



PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION NO. 18
Answered on 22nd July 2024
Fourth Meeting 2023-2024 Session - First Sitting

**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION
ASKED BY**

**MR. DAVID WIGHT, JP, MP - ELECTED MEMBER FOR THE
CONSTITUENCY OF GEORGE TOWN WEST**

TO

**THE HON. SABRINA T. TURNER, MP - MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR
HEALTH & WELLNESS AND HOME AFFAIRS**

QUESTION:

Can the Honourable minister advise whether there are sufficient public hospital beds in Grand Cayman, given the rapid increase in the number of people living on the island since the end of the pandemic?

ANSWER:

Mr. Speaker,

I appreciate that this question is, at face value, about the number of hospital beds in Grand Cayman, but it actually alludes to a greater issue which is that of the capacity of our healthcare system in light of our population growth. As such, I would like to provide a more holistic response that addresses both concerns.

I have been reliably informed that the Health Services Authority (HSA) currently has 104 in-patient beds in Grand Cayman, not including the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and the Accident & Emergency Unit at the George Town Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, Faith Hospital, which primarily serves Cayman Brac, has 18 beds, and while this would seem to fall outside the scope of the question, this must be included as the lack of hospital beds in the Sister Islands would impact the demand for beds in Grand Cayman. As such, Faith Hospital must be taken into account.

The HSA also operates within the overarching healthcare landscape of the Cayman Islands, Mr. Speaker, and will refer patients to other local private hospitals if the patient requires services not provided by HSA.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, the current total bed capacity for all three of our islands across the public and private health sector stands at 226 beds, broken down as follows:

- George Town Hospital — 104 beds
- Faith Hospital — 18 beds (Cayman Brac)
- Doctors Hospital — 18 beds
- Health City (East End) — 104 beds

These numbers do not include, Mr. Speaker, Health City's newly opened Camana Bay hospital, which will add an additional 53 beds to the total. It is also important to note, Mr. Speaker, that HSA has plans to expand the George Town Hospital campus with an additional 11 inpatient beds by the end of 2025.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the World Health Organisation does not provide recommendations when it comes to number of beds based on the population. They instead provide us with figures of trends across a number of countries. The current benchmark based on these trends and other studies suggests a ratio of 3.4 beds per 1,000 persons. Based on this ratio, and Cayman's population of 83,000 persons, Cayman would require 282.2 beds. This number is 56 more beds than what we currently have, but a mere 3 more beds once the Camana Bay hospital opens shortly.

However, Mr. Speaker, as our Chief Medical Officer reminds us, there are other factors that are much more significant and that need to be taken into consideration when assessing our capacity. Among these factors, Mr. Speaker, are: a) the relative health of the population, and b) the system under which care is given.

The relative health of the population determines the demand for care, Mister Speaker. As such, it stands to reason that unhealthier countries need more beds and healthier countries need fewer beds, especially as it relates to infectious disease units, for example.

The system under which care is given also determines whether a more preventative or reactive approach is taken, as prevention and early intervention offset the need for more beds.

Furthermore, recent trends in the Cayman Islands for using minimally invasive surgery, such as laparoscopic and robot assisted surgery, means that a significant number of cases previously needing extended inpatient recovery time are now treated on a day-case or overnight care only basis.

While we are constantly looking at ways to strengthen Cayman's healthcare system, and to improve the health of the nation, local services on offer are of good quality and generally accessible. So, a better test for us when it comes to determining if we have sufficient capacity is not just about number of beds, Mr. Speaker, but rather by asking "are we denying anyone care because we cannot admit them for treatment in a reasonable time?".

The answer to that, Mr. Speaker, is no, we are not denying anyone care because we cannot admit them for treatment in a reasonable time. We are not aware of any instances where care could not be provided at HSA or a private sector provider due to lack of beds.