

# Island Health MLA Update



November 2013

## Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read this first edition of Island Health's new "MLA Update." This will be a bi-monthly electronic e-mail aimed at giving MLAs and your staff information on Island Health activities, priorities and news. We have developed this update as a follow-up to recent meetings that many of you had with members of the Island Health Executive Team; an engagement process we intend to continue.

Island Health is committed to providing elected officials with timely, purposeful and relevant information to help you meet the needs of your constituents. If there is other information you would like to see in future updates, please contact [suzanne.germain@viha.ca](mailto:suzanne.germain@viha.ca).

We know your staff work regularly with Island Health program staff to respond to questions and concerns so we have provided you with several helpful links as well as the following contact information for your inquiries:

North/Central Vancouver Island:	Valerie Wilson	250-739-6303 <a href="mailto:valerie.wilson@viha.ca">valerie.wilson@viha.ca</a>
South Vancouver Island:	Suzanne Germain	250-370-8294 <a href="mailto:suzanne.germain@viha.ca">suzanne.germain@viha.ca</a>

We look forward to continuing to work with you in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jatinder Baidwan,  
Executive Vice President & Chief Medical Officer

Toni O'Keeffe,  
Vice President and Chief,  
Communications and Public Relations

## Useful Links

**News:** [www.viha.ca/about\\_viha/news/](http://www.viha.ca/about_viha/news/). Information about new initiatives, partnerships and programs.

**Facts & Stats:** [www.viha.ca/about\\_viha/](http://www.viha.ca/about_viha/). Information about Island Health, our populations and our staff.

**Local Area Profiles:** [www.viha.ca/mho/stats/lha\\_profiles.htm](http://www.viha.ca/mho/stats/lha_profiles.htm). Community population and health statistics to support local health and wellness planning.

**Wait Times:** [www.health.gov.bc.ca/swt/](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/swt/). Surgical wait times by physician and facility.

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### 1. “Island Health 2018” – Island Health’s New Strategic Plan

Island Health’s engagement process for our new Strategic Plan, called “Island Health 2018,” is now underway. During November, executive and other leadership staff are in communities across Island Health’s service area to hear from residents, patients and clients, municipal and community leaders, physicians and staff about the future direction of health care in our region.

We are hosting Open Houses where members of the public can share their health care vision. As an elected official, you will have received a personal invitation to participate in a Community Leaders’ Forum, hosted by a member of our Executive. We hope you have the opportunity to participate as we seek input from partners and communities on how to:

- Improve health for Islanders through community partnerships and health promotion
- Create a culture of excellence, quality and safety for clients, patients and health care workers
- Engage communities, clients and our workforce more effectively

- Sustain our health and care system through sound fiscal management

We want to hear from you on these matters. To arrange a separate meeting with us, please contact [jayne.ethier@viha.ca](mailto:jayne.ethier@viha.ca).

More information about the Island Health 2018 strategic planning process is available at [www.viha.ca/about\\_viha/strategic\\_plan/](http://www.viha.ca/about_viha/strategic_plan/).

## 2. Influenza Season and Flu Clinics

Influenza poses a serious health risk to vulnerable groups, including the elderly and those with chronic diseases. Influenza season runs from December to March and flu immunization clinics are now being held throughout Island Health communities. Along with frequent and effective hand washing, getting the flu shot is an excellent way to reduce the spread of the flu. The vaccine is free to vulnerable groups, including people who are in contact with vulnerable individuals. The vaccine is available through doctors' offices, pharmacies and public health clinics. For eligibility information and clinic schedules, see [www.viha.ca/flu](http://www.viha.ca/flu), or call Healthlink BC at 8-1-1.

To further reduce the spread of the flu, this year, visitors to hospitals and other care facilities will be asked to wear a mask if they have not had a flu shot. This new policy is consistent across BC. Masks will be available to visitors inside the entrances to our care facilities.

## 3. Population Health

Island Health, as a partner in supporting overall population health, has extensive population and health statistics available at [www.viha.ca/mho/stats/](http://www.viha.ca/mho/stats/). Preventing disease and improving population health is a priority for health care jurisdictions throughout Canada, and Island Health is developing strategies aimed at improving the health of our populations through prevention and health promotion. We will always have a focus on providing quality care when patients come to our facilities, but we hope that through better promotion and prevention initiatives (see items 4, 5 & 6 below), the volume of people who need acute care services can be reduced. Island Health is committed to changing the health of our population, and reducing the health disparity that exists between southern Vancouver Island and the more northern and remote communities that we serve.

## 4. New Rural Health Framework

Appropriate, accessible health care for Island Health's 67 rural and remote communities is a priority, but it is also a challenge. A new Rural Health Framework (see [www.viha.ca/phc\\_cdm/rhs](http://www.viha.ca/phc_cdm/rhs)) has been developed which will be used to help health care planners and partners determine appropriate services depending on the 'rurality' of a community. 'Rurality' is based on population size, proximity to larger communities, reliability of transportation services and other community infrastructure, etc. The Framework will help community discussions and engagement around what health services

are appropriate for specific communities. It also recognizes that health care services in rural and remote communities are delivered by a variety of partners and are not the sole responsibility of any single organization or agency. The changing role of technology and its impact on how services are provided and accessed is considered, as is the need for a 'critical mass' to ensure health care providers' skills are maintained.

## **5. Focus on Integrating Care**

Primary Health Care is the focus of work to integrate care for patients, family and other care supports. In collaboration with our partners in the Divisions of Family Practice, Island Health has developed a model for community-based health care. A more integrated system across the health continuum (hospital services, community programs and residential care) improves health outcomes, patients' experiences and providers' satisfaction. Island Health is focusing on patients with chronic conditions, individuals managing mental health and substance use problems, the frail elderly and maternity care clients. Integration initiatives are seen at the Oceanside Health Centre, in work across the communities of Mount Waddington, in the establishment of Integrated Health Networks and with the introduction of Home First and Integrated Care Teams. Central to the success of integration is partnerships with patients, community agencies and physicians and the use of technology (e.g. telehealth, electronic health record).

## **6. Oceanside Health Centre Open**

The Oceanside Health Centre is now fully open offering primary care, urgent care, medical imaging, laboratory services, telehealth programs and a range of home and community care programs including home care, mental health and substance use services and seniors' programs. Over 1,200 individuals have expressed interest in joining the new primary care practice. This practice delivers an integrated model of care where services are provided by a team of health care providers who focus on prevention, wellness and disease management. Priority is being given to Oceanside residents who currently do not have a physician. Information about the Oceanside Health Centre model is available at: [www.viha.ca/locations/oceanside.htm](http://www.viha.ca/locations/oceanside.htm).

## **7. North Island Hospitals Project – Community Meetings**

In September and October, team members of the North Island Hospitals Project held community meetings in Port Alice, Port McNeill, Port Hardy, Alert Bay, Campbell River and Comox with the public, local organizations, community leaders and First Nations. The aim of the meetings was to share information about the new \$600 million hospitals that will be built and opened in 2017 in Campbell River and in the Comox Valley. Detailed information about the North Island Hospitals Project, including questions and answers raised at the recent meetings are available at <http://nihp.viha.ca>.

## 8. Physician Recruitment

Island Health is continuing to expand our efforts to attract and retain physicians. In addition to supporting the recruitment of physicians and physician specialists for work in our facilities, we actively support recruitment of family practitioners for more rural and remote areas. Attracting doctors is a community effort and partnership. Island Health's physician recruitment office can help retiring or relocating family practitioners find a replacement for their practices by marketing opportunities on Island Health's and Health Match BC's websites and through other advertising venues. Island Health connects interested physicians to practices and, working with the practice, the Divisions of Family Practices and the community, Island Health coordinates site visits and relocation support for physicians and their families. We also work with community groups on locally-led initiatives to attract and retain doctors; for example our active role assisted the Cowichan Lake and Mt. Waddington communities to attract physicians to these areas. Island Health also coordinates the recruitment of International Medical Graduates; approximately 30 percent of physicians recruited to Island Health are International Medical Graduates, and we support them getting licensures, work permits and permanent residency in Canada.

## 9. Redesigning Care Models

Many Island Health residents are aware of our work to create team care models on some hospital units. This redesign took place at Nanaimo Regional General in September and will be put into place on 21 patient care units at Royal Jubilee and Victoria General Hospitals in the New Year. This model is good for quality patient care and will ultimately improve the work environment for staff. The team care model will ensure the right type of care is provided to patients at the right time by the most appropriate health care provider – whether that is a Registered Nurse, a Licensed Practical Nurse, a Health Care Assistant or another member of the health care team. The staff mix for each unit was developed looking at the patient population and services each program provides, and was compared with similar units elsewhere to ensure consistency. There will be no loss of employment as a result of the new team care model – there will be a position available for all RNs and LPNs currently employed on the units. See [www.viha.ca/NR/rdonlyres/8B8E61A3-433C-4705-B2D2-EAC92890C270/0/FSpatientcaremodel.pdf](http://www.viha.ca/NR/rdonlyres/8B8E61A3-433C-4705-B2D2-EAC92890C270/0/FSpatientcaremodel.pdf) for more information.

## 10. Wait Times

We know many MLA offices receive inquiries from constituents about wait times and/or postponements for surgical procedures, medical imaging exams and other tests. We also know how frustrating and stressful it is for patients to wait. We do everything possible to ensure timely access to procedures for patients. Many procedures can only be ordered by a specialist, and wait times vary to see a specialist. Once a physician or physician specialist assesses a patient and orders a procedure, the physician also determines the urgency of

that procedure. Emergency procedures have no, or very short, wait times. Less urgent and routine procedures will have a longer wait time. Patients whose medical condition may have deteriorated since their original assessment should be urged to see their physician again to discuss a reassessment. In the case of surgery, patients can also request to see a physician with a shorter waitlist. In recent months, surgeries on Southern Vancouver Island have been particularly challenged by the sudden departure of several anaesthesiologists. There has been successful recruitment and further recruitment continues to address this shortage. Surgical wait lists are published by facility and surgeon at [www.health.gov.bc.ca/swt/](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/swt/). Island Health publishes a series of performance reports, which are regularly updated (next update will be the end of this month), including wait times for high profile procedures such as MRIs and hip and knee surgeries. These reports can be viewed at [www.viha.ca/about\\_viha/accountability/](http://www.viha.ca/about_viha/accountability/).

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*Excellent care for everyone, everywhere, every time.*

For more information, contact Suzanne Germain via: [suzanne.germain@viha.ca](mailto:suzanne.germain@viha.ca) or 250-370-8294