

Ovarian cancer patient outraged with N.L. health minister

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A St. John's woman who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer says she is outraged by the provincial health minister's suggestion that three resigning cancer specialists can be replaced, and she is vowing to leave the province for treatment.

The three gynecologic oncologists, doctors Cathy Popadiuk, Lesa Dawson and Patti Power — the only specialists in the province treating female patients with cancers of the reproductive system — tendered their resignations to government this week, saying they intend to leave in October.

Health Minister Ross Wiseman said Wednesday that Newfoundland and Labrador will recruit new gynecologic oncologists if Popadiuk, Dawson and Power leave. If new doctors can't be found, he said, cancer patients will be sent out of the province for care.

The St. John's woman, whom CBC has agreed not to name, said she couldn't believe Wiseman's reaction.

"My response is that I hope his mother or his sister or his grandmother or his wife doesn't get cancer real soon, because you're just not replacing a physician, it's not like replacing the receptionist ... where are you going to get the people that need to be in that job?"

Care improved under the gyne-oncologists

During her bout with cancer, the woman had her uterus and both ovaries removed, and she said the care she received from a gynecologist was poor.

"He botched the operation and I ended up very sick and almost dying because of the operation."

She said that doctor is no longer practising and, at the time, she was too sick to think about legal action. Her care improved dramatically when she was finally seen by gynecologic oncologists Dawson and Popadiuk, she said.

"From the moment I got in there, I was not marginalized anymore," she said. "And those doctors ... treated me with kindness and compassion. They understood what I was going through."

The woman has been healthy for five years, but now needs to see a doctor again after suffering pain where her organs were removed.

"I'm scared. I phoned and I said I want to come in, I need it checked. I wasn't able to get in."

The woman said she'll leave the province for care if she can't get in to see the gynecologic oncologists before they leave in October.

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Marrella wrote: Posted 2008/08/01

at 4:47 PM ET Between the Burke incident and the state of health care in this province, I wonder how we will ever be able to entice young professionals to relocate and help revitalize this 'grey-powered' province. Harder yet: keeping the ones we already have.

"Johnny one-note" Williams' focus on the oil industry is all well and good, but a/nother single non-renewable resource-based industry does not a sustainable province make.

Haven't we learned that yet? Williams is treading on some very thin ice. Or should I say, he seemingly no longer walks on water. Or is than an oil slick?

Better watch out, Danny. Your could lose your footing. That oil slick will become a slippery slope indeed once the Tory tables start turning.

Walk your talk and be accountable. Don't count on the populace to forget about these scandals when the next election comes around. I know I certainly won't.

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geometro wrote: Posted 2008/08/01

at 4:26 PM ET We are always looking to blame someone for something. We are not happy until we have our moment of fame putting down someone else. I think its amazing that any doctors stay in NL for the way the gov't, the health auth' and the patients treat them. Its appalling and we should be ashamed ourselves.

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FunkyHouseBeats wrote: Posted 2008/08/01

at 3:52 PM ET I don't think this is about protest.

This is about making sure she doesn't die, I think.

The fact that someone's idea of dealing with this problem is "well, we can replace them" instead of actively dealing with the circumstances causing THREE people in the profession to leave shows TERRIBLE management skills and poor employee empathy.

And these people are MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS. Not exactly like you can go to school for a year and be one.

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Artful Dodger wrote: Posted 2008/08/01

at 3:31 PM ET This is really not helping the cause. Saying she's so outraged by the government's actions that she'll leave the province for treatment is doing exactly what the government says it's going to make her do anyway.

Not a very effective protest.

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