

Intervention report (excerpts)

Intervention at Hôpital et centre d'hébergement de Sept-Îles of
Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Côte-Nord

The intervention

On July 13, 2016, the Québec Ombudsman received a report concerning the emergency room at Hôpital et centre d'hébergement de Sept-Îles (Hôpital de Sept Îles). According to the information at its disposal, abolition of the position of night reception and registration clerk at the emergency room endangered the patients.

The findings

The investigation by the Québec Ombudsman dealt mainly with the lack of patient monitoring in the waiting room at night.

During the investigation, early last September, the position of emergency room clerk was restored temporarily because of the deficiencies observed in the new way of proceeding. A working group was also struck to produce an action plan for properly assessing the situation and the feasibility of abolishing this position at this hospital.

Lastly, three surveillance cameras were installed so that the staff could see the patients as soon as they arrived and until they were directed to the waiting room. It is up to the emergency room nursing staff to check the monitor of these cameras for the arrival of new patients or to act quickly if a patient's condition deteriorates. While this is a marked improvement, the information obtained in the context of the investigation did not confirm that monitoring occurred at all times, as stipulated in the *Guide de gestion de l'urgence*.

Of course, patients are responsible for informing the triage nursing staff of their arrival or of the deterioration of their condition, but this does not relieve the staff of the responsibility for monitoring that falls to them. The inability of some patients to report worsening of their condition must not be underestimated. Furthermore, since the reception clerk or security officers have no training in medicine or nursing, they can hardly be expected to be responsible for waiting room monitoring.

The Québec Ombudsman feels that in not monitoring the arrival of emergency room patients at all times, the institution is not fulfilling its obligation to ensure safe service provision.

When the position of emergency room clerk was abolished, certain administrative tasks that had belonged to the clerk were assigned to the emergency room nursing staff. In this regard, the Québec Ombudsman urges the institution to comply with the *Guide de gestion de l'urgence* by avoiding assigning the triage nurse other tasks that could hinder the achievement of the objectives established, namely, to determine priorities quickly and direct patients to the treatment area appropriate to their condition.

Conclusion

This intervention brought to light certain deficiencies that could compromise safe patient services at the emergency room of Hôpital de Sept-Îles. The Québec Ombudsman therefore made a recommendation to Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Côte-Nord so that it could carry out the necessary corrective action.

Recommendation

The Québec Ombudsman recommends that Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Côte-Nord:

- R-1** Ensure that the triage nursing staff visually monitor the patients in the registration and waiting areas on an ongoing basis. By April 15, 2017, the institution must inform the Québec Ombudsman about achievement of this objective and indicate the means for doing so.

Expected follow-up

As provided for in the *Act respecting the Health and Social Services Ombudsman* (CQLR, c. P-31.1), within 30 days of receipt of this report, the institution concerned must inform the Québec Ombudsman of the actions to be taken as a result of the recommendations or, if the institution has decided not to act upon them, of the reasons for such a decision.