



SCAM SHEET

Scam Sheet #70 - May 9, 2001

Hospital CEO Rebuffs Staffing Improvement

Imagine the following: It's 2:00 am. After suffering a heart attack, you're being transferred from Sutter Solano Medical Center's Emergency Department to a room in the Critical Care Unit (CCU) so you can be closely monitored by the hospital's medical staff. Before you get to your room in the CCU, your room's previous occupant, who is battling an infectious disease, was transferred to another unit in order to free up space for you.

If you're like most patients, you'd expect your new room in the CCU to be cleaned before you arrive. Not so at Sutter Solano Medical Center.

Unlike most hospitals, Sutter Solano has no housekeepers on staff during late night and early morning hours. Consequently, some patients are reportedly placed in dirty rooms, a dangerous practice given the high infection rate at many hospitals. Also, no housekeepers are available to clean up blood, vomit or other infectious materials in the hospital's busy Emergency Room.

Healthcare workers at Sutter Solano Medical Center have long requested that the 111-bed hospital place a housekeeper on staff during these hours in order to ensure clean, safe conditions for patients. "How would you feel if you were put in a dirty room?" ask employees.

After their requests went unanswered, more than 200 doctors, nurse supervisors, nurses, housekeepers and

other employees signed a petition requesting the services of a night janitor. Unfortunately, hospital executives haven't responded since employees presented hospital CEO Beverly Gilmore with the petition in mid-March.

The hospital's stonewalling tactics underscore the need to establish a formal process so staffing issues can be examined and resolved, and which gives frontline caregivers a real voice in the decisions that affect their patients. Sutter is the only major hospital corporation in Northern California that refuses to establish such a system. Twenty-seven hospitals including Kaiser, Catholic Healthcare West, Tenet's Doctors Medical Center and others have already agreed to create such staffing systems.

Sutter Causing St. Luke's Financial Problems

Explosive details from a 1999 lawsuit filed by St. Luke's Hospital against Sutter Health provide new insight into the origin of the financial problems facing the San Francisco independent hospital.

Advocates of Sutter's proposed takeover of the hospital assert that a Sutter buyout is necessary because of St. Luke's financial losses. What is the source of these losses?

According to St. Luke's, one of the main sources is none other than Sutter itself! In 1999, St. Luke's sued Sutter for aggressively recruiting 20 doctors from St. Luke's medical staff and then requiring those doctors to admit their patients *only* to Sutter hospitals. The doctors had been critically important to St. Luke's financial well-being because they "had generated most of the revenue St. Luke's received from the admission of commercial HMO patients." After the doctors left St. Luke's for the Sutter-

aligned Brown and Toland Medical Group, St. Luke's began bleeding red ink.

How much did St. Luke's lose as a result of Sutter's actions?

"Several million dollars each year were and continue to be lost by St. Luke's," according to the lawsuit filed in San Francisco Superior Court. St. Luke's lawsuit declares: "the loss of patient admissions to [Sutter's] California Pacific Medical Center representing several million dollars each year was and continues to be financially devastating to St. Luke's and threatens St. Luke's ability to survive. If defendants [Sutter] continue to enforce their exclusive dealing contract with Brown and Toland so as to deprive St. Luke's of the commercial HMO members that it needs to survive, St. Luke's will be forced out of business."

After dealing St. Luke's a financial blow, Sutter is now trying to use St. Luke's financial losses as a justification for Sutter's proposed takeover of the hospital.

Pat Fry, Sutter's Chief Operating Officer, delivered the company line perfectly at the Attorney General's public hearing on the proposed takeover: "St. Luke's strong desire and commitment to affiliate with Sutter Health according to these agreements is based on its firm belief that it cannot -- cannot -- continue to operate as a private community hospital without our financial support, which we've committed to provide."

What Mr. Fry failed to mention is that St. Luke's current financial situation would be vastly better if Sutter had not caused the hospital to lose "several million dollars each year." The hospital, which reported an operating loss of \$3.4 million last year, might well have broken even without Sutter's predatory business practices.

The Sutter Scam Sheet is published by the Health Care Workers Union, Local 250 SEIU, to update elected officials, regulators, District and Community hospitals, industry insiders, consumers, labor unions and other healthcare purchasers about our campaign to Stop the Sutter Scam.

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