

Make sure our hospital has a future....

Dear Patients, Friends and Neighbors,

We are doctors who practice in Kent and northern Queen Anne's counties, writing to explain our concerns about the future of the hospital in Chestertown. As you'll see below, we are joined by others who share our concerns.

The Board of Directors of Shore Regional Health, the portion of the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) which operates the hospitals in Chestertown, Dorchester and Easton, is in the midst of a study to decide what services each hospital will provide. While most changes will be implemented in 3 to 5 years, after final approvals and construction of a new hospital in Easton, the decisions that will set the changes in motion will likely be made this February or March.

One thing is sure, Chestertown's new Emergency Room, which serves 14,000 people each year, from infants to seniors, is here to stay. But after Shore Health builds a new medical center in Easton, we are concerned that our hospital will be turned into an ambulatory care facility. Locals who need inpatient surgery or hospital care will be sent to Easton or Baltimore.

We believe it is unwise, and may in fact be unhealthy to force our seniors and low-income residents to travel, by ambulance or car, 36 to 50 miles to another facility for the care they now receive in Chestertown.

Here is our prescription for the hospital in Chestertown:

- Maintain inpatient services. As is the case now, round-the-clock care will be provided by local physicians or hospitalists. (Children who need inpatient care will continue to be treated in Easton by community pediatricians.)
- Maintain an Intensive Care Unit but upgrade care by providing intensivists during the day and UMMS doctors in Baltimore at night, via video e-care link.
- Continue both inpatient and same-day general surgery. Restore discontinued surgical specialties: urology, eye, ear, nose & throat.
- Continue providing orthopedic, gynecological, breast reconstruction, breast reduction and plastic surgery.
- Maintain oncology and chemotherapy services, cardiovascular and pulmonary medicine and rehab.
- Restore inpatient dialysis.
- Retain MRI, CT scan imaging, 3-D digital mammography with tomosynthesis, X-rays and ultrasound.
- Maintain pain management, diabetes and other hormonal disease (endocrinologist) care. Add a full- or part-time rheumatologist, neurologist and psychiatrist.
- Improve and increase communications with the Chestertown hospital community.
- Provide frequent and low-cost transportation between the Chestertown and Easton hospitals.

We think it's good that Easton will soon have a new medical center, and we are impressed that UMMS has spent millions of dollars to improve the hospital building in Chestertown. In addition to our new ER, UMMS has replaced heating, air conditioning and electrical systems, installed a new elevator and renovated hallways.

But that doesn't ease our disappointment that UMMS has not kept its promises to attract much-needed primary doctors and specialists to Chestertown. To make matters worse, when doctors have moved away or retired, their type of medical services have disappeared from Chestertown.

Everyone here knows that people move here, and that parents send their children to Washington College and to our summer camps, secure in the knowledge that there is a hospital in Chestertown. And everyone also knows that many in our fast-growing population of elderly residents can't drive to Easton, and that many locals can't afford to pay for transportation.

For all of these reasons and more, we urge Shore Regional Health System's board to maintain and restore Chestertown's inpatient medical and surgical services as provided to our community prior to the UMMS merger.

We urge you to write a "letter to the editor" expressing your opinion to the *Kent County News*, *Queen Anne's Record Observer*, *Tidewater Trader* and/or *The Chestertown Spy*, and to call, e-mail or write to John Dillon, the *Chairman of Shore Regional Health's board*, and Ken Kozel, the *President and CEO of Shore Regional Health*. You may e-mail them both at Mr. Kozel's e-mail address: kkoz@umm.edu.

Thank you for your time, thoughtfulness and support.

Sincerely,

Gerard O'Connor, *M.D. General Surgery*

Wayne Benjamin, *M.D. Family Medicine*

Deborah Davis, *M.D. Emergency Medicine; Shore Regional Health Board of Directors*

Susan Ross, *M.D. Family Physician*

Michael Peimer, *M.D. Internal Medicine*

William Trainor, *M.D., Pulmonology*

Patrick Callahan, *M.D. Pain Management & Anesthesiology*

Melvin Rapelyea, *M.D. Radiology*

Paul Johnson, *M.D. General, Thoracic & Vascular Surgery*

Juan Cordero, *M.D. Cardiology*

Lisa Webb, *M.D. Obstetrics & Gynecology*

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Fred Delboy, *M.D.*

Ona Kareiva, *M.D. Anesthesiology*

Eva Tovar Hirashima, *M.D. Emergency Medicine*

Don Sutton, *Mayor of Betterton*

Edwin R. Fry, *Shore Regional Health Board of Directors, 2013-2014*

Garret Falcone, *Heron Point Retirement Community Executive Director*

Jim Donaghy, *HomePorts President*

Jane Hukill, *HomePorts Vice President former board member, Shore Regional Health System; former board president, Chester River Health Foundation*

Carol Droge, *President United Way of Kent County*

Glenn L. Wilson, *President & CEO, Chesapeake Bank & Trust Company*

Elmer Horsey, *Former Mayor of Chestertown; Kent & Queen Anne's Hospital Board Directors*

Joan Horsey, *Former Board member, Kent & Queen Anne's Hospital; Former Board member, Maryland Health Resources Planning Commission*

Barrie Frazier, *Heron Point Resident Council President; Chester River Health Foundation Board of Directors*

Mary Burton, *Chester River Health Foundation Board of Directors*

Charles Lerner, *Chester River Health Foundation Board of Directors*

Margie Elsberg, *Chester River Health Foundation Board of Directors*

Pat Deitz, *Licensed Clinical Social Worker*

Christian Havemeyer, *Concerned Kent County resident*

Stuart "Mickey" Elsberg, *United Way Kent County Board; Treasurer; For All Seasons; Chester Valley Minister's Assn. Board*