

NEWS RELEASE



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Nurses fear private “ER” will make hospital conditions worse

The scheme threatens to draw staff away from hospital emergency wards. Patients needing a hospital bed will be forced to seek help at hospital ERs anyway

Nurses are concerned a plan to establish a private for-profit “emergency room” in the centre of Vancouver will make problems at the city’s existing hospital emergency wards even worse.

The for-profit scheme by the False Creek Surgical Centre threatens to draw nurses and doctors away from already understaffed hospital emergency wards, while patients who are found to need hospitalization will be forced onto the doorsteps of hospital emergency wards anyway.

“This plan is causing our members real concerns,” says Debra McPherson president of the BC Nurses’ Union. “Quite apart from any violations of the Canada Health Act, to open and advertise a private for-profit emergency room poses real problems to the quality of care patients may expect to receive.”

“What about a patient in the middle of a heart attack, or somebody who needs an emergency appendectomy and a period of hospitalization,” asks Melanie Leckovic, chair of BCNU’s emergency room task force. “There’s no way they’ll be admitted directly to hospital beds at Vancouver General or St. Paul’s. The hospitals are already putting their own emergency patients in hallways and on stretchers, even after they’ve been admitted to a ward for care, because there aren’t enough beds. I’m assuming patients from the False Creek Surgical Centre aren’t going to be fast-tracked to a hospital bed.”

McPherson says “there are vacant nursing positions in hospitals throughout the Lower Mainland. By hiring nurses to its own ER, the False Creek Surgical Centre is going to exacerbate the staff shortages. For most patients who need service in an emergency room, this scheme can only make the situation worse.”

McPherson says the solution is to provide more appropriate long term care and community care for seniors, and expand capacity in the public system through community health centres that are open 24/7, staffed by doctors, nurses, and other health care providers.

**For more information contact Melanie Leckovic 604-785-2752
Debra McPherson 604-209-4253
Art Moses 604-868-4259**

British Columbia Nurses' Union

4060 REGENT STREET, BURNABY, B.C. V5C 6P5
TELEPHONE (604) 433-2268 toll free 1-800-663-9991 FAX (604) 433-7945 toll free 1-888-284-2222