



*Government of Bermuda*  
Ministry of Health

**Ministerial Statement to the  
House of Assembly  
by the Minister of Health, Seniors and Environment  
The Honourable Jeanne J. Atherden, JP, MP  
On 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2015  
Family Responsibility**

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Mr. Speaker,

Thank you for the opportunity to address my Honourable colleagues and the public of Bermuda to talk about how distressed I am that our hospital is being used as a residence for seniors who do not need to be there.

Mr. Speaker,

You will be aware that the new Acute Care Wing (ACW) at the hospital opened its doors in September of last year. During that time, the patient satisfaction survey results have been encouraging. Patients are impressed by the new facility and the services that are being offered.

Mr. Speaker, we could feel some pride that we are moving in the right direction in our provision of quality hospital care for all Bermudians. Now Mr. Speaker, some six months later, there is a problem. The problem is that all 90 beds at the new Acute Care Wing are full.

Not only that, but all of the beds in the General Wing of the hospital are also full, and the Bermuda Hospitals Board is having to add additional beds.

Mr. Speaker, if the beds were full because we had a sudden influx of acutely sick patients, I would understand. But this is not the case.

The problem, and the source of my distress, is that there is a growing trend for the families of these elderly Bermudians to refuse to take them back home. They refuse, Mr. Speaker, to take responsibility for their grandparent, their parent, their sibling- telling the hospital that they are unable to cope with an ageing relative, or don't have the appropriate resources at home.

There are some instances in which the hospital's medical social workers help the family to find alternative placements for their relative, but we are seeing cases where the family is still refusing to make a decision about placement- which leaves the senior in the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, we have more than 30 Bermudians in the hospital who are what we call "long stay social admissions". These ladies and gentlemen do not need to be in the hospital, they should be at home- with their families in familiar surroundings that provide a degree of comfort that they can rely on.

I have to pause here, and say that it is my belief that the vast majority of families on this Island are responsible and caring, they look out for and ensure that their elderly relatives are well looked after. I know that many individuals and families scrimp and save and sacrifice to make sure that they provide for their elders.

But there are others, Mr. Speaker who do not seem to have the same motivation.

Mr. Speaker, I have been made aware of cases where children who are professionals and have good jobs will not help to cover the cost of their parents' residential care and the case where a senior's family has turned their collective backs and said, "They are not my problem - YOU find them somewhere to live."

Mr. Speaker, what this says to me is that we" still have much work to do"! We want Bermuda to be a community where we plan for old age and as a family we work together to allow seniors to age gracefully at home with dignity and independence as far and as long as possible.

Some may say that there's really no harm in this, and that there's no real cost. But the reality is that harm is being done to that senior, and there is a price that that senior pays for staying as a " long stay social admission" in the hospital. Mr. Speaker there is also a price that the community pays.

Let me give you an example, Mr. Speaker.

Let's assume that a 75 year old Senior who is on FutureCare has been in the hospital for more than 15 days, because although they don't need hospital care, they can't be discharged. Every month this Senior is in the hospital costs \$34,000. FutureCare pays 20% of that, or \$6,800, but Hospital Subsidy pays the other 80%, or \$27,200.

I don't have to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the Hospital Subsidy comes out of the Consolidated Fund which means that the taxpayer is paying \$27,200 for every

month that any Senior over the age of 74 is in the Hospital. That is a real unnecessary cost to the public purse.

Mr. Speaker, if we can find a way for just a few of those thousands of dollars that pay for in-hospital care to follow the senior home to provide for in-home caregiver support, I feel that we would realize significant savings on the bottom line.

Mr. Speaker, the Hospital is at the point now where they are having to cancel elective surgery because of a bed shortage. That's right, surgeries are being cancelled because there are a large number of people in the Hospital who do not need to be there- who cannot be discharged.

Mr. Speaker, I brought this subject to the House today so that the public will be aware of the issues that we are facing. I don't have the answers right now, but I am asking my new Seniors Advisory Council to look into the problem on my behalf.

I recognize that in many cases funding, or a lack of funding, is the issue. And I recognize that there are patients who are in long stay beds at the hospital because, while they don't need hospital care, they need more care than they can easily get at home.

We want to find ways to ensure that our seniors can age well and age at home for as long as possible, but it's clear that money and services may be an impediment to ageing at home.

We, as Members of this Honourable House are often focused on legislation. But I don't know if legislation is the answer for this problem.....there has to be a better way to address this than by trying to legislate caring.

For those Bermudians who have relatives in the Hospital, I implore you to visit with them. Let them know that you are thinking about them and that you care. Talk to the Hospital staff, meet with the physician team and the medical social workers, and work with them to develop a plan to have your loved one return home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.