



# SCAM SHEET

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## INFECTIONS SPARK SUTTER LAWSUITS

In July, three patients sued Sutter Roseville Medical Center and Sutter Health after suffering debilitating infections following their surgeries at the medical center. One 17-year-old patient went to the hospital for routine surgery to repair torn ligaments in her knee. "Her recovery, however, was anything but routine," according to national coverage of the lawsuit in People Magazine.

"In and out of the doctor's office for four months, the high school junior lost 15 lbs. and suffered from high fevers and nearly constant pain in her knee before a biopsy finally revealed an infection caused by... a microscopic warrior that, like a demonic Pac Man, eats away at bone and tissue," according to the magazine. In order to conquer the infection, the young woman endured "six weeks of powerful antibiotics, excruciating daily cleanings of her wound and a second operation to remove dead tissue."

According to the lawsuits, the infections resulted from Sutter's "failure to maintain appropriate staff levels," its failure to maintain appropriate infection control standards consistent with California law, and other factors. At a recent rally in front of the hospital, the young woman's mother voiced her

support for caregivers' efforts to improve staffing at the hospital.

## SUTTER S REFUSAL CAUSES CAREGIVER STRIKE

Nearly 450 caregivers at Sutter Roseville Medical Center will conduct a one-day strike on November 14<sup>th</sup> because of the hospital's bad faith bargaining to avoid improving conditions at the hospital.

The caregivers – who include Licensed Vocational Nurses, Respiratory Therapists, Radiology Technicians, Surgical Technicians, Dietary Aides and others – have proposed that Sutter Roseville adopt a staffing system that has been implemented by a majority of hospitals in the Sacramento area, including Kaiser Permanente and Mercy Healthcare Sacramento.

The staffing system allows frontline caregivers to have a role in ensuring that staffing levels are safe for patients and permits outside healthcare experts to resolve disputes about appropriate staffing levels.

Caregivers also seek wages and benefits equivalent to those at surrounding hospitals. Sutter Roseville's wages are as much as 15%-34% lower than at nearby Kaiser and Mercy hospitals. And unlike its neighboring hospitals, Sutter Roseville refuses to provide fully employer-paid health insurance for employees' children. Caregivers note that substandard conditions at Sutter Roseville have created a revolving door of caregivers as they leave the hospital in

search of better conditions elsewhere. Stabilizing the hospital's workforce is essential to improving the quality of patient care.

At an October rally in front of the hospital, community leaders and patients voiced their support for caregivers' proposals. Tamala Edmondson, the mother of the 17-year-old patient who contracted an infection after undergoing knee surgery at Sutter Roseville, expressed her heartfelt support for caregivers' efforts to improve staffing at the hospital. She reported that inadequate staffing levels helped lead to her daughter's infection.

## PROFITS OVER PATIENTS

While Sutter Roseville is refusing to improve conditions for caregivers, the hospital is earning record profits. The hospital reported over \$40 million in profits during 2001. In the last five years, Sutter Roseville's profits have exceeded \$95 million.

Top decision makers aren't doing badly either. In 2000, Sutter Roseville CEO Pat Brady received a \$54,000 salary increase—a 20% raise from the previous year. His total compensation exceeded \$335,000. Meanwhile, Sutter Health gave CEO Van Johnson a \$424,000 "performance" bonus in 2000, boosting his total compensation in 2000 to more than \$1.6 million, 50% higher than his 1999 compensation! We wonder whether Johnson's and Brady's performance evaluations consider the incidence

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.

Local 250 is headquartered in Oakland. Call us at 510.251.1250, or Visit our website [www.seiu250.org](http://www.seiu250.org)

**of life-threatening infections at  
Sutter hospitals.**