

## WATCH: HEALTHCARE UNIONS SAY PATIENTS "HIDDEN" TO FUDGE ER STATS

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Shuyee Lee/CJAD 800 NEWS

A hospital patient being parked near a coffee machine to make room for an emergency room case. Patients being put in overflow units or stuffed into multi-bed rooms.

These are some of the stories coming out that some healthcare unions are blaming on the Quebec health minister's order last week to fix the ER overcrowding problem in seven days.

The Journal de Montreal reports that a diabetic woman hospitalized for the past two weeks for pneumonia and heart problems was recently moved out of her room and put in the corridor next to a coffee machine to make way for an urgent ER patient.

La Presse spoke to healthcare workers in the Montérégie-Centre and Lanaudière who told similar stories.

The healthcare and social services agency for Lanaudière is quoted as saying the measures have nothing to do with the minister's directive. The health ministry told La Presse that they have no indications that this is the case and that overflow units have always been used.

The union representing healthcare workers at the Lakeshore General Hospital said it's the same deal at their shop - patients shipped off to upper floor cubicles and corridors when the 38 beds in the emergency room are full. APTS union political officer Josée Asselin said that way, they can fudge the numbers.

"I heard something like, 'They have better care on the floor, and it is more calm, they'll feel better on the floor.' But basically they are overloading the floor," said Asselin in an interview with CJAD 800 News.

"There's not more staffing to do all these jobs, so there's more paperwork, there's more care to do, professionals have to see more patients and this is (along) their regular job to do."



Roberto Bomba, treasurer of the executive of Quebec's largest nurses' union the FIQ, said that the re-distribution of ER patients is a cosmetic measure to deflate the emergency room numbers.

"In an ER with 24 beds, when they put four stretchers outside, it doesn't change the statistics. So it always looks good in terms of the occupancy if you're running at 100%, your 24 stretchers are filled. But you have four stretchers outside, you're still running at 100%," said Bomba.

"Our area of concern is, did we adjust the ratio of staff? And often times, it's not."

Chairman for the Council for the Protection of Patients Paul Brunet said these measures may improve the statistics but not the quality of patient care.

"What do you do with overflow patients, you throw them beside coffee machines? It is not the way to welcome and admit patients," said Brunet.

"This is not the way to treat a patient when in your own code of ethics you have the patient as a priority."