



No.18 - 7 January 2017

WELCOME

The news this week is that hospitals are not coping with demand and patients are advised not to go to A&E, although what they should do instead is not clear. With staff cuts and bed closures it is not surprising they cannot cope, and that is not taking into account our ever expanding population. It is all so obvious, that I wonder if there is any common sense left.

The other focus this issue is on publicity, because we need to get our message out loud and clear during this early New Year. There are dozens of people who have not heard, or have not listened. When the word is spread and received people are really taking notice, and responding very positively. We must do everything in our power to stop the STP juggernaut, even though we are only a small band of Red Line Warriors.

However great news for the opening week is that we have had many people coming forward enthusiastically to join our ranks. Welcome to those new readers, and I hope that you will find Redlines helps and inspires you. If there are questions you want answered, then please feel free to send them to the address below, as we try to provide you with the tools to do the job.

Material for future newsletters
editor@sohs.co.uk by Thursday
SOHS-Save Our Hospital
Services
(A non-party group whose aim is
to campaign to protect our
health services in North Devon)

Hospital Closed

With adrenalin pumping you rush the badly injured patient up to the hospital door, only to find it barred and bolted, a large sign stating boldly, "Closed". Leaping back into your car with the victim, traumatised and heavily wounded from New Year DIY efforts, muttering, "Shut!" under your breath, you force your brain to go through the options. Well, actually *the* option. This is North Devon. Driving like a maniac (your normal mode) you hurtle towards Plymouth. Well perhaps not hurtle, after all this is Devon, where it is considered perfectly normal to have grass growing up the middle of the road, and other road users are likely to include assorted tractors, horse boxes and tourists. (Of course the worst is a tractor driven by a tourist, pulling a horse box, but I digress). After a long and uncomfortable journey, a painful one for the injured craftsman, you pull up to the gates of A&E at Derriford Hospital. To your horror you spot a sign that says in big, bold, life-destroying letters, "CLOSED".

Where next?

No, this is not the opening chapter to my new dystopian novel, although, there's a thought. This scene of apocalypse is more likely to feature, not in the futuristic drama department, but in the reality TV slot, the fly on the wall. This is not a broken dream of the future, this is a nightmare of today.

According to the headlines in the press, well the Daily Mail, anyway, it has been the "worst NHS week for 15 years" and you should "stay away from A&E".

Some of the other papers are reporting, less sensationally, that the Red Cross has issued a warning of a "humanitarian crisis".

This is not something that should be relegated to small print, it needs caseloads of Poster Bodoni to scream headlines. This is not a minor inconvenience; this is a matter of life and death to some people. If you have had a serious accident, what are you supposed to do if you can't go to A&E? It is not something you can

Continued over >

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Continued from Page 1

fix yourself in Blue Peter style with a bit of sticky plastic, and a used washing up liquid bottle.

More alarming is that most people are not doing anything, not taking to the streets to protest or lobbying their comfortable and complacent MPs. Are they asking the question of how a major country like the UK can be providing a Third World health service? No! Instead, they sit comfortably by as

ambulances figuratively head full-pelt towards cliffs and drive off. Has this country gone mad? Do we care so little about our fellow man, about ourselves even, that we are prepared to allow corrupt and evil policy makers and leaders engineer a fast road to death, so the rich can gain more wealth?

It may not be immediately apparent that the problems of overfull hospitals being faced today are directly related to the

proposed changes of the STP plan which we are fighting in SOHS. However they most

figure is obtained, there is doubt as to whether the beds are "open" and available for occupancy. So

the exact figure is hard to come by, but NHS, if my figures are wrong, then give me the correct ones – which I have a shrewd suspicion might make things look worse.

Alongside the closure of beds is the shrinkage of staff. The STP plan has a target of 11%. Expect the real figure to be higher. So even if wards were re-opened and beds were to be obtained from the NHS equivalent of IKEA, it would be of no use,

there are no staff. "Staff shortages" is a common enough excuse used by TPTB (the powers that be). After all, it is a great catch all. I'll return to this point in a moment.

For now, assuming that we have insufficient beds, and insufficient staff, then faced with a health crisis there is no choice but to turn people away. Of course, before that, they may be stored on trolleys in corridors, or thrown into broom cupboards, at least as a token of how seriously the crisis is being taken. Actually, I've used the word crisis twice, but thinking about it, is there a crisis? Are we experiencing a flu epidemic, an outbreak of plague, a virulent virus? Not that I've heard. This "crisis" is just the normal, predictable British Winter time, and not really a hard winter at that. So if we cannot cope with a crisis that is not a crisis, how will we cope with a real crisis?

For North Devonians, there is the added problem that the STP proposes that "trauma" should be treated in Plymouth. This is essentially A&E. Presumably there will be a first aid box left at the NDDH, Barnstaple, where you can get a sticking plaster, but for anything else you will need to take a trip. This raises two questions in my mind, leaving



assuredly are. At the heart of the STP plan is the declaration that 590 beds in Devon will be "closed". That doesn't seem a lot, maybe. Let's put it another way. Almost 20% of the beds in Devon are to be closed. Some of them, like Torrington and Ilfracombe have already been closed. The exact number of beds left is very hard to discover. A cynic might say that it is being deliberately hidden. Certainly, hospitals do not publish these fundamental details. How odd. Even when a

Diary Dates

Visit our new diary page on the website. More dates, maps and pretty pictures!

Wednesday 11 January 19.00 SOHS general meeting, The Castle Centre. Castle Street, Barnstaple EX31 1DR

Friday 13 January 19.00 Braunton, SOHS Public meeting. Braunton Parish Hall, Chaloner's Road (A361), Braunton EX33 2ES

Saturday 14 January 11 am to 5.30pm The People's Assembly at The Golden Lion Tap - special guest speaker Steve Sweeney, Morning Star journalist and an NHS campaigner. Come for all or part of the day and tell your own NHS stories

Monday 16 January South Molton SOHS Public meeting Assembly Rooms, Town Hall, South Molton EX36 3BU

Tuesday 17 January 19.00 Paignton SOHS Public meeting Methodist Church, Palace Avenue, Paignton TQ3 3EQ

Thursday 19 January 10.00 – 13.00 Devon CC Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to question the STP team. Followed by normal Committee meeting from 14.00

Friday 20 January SOHS Public meeting Winkleigh (details to be confirmed later)

Wednesday 25 January Holsworthy SOHS Public meeting (details to be confirmed later)

Saturday 28 January 20.00 - 22.00 Ricky Knight and Friends, benefit event for SOHS. The Plough Arts Centre, Torrington EX38 8HQ £7 from Box Office: 01805 624624
www.theploughartscentre.org

There may also be a further SOHS public meeting at the Globe in Torrington before Ricky Knight's fundraiser on 28 January

Saturday 28 January Hands Off Our NHS! D-Day March 11.00 · Gower St to Trafalgar Square

Don't forget to send us your dates to include in the diary. If people don't know, they won't attend

Continued on page 3

Continued from Page 2

aside the awkward journey. Has anyone checked to see if Plymouth can handle a non-crisis crisis? After all, the newspaper reports: "In the worst-affected casualty departments – mostly in the West Country – around 60 per cent of patients are waiting four hours or more to be seen." That could mean that after an accident, with the journey time included, the patient would have to wait 6 hours in pain. Now if the patient was a dog or a cat, I guarantee there would be rioting on the streets. Oh it's only a human, who cares? But that "only a human" might be your child, your elderly parent, your loved one, and they are not just "only a human"; they are people who you care for and deserve to be treated properly, with respect.

The second thought about moving all trauma treatment to Plymouth is that in the race to gain treatment those living next door have the advantage. The people heading from the rural lands of North Devon will arrive long after the urban dwellers of that fair city. There is no fairness in this scheme.

I am refraining from commenting further on how you might get there. Hopefully we will have more to report later, and research is being carried out by ordinary people making ordinary journeys, to establish a realistic

and accurate journey time, not the wildly optimistic time touted by the CCG, whose own staff, in fast tax-payer funded cars can't achieve. The journey time alone will lead to deaths, or at least unnecessary suffering.

Returning to an earlier topic, bed closure: (I don't want to leave *the bed*, a trouble I have most mornings!), I have already commented that beds are "closed" for reasons of "staff-shortages". These closed beds often don't reopen, and are gradually lost. It is difficult to establish whether these vanishing beds are included in official figures or not. The "staff shortage" excuse also bears closer scrutiny. Why are there such shortages? It has been suggested that staff are not being properly recruited, are given poor contracts and conditions and so on, in order to engineer the shortage. That is the shortage is manufactured to facilitate cutting beds and closing wards. I do not know for sure if this is the case, but I can say with confidence that these shortages should have been foreseen and greater efforts made in training and recruitment.

The proposal from the STP is that NHS beds in hospital should be forsaken and IKEA beds at home take their place. The hospital based NHS staff will then be replaced by their counterparts, commercial agency staff offering care at home. It certainly has appeal, tucked under your own duvet while attended by a pretty young nurse (OK, in my dreams). I am sure the reality will have to be different. How can a commercial agency provide a mobile service more efficiently and less expensively than providing that care in a place that



Worst NHS week in 15 years: Elderly patient dies after a 35hr wait on a trolley as besieged A&Es shut their doors 42 times leaving nurses in tears and now the Red Cross warns of a humanitarian crisis

- An unnamed elderly woman died in Worcestershire Royal Hospital this week
- She had gone to A&E but could not be placed on a ward owing to a bed shortage
- She died in an unstaffed hospital cubicle with curtains pulled around
- A second patient died in the same hospital after suffering an aneurysm

is geared up for that (aka a hospital)? And if there is a staff shortage in the NHS then this will be made even worse with the new proposals as at least a quarter of each working day will be lost by staff travelling between clients. The reality is that an inferior and inadequate service will be provided which will result in patients having to go elsewhere and pay for commercial assistance, whether it is in nursing or drugs. This is a desired outcome for TPTB as it generates more money for privately owned health care providers.

The utopian dream of the NHS is being supplanted by a dystopian nightmare that is being orchestrated by those who are driven by their own financial greed. It is certainly not because they are doing this for the good of the general public. It is extraordinary that the individuals elected to represent the people, the MPs and politicians of all parties are largely failing to speak out, when they should be addressing the issue with the voice of Stentor. The locked doors of today will become the closed wards of tomorrow, and the inconveniences of today will become the deaths of tomorrow unless our SOHS campaign and others like it are given enough support and voice to be finally heeded by those who are resolutely determined to ignore the cries of the sick.

Stephen

A poster for the SOHS (Save Our Hospital Services Devon) campaign. At the top, the letters 'SOHS' are arranged in a grid with a blue 'H' in the center. Below this is the text '(Save Our Hospital Services Devon)'. A photograph shows a young boy, Ricky Knight, smiling and holding a guitar. Below the photo, the text reads 'RICKY KNIGHT AND FRIENDS' in large blue letters, followed by 'With special guests Jim Jones & Amy Newton' and 'A Benefit for SOHS'. A red banner says 'Keep the red line going - wear red on the night!'. The event is scheduled for 'Saturday 28 January 8pm All Tickets £7'. At the bottom, there is a logo for 'the plough ARTS CENTRE' and contact information: 'Box Office: 01805 624624' and 'www.theploughartscentre.org.uk'. A small box at the very bottom left contains the text 'Great Torrington Box Office: 01805 624624'.

M·A·X·I·M·U·M P·U·B·L·I·C·I·T·Y

Here's a selection of the publicity materials I have produced and will be adding to the website in the next few days. For the moment you have to print them out yourself, but I am investigating a print-on-demand service. If anyone would like to sponsor printing we could produce larger quantities for mass distribution.

SAVE OUR HOSPITAL SERVICES DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO
COMING SOON TO NORTH DEVON
SHOCK HORROR GASPS
 AT GREAT **PUBLIC**
 EXPENSE TO THE
 BY SPECIAL REQUEST OF HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT
AND 400 ACUTE BEDS TO BE CUT
FEATURING 1 OUT OF EVERY 6 ACROSS DEVON
 AND SUPPORTED BY **190 COMMUNITY BEDS CUT**

11% OF NURSING/ OTHER STAFF TO GO | **WAITING TIME TO BE INCREASED**

FEATURING SMOKE AND MIRRORS SPIN!
THRILLS! STROKE CARE MENTAL HEALTH CARE
TRAUMA
 MOVED TO PLYMOUTH, EXETER OR TORQUAY - OVER 50 MILES

NOT FORGETTING THE MUMS AND CHILDREN!
MATERNITY NEONATOLOGY (NEW BORN) PAEDIATRICS
 MOVED TO EXETER MOVED TO PLYMOUTH

ALL THIS AT RISK OF DEATH
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! BUT IT IS TRUE!

THE BATTLE HAS BEGUN | **ON THE ONE SIDE THE POWERS THAT BE** | **ON THE OTHER THE PEOPLE'S RED LINE WARRIORS**

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Circus style poster

I am rather proud of this one. It uses humour, which can be a powerful weapon. It is based on the style of the Victorian circus and show posters. Ideal to be printed in A3, but also works in A4, can be printed in two colour as shown or in monochrome. This heavily features the typeface Poster Bodoni, which is mentioned elsewhere in Redlines. The typeface was introduced in 1928 and based on an earlier, so called, fatface font, which would be exactly what would have been used for these posters.

Oppose Evil

This one has a clear message about stroke care. I thought the centre section might look good on a t-shirt. What do you think?

Make sure your loved ones
LIVE OPPOSE EVIL
 Fight plans to move stroke care 60 miles away
SWIFT STROKE CARE SAVES LIVES!

SOHS Save Our Hospital Services
 www.sohs.org.uk

The fight against North Devon Hospital Services CUTS

Sean: "What do you do at the 'war' dad?"
 Lisa: "I've started and I'm taking it very seriously!"
 Sean: "Do you join the Red Line and join the people's protest?"
 Lisa: "I've joined the Red Line and I'm taking it very seriously!"
 Sean: "Do you join the Red Line and join the people's protest?"
 Lisa: "I've joined the Red Line and I'm taking it very seriously!"

Proposed changes include moving various acute and essential services to Plymouth or Exeter

SOHS Save Our Hospital Services
 www.sohs.org.uk

This affects YOU, YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR HEALTH

What did you do in the war dad?

This one is intended for notice boards and places where people have time to read it and think about it. Basically challenges people to get involved.

Let's be vocal

A poster for a notice board, links with others of similar appearance. Can be used for encouraging people to get involved.

LET'S BE VOCAL ABOUT KEEPING IT LOCAL

Don't let them move vital health services from North Devon!
Your voice counts!
 Join the **RED LINE WARRIORS** now!

SOHS Save Our Hospital Services
 www.sohs.org.uk

