



Women as Workers in the Health Care System

Women Represent:

- The majority of paid healthcare providers. (80%)
- The bulk of unpaid caregivers in communities and homes
- Frequent users of healthcare services
- A minority of the policy decision makers regarding healthcare
- The majority of those laid off in the healthcare sector over the last decade
- Those being exposed to environmental hazards at work and home i.e. contaminants, pollutants and harmful substances

What's happened?

Women as workers in the health care system are constantly facing job restructuring and cuts. This overburden of responsibility has left women and their families stressed and unable to cope.

- Between 1995-1999 the Provincial Conservative government laid off approximately 26,000 hospital workers and nurses.
- Due to "competitive bidding" the Victorian Order of Nurses and Red Cross who have provided homecare have closed up in many communities across the province and have been replaced by for-profit corporations.
- Minimum staff levels to provide 2.25 daily hours of long term care per resident and a registered nurse on duty at all times has been rescinded by the Provincial Conservative government.

Women are Saying:

Women are doing more work for less pay as government cuts to health care increase. Both paid and unpaid caregivers are taking on the burden of the cuts. Women are being used to fill the gap that government cuts have caused.

Women's work is being casualized-full time jobs are being faded out and now women must work 2-3 part-time jobs to earn a living wage.

Women feel guilty, frustrated and unable to cope with the stress of care giving.

Stress is felt at work and home-families are affected by the burden that women are carrying.

When governments cut funding, Women's Health Clinics have been the first services cut and the last to be renewed.

Due to inadequate staffing levels workers are blaming each other for work not done, when it is the responsibility of the corporation to maintain staffing levels.

Women as paid health care providers have been pitted against each other in the workplace blaming each other for workloads when off sick because workers are not being replaced.

Many transgendered women are treated cruelly and with no compassion, due to staff's lack of education regarding the needs of women from this community.

What Women Want:

- Care based on need not on quotas or limits that force women to pay out of pocket for care or go without.
- Adequate funding to meet assessed community and home needs.
- Adequate respite and support for caregivers in the home and health care services.
- The hiring of enough staff to meet patient needs.
- The minimum hours of care per patient increased and assessed based on need.
- Creation of public programs to support women as paid and unpaid health care providers in their workplaces and home. i.e. childcare, eldercare, etc.
- More staff education around transgendered persons and their needs.

Listen Up! Women and the Future of Medicare



The last decade has seen dramatic changes to the basic structure of Medicare and its delivery. Women, as the majority of caregivers, frontline health care worker and as patients have felt the brunt of these changes, through privatization, de-regulation, cuts and downloading of care. The Ontario Health Coalition has created this project "Listen Up! Women and the Future of Medicare" to help engage women in the debate about the future of Medicare.

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