



Nurses for Medicare
Les infirmières et infirmiers
pour l'assurance-maladie

Via e-mail: kevin.falcon.mla@leg.bc.ca

November 22, 2010

The Honourable Kevin Falcon
Minister of Health Services
Government of British Columbia
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Falcon,

As the founding members of Nurses for Medicare, the Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions are concerned about your government's recent decision to implement hospital user fees in the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. We believe that these fees threaten the principles of universality and accessibility enshrined in the *Canada Health Act*.

Under the provisions of the Act, hospital care is clearly identified as an insured service. In fact, the Act specifically defines hospital services that must be insured to include those necessary for maintaining health, preventing disease, diagnosing or treating an injury, illness or disability. The Act further defines that these services include accommodation and meals, physician and nursing care, drugs and all medical and surgical equipment, and supplies necessary during hospital care. As such, it is no more appropriate to charge additional fees for ongoing necessary hospital care as it would be to bill directly for an initial life-saving intervention by a nurse, physician or other health professional.

Further, such fees stand to deter vulnerable individuals – the elderly, those suffering from chronic disease, those from low income groups – from seeking vital medical treatment. Decisions to delay treatment until symptoms are severe result in lost opportunities for early treatment and prevention and far greater costs to the health system.

Access to health care in Canada must continue to be based on need, not on the ability to pay for services. We urge you to discontinue these unfair and unjust hospital user fees immediately and return to complying with the principles of the *Canada Health Act*. Preserving and adhering to this foundational legislation is critical to the sustainability and preservation of our universal health-care system.

Sincerely,

Judith Shamian RN, PhD, LLD (hon), D.Sci. (hon), FAAN
President
Canadian Nurses Association

Linda Silas, RN, BScN
President
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