

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Opinion: Show Juan Luis Hospital Some Love

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Cynthia Graham **October 10, 2014**



Dear St. Croix,

I was devastated to see the recent chain of events in the news regarding JFL Hospital. As you teeter on the brink of losing your accreditation, have you so quickly forgotten the accomplishments you have made in the last few years? Have you let complacency and slackness blind you to what you are allowing to slip through your fingers? Maybe backsliding is just easier. The deficiencies described in the published CMS report cannot be blamed on one person, nor did they happen in one day.

For those of you who like to throw stones at Dr. Griffith, I would like to ask you to take inventory of yourselves and see which one of you, who is pure and perfect, capable, and

willing to take his place. Let me tell you about the man you are so quick to criticize. I had the privilege of being a part of the Cardiac Team in St. Croix, which worked to put your hospital on the map as the first interventional cardiac program in the Caribbean to do PCI without onsite surgical back-up (using the newest technology to stop a heart attack in its tracks and save lives).

This is the program which dramatically decreased the mortality in your islands. In other words, this program has saved the lives of many of you and your loved ones who have suffered heart attacks and cardiac disease. We spent countless hours being on call for emergencies (256 hours of being on call within a 2-week time period plus being in the hospital on duty 8 hour days, Monday through Friday every week is no small task), sacrificing time with our families, and doing all of this with minimal financial reward.

Why? Because we believed in it, and believed it was the right thing to do for our community. Teamwork was a given, not an option. Dr. Griffith inspired us to raise the bar in the entire hospital. He set the Gold Standard and told us we would raise the standards of the entire hospital with what we were doing in the Cath Lab (now your several- million-dollar VI Cardiac Center). He gave me the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skill, and confidence to travel anywhere and accept any challenge brought before me. I have been proud to say that I have never missed an opportunity to uplift the hospital in St. Croix, and the superb training and unique experiences I was blessed with in my years there.

A Registered Nurse for 23 years, I have worked in hospital settings from 3rd world conditions where I couldn't even get something as simple as needle-free IV tubing; to hospital settings, where excess and blatant waste is the norm. I am presently in a hospital that cannot even do a simple routine cardiac test because we do not have even one cardiologist. When I left St. Croix a few years ago, you had three cardiologists, Nuclear Medicine, and Interventional Cardiology. Do you have any room in your hearts for gratitude?

Excellence requires a conscious effort daily to choose excellence. This is the type of leader Dr. Griffith is. But he can't do it by himself. You have a leader who has the highest standards of ethics who is willing to face this challenge. I'm certain he will go about the business of trying to set the hospital straight the same way he very skillfully goes about his angioplasty: where's the culprit lesion, what are our options, let's fix it. Done. Are you up for the challenge?

Employees of JFL, take pride in your work. Show that every person from housekeeping all the way up to the executive suite has an investment in your hospital and your community. Make your hospital a place where you will be proud to receive eager Medical students. You might inspire them to come back and serve your community.

VI Government, take the part of the responsibility which is yours. Give the leadership, guidance, and financial resources required, because you care about the people in your territory.

Community, ask yourselves what you can do to support your hospital. (Can you be a volunteer instead of backbiting and spreading bef?)

I am begging you, stop throwing stones and lend a hand. Cruzan Massive, stand for something, stand together, and stand up to do the work of saving your hospital.

Peace and Blessings, Zanna Walsh, RN, BS

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