

Letter to the editor: Working for a bright healthcare future

Written by By Rick Kruis, M. D.
Friday, 11 February 2022 05:21

As a patient, I try to support our hospital by getting my care locally. I recently received excellent care at RMCH {Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital}. I underwent three surgical procedures from mid-July through mid-October. I felt fortunate to be able to receive care by highly qualified docs and caring nurses. Everyone was pleasant, courteous, and professional.

But I have to say I was a bit hesitant knowing about the turmoil within the organization, seemingly random and reckless retaliatory firings, and ignored safety concerns resulting in the departure of experienced nurses. Most of the nurses caring for me were new graduates.

I want to thank the Board of Trustees of RMCH for their service during a very difficult time. I'm puzzled by the board's taking sides in the physician's unionization effort. Doctors and nurses can be the best barometer for how the administration is carrying out the Trustee's mission. They are part of the team. Listen to them!

It is difficult to recruit and retain qualified physicians and nurses to small rural communities. Patient safety and not compensation was the motive for unionization. Many docs & nurses continue to serve our community because of their dedication and loyalty to the community and to their patients, regardless of the fact that their compensation is less than they could earn elsewhere.

RMCH needs an administration that will focus its energies and resources on addressing the task of providing excellent health care, rather than wasting time and resources on adversarial actions that are devastating to the morale of hospital staff and leading to a mass exodus of staff.

Suggestions for swift action to allay impending closure of our hospital:

#1 The Board of Trustees should proceed carefully, but hastily to fill vacancies with local folks and direct the administration to focus its energies and resources on addressing the task of providing excellent health care, rather than wasting time and resources fighting unionization.

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#2 The Board of Trustees should seriously consider the loss of trust by staff, prospective staff, and the community when evaluating the wisdom of continuing to contract with Community Hospital Corporation (currently managing RMCH).

#3 The Board of Trustees should have at least part of every meeting open to the public and should respond publicly to questions raised by citizens. I felt very disappointed that the Jan. 19 board meeting was closed to the public with short notice.

#4 Traditionally, counties run hospitals. Yet the City of Gallup should keep in mind how tragically the loss of our hospital would impact the local economy and citizen welfare. Gallup should consider following the example of other small N.M. cities by subsidizing the hospital to prevent its failure and to sustain a facility that will attract families, professionals, and businesses that can be confident that their health care needs will be met.

Let's keep working for a bright healthcare future.

By Rick Kruis, M. D.