

BULLETIN

A substantial wage increase imperative for health professionals

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by BRIAN ISBERG

No matter how much the Capital Health Region or any other region amalgamates, consolidates, restructures, reorganizes or regionalizes, it will not get past the underlying fact that there are not enough health science professionals to continue providing quality patient care in the present environment - let alone in one where increased funding for health care is promised.

The Capital Health Region is probably one of the most restructured and "regionalized" regions in British Columbia. Yet today, a large majority of HSA members in this region will once again work overtime just to finish the days work. And some will work extra hours to cover for someone who is sick, and whose shift could not be covered because there are no casual workers available. Other departments will continue to work shorthanded, as they have been doing for a long time.

Increasing funding for doctors and nurses is not enough. Nor is it enough to increase the number of beds and operating rooms available, or to provide increased funding for diagnostic equipment.

It will not be enough to increase hospital beds if there are no health science professionals to perform diagnostic tests, or provide other clinical services, such as social work or pharmacy.

Increasing operating room times will not be enough if there are no health science professionals such as perfusionists or rehabilitation therapists available to care for the patient.

An increase in equipment will not be enough if there are no health science professionals such as laboratory, radiological or ultrasound technologists available to operate the equipment.

These are just a few of the HSA professions that are experiencing staffing shortages. These health professionals are vital in providing British Columbians with the quality health care they deserve and rightfully expect.

As health science professionals enter into contract negotiations, we as a union - and this means all of us - must ensure that our voices are heard. We must demand that our wages reflect our education, expertise and skills.

The province will continue to feel pressure from other parts of Canada and from other countries as they seek solutions to their own shortages of health professionals.

A substantial wage increase is essential if we are to retain and recruit health science professionals and continue to provide our patients with the highest quality care.

Brian Isberg represents Region 2 on HSAs Board of Directors, and is chair of the HSA Paramedical Professional Bargaining Committee for the upcoming round of negotiations.

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017