

Speak Out Now in Healthcare

A workplace newsletter for Highland and Kaiser workers

April 23, 2025

Sitters Keep Patients Safe

Many of the patients we take care of need extra help staying safe during their hospitalization. For patients who are elderly, have dementia, or are confused as a result of their illness or injury, the hospital can be a scary and disorienting place. They may try to get out of bed without help, or interfere with medical equipment such as IV lines.

Patients with these needs should be assigned a "sitter," a nurse's assistant who sits with the patient to gently remind them to stay in bed, to keep their medical devices intact, and to help them with their bathroom needs. Although this support is critical to patient safety, management is making it harder for nurses to request sitters for their patients.

To avoid the extra cost associated with a sitter, management prefers nurses use restraints or sedative medications to keep the patients in bed. More and more paperwork is required for sitter requests, and nurses must state that every alternative has been tried, such as cameras and alarms, before getting a sitter. Even a doctor's order for a sitter can be overridden if management doesn't want to pay the cost.

Sitters are clearly the most compassionate option for keeping our vulnerable patients safe, and the one we would choose for our loved ones in the hospital. Management needs to let nurses take care of their patients and stop fighting us when we request a sitter.

Highland Installs New Purell Dispensers — Are New Pillows Next?

You may have noticed the shiny new hand soap and sanitizer dispensers installed across the hospital. While updated infection control tools are important, some of us are left wondering: *Why this change - and why now?* Was this a regulatory requirement, a vendor upgrade, an internal decision?

Meanwhile, basic supplies like pillows, working equipment, and adequate staffing remain ongoing struggles. It's frustrating when investments are made without staff input, especially when other critical needs go unaddressed. If we're truly prioritizing patient and worker well-being, shouldn't we have a voice in where resources are allocated?

Hunger Strike by Kaiser Workers

Southern California mental health workers at Kaiser are still on strike. They are now engaged in the longest mental health strike in U.S. history. To escalate their tactics against Kaiser, 8 mental health workers at Kaiser engaged in a 5 day hunger strike from April 8 through 12th.

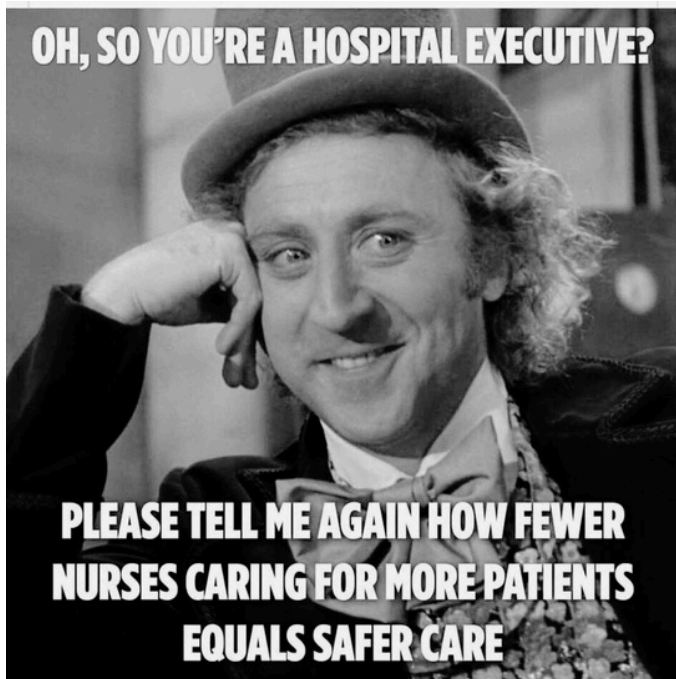
Asked about what drove them to hunger strike, one of the striking mental health workers said, "Kaiser's trying to starve us out, that's clear — so, give them what they want."

Mental healthworkers at Kaiser were also quoted saying that they think Kaiser's reluctance to meet their demands is linked to the fact that the contract for the Alliance of Health Care Unions will expire at the end of September. The Alliance of Health Care Unions is a federation of 21 unions representing workers at Kaiser across the country. If mental health workers hold out and win their demands, Kaiser is afraid this may embolden other sections of the workforce in their contract fights.

The determination of workers to do this is incredible, and the fact that workers are forced to do this shows the lengths that Kaiser is willing to go to protect their bottom line against workers' interests.

Join us at Speak Out's *International Worker's Day Celebration!*
Sun. May 4, 12pm

For tickets and further info, talk to the Speak Out person handing this out



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