

VIHA TO CONSULT ON FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



VIHA's Five-Year Strategic Plan will be ready for release in early October, beginning a process of consultation with VIHA staff, partners and stakeholders.

"This plan builds on our earlier work, but with a more detailed view of impacts 'on the ground'," said **Howard Waldner, VIHA President and CEO**. "We basically asked, 'What is the reality and what do we need to do to improve services and the health status of the population we serve?'"

The Plan incorporates an integrated approach to planning, and addresses the full continuum of care by broad geographic area. It also reflects extensive modeling and evidence-based research, as well as clinical input and practical experience, including population demographics, socio-economic data (including health status), health needs and anticipated changes in delivery of health services.

Throughout the fall, VIHA will engage internal and external groups and communities across the authority to get their feedback on the Plan.

"As we proceed in improving services for all our patients and residents, we need to know there is agreement on the key themes and identified priorities, and whether readers have suggestions for improvement," said **Georgina MacDonald, Vice President, Planning**.

The first stage of consultation will include presentations to VIHA staff, physicians and management groups. From there, the dialogue will continue with a broad range of VIHA's partners in health care delivery and other stakeholders, including the public. This process is expected to take until mid-December. The Plan will then be finalized and go to the Board of Directors for final approval in January. ▲

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Connections^{VI} is the Vancouver Island Health Authority's monthly electronic newsletter for staff, physicians, health partners and community members.

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LADY MINTO GULF ISLANDS HOSPITAL GETS A MAKEOVER

Lady Minto Gulf Islands Hospital, the grande dame of Salt Spring Island, publicly celebrated completion of a “fabulous” \$3 million expansion on September 16th. With a new operating room suite, patient recovery room and palliative care unit and other upgrades, the renovation of the 90-year old hospital will help meet the increasing demands of its growing island community.

Operating Room Supervisor Dona Mackie couldn’t be happier. After 33 years of working in a variety of hospitals throughout Canada, Mackie arrived last year to find Lady Minto’s little operating room provided some of her biggest challenges.

“I’ve worked in some antiquated operating rooms in my time, but Lady Minto took the cake. It was like a closet.” She and her operating room team subsequently endured the hammering and upheaval last year as the operating room was transformed. The result is an operating suite that now provides some 2,500 square feet of space, which for Mackie has become a “little piece of heaven.”

Lady Minto was built in 1914, then rebuilt at its present site in 1958 to meet the needs of the then-isolated rural community of Salt Spring Island. Over the years the small hospital has had ongoing upgrading within its four walls to accommodate new and changing services.

The emergency room may have started with “one little stretcher,” notes **Karen Davies, VIHA Manager of Patient/Client Care, Southern Gulf Islands**, but the facility developed to become an important primary care hospital in the VIHA South Island Region. When Davies arrived at the hospital 32 years ago, the population of Salt Spring Island was 6,000. Now it is 10,000, making it the largest, most populated, and most visited of the Southern Gulf Islands.

The demographic pressures of the 1990s posed the greatest challenges to the hospital, when population ballooned by 40 per cent and retirees flocked to the island, giving the community one of the highest proportions of seniors in the province. Pressure on the hospital space also resulted from technological change.

“With laparoscopy procedures we just had no room for staff, equipment and patient in one room. We were actually flowing over into the scrubbing room and the storage room,” said Davies. With no dedicated recovery room, patients were recovering in emergency room beds. And in the emergency room itself, eight operating room team members, a patient and several equipment carts crammed into a space little larger than a bedroom posed obvious physical challenges. These were compounded by spiralling demand: operations at the hospital increased 300% in ten years.

Lady Minto was doing a lot in its small space - providing 19 acute care and 31 extended care beds, 24-hour emergency room coverage, laboratory and radiology services, surgical and low-risk maternity services, pharmacy and physiotherapy services for inpatients, coronary monitoring services, psychiatric and palliative care, and outpatient medical clinics. Every room evolved to accommodate more than one use. The birthing room, for instance, also serves as the ultrasound room while the chemotherapy room is used to conduct treadmill tests as well as to accommodate overflow of day-care patients from the emergency room.

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HAVE YOU VISITED THE LUNCHROOM LATELY?

<http://intranet.viha.ca/>



Lady Minto Hospital Makeover Cont'...

“The time had clearly come for the renovation,” said Davies. “We’ve coped through good humour. And our community has been extremely supportive of its hospital.”

The Lady Minto renovation took place over the past year and was jointly funded by VIHA, the Capital Regional Hospital District, and the Lady Minto Hospital Foundation, which raised a “phenomenal” \$780,000 toward the total \$3 million capital cost, said Davies. The construction of a new, two-storey addition at the rear of the existing facility added more than 4,000 square feet of new space. The upper level Operating Suite officially performed its first two operations last November. The suite features an 800-square-foot operating room, a four bed post-anaesthetic recovery area, a separate area for endoscopy procedures, a room for sterile supplies plus a room for decontamination of surgical materials and an OR nurses’ change room, washroom and office.

Davies describes the renovations as nothing short of “fabulous” and credits the community for its unwavering support.

The current renovation also includes a major overhaul of the palliative care suite, with \$100,000 transforming a hospital room into a more private home-like setting that includes the donated works of local artists. The suite is providing significant support for the work of the award-winning interdisciplinary Salt Spring Island Palliative Care Program, which won the UBC J.F. McCreary Interdisciplinary Health Care Award in 1997. The program cares for patients facing advanced illness, death and bereavement, both in their homes and in the hospital. Families and patients will find comfort in a healing garden and in overnight accommodation in a carefully furnished home-like suite in the acute care area of the hospital, which ensures 24-hour access to the professional Palliative Care Team.

These renovations are a significant support for the hospital’s critical role not only as a primary care provider, but as part of an integrated system of regional care, Davies said. Increasingly, hospitals like Lady Minto are co-ordinating patient care to more seamlessly integrate with the services provided by other regional hospitals. That means Lady Minto’s cardiac care patients, for instance, can receive appropriate preparatory care at Lady Minto should they need to transfer for more intensive care at tertiary hospitals in Victoria.

“The time had clearly come for the renovation. We’ve coped through good humour. And our community has been extremely supportive of its hospital.”
~ Karen Davies

Similarly, major equipment upgrades such as the state-of-the-art upgrade of the medical imaging services, completed in June, means patient service can be better co-ordinated and interconnected throughout the region. (see related story on page 4).

As Davies notes, the challenges of a rural and isolated hospital will continue. That “big moat” around the island means the hospital’s physical expansion must be continually complemented by expanded skills of the staff, who must wear many hats. But now they have modern, new facilities to make that job a little easier. ▲

ON THE ROAD TO BECOMING COMPLETELY FILMLESS IN VIHA

Goodbye film, hello digital medical images. As part of the extensive upgrade of Lady Minto Hospital (see article on page 2), the diagnostic imaging department has made the conversion from film to computerized medical imaging.

Now 99 per cent of all VIHA's south island medical imaging has become digitized, a revolution that radiologists call the greatest advance since the invention of the x-ray. Images from x-rays, CT scan, MRI, fluoroscopy and ultrasound can now be rapidly shared and transmitted by computer systems. Only two small sites up Island and some mammography services in VIHA are still using film but these sites will convert to digital images shortly, says **Bob Brandt, Manager of Medical Imaging** for VIHA south island.

"It is a vast improvement that not only saves money but improves the speed and ability to handle, store, and share the images between doctors and the hospital - which all amounts to better patient care," says Brandt.

Lady Minto Hospital is the last of the south island facilities to become filmless. The Lady Minto Hospital Foundation donated \$327,030.28 to pay for the cost of the entire conversion. The project included the conversion of the existing Shimadzu fluoroscopy system to a digital system, a new image intensifier, a computer radiography unit and cassettes, as well as the installation of the picture archiving communications systems (PACS) and renovations to update the medical imaging department.

"The most significant impact is the ability to send and receive images and for doctors to have access in their own offices," said **Dr. Don Shea, radiologist at Lady Minto Hospital**. Comparing images is also much easier. "I can interpret a patient's chest x-ray done today with one done at a different site, such as the Royal Jubilee, last week. That immediate comparison is very advantageous."

Over the last six years, medical imaging in all of VIHA has been converting from film to digital images and then networking the images into PACS. The computerized system has many advantages including cheaper operating costs, the ability to store multiple copies of images in multiple locations, and the elimination of toxic chemicals in film processing. The greatest advantage, however, is that VIHA doctors can now access their patients images from any computer anywhere in the island, such as their home or in their office, with a secure sign-in code.

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LONG TERM SERVICE RECOGNITION

Glen Colwill, Director of Human Resources, is delighted to announce VIHA will be recognizing over 1,500 employees this year for their many years of dedicated service and commitment to health care. "We have several new locations this year. I encourage all who are invited to come share your memories with other coworkers and be proud of your accomplishments" he reports.

This year, employees who reached milestone years of 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 and 40 years of continuous service during 2004 and retirees with 15 or more service years during January 1, 2004 and August 31, 2005 are eligible to attend one of eight events between November 29th - December 8th. Events will be hosted in a number of locations across Vancouver Island.

Invitations to these events will be mailed to the employee's home the first week of October. Information about the program will be available on the Value & Recognition website in the near future. A schedule detailing exact locations, dates and times will be published shortly. For more information call: South - (250) 370-8111, local 5452, and Central/North - (250) 716-7716.

Becoming Completely Filmless in VIHA Cont'...

In the past, the hospital had to courier the film images from one site to the other, a time-consuming and expensive process that sometimes resulted in the single image getting mislaid.

Very soon medical imaging at all VIHA sites across the island will be digitized and on the PACS system enabling a doctor in Campbell River, for example, to enter a code and call up the image on his or her computer, whether at home or at the office, and talk on the phone with a physician in Victoria or Port Alberni who is examining the same digital image at the same time.

As soon as images are created they are instantly available to be viewed, transmitted, archived and recalled whenever and wherever needed. Images will be stored on the system for at least six years, enabling; for example, a patient's most recent CT scan to be compared immediately to early CT scans to monitor changes. Multiple images can also be burned on a CD for patients to carry to specialist appointments outside VIHA.

It is estimated that about 7,700 digital x-ray and ultrasound images will be created at Lady Minto Hospital each year, adding to the 600,000 digital exams currently compiled in VIHA PACS systems. All the Lady Minto images will be archived to and retrieved from the data centre at the Royal Jubilee Hospital. VIHA PACS personnel on South Island are providing the installation, training and ongoing support for the Lady Minto system.

The new digital system is expected to save about \$4,000 in operating costs each year at Lady Minto, primarily through the elimination of costs of film and film chemistry.

The benefits of digital images and the PACS system, however, go beyond cost and efficiency. The PACS system is also better for

the environment and the occupational health of the technologists who used to work with wet chemicals to develop the film images. Safe environmental disposal of these chemicals is also no longer an issue.

System security and patient confidentiality are two common concerns of computerized systems, but PACS has taken both into account. Each image is coded and has five copies stored on different servers. That's a huge improvement over the single film image typically taken in an x-ray or scan. And even if one server is down, the image can be retrieved from an alternate location.

In all, the digitized images and PACS system are a significant improvement to both patient care and the working life of hospital staff. ▲

ORGANIZATIONAL RENEWAL...

DOWN TO THE FINE DETAILS

The renewed organizational structure is now in place across the Vancouver Island Health Authority. To help readers better acquaint themselves with the new structure, organizational charts detailed to the Director level are being finalized now. These charts and a detailed listing of managers (by program) will be included in an upcoming issue of ConnectionsVI, as well as posted at www.viha.ca/org_charts for reference. Watch this space!

And speaking of Managers...

Department leaders are currently reviewing their portfolios to confirm their management structure. Most positions will be confirmed by direct appointment, however some positions may require posting because of movement or vacancies. Visit www.viha.ca/jobs to monitor position postings in the coming weeks.

FLU SEASON IS UPON US ONCE AGAIN...

Certain things in life are predictable. Autumn is heralded by frost in the morning, brightly coloured leaves and fat pumpkins in the local supermarkets. It's also when serious seasonal illnesses, like influenza, begin circulating in island communities.

Influenza is a respiratory disease that kills 4,500 Canadians every year. The elderly, people with chronic diseases and children under two years old are most at risk of developing serious complications or dying after contracting influenza.

The Vancouver Island Health Authority is urging all employees to get a flu shot this year to protect their families and their patients from this dangerous disease. Unvaccinated employees can inadvertently pass the disease to at-risk patients and loved ones even if they feel perfectly healthy. This is because people can be contagious for up to 48 hours before they begin developing symptoms of influenza.



This year's flu shot will provide protection against A/New Caledonia, A/New York and B/Jiangsu, the strains of influenza predicted to circulate in North America between October 2005 and April 2006. Flu shots provide 70 to 90 per cent protection from the influenza virus in healthy, working age adults.

VIHA's staff vaccination clinics begin on **Tuesday, October 11 (south), Monday, October 17 (central) and Thursday, October 13 (north)** - and will continue until November 25, 2005. Special vaccination clinics will be held for staff in Emergency Rooms and Operating Rooms as it is difficult for them to attend regular immunization clinics. Other staff are welcome to attend any of the other general vaccination clinics listed on the flu website. Please wear short sleeves to the clinic, as the shot is in the upper arm.

To view staff clinic times and locations, visit the Flu Site on the Intranet (*on or after October 7, 2005*) at: <http://intranet.viha.ca/flu> ▲

SEND VIHA E-CARDS!

Check out the latest addition to VIHA's Value and Recognition web pages. VIHA E-Cards are a simple creative way to acknowledge, thank or congratulate a VIHA colleague. Go to <http://www.viha.ca/recognition/home/> and click on "VIHA E-Cards."

"Good humour is one of the best articles of dress one can wear in society."

~ William Makepeace Thackeray