



Vancouver Women's Health Collective

1 - 175 East 15th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5T 2P6

Tel (604) 736-4234 • Fax (604) 876-1282

vwhc@vcn.bc.ca

Health Information Line (604) 736-5262

MEDIA RELEASE

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Plan to send mastectomies, hysterectomies to private surgical clinics puts women at risk

A Vancouver-based women's health advocacy organization is raising the alarm about a plan by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to transfer surgical procedures like breast mastectomies and vaginal hysterectomies from full service hospitals to stand alone private clinics.

"Women need to know that if they suffer complications after surgery that they'll have immediate access to a full range of emergency and surgical services that are available in a hospital," says the Vancouver Women's Health Collective's Caryn Duncan.

"What happens if things go wrong after a hysterectomy is carried out in a private clinic," adds Duncan. "Will these clinics be able to deal with critical complications in a timely manner?"

In a document made public yesterday, the VCHA lists hundreds of surgical procedures carried out at Richmond Hospital that private clinic operators will be invited to bid on.

Those procedures contain a range of gynecological, obstetric and other procedures including breast mastectomies, total hysterectomies, pelvic abscess incisions and drainage, tubal ligations and episiotomies.

And Duncan disputes suggestions that performing these surgeries at private clinics will solve the problem of long waiting lists.

"The government created the problem of wait lists in the first place by closing hospitals and operating rooms," says Duncan "Wait lists have grown by 20% since June, 2001."

"Privatizing the delivery of surgeries is no solution at all," adds Duncan. "Instead, government should put those resources into getting our public hospitals running properly."

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Contact: Caryn Duncan, Vancouver Women's Health Collective, 604-736-4234.