Strong Gains Made in Negotiations with WVMC

The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) bargaining continues with Willamette Valley Medical Center (WVMC) on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that addresses the challenges and risks nurses are taking every day during this COVID-19 pandemic.

We are happy to report an agreement has been reached with the hospital to provide up to 80 hours of quarantine pay for those employees impacted by COVID-19. However, we are still working to address the hospital’s refusal to apply this benefit to those nurses that were initially impacted and placed on quarantine.

Additionally, we have placed some restrictions around the use of travelers, but we continue to push for language that ensures that nurses are not displaced from their scheduled shifts and replaced by a traveler. These are principles that extend far beyond the COVID-19 crisis, it is important the hospital recognize and value the vital role regular staff have at WVMC. We make a long-term commitment to the hospital and it is simply wrong to hire traveler nurses and have them replace our regular staff.

This lack of regard for nurses is an indication of the lack of respect we will face addressing our problems with LifePoint as we move forward with negotiations for our first contract. We are hopeful we can continue to address our concerns face to face with local administration and identify and address problems with reduced conflict.

We are working to schedule another bargaining session with the hospital in the next several days. If we do not reach a fair agreement, we will be reaching out to all of you to consider other concerted activity to address our issues.

Protect the Frontline Health Care Workers Who Are Protecting Oregon!

Oregon nurses and frontline health care workers are risking their lives every day to save the lives of patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We’re asking Governor Brown to insist that health care employers come to the table with their workers and get COVID-19 protections in place before the lives of Oregon health care providers are lost.

By signing this petition, you take direct action to remedy this crisis by urging Governor Brown to intervene in this extraordinary public health and workers’ rights emergency.

Stand with frontline healthcare workers in Oregon, who’ve already gone too long caring for COVID-19 workers without adequate protections. Click here to sign petition.

Send this link www.OregonRN.org/Petition to your friends and family.

Stand united against COVID-19.
I had my weekly meeting with CNO, Kirsten Ferren and wanted to give you an update:

1. There have been a few people who have asked about the possibility of being put on furloughs. At the moment they are not planning to do that and the reason I was given, is that it would freeze the employees benefit status and they would be unable to use their own PTO and benefits remain unusable until the employee returns to work.

2. They have addressed our concerns about personal protective equipment (PPE) and sent out an informational presentation to explain requirements and expectations.

3. All employees are experiencing some cut in their work hours. All administrative salaried employees are taking a 30 percent reduction in their salaries. The department managers are covering the 8-hour supervisor shift during weekdays resulting in the supervisors each having their 12-hour shifts cut to 8-hour shifts. This was done to keep the hourly loss even amongst all hourly staff (supervisors were the only ones not losing hours prior to that). The managers are expected to take one day of paid time off (PTO) per week to assist in the cost-savings program. The rationale behind this is to save money and to prevent having to cut any actual jobs.

4. The loss of hours should be relatively equal amongst employees of the same department and skill set. If one feels they are losing significantly more hours than someone else, the managers are expected to keep track of the employees in their own departments and should be contacted to discuss fairness.

5. The "crisis initiative" that LifePoint launched was a bit premature. They stated they would offer employees an additional 80 hours of PTO but have currently not been providing that benefit. The executive committee has been working on a memorandum of understanding to cover this issue.

6. HR is working on filing a temporary work share with the unemployment office, that would allow employees that are missing between 25-40 percentage of their hours, some additional benefit. However, it does seem the state of Oregon caps that weekly benefit around $650, so employees that make at least that much may not qualify. There will be more information coming on that. I am not an unemployment expert and am unsure of details on that.

7. We discussed the MedSurg staffing ratios that have increased recently. Kirsten stated that it was understood that a nurse would take four to five patients each. However, she did not know that they were staffing only one nurse on a pod without a "buddy" (CNA or additional nurse). I explained our concerns of safety of that since it is occurring on both East pod and South pod where all the patients are in isolation. She stated she would check in with managers Jill Bowman and Zac Woodruff to find out the details and get back to me. She stated, and I do believe, that she wants to continue to work with us make the best of this very difficult time.

Currently, the hospital’s stance is that they will not provide any retroactive benefits, but we plan to continue pressing that point.

Kirsten has been very receptive to checking on the issues I bring to her and getting an answer to me. I want us to continue to share this information with our fellow nurses to give them the most accurate info and to prevent the spread of rumors that increase the anxiety that is already very high.

Please know that your union executive team is working very hard to be the voice of all our nurses and to address your concerns. While much of what occurs goes on in the background, we are still diligently fighting for your rights. I will continue to meet weekly with Kirsten and am happy to bring our concerns to the table with her. If you have concerns, you can contact any of the bargaining committee members.

Thank you for supporting each other. We are so lucky to have such a great community of nurses at our facility.