

January 5, 2017

Dear MNA Colleague at Newton-Wellesley Hospital,

We are writing to share with you an unsettling letter we recently received from President Dr. Michael Jaff. The letter was Dr. Jaff's response to our ongoing efforts to address nurse staffing cuts in the emergency department and medical-surgical units.

As you can read in the enclosed correspondence, Dr. Jaff's letter was incredibly disappointing. Rather than address our concerns, he chastised us for informing the public about them. Dr. Jaff called our fight for patient safety "disturbing" and "reprehensible." His anger is misdirected. We have tried repeatedly to address staffing problems with management, including during our two recent rounds of negotiations. After our contract settlement last spring, we vowed to remain vigilant about the quality of our patient care. When more staffing cuts were implemented, we brought our concerns to management. After the hospital refused again and again to listen to its front-line nurses, we took our message public.

In this package you will find a letter we delivered to Dr. Jaff last month urging him to address the staffing cuts and informing him of our petition of no confidence in Chief Nursing Officer Karen Conley. Also enclosed is Dr. Jaff's letter and our response. Please reach out to a bargaining committee member if you have any questions.

In solidarity,

NWH RN Executive Committee

Laurie Andersen, Co-Chair

Nancy Anderson, Co-Chair

Connie Hunter, Vice Chair

Connie Bouvier, Secretary

Mary Ellen Castagno, Treasurer

December 15, 2016

Dr. Michael R. Jaff, President
Newton-Wellesley Hospital
2014 Washington St.
Newton, MA 02462

To Dr. Jaff:

We, the registered nurses of Newton-Wellesley Hospital, are demanding change. In response to staffing cuts that have jeopardized safe patient care in the emergency department and medical surgical units, more than 80 percent of staff nurses have signed a petition of no confidence in Chief Nursing Officer Karen Conley.

NWH nurses, represented by the Massachusetts Nurses Association, have vigorously objected to reductions in staffing that have left patients with fewer nurses to care for them. Conley has refused to address nurses' concerns, despite numerous meetings with front-line RNs and a multi-part effort by nurses requesting that Conley, the rest of hospital leadership and corporate owner Partners HealthCare ensure safe patient care.

We have lost confidence in our nursing leadership. The administration is ruining what was once a great community hospital. The hospital, its patients and its front-line staff are suffering. The emergency department alone has lost more than 15 experienced nurses, most of whom have not been replaced, seriously impacting our ability to provide safe and effective patient care.

- In addition to the ED nurses who have left recently on their own, Conley and her leadership team have cut ED staffing three times in less than two years, even though ED patient volume and acuity have been steady or rising:
 - In January 2015, one nurse from the regular ED staffing was cut 24 hours per day, seven days a week for a total of 168 hours per week. In September 2016, another 80 hours per week were eliminated from front-line nurse staffing. This is a total of 248 hours a week or 36 hours a day of fewer nurses at the bedside in the ED.
 - In addition, the hospital eliminated a nurse from the regular ED staffing pattern from 3 a.m. to 11 a.m. seven days a week and also from 3 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- This fall, Conley and her team increased the number of patients medical-surgical nurses regularly care for at one time, from four patients to five patients. On night shifts, nurses are now regularly caring for seven patients. This is unsafe. Our patients are more acute than ever and are not sleeping through the night. These changes have been made despite front-line nurses' vocal concerns and despite numerous academic studies that show additional patient assignments for nurses means a higher risk of harm for patients.

Nurses have become increasingly concerned about patient safety at the hospital over the last few years. During two sets of contract negotiations in 2015 and 2016, NWH nurses picketed outside the hospital and held overwhelming strike authorization votes over patient safety issues. We vowed to remain vigilant about the quality of patient care after we settled our current contract last spring, averting a potential strike. We said publicly at the time that our biggest challenge to providing safe patient care was how the hospital was failing to respect its nurses. Unfortunately, we had every right to be worried.

This fall, nurses waged a campaign for safe patient care following the ED and medical-surgical staffing cuts. We met repeatedly with Conley and her team to voice our concerns and held several meetings among ourselves to discuss ongoing safety issues. Nurses placed two advertisements in local newspapers highlighting staffing cuts and calling on leadership to make improvements. We also sent a letter to your, former NWH President Ellen Moloney and the hospital's board of trustees. Every request by nurses to address the situation has been rebuffed.

We simply want to save our hospital. For that to happen, we need to see dramatic change from management. We want to provide safe, quality care to our patients. That has become increasingly difficult under the staffing cuts imposed by the hospital. The vast majority of staff nurses have now spoken: We have no confidence in the ability of CNO Karen Conley to provide leadership that guarantees the safety of our patients and respect for front-line nurses.

Sincerely,

NWH RN Executive Committee

Laurie Andersen, Co-Chair

Nancy Anderson, Co-Chair

Connie Hunter, Vice Chair

Connie Bouvier, Secretary

Mary Ellen Castagno, Treasurer



NEWTON-WELLESLEY HOSPITAL

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Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
Boston, Massachusetts

January 3, 2017

Ms. Laurie Andersen
Ms. Nancy Anderson
Ms. Connie Hunter
Ms. Connie Bouvier
Ms. Mary Ellen Castagno

Via email

Dear Ms. Andersen, Ms. Anderson, Ms. Hunter, Ms. Bouvier, and Ms. Castagno:

I am in receipt of the letter you wrote and delivered to my office on December 20, 2016. Having taken the opportunity to reflect on this over the holidays, I feel compelled to respond to you to share my perspective.

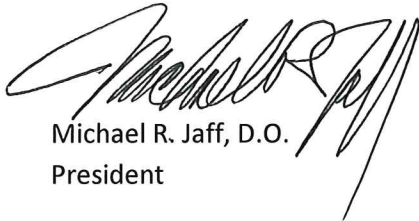
Your behavior, on behalf of the MNA and purportedly on behalf of the NWH nurses, is reprehensible. It is disturbing enough that this letter was sent without attempting to resolve the matter in a respectful, professional manner, but the timing and content of the letter is appalling. The letter personally and publicly attacks the hospital's Chief Nursing Officer, Karen Conley, just five days before Christmas. The timing of this attack lacks any recognition of humanity, respect, caring or compassion. Certainly you know that people suffer loss and intense depression during this most important holiday season, and sending a letter at this time demonstrates a complete lack of consideration or human decency.

Since I accepted the position as President of Newton-Wellesley Hospital, the MNA has chosen to antagonize over 3000 employees of this proud organization and more importantly, has attempted to frighten the thousands of patients and their families who have counted on us – including our excellent nursing staff – to care for them. You have printed advertisements in local newspapers and even pushed the malicious letter described above out as a press release across the internet. Certainly you must appreciate that these tactics have the potential to decrease the confidence of our communities in our care and put us in a precarious financial position. Indeed, I can only imagine that this is your goal. What positive end would that have for your constituency here? Reducing patient confidence has a negative impact on the entire NWH community, including the nurses.



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AND MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

I would have expected a great deal more from individuals who have chosen a professional career steeped in care and respect. When you are ready to behave as professionals and are willing to treat the thousands of employees, patients and families with respect and compassion, I am available to speak with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael R. Jaff', with a stylized, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Michael R. Jaff, D.O.
President

cc: Karen Conley. DNP, RN, Senior Vice President Patient Care Services
Beth Taylor, Vice President Human Resources



January 6, 2017

Dr. Michael R. Jaff
President
Newton-Wellesley Hospital
2014 Washington St.
Newton, MA 02462

Dear Dr. Jaff:

We are in receipt of your disappointing, disrespectful response to our letter dated December 15, 2016 which outlined major issues faced by Newton-Wellesley Hospital and the professional nurses dedicated to its patients.

Your letter offers no acknowledgement or respect for our nearly 150 combined years of professional nursing, love, devotion, leadership, hard work or patient advocacy at Newton-Wellesley Hospital. We find your paternalistic, condescending tone reprehensible. As the leaders of the proud Newton Wellesley-Hospital nurses, we attempted to share the frustration and heartbreak that we feel over the negative changes in our beloved hospital and the impact on our patients' care. We have made every attempt to work with the nursing leadership in the past two years, as we have for many years, but have been met with lack of progress and increased frustration. The once proud working relationship between nursing leadership and the MNA has been damaged.

We have challenged the debilitating cuts in our staffing. The emergency department has cut 36 hours a day of nursing care in the last two years, causing unsafe conditions, delays in care, longer waits and poor morale of all staff. The volume of patients through our emergency department has remained steady but the acuity has risen with the increase in area urgent cares and walk in clinics taking the less acute leaving the more acute to the ED. Our nursing leadership has increased the nurse/patient ratios on the medical-surgical units to levels that are unsafe in this age of computerized documentation and increased patient care needs.

NWH's own recent program to promote the "Relationship Based Care Model" does not support more than a 4:1 nurse/patient ratio but management wants the NWH nurse to take up to 5:1 on days and evenings and up to 7:1 on nights. Our staffing is so tightly driven now that often we have no available beds for admissions from the ED or the OR. We have addressed these concerns directly with the nursing leadership team repeatedly with meetings, labor/management, statistics, letters and communications. There has been no improvement or change in philosophy. The emergency department has had 12 nurses resign since the summer of 2016 because of worsening working conditions and concerns about patient care.

Since the summer of 2016, the hospital initiated a change in policy that removed the safety officers from watching section 12 psych patients and put the patient care assistants in their place. This change was initiated without consideration of the concerns of all staff in the ED, including the nurses. The nurses had an excellent working relationship with the safety and security team which has now been challenged and damaged.

Now there is daily strife over whether the safety officers will or will not watch patients and there has been an increase in injuries and threats to staff. Our patients are also more at risk with untrained observers. The teamwork that had been years in development is now destroyed and ongoing conflicts and lack of respect has developed in its place. This causes increase risk for all. We have brought these issues to the ED leadership and to the nursing leadership team through labor management and there has been no improvement or change in philosophy.

We have excellent language in our contract which recognizes nurses who have served at the bedside for 30 or more years at NWH. This language was hard to reach agreement on and we are proud of that recognition. This language has been disregarded and ignored over and over for the past two years. We have had private meetings with nursing leadership, made agreements with leadership, discussed this at Labor Management and had an open meeting regarding this ongoing violation of contract. There has been no improvement or change in philosophy.

We fought to improve the ability for nurses to have much needed time off (PET) with the last contract. Although nursing leadership promised that 10 percent of the total productive hours for each unit shall be granted each week for time off, this has been violated in more than one area over and over since the contract was settled. There are two grievances currently in process because the contract is being violated daily. This also has been discussed directly with nursing leadership, at Labor Management and through the grievance process. There has been no improvement or change in the leadership philosophy.

We have many other examples of concerns and issues that we, the professional nurses of NWH, have raised with nursing leadership that they have failed to address. We have dedicated ourselves as professional nurses to our patients and to this hospital and are proud of our professionalism, yet we only get disrespect and dismissal from you and the leadership of NWH.

We would have expected a great deal more from an individual who arrived saying he had an "open door policy" and a "great respect" for nurses. We have seen neither.

We had asked to meet with you weeks ago and stand ready to meet at any time.

Sincerely,

NWH RN Executive Committee

Laurie Andersen, Co-Chair
Nancy Anderson, Co-Chair
Connie Hunter, Vice Chair
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