

Telephone: 604-436-5617

E-Mail: pr@burnfund.org

Background Information — BC Professional Fire Fighters' Burn & Wound Healing Research Laboratory at VGH

- The B.C. Professional Fire Fighter's Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit at VGH serves patients aged six and older from all areas of British Columbia and the Yukon. The BCPFF Burn and Wound Healing Research Laboratory serves the unit and collaborates with other researchers in the division of dermatology, the department of surgery, and the department of dentistry, and the diabetes research group.
- The first Plastic Surgery Unit was opened by Robert G. Langston in 1944 at Shaughnessy Hospital. He returned from Britain and was the only fulltime plastic surgeon and looked after the war vets.
- The UBC Medical School opened in 1950
- The first Burn Unit at Vancouver General Hospital opened 1969 in the Fairview Pavilion, under Dr. A. Douglas Courtemanche
- Frank Denhoed was the first Plastic Surgery resident and first burn resident. (He graduated 1971.)
- In December 1977, Captain Alex Blake from Coquitlam Fire Fighters Local 1782 met with Dr. Charles Snelling, Director of the Burn Unit at Vancouver General Hospital. Captain Blake's experience as a fire fighter made him want to do more for burn survivors — to help assist in their long and painful recovery
- It was a natural fit that Captain Blake approach the VGH Burn Unit to offer support. As a fire fighter, he had been involved in fundraising for many years, and wished to propose that all of British Columbia's professional fire fighters join in the fundraising effort for the Burn Unit, particularly as the unit had become the major burn referral centre for the province
- The gentlemen discussed the needs of the Burn Unit at VGH, and at that time, the Burn Unit required approximately \$40,000 worth of equipment
- Fire Fighter Locals throughout British Columbia formed the Burn Fund at the Association's biennial convention in June of 1978, when the Fire Fighters adopted the policy of Burn Unit assistance

Burn Unit Costs / General Information

- It costs \$2.4 million per year to run the 12 bed BC Professional Fire Fighters Burn & Plastic Surgery Unit at VGH
- It costs approximately \$1200 per day, per patient
- The average length of stay is 10 days to 2 weeks
- Patients who receive burns over 50 per cent of their body surface area can be inpatients for between 6 to 12 months

Types of activities supported by the BC Professional Fire Fighters' Burn Fund:

- Canadian Burn Nurses Association
- American Burn Association Meeting
- Advanced Burn Life Support Course
- Dorothy Wyllie Nursing Leadership Course
- Burn Camp
- Burn Pressure Garments
- Family Support – travel / housing
- Patient comfort items for the BCPFF Burn & Plastic Surgery Unit
- 28 year burn database

Provincial Burn Program:

- 100 inpatients per year in VGH
- 1000 outpatient burn visits to VGH Burn Clinic including children
- 20 inpatients/yr at BC Children's Hospital
- Victoria's Royal Jubilee Hospital / Vancouver Island has a four bed unit
- Conduct Advanced Burn Life Support
- Burn staff lecture to communities burn prevention/care

After the BC Professional Fire Fighters' Burn & Plastic Surgery Unit:

Once burn survivors are out of the hospital, the garments they must wear to lessen scarring are costly. For example, a "total" body suit for burn pressure garments is about \$2,000 per suit, and burn survivors can need a second replacement. Often the garments for the upper extremities and hands wear out sooner and burn survivors may require four sets of these. At \$250 each, the UVEX mask (plastic mask for face) costs \$185, with a second replacement at \$85. Burn survivors usually require two face masks during their recovery period. Some burn survivors need these for up to two years and some with severe burns/scars can wear some form of pressure garment for up to five years, especially if they have reconstructive surgeries.

Research Information

- Research applications of Dr. Aziz Ghahary's work include healing of burns, and wounds.
- Dr. Ghahary is developing future generations of researchers by mentoring three PhD students, two masters' students, and a senior research associate.
- Twenty-five to fifty percent of costs related to diabetes care is due to diabetic foot ulcers, which costs approximately \$15 million per year in Vancouver alone

Funding

- The BC Professional Fire Fighters' Burn & Wound Healing Research Laboratory at VGH is supported by a \$400 thousand donation from the BC Professional Fire Fighters' Burn Fund.
- The VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation, in partnership with the BC Professional Fire Fighters' Burn Fund, plan to raise an additional \$3 million towards the program for burn and wound research at VGH.
- BC Professional Fire Fighters' Burn & Plastic Surgery Unit at Vancouver General Hospital — With province-wide donations from fire fighter locals, corporate sponsors and the public, the BC Professional Fire Fighters' Burn Fund has made over \$1 million in donations to the Burn Unit at VGH. The commitment to support the Burn & Plastic Surgery Unit began in 1977. The Burn Fund will continue to fund essential burn survivor support programs, including patient care items, staff training and statistical and research programs in keeping with Vancouver General Hospital's mandate of excellence and leadership in patient care, research and teaching.