

## LETTER TO TRUST ON THREAT TO EALING HOSPITAL THEATRE AT NIGHT.

Sent by email: Weds 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020

To: Jacqueline Docherty, Chief Executive, London North West University Healthcare Trust  
&

Sir Amyas Morse, Chair, London North West University Healthcare Trust

Dear Jacqueline and Amyas,

We are writing to you with regards to the future of acute surgery at Ealing Hospital at night.

At the last Board Meeting in January, the Medical Director, referred to the review he was carrying out of a number of areas including Theatre use. After the meeting he confirmed that this included the possibility of closing Ealing Hospital theatres at night and diverting or transferring patients to Northwick Park for surgery. We have heard from a number of sources that further consultation is taking place and this could well go ahead by the end of the financial year.

Of course, we fully understand your financial difficulties and have raised them with the CCG locally and at North West London level. However, we are very opposed to any plans to close the theatres from 10.00pm - 8.00am for the following reasons-

1. Although there may be very few operations at night, we understand that when these take place it is because there is serious risk to life or limb or there are better outcomes if surgery is not delayed to the morning. This means delays really matter to patient safety and lives.
2. If patients are to be diverted at night to Northwick Park for possible surgery, this places a considerable onus on ambulance staff who would be asked, without the proper assessment carried out by an A&E, to make a decision as to who is displaying symptoms that may require surgery. To minimise the risk, this is likely to lead to more patients being diverted than necessary and place a greater burden on both ambulance staff and Northwick Park.
3. Not all patients that may require urgent surgery arrive in an ambulance. Many people will have walked in to Ealing Hospital and may have waited some time in the UCC and A&E before being seen. Only following the proper assessment by A&E will it become clear if they need urgent surgery. It is extremely worrying to think that they would then be placed in an ambulance and transferred to NPH, placing them at risk of serious harm or possibly loss of life by further delay.
4. Ealing A&E is supposed to be a 24-hour comprehensive A&E and it is what we campaigned to keep open. This proposal appears to undermine its 24-hour

role. We have been advised that the National Standards for emergency medicine may be breached if this goes ahead.

5. Ealing Hospital has an Intensive Care Unit. By its nature patients may suddenly deteriorate and need immediate surgery. Similarly, patients on the wards can suddenly deteriorate requiring urgent surgery. Surely in such cases patients could be placed at serious risk if they had to be transferred to Northwick Park?
  
6. In practise if theatres are to close at 10.00 pm, staff would be very cautious about starting an operation, so in practise the closure time is likely to be much earlier, again adding to the burden elsewhere.
  
7. Given the pressure on theatre space at Northwick Park, how can the Trust guarantee that staff and theatre space would be available either to meet the urgent need at night or to fit in to the next day's schedule?

As patients as well as campaigners we want to be treated and operated on at Ealing Hospital when we are seriously ill or at serious risk, regardless of the time of night.

Without a clear plan for Ealing Hospital as a District General Hospital we fear it is inevitable that changes, such as closing theatres at night, will continue to be proposed.

We have appreciated the opportunity to meet and discuss with you over the last few years and to ask questions and raise our concerns and hope we can continue to do so.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Regards

Eve Turner

Secretary  
Ealing Save Our NHS

REPLY FROM JACQUELINE DOCHERTY

Mon 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020

Dear Eve

Thank you for your email about the potential closures of Theatres at Ealing Hospital overnight. I can reassure you that at the moment there are no definite plans to close theatres overnight and no formal decisions have been made.

That said, the Board like all NHS organisations has to ensure its services, while providing the best possible care to patients are run effectively and efficiently. Given the scale of the financial challenge we have at LNWUHT, over the coming months we will be undertaking further work to form a longer term view of the Trust's future Acute Hospital service and site strategy, within Outer Northwest London, which will include Ealing Hospital. Running alongside that we are continuing to look at a range of options across all our sites and services to reduce our costs that inevitably will include some unpalatable decisions.

The issues you helpfully raise, are exactly the type of key factors and interdependencies we will take into consideration when evaluating the future options and implications for particular services and sites.

As this work commences and evolves we will include stakeholders as part of the process and would look forward to involving you and other community representatives.

Regards

Jacqueline

**Jacqueline Docherty DBE**

Chief Executive

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