

**Eastern Health Authority
Crisis Communications Briefing Note**

Immediate Challenge:

Information on the ER/PR issue continues to be misrepresented in the media. Inaccurate coverage continues to dominate news cycles, provincially and nationally.

The ER/PR issue has now evolved to a broader issue of public confidence in the healthcare system. This has happened as a result of several new issues reported in the media including: radiologist suspended on the Burin Peninsula and now the subsequent emerging question on the credentialing of foreign-trained physicians. In addition, CBC is now in the possession of information concerning the quality of laboratory testing.

The lines have now been blurred for the public and they are viewing the coverage collectively and questioning the integrity of the health care system and its governing authorities vs. looking at an isolated occurrence. Consequently, the public is not open to hear positive messaging about Eastern Health Authority. The health authority cannot begin to rebuild its image or restore public faith in the system until the immediate crisis has been stabilized.

Additionally, the House of Assembly will remain open for at least two more weeks. Expect the topic of health care to be one of the focal point of question period.

It should be noted that efforts to rebuild image/install confidence in the system will require a sustained recovery effort once the authority has stabilized these issues in the immediate short term.

The suggested tactics itemized below are very heavily focused on media for the purposes of managing the crisis over the next 72-hour period. However, media relations are only one small component in effectively managing any crisis and the subsequent rebuilding efforts. The bigger challenge ahead (next week) is fast-tracking the process of managing stakeholders and quickly engaging them in a recovery strategy.

Goals:

- Move from crisis to stability
- Correct inaccurate reporting/misinformation disseminated to public
- Restore public confidence in the healthcare system

Target Audiences:

- Media
- Healthcare users across the province

Recommended Immediate Tactics:

- Advertising – Full page ads this weekend in The Telegram and Community papers (Transcontinental) across the province. Ad will focus on correcting three main inaccuracies currently reported in the media. These include: Eastern Health did fully disclose the ER/PR issue to the affected patients in a timely fashion; neither the ER/PR issue nor radiologist's suspension affect women who have undertaken mammography screening; and Eastern Health upholds the highest standards of patient care and is confident in the quality of its laboratory services.
- Request a meeting with CBC's Regional Producers and Executive Producers of TV and radio (to be held tomorrow) to discuss the ramifications of media inaccuracies. The meeting's discussion should NOT focus on biased reporting. It should discuss the media's ethical obligations to report accurately and how their recent coverage has created a public frenzy. Recommended attendees include: Susan Bonnell, Dr. Howell; and Steve Dodge.
- Media Editorial Board to be held as soon as possible (preferably tomorrow morning) via conference call for all papers outside St. John's. The purpose of this call is to provide them with more detailed and accurate information on this issue and discuss the ramifications of media inaccuracies. Keep in mind that many of these journalists have not had the benefits of technical briefings previously provided to St. John's media.
- Schedule a media briefing with the hosts of the three open line programs – Randy Simms, Bill Rowe and Linda Swain.
- Focus on immediate correction of inaccuracies with individual journalists – i.e. Kirk Squires (Packet), the Globe and Mail and Mark Dwyer (Herald).
- Immediate search and analysis of national coverage over the last three-week period. This will help identify other media coverage which may need to be challenged.
- Book live appearance on CBC Radio's Cross Talk for early next week.
- Call-in to Open Line
- Find immediate opportunities to create positive associations. For example, appearance at the Janeway Telethon.