



Something must be done

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Shortages of health professionals are hurting patient care and the people who deliver it.

HSA is taking action by raising public awareness of how shortages create longer wait times, while mobilizing members to provide key information on where and how the resulting workload issues are happening.

This fall, HSA rolled out a new ad using powerful imagery to show the public how ongoing shortages of health science professionals leave patients waiting longer for care. To date, the ad has been seen nearly two and a half million times through targeted Facebook and YouTube advertising.

The ad's release was timely, coming out just as Island Health Authority revealed in September there were 18,000 British Columbians waiting for ultrasound tests on Vancouver Island alone. HSA President Val Avery, who spoke to reporters about the issue, explained that shortages affected many professions, not just ultrasonographers, and reminded the provincial government that if they want to reduce wait times for patients, as promised, they need to train, hire and retain more health science professionals. "That means increasing training spaces, but it also means tackling the reason why it's hard to retain the ones who are already trained - the private sector and other provinces pay more, sometimes much more," she said. "Until wages are increased to be competitive, we will keep losing trained staff, wait lists will get longer, costs will go up and patients will suffer."

Meanwhile, professionals working in health sciences and community social services find themselves deadling with workload that is approaching the breaking point.

A series of member surveys conducted over the last few months reveal the extent of the problem. In one of these surveys, 92 per cent of members said they miss or cut short breaks because of workload - 46 per cent of them "frequently". The same survey showed that 62 per cent of members work up to four hours of unpaid overtime in a week, and 76 per cent of members are concerned that workload is negatively impacting patients.

HSA is now asking members to document their workload concerns. This will provide important information about the impact of the problem across different professions, worksites and regions, and will provide HSA with data needed to pressure the provincial government and health authorities into taking the matter seriously.

An initial workload survey has been provided to members during site visits by HSA staff and member organizers, but an on line version is now being rolled out to all members. Members are urged to participate by following the initial survey and, if asked, the longer questionnaire. Your participation can help us find a solution.

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