

Real Solutions to Wait Times

Here are 5 real solutions to surgical wait times that are efficient, effective, safe and based on need, not wealth. They'd improve health care for everyone in B.C., not just a privileged few.

Fully utilize existing public operating rooms

Eighteen per cent of public hospital operating rooms are not regularly staffed, primarily because of inadequate funding. No operating rooms have extended hours. Doctors of BC – and even the BC government – have stated that existing public sector capacity should be fully utilized before any money goes to the private system.

Adopt a “first available surgeon” waiting list management model

Wait times vary widely across surgeons and specialty areas. BC should move to centralized management of these waitlists to allow patients to see the first available specialist or surgeon. The implementation of a “first available surgeon” model does not prevent patients from seeing their preferred specialist.

Scale Up Innovative Pilot Projects

The Richmond Hip and Knee Reconstruction Project reduced wait times from 20 months to 5 months by improving the scheduling of surgeries and recovery beds. However, even with these positive results the project was not introduced to other hospitals, and was eventually put on hold.

Dr. Brian Day has stated that the driving force for his Charter Challenge against public health care in BC is the long surgical waiting times patients are experiencing. His solution is to expand the use of for-profit surgical clinics, such as his Cambie Surgical Clinic, by legally charging both the patient and the taxpayer for surgeries, allowing for queue-jumping. However, ALL research has shown that introducing for-profit healthcare into a public system is more expensive, increases wait times in the public system and is less safe. We have public solutions, the government now needs to implement them province-wide.

Expand “one stop shop” patient assessment clinics

A multi-disciplinary team-based approach to surgical care would help better prepare patients for surgery. Potential patients would be assessed by a team of health professionals working at their full capacity, which would free up surgeons' time, and would provide support and education to help patients be better prepared for surgery, leading to fewer cancelled surgeries, better outcomes for patients, and shorter waits for everyone.

Improve access to community and home care

Better access to affordable, high quality home and community-based care, especially for seniors, would reduce hospital bed shortages, cancellations of elective surgeries and, ultimately, wait times for all patients. Many patients, particularly seniors, end up in hospital beds because community alternatives are not available. This situation can be addressed by improving access to publicly funded home and community care to ensure the more appropriate use of health care resources and the best of care for our seniors.

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