

# NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

October 25, 2004

## **Provincial Women's Health Strategy to improve health for B.C. girls and women announced today**

**Vancouver, B.C.** – Representatives from BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre and the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, along with other special guests, today revealed a new collaborative strategy to improve the health of girls and women throughout B.C.

Overall, the health of girls and women in B.C. compares with the best in the world and life expectancy is at an all-time high. However, significant sources of illness continue to affect the quality of life of women and some groups of girls. Women may be more at risk for some diseases, while effective methods of interventions can vary. For example, the strategy points out significant health issues for women in B.C., such as: mental health; problematic substance use and addictions; cardiovascular disease; diabetes; HIV/AIDS; lung cancer; breast cancer; and falls.

In response to these health issues, *Advancing the Health of Girls and Women in British Columbia: A Provincial Women's Health Strategy*, offers a 10-year collaborative, women-centred approach to address three priority areas: women's health monitoring and surveillance; maternity care; and mental health and addiction.

"Mental health and addictions are often interrelated problems," said Brenda Locke, Minister of State for Mental Health and Addiction Services for B.C. "It is vital that we treat women facing these challenges in the most effective way possible – and often that will mean treating them differently than men."

"A woman's health and well-being can be impacted by so many factors - including their self-esteem, their education and their mental health," said Ida Chong, Minister of State for Women's and Seniors' Service for B.C. "We need to work together to truly advance the health of women through all stages of life. This strategy will help us work together to improve the health and well-being of women in B.C. and their families."

Beyond disease and illness, the strategy looks at methods of addressing access to services, such as maternity care for women in both rural and urban areas of B.C.

“Providing maternity services for women across B.C. is becoming more challenging for a variety of reasons. This strategy provides us with a road map to help ensure access to care for all women in B.C.,” said Dr. Liz Whynot, President of BC Women’s Hospital & Health Centre.

In addition to mental health and addiction issues and access to maternity care, underlying the development of appropriate care for girls and women is the need for women-centred research.

“Researchers, policy makers and practitioners need to be strategic in addressing health conditions or diseases that are more prevalent or serious in women, or for which there are different interventions needed for women compared to men,” explained Dr. Lorraine Greaves, Executive Director of the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health. “We are committed to expanding research, evaluation and training in many of the women’s health issues outlined in this document.”

The strategy is the result of combined efforts from two key partners – BC Women’s Hospital & Health Centre and the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health. The Office of Healthy Children, Women and Seniors, Ministry of Health Services, and a task group of representatives from the regional health authorities and other key women’s health advocates across the province, provided further input and guidance.

The complete document is available online at [www.cw.bc.ca](http://www.cw.bc.ca) or through the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health by calling 604-875-2633.

*BC Women’s Hospital & Health Centre, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides service for pregnant women, newborns and women with specialized health needs from across the province. For more information please visit [www.cw.bc.ca](http://www.cw.bc.ca).*

*The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information please visit [www.phsa.ca](http://www.phsa.ca).*

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