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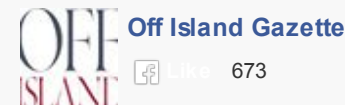


### FROM THE GAZETTE

ALL

## Off-Island patients nervous about cancer cuts

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“We need to reduce all off-the-island-of-Montreal patients by encouraging them to contact a hospital within their respective centre(s) for treatment,” Jewish General Hospital director of professional services Joseph Portnoy wrote to staff.



Photo credit: Dario Ayala, The Gazette

Riley Sparks | From The Gazette | February 18, 2014

The provincial government's decision to cut oncology budgets at on-island hospitals is leaving some off-island cancer patients nervous about their future treatment.

Last week, the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal informed several on-island hospitals that as of April 1 it would cut \$6 million in funding to those hospitals and transfer it to off-island hospitals in Laval and the Montérégie.

As of April 1, the Jewish General Hospital's radiotherapy budget will be cut by 40 per cent, while the Centre hospitalier de l'université de Montréal will lose 30 per cent and the McGill University Health Centre will lost 23 per cent.

The funding shift is intended to help those hospitals treat more patients closer to their homes,

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but many of those patients are now unsure what to expect at their next appointment, West Island Cancer Wellness Centre executive director Debbie Magwood said

She said she was concerned that the decision may force patients away from their chosen doctors.

“If I choose my doctor, and my doctor is at the Jewish General Hospital, then where are our rights? Do I still have the right to be treated the way I want to be treated, where I want to be treated? That’s the bigger argument,” she said.

“If you’re going through cancer, and you already have so many questions and you already feel powerless to what’s going on in your body, add to it now removing your power of choice – that’s profound,” Magwood said.

The Valleyfield and Lakeshore hospitals both have oncology departments, but neither offer radiation therapy. After an initial consultation, patients must travel to Montreal to receive radiation treatments.

After she was diagnosed with breast cancer, Hudson resident Anne Tetrault received treatment at three on-island hospitals — chemotherapy at the Montreal General, surgery at St-Mary’s and radiation therapy at the Royal Victoria.

Tetrault’s husband was recently diagnosed with prostate cancer, after a routine checkup at his general practitioner in Hudson.

He had surgery in Pointe-Claire and is now seeing a specialist at the Jewish General.

“The doctors are caught in the middle of this,” Tetrault said. Her doctor has been supportive and has assured her that he would see her no matter what happens, she said.

Losing that personal relationship, built over months or years of cancer treatment, would be a shock, Tetrault said.

“It’s not so much the visit in the hospital. It’s the personal rapport you build with your doctor — the guy who’s been through it all with you,” Tetrault said.

Tetrault said she wasn’t sure what to expect at her husband’s next appointment, which is scheduled at the Jewish General a week after the new rules are to take effect.

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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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The hospital has said that it will continue to treat off-island patients who refuse to go elsewhere, but is unsure if it will receive provincial funding to cover the cost of those treatments.

“We’ll go on April 8, and I’ll tell you, nobody better say we can’t see our doctor,” she said.

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