

## Factsheet: The Impact Sutter’s Closure Would Have on Healthcare in Sonoma

### Growing Need for Hospital Services in Sonoma County

Population estimates and hospital use trends show that the need for hospital services in Sonoma County has been growing, and will continue to grow in the coming years:

- Sonoma County’s population is expected to grow by nearly 50% over the next 25 years, but is also aging significantly: senior citizen—those age 65 and older—will account for 24% of the County’s population by 2030, a 13% increase from 2000.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, individuals over the age of 65 in the Bay Area region use hospitals at more than three times the rate of younger populations.<sup>2</sup>
- State data shows an increase in the total number of patients using the hospital in Santa Rosa—between 2003 and 2005, Sutter Medical Center of Santa Rosa (“Sutter”) and Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital (“Memorial”) saw an 11% and 8% increase in total adjusted patient days, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

### The Closure of Sutter Santa Rosa Would Eliminate Vital Services

If Sutter closed the Chanate hospital as part of the proposed deal with St. Joseph Health System, owners of Memorial, the County would lose:<sup>4</sup>

- 163 beds, including 16 intensive care & 18 psych beds;
- The largest provider of Medi-Cal services;
- An emergency room that treated 30,818 patients in 2005;
- An OB/Maternity Ward that delivered nearly 2,000 babies in 2005.

### Memorial is Currently Unprepared to Meet the County’s Growing Healthcare Needs

The plan offered by Memorial to fill the gap that would be left if Sutter were to close falls far short of meeting the County’s healthcare needs. The following chart contains projected timelines for Memorial’s expansion projects as cited in a document prepared by the Sonoma County Health Services Dept. entitled “Memorial Expansion Plans”<sup>5</sup>:

Expansion	Description	Projected Completion Date
Emergency Room	Add 19 new ER beds & 12 new ICU beds	“May not be completed until 2013”
Urgent Care	New urgent care clinic next to main hospital	“No projected date of completion”
East Wing	Add 80 beds after renovation	“No date provided”
Parking	81,000 square feet of new parking space	“Possibly 2013”
West Wing	New birthing center to deliver 160 additional births.	“2007”
Heart Institute	Adding additional beds and cath labs.	“March 2008”

The uncertainty surrounding Memorial’s expansion is troubling given the sharp increase in demand Memorial would likely have to absorb if Sutter’s closure were allowed to go forward. This increase could include:

- Upwards of 30,000 additional ER patients per year;
- Upwards of 2,000 additional live births per year;
- The majority of Medi-Cal patients who previously went to Sutter.

All of this would likely result in overcrowding and a severe strain on caregivers since the many of the critical expansion projects proposed by Memorial are not expected to be ready by the date of Sutter’s proposed closure, which would leave the County with a loss of any where from 163 to 83 beds. Moreover, Memorial has acknowledged that it will need to recruit qualified caregivers to fill a number of new and open positions to deal with the massive increase in patients they will experience in the event of a Sutter closure. To date, Memorial has offered no plan as to how they will acquire such a skilled and stable workforce.

### Loss of Bed Capacity Will Impair the County’s Ability Deal with Public Health Crises

The proposed plan between Sutter and St. Joseph—which would result in a loss of hospital bed capacity countywide—could critically impair the County’s ability to confront a public health crisis as the County’s own estimates predict that an outbreak of pandemic influenza could result in the hospitalization of 1,400 Sonoma residents.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the County’s own Public Health Report in 2005 acknowledged that the County needs to *add* at least 240 beds to the countywide hospital bed total in order to adequately deal with emergency health crises.

<sup>1</sup> State of California, Department of Finance, *Population Projections by Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Age for California and Its Counties 2000-2050*, Sacramento, California, May 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Chimento, Lisa. “A Review of Health Services Developments in Marin County.” The Lewin Group. September 15, 2006. (<http://www.marinhealthcare.org/html/documents/LewinRpt091506.pdf>)

<sup>3</sup> OSHPD Hospital Annual Financial Profile for Sutter Santa Rosa, 2003-2005; OSHPD Hospital Annual Financial Profile for Santa Rosa Memorial, 2003-2005

<sup>4</sup> OSHPD ALIRTS Report for Sutter Santa Rosa, 2006; OSHPD Hospital Annual Financial Profile for Sutter Santa Rosa, 2005;

<sup>5</sup> Internal Sonoma County Department of Health Services document entitled, “Memorial Expansion Plans.” Obtained via a Public Records Act request.

<sup>6</sup> County of Sonoma, Dept of Emergency Services, *Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan*, page 81. Santa Rosa, CA, October 2006