

# Community Hospital claims agency report distorted

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SANTA CRUZ — A state agency says Community Hospital has failed to meet almost all the criteria for starting open-heart surgery and other complex cardiac care procedures now available only in the Santa Clara Valley. But the hospital's top administrator says the report is a "numbers game and a distortion."

The Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency, which will make a recommendation to the state for or against the hospital's application to provide the service to Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties, says in a staff report the hospital meets only

three of the required 15 criteria it must fulfill for the state's OK.

But several assertions are flatly incorrect, says Jean Adams, Community's executive director, including that the hospital has no chief of staff, no cardiology department and no community support for the proposal.

The agency's 50-page staff report says patients will pay nearly \$9,000 more for cardiac catheterization, a diagnostic technique, and open-heart surgery at Community Hospital than they would in the Santa Clara Valley — a total of \$12 million more over a five-year period, David B. Wright, executive director of the health systems agency, said in a telephone interview this morning.

But Adams, at a press conference he called this morning, said patients would pay 10 to 20 percent less here than they would over the hill.

Wright said better living habits have cut the death rate due to cardiovascular disease dramatically, and the community does not need care he says is readily available 20 minutes away. It would only send health costs higher, he says.

Adams and Dr. Raja Singh, a cardiologist on staff at Community, disputed this as well. Studies show the mortality is down 10 percent, but Singh asked, "does this mean we don't plan for the other 90 percent?"

Adams said "a numbers game is being played with the staff report. It is a numbers game, and it's a distortion."

But Wright this morning said he stood by the report and all the figures in it.

"I think they made a big mistake, and they got caught with their pants down," he said.

A public hearing will be held at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in UCSC's Classroom Unit 2. Adams said He and his staff will rebut the report and defend the application.

The health services agency panel which will hear at the meeting will make a recommendation to the agency directors. They then will make a recommendation to the state, which will decide by October whether to grant the application.