
BY EMAIL

January 8, 2020

Ms Vickie Kaminski
President and CEO
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
650 Main Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1E2

Dr. Brock Wright
CEO and President
Shared Health
1610 – 155 Carlton Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3H8

Dear Ms Kaminski and Dr. B. Wright:

Re: Critical Care Physicians – ICU Capacity

I am writing again regarding the serious concerns raised by critical care physicians regarding ICU capacity and the risks posed to patient safety.

This situation is now extremely concerning. Critical care specialists are describing this situation to us as a “crisis” and “unprecedented.” Therefore, we request an immediate action plan to open up additional capacity. Doctors Manitoba and critical care specialists remain willing to support you in this endeavour to ensure patients have access to the life-saving critical care services they need.

As you know, the government’s clinical consolidation initiative sought to reduce ICU capacity in Winnipeg hospitals from 73 beds in 2017 to 63 beds in 2019, though only 58 beds are open today. The current bed capacity, however, is insufficient to meet the 70+ patients we understand have critical care needs on a daily basis, a number which could continue to increase as influenza and other pressures grow. We also understand that ERs and recovery rooms are now repurposing their beds to house patients who should be in an ICU, which is not the ideal location for the patient and, of course, also has a negative impact on ER wait times, surgical slates and patient flow.

Critical care specialists have raised concerns about this issue for several months, including in a letter to you on November 4, 2019. A meeting was held on December 4, 2019 to discuss these concerns and an action plan was promised by WRHA and Shared Health to address this very critical situation.

Unfortunately, instead of an action plan a longer-term project charter was shared with implementation plans still 6 to 10 weeks away. This does not address the very serious, immediate situation confronting patients and critical care specialists today.

Doctors are now in an untenable position of determining which critically ill patient receives an intensive care bed and which does not. This is taking time away from caring for their patients and putting critical care specialists under extreme strain.

As a start, we urge you to immediately open – at a minimum – the five closed critical care beds at any appropriate hospital to bring capacity up to the planned 63 beds, with acceptable contingency plans in place should patient needs exceed the planned capacity. We also recommend that you bring together critical care specialists with system leaders without delay to assess the true capacity requirements for intensive care beds in Winnipeg.

We request your response on a priority basis.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Theresa Oswald in black ink.

THERESA OSWALD,
Chief Executive Officer

TO/jb

cc: Ms K. Herd, Deputy Minister of Health