

December 15, 2021

The Honourable Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
PO Box 9050 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Dix:

Re: The waitlist to access Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) surgery remains 4 to 5 years

First, thank you for all your hard work for the people of British Columbia during this unprecedented time during the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate all that you have done to keep us safe and informed.

Parkinson Society BC also appreciates the work done by the Ministry of Health and Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to increase the number of DBS surgeries since 2019. However, there are still many patients, some of whom have been waiting for up to five years to access this life changing surgery. As Parkinson's is a progressive disease, some of these people may no longer be eligible. This is unacceptable.

Dr. Christopher Honey, remains the sole neurosurgeon in BC. Although once on the surgical list, the wait can be as short as six months, an additional trained surgeon is essential as the waitlist to see Dr. Honey for initial assessment is currently up to four years.


Across Canada, there is at least one functional neurosurgeon for every two million people – except in BC, where it is one for every five million people. In comparison, Saskatchewan with a much smaller population of 1.174 million people has virtually no wait list with three qualified neurosurgeons; and Alberta, again with a smaller population than BC, has a waitlist of six months with two qualified neurosurgeons.

Your comments in the Ministry's February 5, 2019 press release indicated "the program is also recruiting an additional qualified neurosurgeon with sufficient experience in primary insertions, while using a team of other neurosurgeons to support less specialized battery replacements for DBS as part of realizing new surgical targets."

Although we are encouraged by the resources allocated to DBS for doubling the number of surgeries, the hiring of a second neurosurgeon is yet to happen and is essential to reducing the waitlist. Our community has waited three years. Although we understood that the hiring process might take some time, as this is a specialized skill, this is extremely long.

As the number of British Columbians with advanced Parkinson's disease is increasing, we ask for your prompt support to take action to secure a second trained neurosurgeon.

Sincerely,



Jean Blake
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Stephen Brown, Deputy Minister of Health
Dr. Chris Honey