



**Medicare: it's
got us covered.**

Eroding Public Medicare

Update on for-profit health care in BC

SEPTEMBER 2010



The BC Health Coalition champions the protection and expansion of a universal public health care system.

We are a democratic, inclusive and consensus-based network of individuals and organizations that span the province of British Columbia. We strive to encourage activism on health care, raise public awareness, develop constituencies around our campaigns, build unity through campaigns, and solicit participation in BC Health Coalition activities.

The BC Health Coalition

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Introduction

In October 2008 the Ontario Health Coalition released a groundbreaking national report entitled *Eroding Public Medicare: Lessons and Consequences of For-Profit Health Care Across Canada*. This report—endorsed by the BC Health Coalition and other regional health coalitions—documented a national explosion of private for-profit health facilities operating across the country, and which jeopardize the equality and fairness of our health care system.

In response to hearing increasing reports of companies selling queue-jumping services without penalty, and inadequate action by federal and provincial governments to uphold the principles of universal publicly-funded health care, report researchers decided to measure what was happening “on the ground.”

The report revealed a disturbing picture of a new phenomenon of private health care in Canada: an increasingly aggressive group of private company owners who are promoting profit-driven health businesses that threaten Canadians’ universal and equal access to care.

Researchers found that 130 for-profit health care clinics across Canada were selling surgeries, MRIs and access to physician care.

Evidence referred to in the report suggests that 89 for-profit clinics in five provinces appear to be in breach of the Canada Health Act’s criteria regarding universality and accessibility; by either selling medically necessary hospital or physician services for direct charges to patients and selling two-tier access to care.

In B.C. the report found 29 suspected violations on the part of for-profit surgical and MRI clinics in B.C. that appear to be in breach of the *Canada Health Act*.

The research also found that for-profit clinics have taken scarce doctors and nurses out of local public hospitals, leading to reduced public services; higher wait times also exist in areas with a high density of for-profit clinics.

With the expansion of for-profit healthcare, researchers reported that corporate ownership is starting to change from small local physician-led corporations to investor-owned chains that operate in their own business interests to maximize their profits, and in so doing, have adopted a morally agnostic approach to the consequences.

Research also found that prices charged in for-profit clinics that are unaffordable for the vast majority of people, and many for-profit clinics are simply selling fast access for the very wealthy.

The evidence also shows that a descent into a U.S.-style system of access based on wealth is not inevitable, but in general, provincial governments have failed to set up regulatory and monitoring systems to counter transgressions.

And the federal government has, in recent years, totally failed its mandate to act as steward of the principles of the Canada Health Act.

Eroding Public Medicare: Lessons and Consequences of For-Profit Health Care Across Canada can be downloaded for the BCHC website at: http://www.bchealthcoalition.ca/images/PDF/ppp_final.pdf

BC today

In 2008 OHC researchers set out to find all the for-profit diagnostic, surgical and “boutique” physician clinics in BC, to see how they work and how they are affecting costs and access in the public health system.

In addition to a comprehensive statistical analysis, researchers also surveyed the businesses in question and used the private clinics’ own words—in their advertising, speeches, and our interviews with clinic staff—to reveal the full picture of the growth of for-profit hospitals and clinics, and their approach to selling health care.

They found evidence to suspect that 29 for-profit clinics appear to be in breach of the Canada Health Act’s criteria regarding universality and accessibility by selling medically necessary hospital or physician services for direct charge to patients and allowing two-tier access (“queue-jumping”) to care.

In BC today, that picture has not changed. Research conducted over three months (June – August, 2010) by BCHC staff has revealed that for-profit clinics across the province continue to openly charge patients additional fees to jump the queue for services that are publicly insured.

Through a combination of examining clinic websites and telephone interviews, researchers attempted to determine what services were being offered. Following the OHC model, they asked clinics questions regarding the purchase of medically necessary services. They asked about price and whether there is a difference if a patient is or is not covered by MSP. They documented all interviews.

This update was compiled using the OHC Report, the current websites of the for-profit facilities in question and phone interviews. It has found evidence to suspect that 33 for-profit clinics are presently charging fees for publicly insured services or for access to them.

Private facilities not in the OHC report were found using the BC College of Physicians and Surgeons’ Accredited Non-Hospital Medical Surgical Facilities list and the website <http://www.findprivateclinics.ca/>.

Findings in detail

The following section contains a list of for profit facilities that require investigation on the part of the BC Medical Services Commission —the body responsible for the administration of the Medical Services Plan and for ensuring that patients are not charged out-of-pocket for medically necessary health services.

The facilities can be viewed in Google maps page, which contains a summary of the services sold and suspected violations committed. Visit: <http://tinyurl.com/233868w>

For-Profit Hospitals (Surgical Centres)

1. Ambulatory Surgical Centre (Vancouver)
2. Blaylock Surgery Centre (Abbotsford)
3. Cambie Surgery Centre (Vancouver)
4. Comox Valley Surgical Centre (Cumberland)
5. Coquitlam Cataract Centre
6. Delbrook Surgical Centre (North Vancouver)
7. False Creek Surgical Centre (Vancouver)
8. Kamloops Surgical Centre
9. Langley Surgical Centre
10. New Westminster Surgical Centre
11. Okanagan Health Surgical Centre (Kelowna)
12. Pezim Clinic (Vancouver)
13. Prince George Surgery Centre
14. Seafeld Surgical Centre (Nanaimo)
15. South Fraser Surgical Centre (Surrey)
16. Valley Laser Eye Centre (Abbotsford)
17. Valley Surgery Centre (Abbotsford)
18. Victoria Surgery
19. White Rock Orthopaedic Surgery Centre

For-Profit MRI/CT Clinics

1. Access MRI
2. AIM Medical Imaging
3. Canada Diagnostic Centres
4. Canadian Magnetic Imaging
5. CML (Vancouver, MRI and Victoria MRI)
6. Comox Valley MRI
7. Fraser Valley MRI
8. Image One MRI
9. MedRay MRI
10. Okanagan Health MRI Clinic
11. Specialty MRI Clinics
12. West Coast MRI
13. Whistler MRI Clinic

Boutique Physician Clinics

1. Copeman Healthcare Centre (Vancouver)

For-Profit Hospitals (Surgical Centres)

False Creek Surgical Centre

6th Floor – 555 West 8th Ave
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada V5Z 1C6
TEL 604.739.9695
FAX 604.709.9676
TF 800.815.9338
info@nationalsurgery.com

Information from website:

<http://www.falsecreekhealthcare.com/>

False Creek provides primary care, advanced diagnostics, day care, and overnight surgery. The clinic also has an Urgent Care Centre and a private family practice. They offer financing for diagnostic services like MRI and CT through the PAIDE Medical Diagnostic Payment Plan. Payment for surgery is due two weeks prior to surgery date.

For \$1575 annually a client can buy the clinic's "Executive Health Assessment" which includes:

- Medical History and Assessment
- Complete Blood Profile
- Complete Urinalysis
- Metabolic Syndrome Screening
- Body Mass Index Calculation
- Coronary Risk Analysis
- Physical Examinations – Cardiovascular, Respiratory, Abdominal, Dermatological, and Musculoskeletal Assessments
- Neurological Assessment
- ECG
- Cardiac Stress Test
- Visual Acuity Testing
- Hearing
- Abdominal/Pelvic/Carotid Doppler Ultrasounds
- Prostate and Testicular Examinations for Men
- PAP Smear, Breast and Pelvic Examinations for Women
- Lifestyle and Stress Management Assessment
- Outcome and Customized Feedback Report
- Lifestyle Sustainability Plan with Follow-Up
- Secure Personal Health Record

For \$2995 annually a client can buy the clinic's "Continuum Premium Health Program which includes the Executive Health Assessment (above) and up to ten follow-up visits with a family doctor.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

Hi, I moved to Vancouver a couple of months ago and haven't had much luck finding a family doctor. I saw on your website that you have a private family practice. Could you tell me a little about it?

A: It's \$2995 per year and for that you get ten visits with a doctor and one full physical. If I buy a membership in the family practice will that also pay for services in your urgent care centre if I need them?

A: Yes, that's part of your ten visits. Otherwise it's \$420 for a walk-in not counting any equipment we may need to use.

Does it make any difference if I don't have MSP.

A: No we're completely private so we have nothing to do with MSP.

What kind of services does the urgent care centre provide?

A: It's pretty much like a walk in clinic, but with much less waiting and more equipment.

Comox Valley Surgical Centre, (associated with Comox Valley MRI)

2696 Windermere Ave,

Cumberland, BC

VOR 1S0

Phone: (250) 336 - 2087

Fax: (250) 336 - 2088

Information from website:

<http://www.comoxvalleysurgical.com/index.html>

The clinic offers surgeries ranging from uninsured plastic surgeries to orthopedic surgeries which are often medically necessary. The clinic does not seem to discriminate between medically necessary and unnecessary services. The site says that people who have some preexisting health conditions may be declined surgery. Financing through Medicaid is available.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?

A: Well, yes, but we only accept third party payers.

So I can't pay for it myself?

A: No, you can't pay yourself for insured services. You have to have a third party pay for it.

And it can be anybody?

A: Yes.

Cambie Surgery Centre

2836 Ash Street
Vancouver, BC
V5Z 3C6
tel - 604.874.1349
toll free - 800.558.1338
facsimile - 604.874.1549

Information from the website:

The clinic offers a range of surgeries, including plastic surgery, orthopedic surgery, and neurosurgery. Patients can expect surgery within 1 to 3 weeks of consultation, with some applicable restrictions. The clinic accommodates overnight stays for surgeries that require "extensive post operative care." All of the clinics surgeons have been approved by the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?

A: Yes.

How much does it cost in general?

A: You'd have to have a booking and a consultation before we knew that.

What does that fee pay for?

A: The booking and consultation.

Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?

A: It's all private. You'd need a specialist referral, so it might matter for that.

So I can buy surgery at your clinic even if it's medically necessary?

A: It's all private.

Blaylock Surgery Centre, Abbotsford BC (Affiliated with Valley Laser Eye Centre)

102-2545 McCallum Road,
Abbotsford, B.C.
V2S 3R1
Tel: (604) 854 3627
Toll free 1-877-854-3627
Fax: (604) 850 3368

Information from website:

http://www.valleylasereyecentre.ca/index_bsc.php

"Blaylock Surgical Centre offers plastic/cosmetic surgery, general surgery, orthopedic surgery, urology, gynecology, W.C.B. cases, dental surgery and eye surgery."

"Blaylock Surgical Centre is available to surgeons and patients to expedite their procedures, at their convenience."

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?

A: You need a consultation first, which would cost \$240 and for an arthroscopy it's \$3100

Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?

A: You absolutely need a Care Card. We need it just to process you. A Care Card from another province will also do.

Kamloops Surgical Centre

200 - 741 Sahali Terrace

Kamloops, BC

V2C 6X7

phone: 250-314-0076

fax: 250-314-1196

toll-free: 1-877-314-0076

email: info@kamloopssurgery.com

Information from website:

<http://www.kamloopssurgery.com/index.htm>

The clinic offers: Orthopaedic, general, cosmetic, ophthalmology and gynecological surgery, urology, neurosurgery, and dentistry. Clients with a medical condition deemed not stable enough may be refused. "All surgical procedures must be prepaid or a suitable guarantee for payment in place prior to surgery." Payment can be made with cash, bank-guaranteed cheques, Visa, and Mastercard. A "guarantee by insurer or third party suitable to management of Kamloops Surgical Centre" is also acceptable. The clinic is also registered with Medicaid.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?

A: Yes.

How much does it cost in general?

A: For an ACL Rupture it could be \$7500 to \$8500. Medicaid is available for financing.

What does that fee pay for?

A: Just the surgery, you need to pay a \$350 consultation fee on top.

Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?

A: Nope. But we can't serve you if you're from out of country. (Does this mean you need medical coverage from some province / territory?)

Langley Surgical Centre

22112 52 Ave.
Langley, BC
604 534 0800
604.534.0844 (Fax)
1-877-700-LSC1(5721)
info@langleysurgicalcentre.ca

Information from website:

<http://www.langleysurgicalcentre.ca/home.html>

"Langley Surgical Centre is a state of the art multi-speciality facility offering a wide range of surgical procedures in a timely fashion." The clinic offers Arthroscopic Joint Surgery, Cataract Surgery, Interventional Pain Management/Nerve Blocks, Hernia repair and Facial reconstructive surgery.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?
- . A: Yes, but you need a consultation with a surgeon first.
- . How much does it cost in general?
- . A: For the consultation it's \$385 and then if you need surgery it's \$7500 for an ACL repair.
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?
- . A: Yes. Then we can't bill MSP for your anesthesia or anything like that. You'd be looking at an additional two to three thousand.
- . So what does the \$7500 pay for?
- . A: It's the facility fee for the ACL repair.

Seafield Surgical Centre

(Run by Surgical Centres Incorporated)

Seafield Surgical
Suite 6N -1179 Seafield Crescent,
Nanaimo, BC
V9S 4S1
Phone: 250.741.0200
Fax: 250.741.0225
info@surgicalcentres.com

Information from website:

<http://www.surgicalcentres.com/seafield.html>

The clinic offers cosmetic, ear, nose and throat, endoscopy, general surgery, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, orthopedic, pediatric dental, and urology.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?
 - . A: Yes.
 - . How much does it cost in general?
 - . A: For an ACL Rupture it's \$8000 to \$10000 which includes the fee for a surgical assistant, facility fee, and all costs. \$3300 is the private fee for the orthopedic surgeon.
 - . Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?
 - . A: Nope.
 - . So I can buy surgery at your clinic even if it's medically necessary?
 - . A: (Didn't seem to hear/understand the question.) If you pay a consultation fee and have the clinic's surgeon assess the MRI it will also speed up the process.
-

From OHC report:

Clinic told OHC researcher that the clinic doctors make their own payment arrangements with patients, and that patients also pay a facility fee for OR time and for use of nurses and anesthesiologists. Payment for surgery could come from MSP.

New Westminster Surgical Centre

104 - 250 Keary Street,
New Westminster,
British Columbia V3L 5E7
Phone: 604.517.1063
Fax: 604.517.4652

Information from website:

<http://www.surgicalcentres.com/newwest.html>

The clinic offers cosmetic, ear, nose and throat, endoscopy, general surgery, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, orthopedic, and urology.

BCHC Phone Interview (None given: office closed until Aug 30).

From OHC Report:

Clinic told researcher that a patient is billed a \$950 facility for cataract surgery in addition to the charge for the lens, which is paid for by the patient, and the cost of the surgery itself. When asked if this was covered by MSP the researcher was told that the consultation "might be covered." The researcher was referred to Dr. Niema whose office told the researcher that the cost of a hard lens is covered by the government but that the patient is billed \$300 to \$450 per eye for soft lenses. In total, the researcher was told "if you go through [the surgery] privately it's about \$1500 per eye." The researcher was told that Dr. Niema performs MSP covered surgery out of Rich Meadows Hospital with a waiting list of four to six months or the surgery can be performed privately, for a fee, usually after a wait of "about 2 months."

Delbrook Surgical Centre

107 - 3711 Delbrook Ave.
North Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada V7N 3Z4

Toll Free: 1-888-985-7488
Telephone: 604-985-7488
Fax: 604-985-7470

Information from website:

<http://www.delbrooksurgical.com/>

The clinic offers general, cosmetic & plastic, ear, nose & throat, orthopedic surgery, gynecology, neurosurgery, urology and pediatric dentistry.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?

A: Yes.

How much does it cost in general?

A: Usually around \$7500 to \$8000.

What does that fee pay for?

A: Facilities, nurses, anesthesiologist.

Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?

A: No.

So I can buy surgery at your clinic even if it's medically necessary?

A: Yes.

Pezim Clinic

Suite 30 - 3195 Granville Street
Hycroft Centre
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6H 3K2
Phone: 604.730.5810
Fax: 604.730.5820
ezimclinic@telus.net

Information from website:

<http://www.pezimclinic.com/index.html>

"The Pezim Clinic is the first freestanding ambulatory surgery centre in British Columbia dedicated solely to gastrointestinal endoscopy (scope tests) and anorectal surgery. The Pezim Clinic provides expedited GI diagnostic and treatment services including flexible sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, anorectal surgery and colorectal cancer screening programs in a friendly clinic setting. Both provincial Medical Services Plan (MSP) and private care are offered."

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my doctor says I need a colonoscopy can I get one at your clinic?
- . A: Yes.
- . How much does it cost?
- . A: Your consultation will be covered by MSP but for the "surgery" you pay \$320 or more.
- . What does that fee pay for?
- . A: Reimbursement for the clinic.
- . Does it make a difference if I have a Care Card?
- . A: Care Card or no, you still pay.
- . What's the advantage of going to your clinic over a normal hospital?
- . A: We can do it sooner than the hospital. It's 4 to 6 months at the hospital and we can do it in 2 to 3 weeks.

From OHC's report:

An OHC researcher was told that for colonoscopies covered by MSP a facility fee of \$240 is charged in exchange for "faster service than what would be obtained through a hospital."

Ambulatory Surgical Centre

7th Floor – 1200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC V6Z 2C7
Telephone: 604 669-6181
Fax: 604 694-6613
Toll Free: 1-877-333-ASCV (2728)
E-mail: info@asc-canada.ca

Information from website:

"ASC Vancouver Surgical Centre is a private surgical centre in downtown Vancouver offering expedited access to a wide range of day and short stay surgeries, including orthopedic, vascular (vein), gynecology (incontinence), general (hernia), neurosurgery (discectomy) and plastic surgery including excessive sweating and carpal tunnel release."

"ASCV is committed to the principles of the Canada Health Act and Medicare Protection Act, and requires that surgical services are paid by third party payers, not patients. This may include an employer, a disability insurer, or another third party (WCB, RCMP, ICBC).

All payments are due prior to surgery."

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?
- . A: Yes, though we're booking surgeries for Sept 23 and later now because a lot of people are on vacation.
- . How much does it cost in general?
- . A: \$500 for the consultation, about \$4500 if you just need a scope afterwards.
- . What does that fee pay for?
- . A: Everything. Doctor, facility, anesthesia...

- . Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?
- . A: No.
- .

Victoria Surgery

3rd Floor, 715 Finlayson Street
 Victoria, BC, Canada
 V8T 2T4
 Tel: 250.595.1553
 Fax: 250.595.1518
 Toll free (Canada and US): 1.877.715.1553

Information from website:

<http://www.victoriasurgery.com/>

"Victoria Surgery specializes in a range of procedures that are appropriate for a private surgical facility, from hernia repair to varicose veins treatments and spinal surgery."

The website says they are unable to provide estimates unless they have "received a booking" from a consulting surgeon. Overnight stays cost extra. Patients with certain health conditions or who need more complex surgery may be refused.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?
- . A: Unfortunately it would have to be through WCB or other 3rd party insurers, like Blue Cross for example. So if you have a Blue Cross extended plan the next thing to do would be to talk to them to see if they'll cover it. We used to be able to take private patients but the government said we can't do it anymore.
- . In your experience has Blue Cross paid for people to have surgery at your clinic?
- . A: They have before yes, but it will depend on your coverage and 'situation.'

Valley Surgery Centre, Surrey

Suite 302, 14439 104th Avenue
 Surrey, BC V3R 1M1
 Telephone: 604-585-3005
 Fax: 604-585-3007

Information from website:

<http://www.valleysurgerycentre.com/ourcentre.htm>

The clinic offers ophthalmology, orthopedic surgery, urology and plastic and reconstructive surgery.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?

.
A: Yes, but you have to pay. You have to contact an orthopedic surgeon who may refer you here. We don't have in house surgeons; we're just "a shell."

Okanagan Health Surgical Centre

401 - 3320 Richter Street,
Kelowna, BC, V1W 4V5
Phone: 250 868-9799
Toll Free: 1-877-505-8895
Fax: 250 868-9734
Email: contact@okanaganhealthsurgical.ca

Information from website:

<http://www.okanaganhealthsurgical.ca/>

"Through contracts with the Interior Health Authority, Okanagan Health now provides day care surgical access for up to 2000 Medical Services Plan patients. This has helped to diminish the wait times for surgical access in the regional hospitals. This is in addition to more than 2000 patients treated on a private basis."

"Payment is required two weeks prior to surgery. Cash, certified cheque, VISA or Master Card is accepted. Cheque payments are made out to 'Okanagan Health Surgical Centre'. Surgeon's fees are separate and are to be processed by the surgeon's office."

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- .
If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?
A: Yes, but you need to go through an orthopedic surgeon. We're just a facility that surgeons use. You can ask your doctor to refer you to [other doctors], all of [whom] use this facility.
How much does it cost in general?
A: We'd need a diagnosis, but let's say you just needed a knee scope, then our fee is \$2240 and then whatever the doctor's fee is would be on top of that.
Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?
A: No, not if you're going about it privately.

Prince George Surgery Centre

2nd Floor, 500 Victoria St.
Prince George, BC, V2L 2J9
Tel: 250-563-4077
Fax: 250-563-4028
Toll Free: 1-877-563-4077
info@pgsurgerycentre.com

Information from website:

The clinic offers cosmetic surgery as well as hernia repair and orthopedic surgery. For payment it

accepts Visa, Mastercard, bank-guaranteed cheques or “guarantee by insurer or third party suitable to management of Prince George Surgery Centre.” It’s also registered with Medicaid.

The clinic’s mission statement is: “We dedicate ourselves to continuously improve the access, process, quality and scope of surgical service through individual and collective leadership which is thoughtfully responsive, progressive, and fiscally conscious.”

Phone Interview (unable to contact; facility closed until August 30).

South Fraser Surgical Centre

#401 - 2031 McCallum Road
Abbotsford, BC V2S3N5
Phone: 604.854.1558
Fax: 604.854.1559
Email: yourhealth@southfrasersurgical.com

Information from website:

The clinic offers cosmetic and other non-medically necessary surgeries, as well as orthopedic surgery and hernia repair. It is owned and operated by doctors and is a contracted facility with WorksafeBC, Fraser Health Authority as well as a facility where surgeons can bring their private patients.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?
- . A: You’d need a consultation with a surgeon first.
- . How much does it cost in general?
- . A: You can get the consultation here, and that’s \$400. If you just need a scope it’s another \$3550.
- . What does that fee pay for?
- . A: Everything.
- . Does it make a difference if I don’t have a Care Card?
- . A: No.

White Rock Orthopaedic Surgery Centre

44-1480 Foster Street
White Rock, BC
V4B 3X7
Tel 604-538-0068
Fax 604-538-0703

Information from website:

<http://www.wrosc.com/>

The clinic offers a wide range of orthopedic surgery procedures to those who want to pay to expedite surgery.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my doctor says I need knee surgery can I buy it from your clinic?
- . A: You need a consultation first for which there is a \$400 fee, and then if you just need a scope it's \$2300. That includes everything.
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?
- . A: Not at all.

Valley Laser Eye Centre

(Affiliated with Blaylock Surgery Centre)

102-2545 McCallum Road,
Abbotsford, B.C.
V2S 3R1
Tel: (604) 504-3937
Toll free 1-888-977-3937

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my doctor says I need cataract surgery can I buy it from your clinic?
- . A: Yes. Right now we're booking for end of September for consultation. Surgery generally happens a month after that if the doctor does it here privately. He can also do it at Chilliwack hospital but it would take about 3 months after the consultation.
- . How much does it cost?
- . A: \$1275, with the soft lens.
- . What does the fee pay for?
- . A: The lens, surgery, tax, everything.

From OHC report:

A researcher was told that if they wanted to get cataract surgery that was covered by MSP they could go on the 6 month wait list or they could get it right away for \$1200 per eye. Both procedures would be performed by the same Doctor.

Coquitlam Cataract Centre

#205 - 1015 Austin Avenue
Coquitlam, BC
phone: 604.937.3211
fax: 604.937.3231
email: coquitlameyes@telus.net

Information from website:

<http://drkevinparkinson.com/index.html>

The clinic charges a facility fee of \$1000 per eye in addition to the intraocular lens charge for “patients wishing expedient surgery in a personalized setting.”

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . Hi, I'm calling for my mom. If her doctor says she needs surgery can she buy it at your clinic?
- . A: Yes, we do private surgeries one day a month. The next one is Sept. 25. But you need a consultation first.
- . How much does it cost?
- . A: The clinic has a user fee of \$1000. Then you have to pay for the lens, starting price is \$325 and that's for a soft lens.
- . Could she get a consultation before Sept 25?
- . A: If she's coming for private surgery we could fit her in.

From OHC's report:

A researcher was told that patients could have a doctor perform a cataract surgery in a hospital if they were willing to wait 5 to 6 months, or they could pay a user fee and get it done at the clinic and only wait about 2 months

For-Profit MRI/CT Clinics

Canada Diagnostic Centres

City Square Mall (Upper Shops Level)
Suite 136 - 555 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 3X7
Telephone: (604) 709-8522
Toll free: (877) 709-8522
Fax: (604) 709-6112

Information from website:

<http://www.canadadiagnostics.ca/>

The clinic offers private MRI, CT, ultrasound and dental scans. They require a doctor's referral and most appointments are booked within 48 hours of receiving the referral.

The clinic's fee schedule can be found here: <http://www.canadadiagnostic.com/fee-schedule.php>

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my Dr. says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?
- . A: Definitely, you just need a doctor's referral first.
- . How much does it cost?
- . A: For a routine MRI it's \$895.

- . Does it make a difference if I don't have MSP?
- . A: Nope, we're completely private.
- . What's the advantage of using your clinic?
- . A: You don't have to wait.
- . And after that if I need surgery can I get that at a regular hospital?
- . A: Yes.

West Coast MRI

3997 Hastings St.
 Burnaby, BC V5C 2H8
 Ph: 604.568.6805
 Fax: 604.568.6903
 info@westcoastmri.com

Information from website:

The site says that routine MRIs at this clinic cost \$699 and there is no waitlist.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my Dr. says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?
- . A: Yes, you just need a doctor's referral and it's \$699.
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have MSP?
- . A: No, because we're a private clinic.
- . What's the advantage of using your clinic?
- . A: We don't have a waitlist.
- . And after that if I need surgery can I get that at a regular hospital?
- . A: Oh yes, it's up to your doctor and you.

Whistler MRI Clinic

#218, 4368 Main Street,
 Whistler B.C.
 Tel: 604-962-0220

Information from website:

<http://www.whistlermri.com/Home/tabid/38/Default.aspx>

The clinic is an "independent" MRI clinic "whose goal is to provide immediate access" to MRI services.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my Dr. says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?
- . A: Yes, we can get you in on Monday if you like.
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?
- . A: No.

- . What's the advantage of using your clinic?
- . A: We're much faster. We have no waitlist and you get your report within 24 hours of having the scan.
- . And after that if I need surgery can I get that at a regular hospital?
- . A: Yes.

AIM Medical Imaging

1371 West Broadway
 Vancouver, BC, V6H 1G9
 604.733.4007
 1.877.482.5859

Information from website:

<http://www.aimmedicalimaging.com/>

AIM is completely private so MRIs there are not covered by MSP, but sometimes medically necessary scans are tax-deductible. The clinic also offers "preventative" (which aren't medically necessary) full body imaging, which clients can then presumably take with them into the public system if a problem is found.

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

The clinic told a researcher who said he was on a waitlist for an MRI in the public system that for \$825 for a knee MRI he could be in and out within 24 hours.

Canadian Magnetic Imaging

Hycroft Centre
 #18 – 3195 Granville Street
 Vancouver, BC
 V6H 3K2

Tel no: (604) 733-5563
 Fax no: (604) 733-4424
 Toll free no: 1-877-268-8530

Information from website:

<http://www.canmagnetic.com/>

A break-down of various scans and prices can be found at:
<http://www.canmagnetic.com/scans-rates/>

A patient looking to purchase an MRI scan needs an MRI Patient Requisition form signed by a physician.

BCHC Phone Interview:

June, 2010

- . If my doctor says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?
- . A: Yes, we don't have a waitlist, but you need a referral from your doctor.

- . How much does it cost?
- . A: For a knee scan it's \$895.
- . Does it make a difference if I have a Care Card?
- . A: No, we're completely private.
- . If I find out from the MRI that I need surgery, can I get it at a public hospital?
- . A: Yes, I believe so.

From the Ontario Health Coalition's Report (interviews conducted in 2008):

"The researcher was also told that while CMI's specialty is non-medically necessary "litigation MRIs" they would conduct medically necessary MRIs if requested." (p. 55)

Comox Valley MRI

(associated with Comox Valley Surgical Centre)

1211 Ryan Road

Courtenay, BC

V9N 3R6

Ph. (250) 334-1023

Fax (250) 334-1083 email: info@comoxvalleymri.com

Information from website:

<http://www.comoxvalleymri.com/>

The clinic takes patients referred from WCB, ICBC, Blue Cross and other private insurers, as well as patients who prefer to buy their MRI instead of waiting. Patients must have a doctor's referral. The clinic is not available to "the general population" through MSP "at this time."

"What are private surgical centre fees?

Doctors can only charge the MSP rate for specific surgeries. They cannot charge more by getting patients in sooner (jumping the queue). Private Surgical Centres allow doctors to assist patients who do not want to wait months for surgery or an MRI scan. Doctors bill the MSP for the performance of a surgery (same as if you were in a hospital). The Surgical Centre fee (paid by the patient) is to cover the cost of having the facility open, allowing them to get help sooner, in many cases improving quality of life dramatically. This kind of service has been available on Vancouver Island for over 20 years."

A list of scans and costs can be found here:

<http://www.comoxvalleymri.com/comox-valley-mri-services.php>

The site links to www.medicard.com for a financing option so that patients won't have to "delay treatment due to cost concerns."

BCHC Phone Interview:

June 2010

- . If my doctor says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic? A: Yup, you just have to get him to send us the requisition and then we can get you in within a week to ten days.
- . How much does it cost? A: For a routine knee it's \$875.
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have a Care Card?

- . A: No.
- . If I find out from the MRI that I need surgery, can I get it at a public hospital?
- . A: Yes.

Access MRI

15137 56 Avenue
 Surrey BC V3S 9A5
 Phone: 604-575-5566
 Fax: 604-575-5414
 Email: info@accessmri.com

Information from website:

<http://accessmri.com/index.htm>

Most MRI scans cost \$875 with the possibility of additional expenses for things like contrast material injections. These costs are not covered by MSP. The clinic takes cash, certified cheque, debit, Visa and Mastercard. Patients need a doctor's referral for an MRI.

BCHC Phone Interview:

June, 2010

- . If my Dr. says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?
- . A: Yes. We can usually get you in within three business days and the fee is usually \$875.
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have MSP?
- . A: No, we don't do anything with MSP.
- . Can I get surgery at a regular hospital after I get an MRI from your clinic?
- . A: Yup.

Okanagan Health MRI Clinic (extremities only)

#206-3320 Richter Street
 Kelowna, BC
 V1W 4V5
 Phone: (250) 860-3130
 Toll Free: 1 (877) 860-3130
 Fax: (250) 869-1402
 E-mail: OkanaganHealthMRI@Shawbiz.ca

Information from website:

<http://www.okanaganhealthmri.ca/>

Okanagan Health MRI Clinic offers "quick, convenient booking times, with availability to expedite surgical consult."

BCHC Phone Interview:

June, 2010

- . If my Dr. says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?

- . A: yes
- . How much does it cost?
- . A: \$850
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have MSP?
- . A: No, you just have to get a referral and you pay privately here. We just need any doctor, even a walk in clinic to communicate the results to in case we find something.
- . And after that if I need surgery can I get that at a regular hospital?
- . A: Yes, you can choose either route, public or private.

CML – two locations

Vancouver MRI (CML HealthCare)

3997 Henning Drive, 103
 Burnaby, British Columbia
 V5C6N5
 Phone: (604) 272-9797
 Fax: (604) 272-9710
 Services: MRI

Victoria MRI (CML HealthCare)

301-1990 Fort St.
 Victoria, British Columbia, V8R 6R5
 Tel: (250) 598-0193 Fax: (250) 598-3594
 Email: vicmri@cmlhealthcare.com

Info from website:

<http://www.cmlhealthcare.com/>

“In Ontario, an MRI exam is covered by OHIP and can be ordered by a physician. In British Columbia and Alberta, patients can pay for their own MRI scans. When we receive your referral from your physician, we will provide you with an accurate cost breakdown based on the complexity of the test.”

The clinics accept payment by Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Interac.

MRI Vancouver is one of two for-profit MRI clinics in British Columbia run by CML Healthcare. CML Healthcare provides imaging and lab services in clinics in five provinces, but only sells MRIs for profit in Alberta and British Columbia.

The fee structure can be found here: <http://www.cmlhealthcare.com/Patients/AllImaging/MRIScan/Fees.aspx>

Physician Requisition form required for MRIs. (OHC's 2008 report)

BCHC Phone Interview:

June, 2010

- . If my Dr. says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?
- . A: Yes, we are a private MRI clinic.
- . How much does it cost?
- . A: \$725

- . Does it matter if I don't have MSP?
- . A: No, we are private
- . And after that if I need surgery can I get that at a regular hospital?
- . A: It's up to you and your doctor, we only do the scans here.

Specialty MRI Clinics_(extremities only)

140 5611 Cooney Road
 Richmond, BC, Canada
 V6X 3J6
 Phone: 604-734-4942
 Fax: 604-734-4946

Information from website:

<http://www.specialtymri.com/>

"Payment: The payment is due before the scan is performed. For your convenience we accept Visa, Master Card, American Express, Interac Debit Cards and Cash. The cost starts at \$475, no tax is paid for this procedure. Preauthorization is necessary for all third party payees such as WCB, RCMP, ICBC, the Military and Insurance companies or Lawyers.

Booking: Take the booking requisition to your Family Doctor, Specialist or a walk in Clinic have it filled out and faxed over to us, we will give you a call to go through some screening questions and set an appointment, this can usually be completed in under 3 days."

BCHC Phone interview:

June, 2010

- . If my Dr. says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?
- . A: Yes
- . How much does it cost?
- . A: \$475
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have MSP?
- . A: No, we have nothing to do with MSP.
- . And after that if I need surgery can I get that at a regular hospital?
- . A: Yes, outside of industrial work, 90% of our work is with insured individuals, who then go back into the public system. The wait for surgeries is often not that long, the bottleneck is the "pictures".

Fraser Valley MRI

Suite 5, 2151 McCallum Road
 Abbotsford
 British Columbia
 V2S 3N8
 Tel: 604 859 1707
 Fax: 604 859 1747 Toll free: 1 888 788 4MRI

Information from website:

<http://www.fraservalleymri.com/>

"If your physician is recommending an MRI scan for you or a family member, please consider the following aspects of the service we can provide for you.

- We are usually able to book an appointment within a day or two of receiving the requisition. There is no wait list and you choose a time convenient for you.
- Reports go out to your physician within 2-3 working days. You take home an image CD for your own medical record.
- Our Radiologists are available to consult with your physician when necessary.
- The cost of an MRI exam at the Fraser Valley MRI Clinic has remained unchanged since we opened in 2004. Our price of \$750 per exam is still the lowest available."

BCHC Phone Interview:

June, 2010

- . If my Dr. says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?A: Sure can. We do need a doctor's referral though. It would be best if it was faxed. Once your doctor faxes your referral we'll call you for an appointment which usually happens the next day, and we can give you an exact quote then.
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have MSP?
- . A: Not a problem at all.
- . And after that if I need surgery can I get that at a regular hospital?A: Yup, your results go to your referring doctor, and to you by the way, you get everything. Then your doctor can send our MRI results to an orthopedic surgeon or a neurologist, depending on what we're doing, anywhere in the Fraser Valley Health Authority. They love 'em.

MedRay MRI

Suite 108, 3001 Gordon Avenue
 Coquitlam B.C. V3C 2K7
 Telephone: 604.941.8780
 Fax: 604.941.8709

Information from website:
<http://www.medrayimaging.com/>

Medray requires a doctor's referral for an MRI. "The costs of an MRI scan at a private clinic are not usually covered by Medical Services Plan of British Columbia." They accept Visa, Master Card, American Express, cash, debit and Medicaid.

BCHC Phone Interview:

June, 2010

- . If my Dr. says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?
- . A: Yes.
- . How much does it cost?
- . A: It's \$850 and if contrast is required it's an additional \$200.
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have MSP?
- . A: No, not at all.

- . And after that if I need surgery can I get that at a regular hospital?
- . A: You can, but I think the wait times for surgery are quite long. You can discuss that with your doctor.

Image One MRI

Image One MRI Clinic Inc.
 101-3320 Richter Street
 Kelowna, British Columbia
 V1W 4V5
 Canada

Phone: 250-860-4848
 Toll Free Phone: 1-866-966-4848
 Fax: 250-860-4546

Info from website:

<http://www.imageonemri.ca/>

Patients require a doctor's referral for an MRI. Once the requisition is received patients can expect an appointment within days for routine exams. Image One accepts Visa, Mastercard, debit and cash. They offer patient financing through Criditmedical Corporation or Medicaid.

Pricing information can be found here: <http://www.imageonemri.ca/trellis/Pricing>

BCHC Phone Interview:

August, 2010

- . If my Dr. says I need an MRI for my knee can I get one from your clinic?
- . A: Yes, but we're private so you'd have to pay for it.
- . How much does it cost?
- . A: \$850
- . Does it make a difference if I don't have MSP?
- . A: No, no difference. But we do need a doctor's requisition. A doctor would fill out a requisition form and fax it to us and then we'd call you directly for an appointment.
- . And after that if I need surgery can I get that at a regular hospital?
- . A: If you have BC health coverage, yes. But you would be waiting a while. First you'd have to see a specialist and then if you need surgery you'd be put into the system; the lineup. Or you can get it privately, but not in Kelowna. Probably Vancouver.
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Boutique Physician Clinics

The Copeman Healthcare Centre

4th Floor
1128 Hornby St.
Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2L4
Toll Free: 1-888-922-2732
Tel: 604-707-CARE (2273)
Fax: 604-707-2250

Information from the website:

<http://www.copemanhealthcare.com/>

Clients pay a yearly membership fee for which they get a package of non-insured services. This is called the "Elite Program." The clinic also performs insured services for their members and bills MSP as part of the program. Enrollment costs \$3900 for the first year and \$2900 per year for subsequent years, and has a monthly payment option. The site says that a portion of the program "represents a non-specific package of services and GST/HST applies to that portion." Clients do not have to enroll in the Elite Program but can instead choose to buy individual services.

BCHC Phone Interview #1:

August, 2010

I'm looking for information on your corporate health program.

1. How much does it cost and what is included?

A: We have two types, the first is called the Core Prevention Plus which includes consultations with a doctor, a kinesiologist, and a nutritionist, and it's \$1400. The other is called the Core Prevention Program and it's basically the same minus the nutrition assessment and you don't get a follow-up appointment to go over the results. It's \$1100.

Q: Is there also a membership fee?

A: We have the Elite program, which automatically includes the Core Prevention Plus. It costs \$2900 a year except the first year is a little bit more, it's \$3900 for the first year.

2. Does it matter if I don't have a care card yet?

A: Not for the Core Prevention Plus part, but if you become a member of the Elite Program and have a BC care card you can use our doctors as your regular doctors under MSP. It's hard to get a family doctor in BC so you end up being stuck with walk-in clinics where you wait for hours to see a doctor for 5 minutes. Here you are automatically booked for half an hour.

BCHC Phone Interview #2:

August, 2010

1. I have a question about your Elite Program. The website says that a portion of the yearly fee is for a non-specific package of services. I was wondering what that means.

A: It just means that your invoice will list a package of tests and services with a price, not the price for each individual service. I can send you a sample invoice if you like.

2. What if I don't want to pay the yearly membership fee?

A: You can do the Core Prevention or Core Prevention plus program (see phone interview #1 for details).

3. But I wouldn't be able to use your doctors as my regular GP if I did that?

A: No you wouldn't. That's what the yearly membership in the elite program gives you.

4. Oh, I see. So just to clarify, if I got a membership in your elite program then I wouldn't have to compete for time slots with people who haven't paid the membership fee because you don't book appointments for people that don't pay it... like if someone just wanted to use their care card?

A: Yes, that's right. That's why we can keep it so the doctor can see each patient for half an hour instead of the five minutes you get in the public system.

From OHC report:

Clinic has yearly rates (membership fees) and if a client doesn't have MSP they pay more. Clinic bills MSP for "regular (non-preventative) health care" and charges privately for everything else. Clients not paying privately can access doctors for only 15mins at a time. People who don't want the full membership can get an "executive medical appointment" for \$1400 which is a physical and bloodwork and is 3.5 hours long.



The BC Health Coalition

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