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Discovering new horizons in pain care:
Highlights from the 2025 Pacific Pain Forum

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April 10, 2025

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Planning committee members for the 2025 Pacific Pain Forum.

On April 4, 2025, the 3rd annual Pacific Pain Forum took place at UBC Robson Square, drawing interdisciplinary health care providers, researchers and people with lived experience. This year’s conference, hosted by Providence Health Care and PHSA Pain Care BC, explored “New Horizons” in pain assessment, management and research.

The day began with a warm welcome from PJ Matras, CNS in Pain Management and Planning Committee Lead, and Dr. Vishal Varshney, Physician Lead, followed by opening remarks from Fiona Dalton, PHC President & CEO.



Fiona Dalton, PHC President & CEO.

“Providence’s history is often about working in the margins and cracks for groups of patients who are at risk of being forgotten or are not being prioritized,” said Fiona. “When I educate myself on the number of people who live with chronic pain across the world, it’s an enormous number, and that’s a fundamental part of what Providence’s raison d’être is. We focus on people that others haven’t.”

Opening keynote from Dr. Nel Wieman



Dr. Nel Wieman.

In her opening keynote speech, Dr. Nel Wieman, Chief Medical Officer at First Nations Health Authority, addressed the ongoing impacts of anti-Indigenous racism in BC’s health care system. Dr. Wieman introduced key frameworks for learning and improvement, including those outlined in the BC Cultural Safety and Humility Standard, and encouraged the adoption of “[Two-Eyed Seeing](#).” Developed by Mi’kmaw Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall, two-eyed seeing is an approach to learning that integrates Indigenous and Western perspectives with equal respect.

History of Ketamine

- Ketamine is a chemical derivative of phencyclidine (PCP)
- First administered to 20 "volunteer" prisoners in 1964
 - Produced dissociative anesthesia
 - Provided effective analgesia in doses ranging from 1 to 2 mg/kg
- Subjects described strange experiences such as a feeling of floating in outer space and having no feeling in their arms or legs
- Approved by the FDA in 1970
- Widely used in the Vietnam War

Reprinted from: Hogg, 2012; Hogg, 2014
The Pharmaceutical Press, 1964; p. 239-240

Dr. Ainsley Sutherland, Physician Lead for the Acute Pain Service and the Co-Physician Lead for the Transitional Pain Clinic at St. Paul's Hospital, presented on the growing perception of ketamine as a cure-all in pop culture, describing the evidence for ketamine infusions in acute and chronic pain and discussing the broad range of protocols used in various clinics.

In the afternoon, the forum hosted a panel discussion moderated by Tori Etheridge, Provincial Clinical Lead of Initiatives and Innovation for Pain Care BC. Featuring panellists with lived experience: Jenny Lorca, Virginia McIntyre, Keith Meldrum and Desmond Williams, this discussion centred on the voices of people living with pain, offering insight into what meaningful validation looks like in clinical settings. Drawing from first-hand patient experiences, panellists each shared strategies for building trust and supporting person-centred care.



L-R: Tori Etheridge, Jenny Lorca, Desmond Williams, Virginia McIntyre and Keith Meldrum.

“Connecting with people on a human level is what is fundamentally missing in health care,” said Meldrum. “For 18 years, I fought through a health care system that didn’t treat me as a person. It just treated me as somebody who had an accident. When I was referred to St. Paul’s Hospital, I was at the end of my rope. Dr. David Hunt stopped asking questions, put his pen down and said, ‘It’s okay, we believe you.’ That’s what validation is.”

3rd Annual Dr. William McDonald Keynote Presentation



Dr. Hance Clarke, Canadian Pain Society President.

The day concluded with Dr. Hance Clarke, Canadian Pain Society President, delivering the 3rd Annual Dr. William McDonald Keynote Presentation, where he described innovations and gaps in Canadian pain care and proposed forward-looking strategies to improve research and management across the country.

Learn more about the Pacific Pain Forum [here](#).

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We would like to humbly and gratefully acknowledge that the work guided by our Mission, Vision and Values is delivered on the unceded, traditional and ancestral lands of the Coast Salish People - in particular, the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and sə́lilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh).

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