



151, Slater Street, Suite 205, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H3
Website: <http://www.cpa.ca>

CONTACT:
Ivan Parisien, Communications Co-ordinator
Tel: (613) 237-2144 ext. 25
1-888-472-0657 ext. 25
E-mail: iparisien@cpa.ca

PSYCHOLOGY CUTS AT THE OTTAWA HOSPITAL THIS ACTION WILL COMPROMISE PATIENT CARE

OTTAWA, May 1, 2003 – The Ottawa Hospital will balance its budget by cutting psychological services. Dr. Jack Kitts, President and Chief Executive Officer stated that this decision will not compromise quality of care to its patients.

“This action **WILL** compromise patient care. It significantly reduces an already very small department”, said Dr. John Service, Executive Director of the Canadian Psychological Association. “To reduce or eliminate psychological services to respirology, emergency services and neuropsychology will compromise care because patients will either not be able to see a psychologist or will have to go on waiting lists that will get even longer.”

Excellent psychological services are available in the community, primarily in the private sector. There are waiting lists and these services are often out of reach of lower-income patients. This action taken by The Ottawa Hospital will reduce even further access for those who can least afford it at a time when they need the services the most.

It is unfortunate that the hospital stated that the quality of care would not be compromised. It would have been more accurate for Dr. Kitts to report that the quality of care is compromised when important services, such as psychology, are downsized but that the Hospital has taken all the necessary steps to minimize the impact on patients.

He then could have put the focus on the lack of funding for health from the province and the federal government.

The situation we are in today at The Ottawa Hospital is partly due to the federal government's reduction in transfers to the provinces for health care and Mr. Harris's common sense revolution.

The Ottawa Hospital is an excellent, world-class facility, one the community can be justly proud of. Health has biological and psychological dimensions. Research clearly shows that psychological factors are essential to maintaining health and to successfully managing injury and illness. It is very disappointing that the hospital, through its recently announced service cuts, has decided to ignore the science that calls for a more balanced approach to health care.

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The Canadian Psychological Association is the national organization in Canada representing 5 200 psychologists and students in psychology from all Canadian Provinces and Territories. Its objectives are to lead, advance and promote psychology as a science and as a profession for the benefit of humanity; to provide leadership in psychology in Canada; to promote a sense of identity among psychologists; to promote the advancement, dissemination, and practical application of psychological knowledge; to develop standards and ethical principles for education, training, science and practice in psychology.