

Letter - More than a numbers game

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On Aug. 10, the Driftwood published a Viewpoint (“Don’t let go of OR issue, says SOS”) that was understood by Dr. Don Shea, radiologist at Lady Minto Hospital, as an unfair description of what is going on day by day at our hospital.

We, the writers of the Viewpoint, regret his different interpretation of what was meant. We appreciate that he was willing to discuss this with us in person. Dr. Shea guided the members through the radiology department where there is up-to-date equipment and which provides patient-friendly, quality radiological service to the community.

In response, we would like to point out that for the Save Our Surgery Committee this hospital is very important to us, and if hyperbole and emotion are detected, that is precisely why. Our aim is to restore surgical services consistent with a rural hospital in a community where transportation can be difficult, expensive and sometimes unavailable.

We acknowledge that acute care at Lady Minto shows energy, a caring staff, and new and modern equipment. We also acknowledge that in common with most communities, the number of patients requiring extended care facilities is increasing.

What we lack, and what we believe is an essential part of a fully functioning rural hospital, is the ability to provide general surgery and related services. We realize that general surgery does not answer the need for complex surgical procedures. What it does allow for is minor surgical services to be available on the island and removes the discomfort and costly inconvenience of off-island travel.

More importantly, the organization we hold responsible for our problems, be they mental health, geriatric or surgical services, is not the staff or medical practitioners at Lady Minto but the Vancouver Island Health Authority. VIHA has been uncooperative regarding the needs and wishes of residents, taxpayers and donors, including the Capital Region Health District. The real culprit is the provincial government, as it provides the funding to health authorities. It is not providing sufficient funding to meet the level of care required by the Canada Health Act.

This is more than a numbers game. This is an issue of social impact. “Saving” money in VIHA’s budget has meant passing on the costs to patients and especially their families. Anyone with family members in Victoria or Duncan hospitals knows the cost in time and dollars to transport and visit them.

The thanks of the SOS Committee go to Dr. Shea and we wish to compliment him for the manner in which he has overseen the ongoing improvements of the radiology department.

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SOS Committee

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