



Plan for restructuring of rehab services in VCH threatens quality care; important meeting for OTs and PTs set for Tuesday

February 17, 2012

HSPBA, the union bargaining association that represents physiotherapists and occupational therapists delivering crucial patient services at Vancouver Coastal Health Authority hospitals and agencies, is speaking out against a proposed restructuring that threatens to affect the quality of services delivered to patients.

Under the restructured program, the Health Authority proposes to eliminate certain supervisory positions that oversee staff and student performance and who take appropriate follow-up action where necessary so as to optimize patient safety and quality care. The change also means that one Chief Physiotherapist and one Chief Occupational Therapist will each be responsible for a huge department of some 400 employees, covering some 24 hospitals/community health agencies, ranging from Richmond to Squamish and Powell River.

"We are very concerned about the Health Authority's intent to create a structure that does not appear to have taken into sufficient consideration the correlation of staffing resources with the patient populations acuity and complexity factors," said HSA membership services coordinator Kathy McLennan. Patients come from all over the province seeking the expertise provided by OTs and PTs within Vancouver Coastal Health, but the new structure does not properly reflect the value of that hands-on and practice support expertise.

The Health Authority issued Section 54 notice of the changes today. Section 54 requires the union and employer to meet to try to develop an adjustment plan which serves to mitigate the effects of the reorganization. Unless otherwise agreed by the parties, the new structures must not be implemented prior to April 17. The HSPBA has called for an early meeting with VCH.HSA, on behalf of the union bargaining association, has already voiced the unions serious concerns about the new physiotherapy and occupational therapy service structures.

VCH representatives are holding staff forums today, where frontline clinicians are telling them they are worried the new structure diminishes the practice support they currently have, and will not provide practical access to a supervisor for professional guidance.

OT and PT "Grade 3 Plus" members employed by VCH have been invited to attend an HSPBA meeting to hear union representatives describe these developments, explain the Section 54 process, and answer questions. The meeting particulars are:

- Date: Tuesday, February 21st
- Time: 4:00pm ... 6:00pm
- Place: Paetzold Room, behind the information desk, main floor, VGH

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