

Letter: Nursing strike is not in patients' interest

Posted Wednesday, July 26, 2017 5:36 pm

To the editor:

Berkshire Medical Center has been my employer for 23 years. I work in a non-management, staff recruitment role. My mother is a retired RN and my father was a member of two labor unions during his career. I grew up influenced by nursing and labor.

Health care is a difficult and complex business. Whether one works in a clinical function or in another role that supports the operation of a hospital, the work is hard. Financial viability is a constant struggle and dollars are ever shrinking. Given the goals of the current federal administration even tougher times may lie ahead. BMC is a not-for-profit hospital. "Profits" become additional services, staff or new equipment.

The Berkshire community benefits from BMC's financial health. Such initiatives as the Cancer Center at the Hillcrest campus, or the ever-growing array of services now offered at Berkshire Health North in North Adams — following the calamitous demise of North Adams Regional Hospital — are a testament to what is possible when fiscal responsibility and patient access to care are priorities.

Money alone won't achieve the award-winning status that BMC has earned. A positive patient experience depends on competent and compassionate staff and the BMC team is composed of a very broad range of clinical specialists and operational support staff. This team approach fosters quality care that patients expect and deserve when they place their trust in Berkshire Medical Center.

The registered nurses who are considering staging a strike at BMC are telling the public that nurse/patient ratios are unsafe. BMC's staffing standards follow recommendations by the American Nurses Association, a professional nursing organization. Nurses are part of clinical teams who, together, provide patient care. Management has offered the nurses the option to participate in an ongoing hospital-wide staffing committee to address their staffing concerns, but the RN union is lobbying to have fixed RN/patient ratio language in their contract that essentially ignores the contributions of the rest of the clinical team.

BMC is this community's hospital. Management is making staffing plans to ensure that patients are cared for if a nursing strike occurs. A strike is not a patient-centered action. BMC's entire staff works to provide high quality care for the people of Berkshire County and a nursing strike will not support that effort. For more information please visit <http://www.bmcnurses.com/>.

Sue Purdy,

Dalton