

February 10, 2020

Ms. Sarah Krevans
President and Chief Executive Officer
Sutter Health Board of Directors
Sutter Health Corporate Office
2200 River Plaza Dr.
Sacramento, CA 95833

The Mills-Peninsula Rehabilitation and Pool Program recently notified pool users of reduced hours/days for the Mack E. Mickelson Arthritis and Rehabilitation Center pool. We are writing to object to this new schedule as it results in a substantial reduction in availability for morning and evening independent therapy whose members represent the majority of pool users.

The schedule reduces the morning hours for independent therapy from 6 days a week to 4 days a week. The evening hours are reduced from 5 days a week to just two. Additionally, the rate was 10 classes for \$80.00 and will increase by 50% to 10 classes for \$120.00, plus the passes will only be good for 8 weeks (there was no expiration date before.)

The justification for these changes is to "... increase access to our Aquatic Therapy patients and meet regulatory requirements" (see letter attached.) While we are unclear what "meeting regulatory requirements" means, these changes do not in fact increase access for the aquatic therapy patients (the majority of pool users) who:

1. Currently come in the evenings and are unable to come earlier in the day, reducing their access from five days to just two days a week
2. Currently come 4-5 days a week in the morning hours and are unable to come later in the day or on Saturdays due to other commitments, transportation or physical limitations.
3. Cannot afford the increased class rates.

This new schedule was created without any input from users. If asked, we would have pointed out that:

1. There are on average 220 to 230 independent pool users per month.
2. There are rarely more than two physical therapist patients in the water when the pool closes at 9:00 am and from the posted schedule board there are rarely more than two or three more sessions for the remainder of the morning closure.
3. There are currently only 3 full-time pool therapists. There were five; one left at the beginning of the year and one is on extended leave.
4. There is a four to six week wait for pool therapy along with similar delays in land physical therapy.

These observations indicate a need for more physical therapists not for more water PT time. Assuming, that more pool therapy staff are hired a better choice would be adding a similar schedule of non-independent pool therapy to Tuesday and Thursday. This would meet the needs and would not be so disruptive and potentially harmful to the current members.

As you are aware, pool membership requires a referral from a doctor or is recommended following physical therapy. Benefits of aquatic therapy are well known and apply particularly to seniors. This ongoing maintenance helps to reduce the recurrence of an injury and relief for long-term issues that brought the patient into the therapy program in the first place. Specific benefits include:

- Increase in joint flexibility. Buoyancy offers a tremendous advantage because it reduces the effects of gravity allowing for increased joint range of motion
- Increase in muscle strength
- Decrease in pain
- Decrease in abnormal tone, spasticity, and rigidity
- Improved balance
- Independent movement not possible outside of the water

An additional benefit of ongoing participation (particularly for seniors), is the social interaction, which studies have shown:

- Potentially reduces the risk for cardiovascular problems, some cancers, osteoporosis, and rheumatoid arthritis
- Potentially reduces the risk for Alzheimer's disease
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces the risk for mental health issues such as depression.

The Mickelson Pool is the only therapy pool in San Mateo County and an important part of wellbeing for many in the community who rely on the therapy to maintain mobility and flexibility. Members continue to come to the pool for as long as physically possible. They do this because they experience a marked improvement in their quality of life. Some members have been members since the opening of the pool over 20 years ago.

In summary, we feel that the new schedule:

- Has been made without consideration to the needs of the community that Sutter Health serves.
- Received no input from the pool users or the community.
- Reduces access to current and future users
- Does not address the need for qualified water therapists
- Does not serve the community and disproportionately affects senior citizens
- Does not comply with the spirit nor intent of the donations received to build and maintain the facility.

- Contradicts Sutter Health’s own mission statement and charter as a non-profit:
*“... Sutter Health is a not-for-profit organization: any money left over after employees and bills have been paid is **reinvested in our care of patients and their families.**”*

*Charitable donors, therefore, are valuable partners. Philanthropy allows our physicians and medical teams to do what we otherwise could not: **innovate models of care**, recruit new talent, fund patient-centered research, purchase advanced technology, and **expand access to care to our community.**”*

- Does not align with the new Governor’s Master Plan for Aging that supports
 “access to services and care that optimize health and quality of life.”

We are therefore requesting that Sutter Health/Mills-Peninsula Medical Center cancel this new schedule immediately and meet with us to ensure that the pool continues to meet the needs of the community and that as many members as possible receive access to the pool benefits.

We look forward to hearing from you.

See attached signature list.

CC:

Janet Wagner
 Chief Executive Officer, Mills-Peninsula Medical Center, 1501 Trousdale Dr.
 Burlingame, CA 94010

Peter Gielniak
 President, Mills-Peninsula Hospital Foundation, 1501 Trousdale Dr.
 Burlingame, CA 94010

Shasta Addressi
 Administrative Director, Clinical Service Lines & Care Coordination, Mills-Peninsula, 1501
 Trousdale Dr. Burlingame, CA 94010

Ranjit Hundal, M.D.
 Chief Medical Executive, Mills-Peninsula Medical Center, 1501 Trousdale Dr.
 Burlingame, CA 94010

Holly Vafi
 Manager, Outpatient Rehab Services, Mills-Peninsula Medical Center, Community
 Rehabilitation, 100 South San Mateo, CA 94401

Joan Smith-Maclean, M.D.
 Sutter Health Board Member, 2030 Sutter PI #2000, Davis, CA 95616