

October 1, 2013

Paul Wilson, MD
Chief, Department of Psychiatry
Kaiser Redwood City

Dear Dr. Wilson:

We, the adult team therapists, are writing to express our concerns about the current state of affairs in the Adult Psychiatry Department at Kaiser Redwood City. Earlier in the year, you asked us all to temporarily add intakes to our schedules to help with the access demands. At that time, you told us you were looking to hire four new therapists to help with access as well as filling long standing vacancies in the department. You also stated that demand for psychiatric services in Redwood City was up 17% over the previous year and increasing.

We agreed, at your request, to add intakes as a temporary measure to meet the access requirements of DMHC with the understanding that additional therapists would be hired to fill vacancies and increase the total number of providers. While we do appreciate the efforts made on our behalf to secure more staff, this has not been successful and thus we continue to struggle with an untenable workload.

A particularly challenging issue is our inadequate intake to return ratio. We understand that our current ratio of 1:2 intakes is not at the regional standard of 1:3 or 4 returns. In addition, our ratio appears better than it actually is due to hidden intakes built into the "intake cluster" system and forced intakes during meeting times. The current intake cluster system results in increased overall intakes in our weekly schedules due to overbooking and the potential for two, even highly acute patients, to be forced into one clinician's hour-long appointment time.

These strategies to increase access result in a degradation of our ability to provide safe quality patient care. The soonest available individual return appointment times average 6 weeks or longer for most of us and case loads and group sizes are inflated and increasingly unmanageable. Demand for IOP, urgent, and emergent services have increased dramatically. Documentation demands, including AOQ score entry, continue to increase along with our increased clinical caseloads.

As ethical and concerned clinicians, we bring these issues to your attention in light of the recent spate of suicides in our clinic. These tragedies have heightened our longstanding concerns that we do not have adequate resources to safeguard our patients and provide quality care. The workload we have struggled with for years and have been asked to even further increase is unsafe and unsustainable.

We are contacting our Union representatives to follow up with you on our behalf. We are confident that you share our commitment to patient care and therefore will work collaboratively with us to rectify these issues.

Sincerely,

The Adult Team Therapists