



A Note From Our President:

It has been a particularly difficult period for healthcare in BC with the Covid pandemic. As we all know healthcare workers are over worked and stressed. Even without Covid there are many challenges with the shortage of medical staff and lack of support for them. The Cortes Clinic has many challenges, but we are fortunate that we have been able to provide good medical service to the community. I would like to thank all the doctors, nurses, MOAs, all other staff, and the Board for their hard work and perseverance. – Ed Safarik

Rural Health Care Situation and Cortes

Cortes has been fortunate for many years to have a stable rotation of physicians staffing our clinic, but we are now in a time of feeling the crunch that all rural areas of BC have been experiencing for a while. The model here is that we have a group of physicians who contract with Island Health to staff our clinic. Our community was one of the first in the province to benefit from this model, this replaced the single physician practice when we were unable to recruit a full-time physician. The inability to recruit full-time medical staff has long been the case in rural and remote communities. It is also now common in urban setting for a retiring physician to be unable to find anyone to take on a solo practice. The reasons for this are complex: fewer graduating physicians are choosing General Practice, less interest in solo practices and more in a team-based approach to patient care, and financial disincentives for rural practices.

We are working on having 4 physicians providing rotating coverage for the clinic. Our physicians also have other practices and live elsewhere. In their contract they are entitled to approximately 42 days that can be replaced by locum physicians. These replacement physicians are a pool of doctors who contract with the Rural Locum GP Program (RGPLP) to provide services in places such as Cortes. Ideally under this system, all days that the clinic is open are covered by a physician.

Three things have been happening:

1. Our physician group has not been able to fill some weeks that they require locums due to a shortage of locum physicians available through the RGPLP at the times needed.
2. The physician group of only 3 last year was not able to cover all the days they were contracted for due to their obligations elsewhere. They do try to find other physicians to subcontract these days to, but they are often not able to find a physician willing to come here and subcontract those days.
3. The group of locums that were relied on to cover those locum days and were familiar faces has dwindled, mostly due to retirement.

Thus in 2022 we have had a few times when there is not a physician at our clinic and we saw new locum physicians at our clinic. This is all to say that there may be more weeks in the future that there is no physician at the clinic and there will be fewer familiar faces as new physicians try out the Cortes Clinic.

Furthermore, our clinic has been seeing increased patient volume and complexity, and you've probably noticed longer wait times for an appointment or lab work.

What We Are Doing to Foster Stability for patients:

1. If there is no physician at the clinic, it does remain open and an RN is on site for lab work, triaging phone calls, seeing patients, and treating within their scope of practice. Also, the office staff remains dedicated to answering the phones, scheduling future appointments and lab work, filling out travel forms, and all the myriad other tasks they conduct.
2. All physicians rotating through the clinic leave a handover note to the next physician, detailing patients who may have concerns in the next week that need to be addressed.
3. We want to promote communication. There is regular communication between the clinic nurses and physicians about patients. Additionally, the physicians, RN, Mental Health clinician, and Community Paramedic have regular multidisciplinary rounds to discuss patients of concern.

What you can do

1. Bring an up-to-date medication list to your appointment.
2. Have a concise list/history of your medical concerns and conditions.
3. Recognize that if your concerns are more complex, you may require more than one physician visit. Ideally with the same physician, but realistically it may be with another physician. The physicians do try to make good notes and suggestions for treatment plans so you don't have to start at the beginning again.
4. It is a good idea to take your own notes, and maybe have someone with you as a second pair of ears.

Physician Housing

Housing for our physicians is a concern. The terms of their contract have not kept up with the costs of housing here. Housing availability and affordability on Cortes being a major issue should not surprise anyone. The physicians have stable housing for the next several months, but it is not available 4-5 weeks each summer and we do not know if it will be available in the fall of 2023. Finding summer accommodation for the physicians and locums is difficult and cost prohibitive.



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We are starting the search for affordable year-round accommodation for the physician group. Please contact us if you would be willing to rent your house year-round, if you foresee renting out your house but still need it available for a few weeks in the summer, and if you have accommodation available in the summer months. Since, we may not be able to find year-round housing and would like to find affordable accommodation options outside of the vacation rental system for the summer weeks that housing usually is not available.

Seeking Board Member

Due to unforeseen circumstances two of our Board members have had to leave the Board since our last AGM. We are recruiting one new Board member, hopefully to fulfill the role of House and Grounds manager. This is a board oversight position and does not require the board member to physically carry out the day-to-day work. Anyone with an interest in health care and some knowledge of building maintenance would qualify. If you are interested in getting involved in this organization, would like to know more about us or the board position, please contact us.

Comings and Goings

In the last year, faces at the clinic, CCHA, and program staff have changed. Marilyn Fitzmaurice, who has been our phenomenal administrator for many years, has gradually been stepping back from the countless things she does for us but will remain our accounting manager. We are very grateful for all the work she has done with us to make our complex organization run smoothly. Jenny Hartwick had been taking over many of Marilyn's jobs for the last 2-3 years. Jenny left us in June to concentrate on her other responsibilities of family and business, and Rose Fitcyk has joined us as our administrative assistant. This past year we have also welcomed Katie Barr and Filipe Figuera onto the CCHA board.

Bernice McGowan and Linda Cartland have retired as RNs at the clinic and Bernice from Home Care nursing as well. Isabelle LaPlante is our regular RN, but there will be some rotating faces in the nursing

role with Erin, Angel, Brittany and Murrays, and other island nurses that come to do locums here. Bernice has taken over as the coordinator for the Augmented Home Support Program operated by the CCHA which was shepherded so ably by Linda since its beginning.

Mary Lavelle, MOA for clinic, left in the winter for a job at the CO-OP, and was replaced by Kelsey Brill-Funk and Madison Hyndman. Kelsey is now off to school in Vancouver. Thus, our incredibly capable front desk team is now Heidi, Sandy, Bianca and Madison.

Community Support is Essential

The CCHA owns and operates the Cortes Health Centre, along with providing programs to foster health in the community e.g. child and youth programming for a wide range of ages and the Augmented Home Support Program. We receive income from rentals from Island Health, our practitioners, and other people who use our clinic, but we rely on donations and grants to sustain our community programming and some aspects of the Health Centre operation. Our building is almost 18 years old and needs some upgrading and ongoing general maintenance. We would like to install a heat pump system for energy efficiency and to keep patients and staff cool in the summertime.

Although Island Health does provide much in terms of operating supplies for our clinic, they don't provide capital costs or larger ticket items since we are a community owned clinic. We have been asked by our practitioners to provide a device which would give immediate blood results, and this would be very helpful for decision making in emergency situations. Though it would not replace our routine lab services. The cost of this device is \$12,000.

We encourage you to become a new member or renew your membership in the CCHA, and ask that you consider a tax-deductible donation. We're happy to accept donations for specific projects or general operations.

Cortes Community Health Association **Annual Membership Dues 2022**

Name(s) _____ (renewal / new)

Mailing Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail address _____

Annual Membership is \$5.00 for **each person** named above. Please make cheque payable to CCHA.

Mail to: **CCHA Membership, Box 59, Manson's Landing, BC. V0P 1K0**