

Time to take a stand with Osler

This past week, it seems there's been quite a bit of emotion flowing around town.

And it all centers around the hospital.

With the powers that be at William Osler Health Centre, Georgetown Campus announcing that the obstetrics department was going to close, thousands of local residents are furious.

In my opinion, the moment Georgetown District Memorial Hospital (GDMH) was swallowed up by the former Peel Memorial and Etobicoke hospitals, the quality of our local hospital suffered dramatically.

Adding insult to injury, it was named after an American doctor who died more than a 100 years ago, contributing nothing to the betterment of Georgetown, Brampton, or Peel Region.

And now we're stuck with a ungainly name to match an equally ungainly administration team at the helm of three hospitals which appear to have nothing in common.

Personally, I think things were better back when a local GDMH hospital board was in charge, working perhaps with a lot less funding, but certainly with lots more heart.

Today we have people in their ivory tower in Brampton dictating to a hospital that they have very little feeling or knowledge about.

Case in point— earlier this year, I was sent to Georgetown hospital to photograph a person who was recognized for years of volunteering.

She was to be photographed with a patient.

I met with her and the hospital media relations person in the lobby, and we proceeded to the room to take the photo. The patient had given permission, and the media relations person had us all sign the necessary releases.

After I got my shot, I said I'd see myself out.

I was told by the media person that I could not, under any circumstances, be allowed to leave unauthorized. After all, I just might take some inappropriate photos on my way out.

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Ted Brown

I called her on it— did I get no credit for intelligence or good taste? She back-pedalled, saying she was joking, but she had been serious.

Back in the lobby, she handed me a parking pass to get out of the parking lot.

It was a paper pass from Peel Memorial.

"This won't work," I said.

"Of course it will," she said, "You give it to the parking attendant and he'll let you out."

I had to point out to this person who was looking after the media needs of Georgetown hospital, that there was no parking attendant at this hospital, only a coin-operated machine which lifted the gate.

Fluffing it off, she offered a weak laugh.

To me, that said it all— the administration of the William Osler group has about as much feel for the people of Halton Hills as that media person had about the damned parking lot.

It's time to raise a little hell and get respect. And Peel Memorial people, watch your backs too, cuz what's good for Georgetown will most certainly be good for Peel.

Ballots to express your concern are available at *The Independent & Free Press* office, at Georgetown Market Place, and on-line at our Web site. Fill them out, have your say, and get the message to Osler CEO Bob Bell that you're "mad as hell, and not gonna take it any more."

It's time, and long overdue.

Letters to the editor

Which service will be cut next?

Dear editor,

I was very upset to learn of the impending closure the maternity ward at Georgetown hospital. This decision now forces families that live in Georgetown to go outside of their community to give birth to their children. Georgetown is a rapidly growing community and its hospital will no longer meet all the necessary medical needs of its community. As we have seen in the past when services are cut, doctors then leave the community too. Georgetown is already under-served.

I have experienced first-hand the differences between the maternity wards in Georgetown and Brampton. I had my first child in Georgetown, and received wonderful, caring treatment. When I went into labour during my second pregnancy, Georgetown was unable to take me (due to an already busy night in the ward and a nursing shortage), and I was sent to Brampton.

The care I received there was the exact opposite to that in Georgetown, and should have warranted a complaint to the hospital.

Georgetown has been forced to send mothers to other hospitals because of their primary care level status. Being a mother who has refused to leave the hospital the first time and regrettably went along with the transfer the second time, if I had to make the choice again, I would refuse to leave Georgetown.

If mothers were not forced to leave Georgetown, due to lack of staff (medical and nursing) then the number of births would be greatly increased. I believe that Georgetown's staff have the care and expertise to handle many of the cases they are forced to send out.

I encourage everyone to make your feelings about this closure known...write to Bob Bell, the CEO of William Osler, the company's patient ombudsman, their chair of obstetrics

(Dr. Henry Cheng)...anyone else you can think of. If we, as a community, don't speak up and let them know how we feel, we'll lose a service that is essential to this growing community. Which service will they take away next?

Barbara H. Martin, Georgetown

Closure is outrageous

Dear editor,

When my doctor informed me that the obstetrics ward is due to close in two months, I was struck with many emotions—disbelief, dismay, anger and relief. Relief only because my baby will be delivered before the closure. I can only imagine what other expectant parents are feeling, particularly those due in the coming months. I would be devastated.

Mayor Rick Bonnette is right in stating that this action is unacceptable— it is outrageous! How can such an essential service be taken away from any community, let alone one that is growing with an increasing number of young families?

Expectant parents are already dealing with an overload of emotions, and now they will be forced to deal with a strange (and likely overcrowded) hospital, strange doctors and a longer drive, along a route often heavy with traffic. I'm sure there will be many who will choose not to have their children in Brampton and instead will go to hospitals in other communities. Why would they go to a William Osler campus?

It is a shame that running a hospital has become all about a corporation's money instead of providing care. Closing this ward will hurt this community and its residents. There must be another way to balance a budget.

Gabriele Ernst, Georgetown

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