



July 20, 2020

Honourable Hugh Flemming
New Brunswick Minister of Health
P.O. Box 5100
Fredericton, N.-B. E3B 5G8

Dear Minister:

As you know, the mandate of the NBHC is to inform New Brunswickers on health system performance and to engage them in improving health service quality. The most recent results of our Hospital patient care experience survey, not yet released to the public, has inspired Council members to an even greater level of engagement.

This report, which measures both the last three years and provides a 10-year overview of patient experiences, shows that no measurable improvement has occurred in the 16 indicators that the Council has labelled as key because of their impact on patient experience. While some individual hospitals have shown some improvement on individual indicators, neither the RHAs nor the overall provincial results have shown any improvement.

Council members were disappointed to learn this, having seen some hope for improvement in the 2016 results. Now, discussing among themselves, they question how to share these results in their communities, to avoid discussions that lead to simplistic answers like “more money” or “more resources”. They want both citizens and health system stakeholders to truly take to heart results such as:

- Patients who always received services in preferred language when French is preferred, which is declining provincially, not only at one RHA or the other;
- Patients who reported that their room and bathroom were “Always” kept clean has declined from 59.6% to 50.4% (Results of similar surveys in other jurisdictions that range between 60% and 70%);
- The percentage of patients who believe they experienced harm during their hospital stay has remained at 5% over the 10 years of the survey;
- Communication about medications has remained between 52 and 55% and Communication among staff about the patient’s care is only rated as always good 60% of the time.

Council members plan to explore, in discussions with RHA leadership, how to ensure improvements in patient care experience. Given the learnings from twelve years of assessing health system performance in New Brunswick, Council members are aware of the critical role of effective governance in future efforts. Effective governance, with clarified roles for government and boards, is a key

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criterion for enabling the delivery of improved health service quality. This would include improved planning, integrated RHA plans guided by a provincial plan based on legislation, and effective public accountability practices that would serve to challenge the status quo.

In addition to speaking with the CEOs of the RHAs, Council members would also appreciate your reaction to this most recent report and your thoughts on how to ensure success in the required improvements in patient care experience. As these results will likely form part of the public discourse around the future of health care going forward, it is an opportunity to proactively respond to some clear areas of need.

Thank you for your ongoing support for the work of the NBHC.

Sincerely,

Roger Léger
Chair
New Brunswick Health Council

Cc Mr. Gilles Lanteigne, CEO, Vitalité Health Network
Ms. Michelyne Paulin, Chair, Vitalité Health Network
Ms. Karen McGrath, CEO, Horizon Health Network
Mr. John McGarry, Chair, Horizon Health Network
Mr. Gérald Richard, Deputy minister, Department of Health
Mr. Stéphane Robichaud, CEO, New Brunswick Health Council