria fund of \$4725.00 to be used to pay those volunteers who will learn how to operate the system and subsequently teach the community about the system.

Information collection and research will be an ongoing process which will include the input of researchers, volunteers and community health advocates.

We have an outline of the information we would like to include in the system.

The first draft of the webpage/database will include the following :

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
- Quotes from women who have experienced violence in the system

Doctors and Therapists

- List of practitioners in the Lower Mainland and area of expertise
- Women's comments about these practitioners (questionable what we can include)

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)

Health Advocacy

- What has been done (case studies)
- Tips and suggestions for advocacy/lobbying
- BC Health Policies : Who are the decision makers?
- What are Community Health Committees/ Health Boards/ etc?

Community Resources

- Women's Groups
- Community Centres
- Health Clinics
- Resource Centres
- Internet links

Voices of Women

- Inputted by Community Health Advocates what are the issues in the various communities we have reached out to already?

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.

The webpage will have the following layout with each box representing a page and each page connected to the one above it:

HER SYSTEM LAYOUT

Women's Rights	Doctors Therapists	What Practioners should know	Health Advocacy	Community Resources	Health Information
How to find a practioner	G.P.'s by Area	Advocacy	BC Health Care	Women's Group	Empowerment
How to find a therapist	Alphabetical	Questions	1.Overview 2. Services	Community Centers	Menopause
How to choose one	Speciality	Workshops	Empowering Women CHOICES RIGHTS QUESTIONS	Health clinics	Birth Control
How you should be treated	Holistic	Referrals	Core Health Issues REPRODUCTION, AIDS , BIRTH CONTROL	Resource Centers	Abortion
Question you should ask	Natupathic	Resources	Abuse DEFINITION, COMPLAINING, RESOURCES	Internet links CWHC Hospitals Libraries Magazines	
How to file a complaint			Harassment DEFINITION, COMPLAINING, RESOURCES		
Quotes			Access WALK-INS, APPOINTMENTS , WORKSHOPS, MEDIA		
Experiences					

Instead of creating a database with a program such as Access or Minisis or hiring a database designer we have decided to create a website for the internet. This will allow us a quicker, cheaper and more accessible system which will have the ability to start out small with the potential to grow as the information is collected. This also allows us to pilot the project as a resource for the community health advocates so we can see how effective it is before we expand it. There are a few pieces of equipment and hardware we will need to purchase before we can set up the WHIN system. (see budget attached). We will especially 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 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 this information useful.

Community Health Advocate Coordinator : Would liaise with the project staff and train the Community Health Advocates how to use the website. The CHA coordinator could incorporate the information gathered by the researchers to supplement the CHA Manual.

Volunteers : The committees and the project staff would need to develop a simple process of updating and maintaining the website by volunteers. There needs to be a strategy for what type of information gets included in the website so that volunteers can easily select from a pile of information, which info gets included in the website.

Representing Women

The HER gives authority to the voices of women by using women's opinions about health issues and their experiences with health practitioners as a basis for the system. This will allow other women to make safe choices for better health care because.... 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. (Women who are marginalized due to poverty, racism, ageism, homophobia, cultural stereotypes, geographic isolation, and/or addictions.)

Looking Ahead

We are in the process of researching our funding possibilities for the next two years. Currently 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 over the next year. Our Community Health Advocate program has already received funding from the Vancouver Richmond Health Board, which will help us establish the Community Health Advocate component of HER. We operate with the ongoing help of volunteers and hope to recruit more women who are interested in the HER project. This will be an attractive opportunity for many to work with in that it will offer women a chance to get familiar with the internet for free. the Safer Futures program from the Ministry of Women's Equality and (make a point about involvement of other organizations in CHA)

How will the data be protected from malicious use?

Initially we were going to include information about health practitioners as a part of their files on the database system. We have decided that in order to protect those who may be in risk of danger from the inclusion of this information in a publicly accessible place we will only give this information to women who come into the centre. Instead our link to information about practitioners and specialists will only include their regular information such as area of practice, location etc. The Vancouver Women's Health Collective will however reserve the right to choose who will be included in our database of practitioners. If a practitioner has been given several poor reviews we will not offer them as a resource to women.

5. Will the system interface with the Canadian Women's Health Network?

The system will have the ability to interface with CWHN but it 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 as a part of our homepage. This link will aid us in that it will prevent the duplication of research and information for our database. It will also be beneficial in that it will allow us to gather current information without having to go further than the internet. Our link to the Canadian Women's Health Network will allow us to offer information about our organization and the community Health Advocate program to all women's organizations across the country. This will hopefully help us to generate new ideas about women's health advocacy across Canada.

6. Which operating system, software and hardware will be purchased?