

Hawaii Pacific Health

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Date: June 22, 2006

To: United States Senate
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Attn: Gordon H. Smith, Chairman
Subcommittee on Trade, Tourism and Economic Development
Washington D.C. 20510-6125

From: Virginia Pressler, M.D., MBA, FACS
Senior Vice President, Strategic Business Development
Hawaii Pacific Health

RE: International Tourism in Hawaii
Medical Infrastructure: Straub Clinic & Hospital Burn Unit

Dear Senator Smith:

My name is Dr. Virginia Pressler, Senior Vice President, Strategic Business Development for Hawaii Pacific Health (HPH) which is the four hospital system of Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women & Children, Kapi'olani Medical Center at Pali Momi, Straub Clinic & Hospital, and Wilcox Hospital/Kauai Medical Clinic. In addition, HPH has 23 clinics and numerous outreach programs.

Access to quality medical infrastructure is essential for any tourism destination to remain competitive. In addition to the beach and weather, Hawaii's advantage as a premier tourism destination is due to the reputation of its medical infrastructure—both personnel and facilities. Hawaii is both a dream destination for international travelers and at the same time one of the remotest places in the world. Visitors come to Hawaii knowing that when they visit – in the case of a medical emergency – they will have access to medical care that is at a standard comparable to any mainland facility.

As you are probably aware, Hawaii continues to be one of the premiere destination choices for both domestic and particularly foreign travelers. In 2004 the number of visitors by air to Hawaii increased by 8.5% from the previous year to approximately seven million. Two million three hundred thousand of these visitors (34% of total) were visitors from Japan, Canada, Europe, Oceania, Latin America or Other foreign country. The economic impacts are significant. Tourism expenditures in Hawaii were close to eleven billion dollars in the year 2004 and have continued to increase since. Japanese visitors are a particularly important segment of Hawaii's international tourist market. In 2004 the number of Japanese tourists increased by 8.6% from the previous year reaching 1,482,085. More significantly, the Japanese represent the highest daily expenditures spending more than 70% more per day than our U.S. West Coast visitors.

With this many visitors, it is inevitable that many will require emergency and/or unplanned medical treatment. The Hawaii State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism estimates that in 2004, close to twenty four thousand visitors needed to access our



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emergency rooms for medical care. Approximately half of those visits were international tourists.

An example of emergency services that are accessible for all visitors is emergency burn services at Straub Clinic and Hospital – an affiliate of Hawaii Pacific Health. The Straub Burn Unit was founded in 1983, to serve as a primary and tertiary burn treatment center for Hawaii and the Pacific Region. The Straub Burn Unit serves as both a primary and tertiary burn treatment center for Hawaii and the Pacific region providing care for both residents and non-residents. Patients come to the Straub Burn Unit from not only all parts of Hawaii, but also areas within the Pacific Basin. The Straub Burn Unit has also provided care to patients from Tripler Army Medical Center and continues to be a source of advice and consultation because Tripler does not have a consistent burn care program. The Straub Burn Unit includes three intensive care unit rooms designated specifically for burn patients, transport lift to place patients within the burn tub, and highly specialized beds for greater patient comfort and care. The patients treated at the Straub Burn Unit benefit by having their care provided locally, eliminating the need for travel to the mainland thus avoiding increased risk and expense and also facilitating family support, a very important component of a burn patient's recovery.

Since its opening in 1983 through 2004 the Straub Burn Unit has admitted a total of 783 patients with 675 residents and 108 non-residents. The numbers are not as important as the fact that the Center serves an invaluable resource for unplanned and emergent care. (See attached letter from Dr. Schulz with specific examples of patients served). Most importantly, the Center also serves as an essential public health resource in the event of a major airline disaster. With the rapidly increasing number of flights to and from Hawaii annually, the Burn center will play a key role in the recovery and treatment of injured passengers. Financially the Burn Unit operates at a loss given the low rate of reimbursement. However it is an essential service that Hawaii Pacific Health maintains to ensure that both residents and visitors alike have access to specialized care in the event of an emergency.

Finally, medical infrastructure is also a vital component in an area we have not fully explored in Hawaii - Medical Tourism. Many foreign countries such as India, South Africa and Thailand have invested in medical infrastructure to attract foreign tourists by providing specialized care. The medical treatments range from simple comprehensive medical check ups to elective procedures such as rhinoplasty, liposuction, breast augmentation, orthodontics, and LASIK eye surgery. These destinations often also provide medical services for larger and life-saving procedures such as joint replacements, bone marrow transplants, and cardiac bypass surgery. These medical tourism destinations typically offer numerous options for tourists including sight-seeing and shopping within a resort like setting. The bundling of superior medical services with the benefits of a desirable tourist location has worked well for places like India. Already in Hawaii more than 11,000 visitors come for planned medical treatment. Given Hawaii's location and reputation as a tourist destination - this potential remains largely untapped.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

*(PLS. SEE ATTACHED LETTER FROM DR. ROBERT SCHULTZ, MD)



Straub
CLINIC & HOSPITAL

 **Wilcox Health**

June 16, 2006

Virginia Pressler, M.D.
Senior Vice President
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Dear Doctor Pressler:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. It is very timely since recently I have been in contact with four patients who were treated at our Straub Hospital; who would not have survived had the unit not existed in Honolulu. The first letter was from a patient who fell through the crust of a advancing lava flow on the Big Island as part of his work with the Volcano National Parks Center. He sustained severe burns to his lower extremities. I will include a copy of his recent letter dated May 6, 2006. This coincided with a recent visit from two 65+ visitors from North Carolina who were severely burned in a plane crash on the Big Island when they were viewing the Volcano National Park. These patients, under our instruction, were incubated at Hilo Hospital and air evacuated to the Burn Unit at Straub. Their chance for survival was less than 20 percent and this surely would have been significantly reduced if they had been transferred to a burn center on the mainland if in fact, we could have found air transportation for them from Honolulu International Airport to a mainland burn center. They visited with me in my office two weeks ago with their two daughters who are RNs and were extremely thankful for our efforts in saving their lives. These patients shared a similar severe prognosis with five tuna fishermen from a large boat fishing near Kwajalene Island. A flash fire in the engine room led to the death of the boat's Captain and severe burns to five fishermen. They were air evacuated from Kwajalene to the Straub Burn Unit and all survived their critical burns. Lastly, I received a letter from a patient and her husband from Japan last week. Five years ago she sustained a severe injury to her lower leg with developing gangrene in an accident on Lanai. She was treated in our Burn Unit due to the severity of her wounds. They visit our Burn Unit every year, when visiting on vacation, and are extremely thankful for the treatment they received.

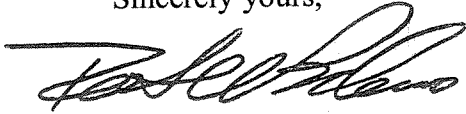
We not only supply treatment at Straub Clinic Burn Unit, but we provide consultation with all of the islands and the pacific basin. It is not uncommon to treat sailors from ships from within 1-2 thousand miles of Honolulu or to receive questions regarding less critical burns from emergency room physicians on the Big Island, Kauai, Lanai, and Molokai. We additionally receive periodic consults and patients from Tripler Army Medical Center since they no longer provide burn care treatment for critical burns and

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due to periodic deployment of their plastic surgeons and general surgeons they do not have a consistent burn care program. We additionally do periodic seminars for nurses and physicians throughout the islands and would clearly be responsible for the triaging and treatment in the event of a catastrophic fire or thermal event.

I hope you find this information helpful and we are very thankful for congressional consideration regarding the Straub Clinic & Hospital Burn Unit.

Sincerely yours,



Robert W. Schulz, M.D.
Plastic Surgeon

Enclosure

