



MARK VAN MANEN/Vancouver Sun

PRESCRIBING PRIVATE CLINIC: Dr. Brian Day believes B.C.'s attempt to heal system misdiagnosed

HEALTH CARE

Slice at clinics angers surgeon

REBECCA WIGOD

Sun Medical Reporter

Dr. Brian Day wonders why the B.C. government wants to control private medical clinics when it cannot provide all the health services people need.

Day, a Vancouver orthopedic surgeon who is building a private surgery clinic with 14 other doctors, said: "We wouldn't need to build private surgical facilities if the government were doing its job."

He was reacting to Health Minister Paul Ramsey's plan to introduce legislation to bring private clinics to heel.

Ramsey told reporters Monday the clinics threaten Canada's system of universal, accessible health care — especially when they charge patients extra fees for performing insured, medically necessary services.

B.C. has 20 to 30 private clinics. Some do plastic surgery, others do eye operations, while still others perform abortions or provide MRI scans.

Ramsey doesn't know how many dollars' worth of extra fees the clinics charge.

But he wants the practice stopped so B.C. won't have its federal transfer payments docked, as federal Health Minister Diane Marleau has threatened.

Day, who works at Vancouver Hospital and Health Sciences Centre, is building a 740-square-metre (8,000-square-foot) private surgical clinic with 14 colleagues. Construction is about to start at the site, which is within blocks of the hospital.

Day maintains he wouldn't be investing his own money

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DR. BRIAN DAY

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them.”

Day said that while Ramsey is adamant about preventing moneyed Canadians from getting quicker treatment than that which is available to the poor, the public wants that option. He said that, using the government's logic, "It's okay to spend money to get your pet dog treated tomorrow, but not your grandmother."

Dr. Morris Van Anel, a deputy registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of B.C., said the college already regulates private clinics "to a very significant degree."

Van Anel wouldn't like to see the province's two private MRI clinics squeezed. The few machines in publicly funded facilities are available only for diagnosing serious problems, such as brain tumors.

Said Van Anel: "If you're an aspiring hockey player and you have a rotator-cuff tear in your shoulder, there is no way you are ever going to get into a public MRI clinic."

in a private surgical clinic if problems in the health-care system hadn't driven him to it.

"I'm a doctor. I work at UBC, I teach, I do research, I write articles. I'm the editor of a medical journal — I've got a lot of things on my plate.

"Basically, though, I became a doctor so I could treat patients.

"Eighteen months ago, I had almost two days a week of operating time at [Vancouver Hospital's] UBC [site]. I now have one day, and yet I have large waiting lists of patients.

"I get pressure from patients because there's nowhere to treat