



CONSUMER COMMISSION ON THE ACCREDITATION OF HEALTH SERVICES

QUARTERLY

SPRING

CONSUMER EXPERIENCES IN HOSPITAL ACCREDITATION

1974

A recent issue of CCAHS Quarterly (Fall, 1973) reported changes in Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals (JCAH) procedures and a new federal law, both of which can increase consumer participation in hospital accreditation surveys.

This Quarterly will report on:

- the experiences of consumers and providers in recent New York City area JCAH accreditation surveys;

- three steps that must be followed to become involved in the JCAH hospital accreditation surveys;

- fifteen ways to make consumer participation more effective at the surveyed hospital;

- how to get involved in JCAH hospital accreditation;

- how to request a federal validation of JCAH surveys; and

- the list of New York City and Nassau and Suffolk County hospitals scheduled for JCAH survey during April, May and June, 1974.

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The JCAH reports a sharp increase in consumer requests for Public Information Interviews (PII) since the release of the Fall, 1973 CCAHS Quarterly. Most of the requests have originated in New York City or Nassau County. The JCAH staff indicates that consumers are now better prepared and more effective at JCAH Public Information Interviews than in the past.

Community Advocates, located in Great Neck, requested several Public Information Interviews at local hospitals. We have summarized the experiences of consumers and Community Advocates at the following Nassau Hospitals:

Nassau County Medical Center - Nassau County local government run teaching center

Local press coverage and coordinated community pressure forced this hospital and JCAH to respond to consumer complaints. The Board of Managers was expanded to include the Board's first woman and minority group representative.

At a follow-up public meeting where it released the full JCAH survey report, the hospital received a one year rather than two year accreditation. The hospital hired translators, prepared and distributed a patient bill of rights. The newly structured Board of Managers (with consumer representatives) asked the hospital director to resign.

North Shore Hospital - Nassau County voluntary teaching -

The hospital administration agreed to allow a consumer representative to join the JCAH surveyors for part of their tour of the hospital. The hospital refused to allow the consumers to participate in the exit(summary) interview. The consumers at the Public Information Interview agreed to choose one representative to take part in the site visit. Once the Public Information Interview was over, the team split up, each member looking at different aspects of the facility. This meant that one consumer representative had to choose which JCAH surveyor to accompany.

The failure of the hospital to permit this one representative to be present at the exit (summary) interview prevented consumers from knowing whether the numerous issues raised at the Public Information Interview (ie. board composition, etc.) were ever considered by the JCAH surveyor.

The hospital administration would not agree to make the final JCAH written report public. The hospital administration declared that the question of release of this confidential report had to be considered by the Board.

Syosset Hospital - Nassau County for profit -

The Syosset experience was similar to that at North Shore. At the end of the public hearing the owner of the hospital demanded to know who the consumer representatives were and who they claimed to represent.

Community Hospital at Glen Cove - Nassau County voluntary -

There was only one community representative at the Public Information Interview. The hospital agreed to the same set of conditions regarding consumer participation as North Shore Hospital.

Southside Hospital - Nassau County voluntary teaching -

Consumers were denied the opportunity to speak at the Public Information Interview because they had not properly written to the hospital stating that they planned to attend.

Long Beach Hospital - Nassau County voluntary, teaching -

A telephone call to the administration of this hospital elicited a date for a public hearing. When consumers arrived at the hospital on that date, they were told that the hearings had been held the previous week.

John T. Mather Hospital, Nassau County voluntary -

No member of the Board of Directors attended the hearings, eliminating the possibility of receiving answers to important questions raised by consumers from someone with authority. The absence of a member of the Board of Directors is contrary to JCAH standards which request Board involvement in all phases of the JCAH survey process. The Administrator of the hospital said that the Board of Directors decided not to allow consumers to accompany the surveyors on the site visit for reasons of confidentiality. The hospital wanted to hear criticisms of the hospital without consumers being present.

Staten Island Hospital, Staten Island voluntary teaching -

JCAH regulations require every consumer wishing to speak at the Public Information Interview to send a letter to the JCAH and to the hospital scheduled for survey. Most hospitals waive this technical requirement and allow all present to speak. But, at Staten Island Hospital, two people invited from the Staten Island Community Corporation by the Urban League to the Public Information Interview were almost denied entrance to the hearing by the hospital representative. After reconsideration of the situation by the hospital with the JCAH staff these two persons were invited to attend the Public Information Interview as observers.

Hillcrest Hospital, Queens - now a wholly owned subsidiary of GHI -

Hillcrest Hospital at the time of the JCAH survey was a proprietary (for profit) hospital. A hospital official attempted to exclude consumers who had not sent in a written request to attend the Public Information Interview. The consumers refused to go along with the hospital's decision and demanded their rights to speak. The hospital and the JCAH after some deliberation waived the technical requirement that separate and individual letters be sent by each person or group. All consumers present were allowed to speak and a consumer was allowed to accompany the surveyors on their tour of the hospital.

Cumberland Hospital, Brooklyn Municipal Hospital -

The two consumers from Cumberland Hospital's Community Board stated that they had gained a considerable amount of knowledge during their two day tour with the Commissioners. The JCAH staff were impressed by the results of the tour with consumers and the positive attitude of the hospital Administrator toward the consumers. The JCAH staff reported that they were privileged to have surveyed the hospital with the Community Board members. Members of the Community Board and hospital staff attended the exit (summary) meeting at the end of the survey.

The Executive Director of Cumberland Hospital, Inder Persaud, agreed to make the results of the JCAH survey report available to the hospital's Community Board, stating that full disclosure of the report will build community support for improvements.

Hospital administrators and Board member reaction to consumer participation in JCAH surveys varies. Most are reluctant to cooperate with consumers because of fears that there will be disclosures of hospital shortcomings. Many hospital administrators and board members believe that consumers have no role or right to be fully involved in hospital accreditation surveys. Some cooperate and work with consumers because it helps perform a better evaluation. A few agree to cooperate with consumers for public relations reasons.

The results of the experiences of consumers present at accreditation surveys shows that it is essential for consumers to accompany the JCAH on their surveys, to be present at the summary (exit) interview and most important, for the written JCAH survey report to be made available to community boards, hospital workers, the house and attending physician staff and the public.

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Consumers who want to become involved in hospital accreditation must:

-Call the hospital to request the date of the hospital accreditation survey (see below for the hospitals scheduled for survey during April, May and June, 1974). Some hospitals refuse to give survey dates over the telephone and demand that the request be in writing.

-Write a letter to JCAH and the hospital requesting a Public Information Interview. This letter should notify the hospital that you will make a presentation.

-Prepare a statement for the meeting identifying deficiencies, complaints and commendations which are based on the JCAH Preamble and Standards.

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Consumers who do get involved in hospital accreditation can make the most of this involvement by following the notes below:

1. Although most hospitals are cooperative, it has been learned from the experiences at several hospitals that administrators may try to keep consumers from speaking at the Public Information Interview because each individual or organization failed to ask in writing for permission to attend or to speak at the Public Information Interview. The letter to the hospital and JCAH requesting a public meeting should include a general statement that the request is officially being requested by your organization on behalf of other consumer and community groups. This will assist others who failed to write to request permission to be present as full participants in the Public Information Interview.

2. If the hospital official does not allow consumers to speak because of the lack of a letter, inform the official that other hospitals (ie. Hillcrest) have waived this technical requirement.

At Hillcrest, the consumers demanded to be heard because they represented potential hospital users. Any hospital that insists on a letter as a precondition for admission to a Public Information Interview should be asked to explain why it would deny the public of its right to speak.

3. The Joint Commission considers itself a guest in the hospital it is surveying. Therefore, requests to accompany the two or three JCAH surveyors must be made to the hospital. The community should decide in advance of the Public Information Interview who will accompany each of the JCAH surveyors.

4. If you want to attend the exit (summary) interview, ask the hospital for permission. The JCAH surveyors consider themselves guests and will comply with the position taken by the hospital. You should point out that other hospitals (ie. Cumberland) have allowed consumers to attend exit interviews.

5. A letter should be sent to all the members of the Board of Directors asking them, their President or Executive Committee to authorize the hospital's representative at the Public Information Interview to approve a request by consumers to tour the hospital with the JCAH survey team and to attend the exit (summary) interview. The Board should also be asked to authorize the release of the full written JCAH survey report to interested and responsible community, labor, professional and community health planning agency representatives.

6. Send a letter to the chief medical, surgical, obs-gyn and pediatrica residents asking for a meeting to discuss patient care problems at the hospital. Any problems raised by the doctors should be made available to JCAH at the Public Information Interview.

7. Send a letter to the main office of the unions representing hospital workers asking for a meeting to discuss patient care problems. These problems should be presented at the Public Information Interview.

8. A simply worded press release should be prepared and distributed to major New York City papers, television and radio stations stating the reasons for a request for a Public Information Interview and major issues to be raised at that meeting. The news media should be invited to attend the Public Information Interview once that date, time and place are known. Newspaper coverage was very effective on Long Island.

9. A copy of your press release and written statements should be sent to the President of the hospital board, the chief of the medical staff, chief residents, the State Health Department, the local health planning agency, the Social Security Administration (Medicare), third-party insurance companies (ie. Blue Cross, HIP, GHI, Workmen's Compensation) and union and house-staff organizations.

10. At recent Public Information Interviews either the hospital or the JCAH surveyors have attempted to put unreasonable restrictive time limits on the Public Information Interview. Those persons present at the Public Information Interview should request adequate time to make their presentation without being rushed.

11. At most Public Information Interviews, consumers have alerted the JCAH surveyors that the Board of Directors of the hospital does not represent the communities served as required in JCAH accreditation standards (see Health Perspectives, Volume I, No.3 "Profiles of Governing Bodies of Voluntary Hospitals in New York City"). Most hospital boards have insufficient or no community, women, labor, minority and consumer advocate representatives.

12. The Preamble to the JCAH Standards lists the rights of hospital patients. The violation of these rights by the hospital or its staff is taken into account by the JCAH surveyors to the same extent that they consider a deficiency on the part of the hospital in regard to any JCAH standard.

13. Write to the JCAH, 875 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60611 for a copy of the standards to accredit hospitals. There is a small charge for the JCAH standards.

14. Community groups interested in becoming involved in JCAH surveys at hospitals not scheduled during April, May or June, 1974 can write to JCAH for the accreditation history of the hospital. By obtaining the date of the last survey, the anticipated date of the next survey can be determined. This information will allow the community to obtain time to adequately prepare for the next accreditation survey.

15. Write or call the Consumer Commission for additional information.

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SUMMARY OF FALL, 1973, CCAHS QUARTERLY HOSPITAL ACCREDITATION AND THE ROLE OF THE CONSUMER.

The Joint Commission is one recognized body for surveying and accrediting hospitals. In the past, hospitals accredited by the JCAH, for example, were automatically deemed to be eligible for participation in the multi-billion dollar Medicare Hospital Program. Accreditation by the JCAH is of vast importance to a hospital. Nationwide, hospitals with JCAH accreditation are automatically eligible to receive Medicare payments. Non-accredited hospitals cannot be approved for internship and residency training programs.

The Joint Commission surveys each hospital about once every two years. These surveys are performed exclusively by health professionals. In response to public pressure, the JCAH last year established new policies and procedures which allow consumers a limited, but potentially powerful role in accreditation surveys.

These new policies state that upon written request to the hospital and JCAH:

-JCAH will provide the past accreditation history of the hospital,

-the hospital must provide the exact date that the hospital will be surveyed (the hospital is notified of this date at least six weeks in advance but consumers get only a few days notice in many cases).

-and, the hospital and JCAH must hold a Public Information Interview (PII).

At the Public Information Interview, which takes place at the beginning of the survey of the hospital, community, house staff, patients and hospital worker representatives are given an opportunity to meet JCAH surveyors. At the PII, complaints, commendations and suggestions can be made. Your comments or complaints should be tied into JCAH standards (available from the Commission for a small charge) or be directly related to the patients rights (see JCAH Preamble to JCAH standards) safety and health. You should present statistical data and supportive documents, if possible, at the PII to support your statements about the hospital's services and deficiencies.

The survey team will then proceed to conduct a survey of the hospital which may last one or more days. It is assumed that the team members will be alerted to the areas of commendations, complaints and deficiencies during the hospital survey. At the conclusion of the survey, there is a summation (exit) interview between JCAH surveyors and members of the hospital board, administration and medical and nursing staff members. JCAH expects members of these groups to attend the summation interview. You should encourage concerned and cooperative board members, administrators, physicians or nurses to attend the summation interview so that you may obtain a first-hand report of the JCAH's findings.

The surveyed hospital will receive a letter, based on the findings of the survey team, from JCAH within 90 days notifying the hospital of its accreditation status. Any difficulties or problem areas and specific recommendations for improvement are listed in a separate attachment to this letter. The letter and attachment are considered confidential and will not be released by JCAH.

Hospitals, on occasion, extract parts of the JCAH letter that is favorable to them and release it to the local press. This practice and recent changes in JCAH policy and procedures should encourage and support your request to the JCAH to receive the full contents of the letter to the hospital. A copy of the JCAH letter and attachment is sent to the Chief Executive Officer, the President of the Board of Directors (Trustees) and the Chief of the Medical Staff. You should solicit the cooperation of one of these parties so that you can get a copy of this letter.

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HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE VALIDATION OF SURVEYS MADE BY THE JOINT COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION OF HOSPITALS.

The new federal law (P.L. 92-603, Social Security Amendments of 1972) authorizes the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) to make surveys, either on a selective sample basis, or on the basis of substantial

complaint. This means that even if a hospital has been surveyed and accredited by the JCAH, it may be surveyed again by the Secretary. The standards of the HEW Conditions of Participation in the Medicare program will be used in HEW validation surveys. If significant deficiencies in any hospital are found to be detrimental to the "health and safety" of patients, the Secretary may consider the hospital ineligible for participation in the Medicare program and, therefore ineligible to receive Medicare money, notwithstanding JCAH accreditation. The Secretary will communicate his actions and decisions to the JCAH.

Under the law, community, labor, patients and house staff representatives may write directly to the Secretary of HEW specifying substantial allegations and evidence of a hospital condition adverse to the health and safety of its patients. If significant allegations regarding deficiencies are presented to the Secretary of HEW, the hospital may be surveyed again by the State Certification Agency (i.e. in New York State - NYS Health Department).

Under the terms of this law, all participating hospitals in the Medicare program will be required, as a condition of participation, to supply the Secretary with JCAH reports and recommendations when HEW validation surveys are to be made. These will be held confidential by the Secretary and will be used only in connection with the HEW surveys.

Another implication of the 1972 amendments is that the Secretary is now authorized, after consultation with JCAH to promulgate standards, as necessary for the patient's health and safety, which may be higher or more precise than those of JCAH and which all hospitals would have to meet after appropriate and adequate time for compliance. However, this power will not be used often because as changes in accreditation requirements are identified by the Secretary, they will in all probability be adopted by the JCAH first.

Consumer, labor community and house staff representatives should write to the Secretary of the Department of HEW (Washington, D.C.) asking HEW to validate JCAH accreditation surveys. The request for a validation should be made on the basis of adverse conditions in the hospital which have a serious effect on the patient's health or safety.

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Below is a list of hospitals in the New York City area scheduled to be surveyed during April, May and June, 1974, and their survey dates (where available at the time of publication). This list is subject to change.

BRONX

Cavalry
Lincoln
Misericordia
Mt. Eden

BROOKLYN

Coney Island
Lutheran Hospital
Metropolitan Jewish Geriatric
State University (Downstate)
Swedish
Victory Memorial
Williamsburgh General

MANHATTAN

Beekman-Downtown
Cabrini (Columbus) - May 13, 14, 15 *
Doctors
French & Polyclinic
Harlem
Jewish Memorial
N.Y. Eye & Ear Infirmary

QUEENS

Boulevard - May 6th & 7th
Flushing
Jamaica - April 30 - May 1
LaGuardia - May 2-3
Parsons - April 19-20
Physicians
Whitestone

NASSAU-SUFFOLK

Brunswick
Doctors - April 17-18
Mid-Island - April 15th & 16th
St. Francis - April 24 & 25
St. Johns-Smithtown - April 8 & 9
Smithtown General - April 10 & 11

* tentative date

For more information or assistance write to:

The Consumer Commission, 381 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016