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JFL Promised 12 Medical Personnel Following Consortium Report; Hospital Says it Has Been Sending Patients Off Island Because ICU at Capacity

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

The Juan F. Luis Hospital said late Monday afternoon that it has been sending patients in need of emergency care off island because of severe staffing issues at its intensive-care unit. The hospital further stated that while the ICU remains operational, it was under pressure and at capacity.

JFL said it has suffered staffing challenges and has been using Pafford Medical Services to augment its critical staffing needs. "Due to the current staffing shortage, when a patient count exceeds safe standards, JFL evaluates and transfers care to an accepting hospital," JFL said.

The hospital further stated, "At this moment, JFL is currently at capacity within the ICU due to a staffing shortage. Hospital staff and administration are actively working with the Virgin Islands Department of Health and Pafford Medical Services to provide additional nursing support.

"During our update [Monday] morning, JFL was promised 6 Registered Nurses and 6 paramedics to arrive, shortly, through the Pafford Medical Services.

"JFL is not diverting all ICU patients. At this time, JFL has made a determination that based on the staff-to-patient ratio, each patient will be assessed and it will be determined at that time if a transfer is medically necessary.

"There is a plan for \$8 million American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 ("ARPA") funding for recruitment and retention through the Office of Governor Bryan. We await the receipt of the first tranche of funding to retain, recruit, and provide employment opportunities."

Government arms sprung into action following a V.I. Consortium [report Monday morning](#). People familiar with the matter told the publication Sunday evening that the ICU at JFL had basically fallen apart and would be unable to provide services to the community for at least four weeks. Additionally, a source with intimate knowledge of the situation told the Consortium Sunday that because of the lack of a functioning ICU at JFL, all PTS, or post-thrombotic syndrome patients would be sent off island for care.

Governor Albert Bryan told the Consortium Monday afternoon that following meetings with JFL leadership, his administration warded off a potential disastrous situation at the hospital, with the administration providing funding to prevent a collapse of the intensive-care unit because of severe staff shortages.

Following the meetings, Mr. Bryan told the Consortium, "We don't understand what the issue was. We have help, all they had to do is ask. They are getting the personnel they need." The governor further confirmed that PTS, or post-thrombotic syndrome patients would no longer be sent away for care, as had been earlier reported by the Consortium.

According to [a post](#) on Monday on a Facebook group called "Traveling Nurse Jobs \$5,000 a Week and Up", Pafford is offering traveling nurses \$20,000 a month to work on St. Croix, specifically in the ICU. The post reads, "ICU nurses (RN) needed in St. Croix USVI. \$20,000 for 30 day contract with option to extend. I am being told it will be 3 to 4 -12 hour shifts per week. \$1000.00 bonus if you can deploy in the next 72 hours. Travel, housing, per diem and vehicle provided. This is a 1099 contract. I am not the recruiter, I am passing along information. I do not have specific salary or contract information. Send resume and any questions to the recruiter: nmoore@paffordems.com"

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.

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.

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