

BULLETIN

## Patients must always be the top priority in innovative and changing health care

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Reid Johnson, President of the Health Sciences Association, welcomes innovative changes in the delivery of health care and will be watching as the patient-focused funding initiative unveiled by Health Minister Kevin Falcon yesterday unfolds. HSA is the union that represents the health science professionals on the modern health care team, delivering critical diagnostic, clinical and rehabilitation services in BC hospitals.

-There's no question our health care system needs to be innovative and responsive," Johnson said.

-But yesterday's announcement raises more questions than it answers. Time will tell if the project does lead to reduced waiting lists and a more efficient health care system. Ultimately, the priority has to be patients, and HSA will be watching to ensure patients are not forgotten in the focus on efficiency," he said.

-I am concerned that what Minister Falcon is proposing is not patient-based funding, but activity-based funding. If funding will be structured to reward performance based on volume, hospitals will be forced into competing for funding based solely on their ability to push patients out the door. And that's not good health care," Johnson said.

He said that British Columbians have already seen a deterioration of access to rehabilitation for patients as services like physiotherapy have been moved out of the public system and into private delivery.

-If you don't have an extended health care plan ... and only about 50 per cent of British Columbians do ... and can't afford to pay for physiotherapy and other rehabilitation services, chances are you are not going to get the rehabilitation you need to make you better. Sending patients home without proper recovery is not the right health care choice," he said.

Johnson also questioned the \$250-million price tag for the patient-focused funding project.

-Where is that money coming from? Are health authorities going to have to come up with the money out of their budgets? That could spell disaster for health care. Last year, government forced health authorities to take \$360 million out of their budgets and it resulted in severe cuts to services, including cutting 10,000 MRIs, and cutting hundreds of surgeries ... which resulted in driving up wait lists."

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