

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Cancer Patient At Juan Luis Placed In Room With No Air-Conditioning

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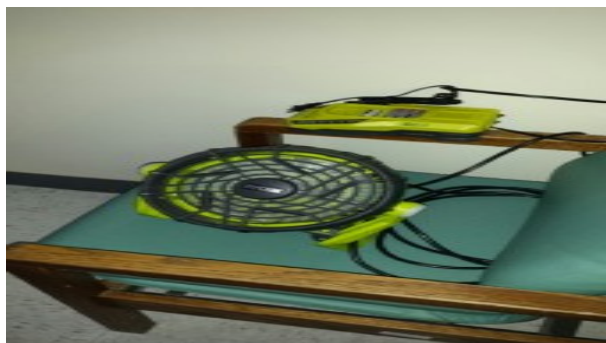


ST. CROIX -- Talk to the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center's Chief Executive Officer, Kendall Griffith, and he will tell you that the hospital, St. Croix's only, [is ready for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid inspection](#) that will determine whether or not the facility gets to keep accreditation based on a Systems Improvement Agreement (SIA) the two parties [agreed upon](#).

Responding to a question from the hospital's Board Chairman, Dr. Anthony Ricketts, concerning JFL's SIA status being led by [Greely Consultants](#) during a June board meeting, CEO Kendall Griffith said that the hospital was near its goal of 100 percent SIA completion.

"We are more than 95 percent complete now," Griffith said. "We are targeting 100 percent this month to ensure that all of the processes that we have put in place will become incorporated into the operations and culture of the organization, which would make us survey-ready in August," he added. "And it also helps with the sustainability of those processes."

Ricketts pointed out that the board's goal was to arrive at 100 percent SIA completion six weeks ahead of CMS's arrival, and Griffith's latest report had seemingly placed the



Fan brought to the hospital by Rogier Fahie to

keep his wife, who's battling cancer, cool.

But employees and patients at the facility paint a picture that looks very different from what JFL's CEO has been saying. Rogier Fahie, whose wife, Petra Jones-Fahie, has been battling cancer since November of 2014, and has been back-and-forth at the facility -- its ER and patient rooms -- described to *The Consortium* the experience that they've had at the hospital.

Fahie also forwarded to *The Consortium* a message he sent to some senators, which has been reproduced in italics immediately below:

Good morning Senator, my reason for contacting you is to let you know about an important issue currently happening at Juan Luis Hospital. My wife is a cancer patient and has been admitted due to Neutropenia. Basically, her white blood cell count has dropped dangerously low from chemotherapy. She has been placed on isolation to avoid any bacteria or viruses affecting her already compromised immune system.

On June 23, 2015 she was admitted to the hospital and her room did not have any AC. In fact, the nurse told me to bring a fan from home to make her more comfortable. She was admitted again for Neutropenia last night and again her room has no AC. The nurse who was very helpful advised me to get a fan from home. This situation is happening with many patients. Something has been wrong with the air conditioning unit for some time now.

It is not right to not have a properly functioning AC in hospital rooms as bacteria can rise which in turn will affect patients, families and the hospital staff. In my wife's case it is extremely dangerous because her immune system cannot fight off bacteria or infections due to her Diffuse Large B Cell Lymphoma Cancer. She needs the medical attention to make sure her body can withstand her next chemotherapy treatment. This situation at the hospital is deplorable and needs to be addressed for the safety of everyone coming to the facility.

Fahie and his wife will travel to Puerto Rico today where she will undergo a bone marrow transplant. She was diagnosed with cancer in January and has had 6 cycles of another set of cycles with different drugs and may need to



Rogier Fahie with his wife Petra.

Speaking to *The Consortium* last night, Fahie said after the message was sent to senators, his wife was transferred out of room 3085 and placed in room 3119. Even so, he said, many parts of the hospital remain without air-conditioning; a situation that is not conducive to a facility housing patients because bacteria thrive in heat.

"The vents were not pushing anything," Fahie said. "And even with the fans in the room, it was still at 80 degrees." His wife has been in reverse isolation where it is critical that temperatures remain at a level that would quell the development of bacteria.

And Fahie's wife will not be able to work until next year because although they've been winning the cancer fight, there are still tumors that need to be removed.

Meanwhile, the hospital is working some of its nurses on 16-hour shifts, the maximum allowed by Virgin Islands law. Fahie said he's witnessed, while in the emergency room, nurses being overwhelmed with patients because the hospital is short-staffed. "They are overworked," he said. Another problem that could lead to malpractice if not addressed soon.

JFL will hold its monthly board meeting tonight, where an update on the facility's status will be given. [At the last meeting](#), Dr. Ken Okolo, the hospital's chief operating officer, said the AC problem was "fixed temporarily."

According to various health outlets, a hospital must be able to guarantee the health of its patients, staff, and visitors. Bacteria, molds and viruses pose serious threats. Hospitals must maintain the highest level of hygiene and indoor air quality in order to combat the growth of bacteria. The air-conditioning is essential in this process.

Feature Image: JFL CEO Kendall Griffith at July board meeting.

