

Petitions Committee Rapporteur Visit to Cardiff North Renal Dialysis Unit

24 May 2012

Present:

- Bethan Jenkins AM
- Russell George AM
- Julie Morgan AM
- Robert Kendrick, lead petitioner
- Andrea Richards, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
- Richard Parry, B Braun
- Deana Webber, B Braun
- Abigail Phillips, Clerk to the Petitions Committee
- Sarita Marshall, Deputy Clerk to the Petitions Committee
- Annette Millett, Petitions Committee Support Officer

Background:

The Committee received a petition calling for a new renal unit at Prince Charles Hospital in November 2011. The petition was submitted by a renal patient and collected in the region of 1,150 signatures. The wording is as follows:

Petition for a new renal unit at Prince Charles Hospital, Merthyr Tydfil

The current unit was built in 1989 to treat up to 16 patients per week that number has now grown to 52. So with the rising number of renal patients rising annually it is really important that we have a new renal unit.

The following are just a few of the problems that we have to put up with:

- 1. No Isolation Area (which could lead to cross infection)*
- 2. Only one toilet for all patients both male and female*
- 3. Cramped waiting room*
- 4. Poor airconditioning*
- 5. Unit has been flooded on a number of occasions*

Members undertook a visit to the Prince Charles Hospital renal unit in January 2012 and chatted to staff and patients about the conditions there. Patients described some of the problems experienced in the unit, which has been located in a portocabin with a 'life expectancy' of seven years since 1989. The problems included the lack of an isolation area; flooding; damp; inconsistent air conditioning, leaving patients cold; and the fact that there is only one toilet for all patients and staff.

Patients and staff told Members that they would like to see a state-of-the-art unit, such as the one in Pentwyn, Cardiff, replicated in Merthyr. The Cardiff unit is located in an industrial park, away from the University Hospital of Wales site. The Committee therefore resolved to

visit that unit to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the off-site model with patients and staff.

The Renal Dialysis Unit in Cardiff:

The treatment area in the Cardiff unit was spacious compared with the unit in Merthyr, with plenty of space between the beds for the nursing staff to treat the patients. The waiting area in the Cardiff unit was roughly the same size as the whole of the Merthyr unit. There were also two consulting rooms; in Merthyr, consultations take place in a space also used for storage. The treatment area was light and airy. It had a clean area for the preparation of medicines, as well as an isolation area for those with infectious illnesses such as 'flu. However, Members were told that there was no consultant based at the unit and that, in an emergency, staff have to call 999 for an ambulance to take the patient to the University Hospital of Wales.

As patients undergo dialysis for between 3.5 and 5 hours at a time, several times a week, sometimes for the rest of their lives, comfort and practicality are key concerns. In the Cardiff unit, each patient has their own television, which they can choose to watch or switch off if they want to sleep. Members were told that patients may prefer to watch television as it can be difficult to read due to fluctuations in their blood pressure whilst they are receiving dialysis

Mrs Maureen O'Brian, a member of the patients' forum, praised the facilities at the unit as excellent but said that, even with excellent facilities, attending the unit for dialysis several times a week is burdensome. The only criticism Mrs O'Brian had was of the transport service, which often runs late, adding to the time taken for patients to be treated.

Richard Parry of B Braun told Members about the state-of-the-art water treatment equipment at the unit, which creates clean water used to flush patients' blood. Members were told that using water of poor quality can be fatal. We were told that the water treatment equipment in the Merthyr unit is not as advanced as that in the Cardiff unit, as the cost of installation is prohibitive for a temporary setting.

Prince Charles Hospital Renal Unit

B Braun manage both the Merthyr and Cardiff unit, but refurbishment of the Merthyr unit has not been included in their seven-year contracts as there had always been an intention to build a new unit. However, the new build originally planned is now not possible due to a cut in NHS funding.

Members were told during their visit to the Merthyr unit in January that space in the existing hospital buildings would not become available until 2018 and that, therefore, options for a third party to develop an off-site unit had been identified. However, Andrea Richards told

Members that this is no longer an option and that another business case for a unit on the hospital site is to be submitted shortly.

The petitioner, Robert Kendrick, told us that the patients of the Merthyr unit had not been informed of any of these developments. Neither had the Chief Executive of Cwm Taf Health Board arranged a meeting with patients to discuss proposals, as she had committed to do at the January meeting.

Committee Service
May 2012