

24 May 2023

Kathryn MacNeil

President and Chief Executive Officer

Dr. Ben Williams

Vice President of Medicine, Quality, Research & Chief Medical Officer

Island Health

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Dear Kathy and Ben,

The South Island MSA gathered on April 12, 2023, for our annual review of the Doctors of BC Health Authority Engagement Survey. We were delighted that Dr. Mary Lyn Fyfe and other local physician leaders were able to participate, bringing their leadership perspective to the tables. We are sorry that you and other senior leaders weren't able to attend and are therefore using this letter to update you about the meeting. From here, we hope we can jointly set the agenda for further engagement on these issues.

Our conversation during the meeting centred around "what one change" would make the biggest impact to the South Island Medical Staff, in areas identified as being of particular deficit or importance in the survey results. It was a lively and interactive meeting between and among the three tables of physicians, and many excellent suggestions were brought forward. Please find these summarized below:

Question 1: What one change would make senior leaders' decision making more transparent to physicians?

In-person presence of and connection with senior leaders

What this looks like:

- A visible presence of senior leaders at physician meetings, on the wards, and at events.
- Senior Leaders hear from Medical Staff in the clinical context. *"Currently we are being spoken to rather than worked with."*
- Consistent leadership. It's hard to sustain relationships with senior leaders when there is fluctuation in the roles.

What we will do:

- Continue to invite senior leaders to South Island MSA General Meetings, Special Meetings, networking and social events.
- Create opportunities for senior leaders to connect with Medical Staff. Offer one-on-one tours of departments, led by a member of the South Island MSA executive.

What we ask of you:

- Ensure at least one senior leader attends South Island meetings and events.
- Have conversations with front-line staff and Medical Staff when visiting departments to learn about their successes and challenges. Consider this information in your decision-making.
- Encourage long service in administrative leadership roles.

Share and receive information in a thoughtful and comprehensive way

What this looks like:

- Fewer corporate emails so that physicians' attention can be honed on important, valuable Medical Staff-focused communications, including health authority priorities, goals, decision making processes and layers.
- Encourage feedback from Medical Staff outside of existing surveys.
- Clear, non-admin speak messaging from Island Health: What are we doing, what we hope to do, what we can't do.

What we will do:

- Continue to amplify Island Health messaging on our website and through our newsletters.
- Provide funding to identified South Island physicians who are available to give thoughtful, front-line worker feedback on Island Health communications.

What we ask of you:

- Allow two-way communication during Medical Staff town halls: Move from 'Inform' to 'Involve'.
- Develop a process that engages Medical Staff in clinical and relevant administrative decisions. Currently, decisions can be made that lead a department to wonder, "*Who asked the physicians what they think?*"
- Communicate Island Health's challenges and concerns with Medical Staff: Sharing problems will help to build trust.
- Streamline and simplify messaging for the Medical Staff audience.

Question 2: What one change would make your facility an even better place to practice medicine?

Physical, Human, and System Improvements

What this looks like:

- Improved access to equipment, bringing Royal Jubilee and Victoria General Hospitals up to the same standards as other major tertiary facilities across the province and country.
- Adequate clinical and administrative staffing levels, including nursing, allied health, and clerical support.
- Improved support for Medical Leaders, so they can more easily communicate with and disseminate information to their teams while balancing their clinical workloads.

What we will do:

- Facilitate the engagement of Victoria Hospitals Foundation and the South Island Medical Staff to identify gaps in equipment. Fund physician engagement to develop new equipment processes, as we are currently doing with Dr. Nathan Hoag and the potential for robotic surgery equipment.

- Amplify health authority-led improvement work through our regular communications with South Island Medical Staff to ensure comprehensive participation.
- Work collaboratively to improve Medical Staff onboarding. While we have our own 'welcome package', onboarding would be more efficient, welcoming, and effective as a joint effort.

What we ask of you:

- Connect directly with us when you have questions about what's happening at Royal Jubilee and Victoria General Hospitals. Our seven executive members have connections throughout both facilities.
- Acknowledge to the Medical Staff when there are problems. This simple act can be validating.
- Through policy and leadership practice, encourage all members of the care team to work to top of scope.
- Improve Medical Staff onboarding. Physicians need to understand topics such as the leadership structure of Island Health, avenues of physician engagement, Health Authority priorities, decision making processes, Medical Staff Rules and Bylaws, and site/organizational norms. This will reduce the burden on Medical Leaders.

Question 3. What one change would make the biggest difference to physicians' physical safety at Royal Jubilee Hospital and Victoria General Hospital?

Physical Improvements and Education Opportunities

What this looks like:

- A continued/improved visible presence of non-clinical employees, including Ambassadors and PSOs.
- Ergonomic equipment options are readily available to Medical Staff.
- Debriefing opportunities are offered after violent incidents to support quality improvement.
- Medical staff are upskilled in violence prevention, know how to report a violent incident, and are confident that action will be taken based on their reports.

What we will do:

- Amplify Violence Prevention training, violence reporting processes, and debrief opportunities to Medical Staff.
- Host a South Island Medical Staff meeting for Island Health to engage on Occupational Health and Safety topics with membership.

What we ask of you:

- Prioritize Violence Prevention training (including simulations) for all Medical Staff.
- Implement a clear violence reporting process (which includes acknowledgement of submission and debriefing) for Medical Staff, embedding this information into the Violence Prevention training and ensuring ongoing reminders about how to report a violent incident.
- Consider ergonomics in all retrofits, new builds, and capital purchases.

Question 4: What one change would make the biggest difference to physicians' psychological safety at Royal Jubilee Hospital and Victoria General Hospital?

Optimize Existing Structures

What this looks like:

- Physicians involved in an EMSS review have foreknowledge about the disciplinary process, which is fair and followed in every case.
- The PSLS system is used regularly and rigorously to capture more or near incidents.
- Physicians feel heard and believed when they raise a challenge or difficulty.
- Plans exist to accommodate physicians who need to slow down for physical or health reasons, including parental leave.

What we will do:

- Educate membership on an ongoing basis about the Medical Staff Rules and the disciplinary process. Ensure Peer Supports are made available to every member who requests one.
- Amplify messaging about the importance of PSLS and its use.
- Co-create a culture that encourages reporting, speaking up, and psychological safety.
- Encourage physician groups to consider alternate resourcing models.

What we ask of you:

- Ensure that fair process is applied consistently in cases of disciplinary review. Consider alternative frameworks for discipline. Upskill Medical Leaders in giving feedback and EMSS processes.
- Strengthen the PSLS system, processes, and follow-up.
- Co-create a culture that encourages reporting, speaking up, and psychological safety.
- Consider new models of Medical Staff deployment that support cross-coverage.

We recognize and appreciate that work is already taking place within Island Health to support many of these ideas, including Dr. Keith Menard's staffing analysis pilot project at Cowichan District Hospital, the Medical Staff Respectful Workplace Working Group's reimagining of the disciplinary process, the onboarding of a new Island Health employee dedicated to Medical Staff Communications, and the nascent Communications Working Group.

We welcome to the opportunity to prioritize and implement these and the additional suggestions with you. We hope that, by working together, we can build a better culture in the South Island at RJH and VGH.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on how to best move forward together.

Respectfully,

The South Island MSA Executive

Dr. Catherine Jenkins – Co-President
Dr. Fred Voon – Co-President
Dr. Suresh Tulsiani – Treasurer
Dr. Krystal Cullen – Secretary

Dr. Alicia Power – Director at Large
Dr. Alex Hoechsmann – Director at Large
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