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HAWAII'S SICK HOSPITALS

Profit is hardly its motive, says Hawaii Air Ambulance

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By Helen Altonn
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Hawaii Air Ambulance runs about 180 to 200 flights a month, transporting patients from the neighbor islands to Oahu for treatment, said Andy Kluger, president and chief executive.

About 30 percent of the passengers are indigent or have state QUEST health coverage, he said, adding up to a loss of about \$200,000 to \$224,000 a month on those flights.

About one-third of the flights involve patients on Medicare, and those "reach the point of almost breaking even," Kluger said.

He said Hawaii Air Ambulance made money in only two of nine years of operation here, but he has mainland companies that help to support the interisland service.

"I am dedicated," he said. "I believe in the mission. I think it's important."

The flights break out to about a third each from the Big Island, Maui County and Kauai, he said. The two biggest patient transport areas are from Hilo Medical Center and Maui Memorial Hospital, he said.

In most cases, he said, patients are stable but need specialized care. Most passengers flown out of Maui have cardiac problems, he said. Orthopedic and neonatal cases are two other big problem areas on the Valley Isle.

Patients transported from the Big Island and Kauai represent a combination of injuries and disorders, although a majority are psychiatric patients with chemical dependency, Kluger said. Ten to 15 percent of patients are tourists from out of state, and 10 percent are military veterans or retirees, he said.

Hawaii Air Ambulance operates five Cessna 414A aircraft around the clock. Three are assigned to

Honolulu, and one each to Hilo and Kahului.

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