



The Kincardine INDEPENDENT

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Kai Schwindt, 4, gets the feel of the steering wheel in a 1968 Mustang. The car was one of many on display during the 18th annual Point Clark Cornfest Saturday evening. (Kiel Edge photo)

Hospital board ignores public's concern

Doctors refuse to accept physio decision
By Eric Howald

The people have spoken.

However, the South Bruce Grey Health Centre (SBGHC) board didn't get the message.

A month ago, Kincardine doctors heard the SBGHC would be replacing the physiotherapy department at the Kincardine hospital with a private company.

July 31, a rally at the bottom of the hospital hill drew hundreds of protestors. That evening the doctors made a presentation to the board and produced a 3,600-name petition against the change.

The SBGHC board said it would review the situation Aug. 6 and then put off its answer until Aug. 13. However, it appears the decision was made before the evening of the 13th.

Dr. Lisa Roth phoned The Independent that afternoon to say the physio equipment was being packed up. Some went into storage while some was moved elsewhere.

Replacing the physio department with a private firm means that all out-patients will now have to pay for their physiotherapy - unless they have a private health plan.

The Chesley and Walkerton hospitals will also be losing their physiotherapy departments, said Roth. The doctors in Chesley have complained to the board and the Walkerton newspaper has also editorialized on the matter.

The only private designated physiotherapy clinic in the area that can bill OHIP is in Durham. That means the people of Durham can still get provincially-covered services, even if physio is cut at that hospital.

The SBGHC controls the hospitals in Kincardine, Walkerton, Chesley and Durham.

The board is cutting physio at its hospitals as a cost-cutting measure. That's because OHIP no longer covers physio at those centres.

The decision to close the department and move some of the Kincardine physio equipment to Walkerton and Chesley will throw a damper into fund raising, Gregg McClelland of the Kincardine hospital foundation said Thursday.

He said the foundation will do its best "to keep our hospital, even if it means deamalgamation" from the SBGHC.

Paul Davies, CEO of the SBGHC said equipment was being moved last Wednesday so the walls in the room can be repaired. However, it had to be removed by Monday anyway.

He said the physio departments in Chesley and Walkerton would close when the impact on staff would be minimal.

The Ontario Ministry of Health gives the hospital a block of money each year and the board spends it to get the maximum impact, he said. Except for the fact that some people will now have to pay for physio, its removal was a good idea, he said.

Kincardine has applied for a Family Health Team, said Davies, and the board has asked the ministry and the South West LHIN to include funded physiotherapy with the team.

The doctors have accused the board of secrecy but Davies said it was discussed last fall and Dr. Rick Mann was at the meeting. Roth said late Thursday that the board makes its decisions in camera so Mann could not tell the rest of the doctors. "Had we known earlier, we would have objected earlier."

The doctors, health foundation members and a few citizens are meeting to come up with a strategy to fight the closing of the physio department, Roth said. The closing of the department is not good for the hospital or patients. The loss of services "really impacts on doctor recruitment," she said. "The more you have, the more you attract people."