

ST. JOSEPH'S GENERAL HOSPITAL

The year end report allows for some reflection and navel gazing of the past year. It has been an interesting year and finding the time to devote to administrative responsibilities has often been a personal challenge. One of the main issues of my year were the VIHA North Island Five Year Review and planning of acute care delivery services in the Comox-Strathcona health district. I'm pleased that our Medical Staff is standing resolute in their support for acute care delivery in our community as well as support for our colleagues in Campbell River. It is my opinion, the debate will not be where to put a single regional hospital but rather, what services will be ultimately retained in both communities. I plan to stay involved with the sub-committee looking into this proposal but I suspect that the real work will begin in the fall with VIHA's announcement regarding their intended plan.

The other pressing issues have been dealing with VIHA funding shortfalls and the impact they have had on our hospital. With regard to the latter, I have been unable to grasp the complex funding formulas as they pertain to global hospital budgets. The only conclusion I have gleaned in the past year is that chronic under funding can only be managed by rationing access to acute care services or risking running deficits. In many aspects, St. Joseph's has been a victim of its own success in meeting arbitrary budgets in the past. As somewhat heartened by our \$456,000 deficit last year, perhaps we are starting to get it right. We have only two choices: demand what is required to provide regional access to acute care services or further ration and triage health care delivery. I realize after sitting at several Board Meetings this past year that budgets are complex but we are now seeing the aftermath of funding shortfalls. I am pleased that the administrative team of St. Joseph's Hospital is now addressing the main concern of nursing to patient ratio deficiencies and I hope that they will be transparent with their strategies and keep the Medical Staff informed as to their actions. We will need to remain vigilant in this regard.

The biggest funding crunch however, remains the ALC placement crisis. The number of ALCs occupying acute care beds has remained stubbornly at 30% of acute care occupancy and will not be likely resolved prior to 2008. There are plans proposed by St. Joseph's to offer immediate relief within the next six months and hopefully VIHA will come through on prior promises.

I would like to thank the medical staff for the “opportunity” to serve as Medical Staff President and thanks to the MAC and Executive, Dr. Laura Bell and Dr. Rick Engman, for their input over the past year. Also, thank you to Mr. Pontus and his administrative team for guidance and, I feel, sound management at St. Joseph's Hospital. Despite some of the doom and gloom observations by members of the medical staff, I feel that this is a well managed hospital that has patients best interests at heart. It is certainly a juggling act that I feel Mr. Pontus accomplishes most days.

Lastly, I'd like to thank Dr. Don Fockler who has stepped in as the Medical Director and has done a great job in that position. It is often a thankless and under recognized job although Don has grasped the position and has certainly been a valuable asset in this regard. In addition, I'd also like to thank Tami Dow who also stepped in midway into the year into a very demanding position and has seamlessly carried on the position with barely a hiccup.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Dennis Hartman, President
Medical Staff