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No ICU at JFL for at Least Four Weeks; Physicians Seek Tuesday Meeting With Governor Bryan

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The Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

The intensive-care unit at the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center will be out of commission for at least four weeks, with people familiar with the matter stating that the unit has basically fallen apart and is unable to provide services to the community.

The intensive-care unit of a hospital is responsible for providing emergency support to patients who need immediate care for their sudden and critical health problems. ICUs also offer 24-hour monitoring and treatment of patients. A community whose hospital is without an ICU is massively disadvantaged, with lives potentially being lost because of the deficiency.

Some physicians working at the hospital have requested a meeting with Governor Albert Bryan for Tuesday, a meeting the governor acknowledged to the Consortium but could not provide detailed information on as he had yet to know of the particulars the physicians want to discuss. It was unclear as to whether those physicians make up part of the JFL leadership, or whether they were acting on their own. Also unclear is whether JFL leadership would be part of the Tuesday meeting.

A source with intimate knowledge of the developing situation told the Consortium that because of the lack of a functioning ICU at JFL, all PTS, or post-thrombotic syndrome patients are to be sent off island for care.

While it was unclear as to what, exactly led to the closure of the ICU, JFL has been struggling to retain employees, particularly nurses, for a while, and the matter was exacerbated when the territorial hospital board mandated Covid-19 vaccination. To that end, Governor Bryan has provided [a combined \\$16 million](#) to help retain and recruit these essential employees at JFL and the Schneider Regional Medical Center. Mr. Bryan said earlier this month that the first tranche of \$3 million each was in the process of being released as the hospitals try to manage facilities that are lacking adequate staff and in turn straining those who remain to perform critical work.

The funding also coincides with the exit of many Pafford-hired traveling nurses whose contracts have expired or are nearing expiration. Those nurses took advantage of attractive compensation offers, including a \$20,000 a month package.

In October, Mr. Bryan acknowledged that the hospitals were under pressure, singling out JFL. "Right now JFL is going through it," he said. "Every single day we're looking for new ways to help them." According to a JFL schedule examined by the Consortium at the time, the hospital's Critical Care Unit had a shortage of 9 nurses from Oct. 3 through the 9th.

On Friday, the hospital [announced a permanent CEO](#) to replace Dyma Williams, who was the interim chief executive at the facility [since September 2018](#), steering JFL through the turbulent aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria, and more recently through the Covid-19 pandemic.

An ICU provides essential services critical to any functioning society. They include the ability to closely monitor seriously ill patients; the availability of special equipment to aid in patient monitoring; stabilization and recovery; specially trained nurses working around the clock; the ratio of nurse to patient is usually 1:2 usually; and there are resident doctors on call around the clock, according to Kauvery Hospital, a leading, multi-speciality hospital offering best-in-class medical services for nearly 2 decades.