

May 17, 2022

### **Specialty Neurology Services in Manitoba on the Verge of Collapse**

Over the past 20 years, dramatic development in treatment for multiple sclerosis, stroke and epilepsy have transformed the specialty of Neurology into a highly interventional discipline. Current minimum standards of care require a dedicated Multiple Sclerosis clinic, hospital based acute stroke teams and an Epilepsy Surgery program where highly specialized interventions often mean the difference between life and death or determine whether a patient is restored to a state of independence and dignity.

Just prior to the pandemic I was asked to provide leadership in the cause of advancing neurology by the head of the Department of Medicine at the University of Manitoba. Despite endless briefing notes, letters and solicitations up to and including the Deputy Minister of Health, there has been little meaningful response. In the last 18 months, because of further reductions in manpower, we have been forced to abandon most services at St. Boniface Hospital and consolidate Acute Stroke Services to one site. Our Multiple Sclerosis Clinic is on the verge of collapse and we are unable to provide outpatient EEG services. Wait times for patients with multiple sclerosis exceed well beyond a year.

This government has announced the construction of a new Epilepsy Monitoring Unit and a 28-bed Stroke Inpatient Unit which is nearly complete but ironically has failed to approve operating budgets which precludes recruitment of additional neurologists to staff these facilities.

What was initially a recruitment problem has now become a desperate situation requiring urgent intervention to retain the current cadre of neurologists.

These remedies are not forthcoming and one or more defection will, I fear, lead to the collapse of most of our services.

There are nearly 3,000 patients with multiple sclerosis who rely on one clinic, nearly 20,000 epileptic who require ongoing care and scores of acute stroke patients every week who depend on rapid assessment and timely intervention. I see no alternative but to bring this disastrous situation to the public's attention.

I would like to invite you to a virtual press conference on Thursday, May 19 at 10:00 am. A Zoom link will follow tomorrow.

Dan Roberts MD FRCPC

Acting Head Neurology