



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWSLETTER

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## Language updates and improvements continue in benchmark review talks

### *Update on Page 209 benchmark review negotiations*

Talks between HEU and the Health Employers Association of B.C. (HEABC) continue to make progress on most of the benchmark language updates for rehab assistants, activity workers III and IV, coordinators of volunteers, ophthalmic technicians, and renal technicians. HEABC has not, however, responded to the union's proposed wage rate increases.

The union has maintained its position that there will be no final agreement on any benchmark updates unless both parties agree to adequate wage rates, as well as the benchmark language changes. Without a final agreement the current benchmark language and wage grid will stay in place.

HEU, on behalf of the Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA), and HEABC met in January, February and March of this year. In the 2006 round of bargaining, HEU and its union bargaining partners in the FBA negotiated \$2 million from health employers for grid rate increases that resulted from a review of benchmarks listed on page 209 of the collective agreement.

The parties reached agreement in principle on revised language for the rehab assistant benchmark that recognizes the observation, judgment and critical thinking skills rehab assistants bring to the workplace. For example, one of the updates includes the phrase "as part of a multidisciplinary team and in consultation with the therapist, [rehab assistants] provide input into the planning, implementation, modification and evaluation of the rehabilitative treatment plan/program."

HEU and HEABC also reached agreement in principle on activity worker III and IV benchmarks. The updated language will add phrases to describe the assessment, monitoring and evaluation of patients, residents' and clients' progress. Benchmark updates will also recognize activity workers' role in developing program goals and objectives.

For the coordinator of volunteers (CoV) I and II benchmarks, the parties agreed to new language, including the addition of an introductory volunteer management course in the qualifications. The CoV II benchmark revisions also expanded the position's duties and responsibilities so a member who oversees a program can be matched to that benchmark, even if they do not act in a supervisory role.

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There is also agreement in principle on revised benchmarks for ophthalmic technicians. The ophthalmic technician I benchmark describes basic testing and assessment procedures. The ophthalmic technician II benchmark received significant updates, adding a description of the complex procedures and assessments required in imaging, visual field and other tests.

The parties could not reach agreement on revisions to the renal technician I, II and III benchmarks, despite many hours of negotiation and the union's presentation of detailed examples. HEABC maintains that there is no need to change the benchmark language and would not agree to any wage grid increase for the renal technician series. As a result, the union and members may have to consider options outside the benchmark review process to achieve these increases.

HEABC has also resisted any benchmark recognition or compensation for members who provide training and education to other staff and students. Training and education provided by members has been raised by HEU at every set of talks in the benchmark review. It is the union's position that workers who provide training to others should be compensated at a higher rate.

It is the union's intention to reach agreement on language for the remaining jobs covered by the Page 209 benchmark review, and to address the more difficult issues of wage grid increases and the allocation of the \$2 million fund, over the summer and fall of 2008.

Progress in the benchmark review negotiations has been made possible through the careful thought, input, suggestions, and concrete examples of many members in each of the classifications reviewed.

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