

To the Honorable Gavin Newsom

November 19, 2004

Dear Mayor Newsom,

Thank you for taking the time to listen to the concerns of staff, volunteers and neighbors who care about Laguna Honda Hospital (LHH). We all appreciated your visit very much.

As the admissions ward physicians for many years and as the admissions screeners for LHH, we have been intimately involved with the Flow Project since its inception. We are the most knowledgeable and experienced physicians in this domain. One of us attends virtually every daily placement meeting, and personally evaluates each patient.

During our meeting, Dr. Katz stated that at one point in January 2004 there were “30 patients at SFGH accepted and awaiting a bed at LHH,” and that this resulted in unprecedented ambulance diversion, prolonged ER stays, and cost over-runs.

Neither of us challenged Dr. Katz at the meeting due in part to the nature of the forum, and quite frankly because we were stunned that he still used a figure of this magnitude despite the lack of evidence and our prior challenges to his data. Mayor Newsom, we have analyzed both our own data and data provided by the DPH to reach our conclusion that **THERE HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE THAN 9 PATIENTS APPROVED AND AWAITING AN LHH BED AT SFGH AT ANY ONE TIME IN 2004.** Our conclusion has yet to be disproved by verifiable data about actual patients.

We enclose an important document compiled along with two respected colleagues (Brenda Austin, PhD and Derek Kerr, M.D.) showing that we cannot confirm or agree with Dr. Katz’ claim that LHH was responsible for such a large backlog at SFGH.

The two critical data issues that divide LHH clinicians and the DPH administrators are:

- 1. The size of the backlog of patients at SFGH ready and accepted for LHH transfer.**
- 2. The number of available vacant beds at LHH.**

We will address the second point in a subsequent letter. Your careful review of this matter is most important in order to understand what is happening at LHH.

Respectfully,

[Signature]
Mario Rivero, M.D.

[Signature]
Timothy Skovrinski, M.D.

cc: Mitchell, Katz, M.D.,
Paul Isakson, M.D.

The Department of Public Health (DPH) is working behind the scenes to drastically change the mission and patient population of Laguna Honda Hospital.

Since Health Director, Dr. Mitchell Katz unilaterally changed the LHH admission policy in March 2004:

1. LHH doctors have been pressured to admit dangerous patients who can not be safely managed there.
2. Virtually all patients are now coming from San Francisco General Hospital (SFGH) due to the near exclusion of patients from home and other San Francisco Hospitals.
3. There has been an increase in younger, transient, and less disabled patients with psychiatric and addiction problems being brought into LHH and our neighborhood.
4. There has been an increase in violent and aggressive behaviors, including a major arson fire at LHH.
5. These changes have resulted in citations against LHH from State Licensing and Certification as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The citations referred to an increasing population of dangerous patients without an appropriate safety plan.

These changes are the first part of Dr. Mitchell Katz's recently announced plan to convert LHH from a nursing facility for elderly and disabled San Franciscans into a "Social Rehabilitation Facility for the Urban Poor." This change in mission, contrary to what was sold to the voters during the campaign for the \$300 million Proposition A, will have an enormous impact on our neighborhood.

At a recent City Hall Hearing former Supervisor Tony Hall sharply criticized Dr. Katz for exceeding his authority in changing the mission of LHH and endangering its residents. Supervisor Sean Elsbernd has recently expressed concern about the situation and has advised the Mayor.

To ensure that changes at Laguna Honda occur in a safe and acceptable manner, and to protect our neighborhood from danger and deterioration, our neighborhood associations must be informed and involved.

Note

Also attached to this November 19 letter to Mayor Newsom was a document entitled "Information Packet #2" that was addressed to Supervisor Tony Hall and was dated July 7, 2004.

That document is located separately on the "Correspondence With S.F. Public Officials" page on this web site.