

WAITING FOR HEALTHCARE IN BC

91% of British Columbians Are Concerned About “The Waiting Time For Surgery”

Two-Thirds (68%) Say Waiting Has Led to Worry, Anxiety or Stress

8 in 10 (81%) Would Support BC Government Introducing Waitlist Guarantee



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Vancouver, BC – An Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of the BC Medical Association (BCMA) and released today shows that British Columbians are concerned about the amount of time it takes to get access to many medical services. In particular, most (91%) are concerned about “the waiting time for surgery” including two-thirds (66%) who are “very concerned”. Among those who have waited for longer than they thought was reasonable for healthcare the largest number (68%) say they experienced “worry, anxiety or stress”. Given these findings, it is perhaps not surprising that eight-in-ten (81%) would support the BC government introducing a waitlist guarantee that sets out the maximum amount of time that a patient would ever wait for surgery in BC.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of the BC Medical Association between May 4th and May 10th 2004. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 800 adult British Columbians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult British Columbian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual British Columbian population according to the 2001 Census. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.



91% of British Columbians Are Concerned About “The Waiting Time For Surgery”

A large number of British Columbians are concerned about the length of time they have to wait to access certain healthcare services in the province. At the top of the list, 91% say they are concerned about “the waiting time for surgery” – 66% are “very concerned” while 25% are “somewhat concerned”. An almost equally large number (87%) are concerned about “the time it takes to get access to diagnostic procedures such as MRI’s” including 55% who are “very concerned” and 32% who are “somewhat concerned”. A similar number (85%) are concerned about “the time it takes to see a specialist” (52% “very concerned”, 34% “somewhat concerned”). Meanwhile, eight-in-ten (80%) are concerned about the cost of healthcare to taxpayers with equal numbers saying they are “very concerned” (40%) and “somewhat concerned” (40%).

Two-Thirds (68%) Say Waiting Has Led to “Worry, Anxiety or Stress”

Many of British Columbians who say that they or a family member has had to wait longer than they thought was reasonable to get access to a healthcare service in the last 12 months have experienced some negative impacts as a result. The most frequently mentioned impact is “worry, anxiety or stress” (68%, including 47% who say “a lot” and 21% who say “a little”) followed by “increased pain or discomfort” (60%, 39% “a lot”, 21% “a little”) and “inability to participate in activities you enjoy” (51%, 35% “a lot”, 16% “a little”). Less than a majority have also experienced “deteriorated health or worsened condition” (42%, 22% “a lot”, 20% “a little”) or “loss of work or income” (24%, 14% “a lot”, 10% “a little”).



8 in 10 (81%) Would Support BC Government Introducing Waitlist Guarantee

Given the level of concern and impact, it is perhaps not surprising that eight-in-ten (81%) British Columbians say they would support “the BC government introducing a waitlist guarantee that sets out the maximum amount of time a patient would ever wait for surgery in BC”. This includes a majority (53%) who “strongly support” introducing the guarantee and more than a quarter (28%) who “somewhat support” its introduction. In contrast, less than one-in-five (17%) oppose the guarantee with almost equal numbers who “strongly oppose” (8%) and “somewhat oppose” (9%).

Doctors continue to be the most believable when it comes to providing information with respect to managing BC’s health care system. Almost nine-in-ten British Columbians say family doctors (88%) and specialists (88%) are believable sources of information while three-quarters (77%) say the information provided by the BCMA is believable. These ratings are unchanged since this question was last asked in December 2003. However, the believability of both Health Services Minister Colin Hansen and Premier Gordon Campbell has deteriorated since December 2003. Minister Hansen’s believability rating has dropped 10 points to 44%, and Premier Campbell’s rating has dropped 5 points to 37%.

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