

Patient lives jeopardized by transfers, group says

New York State is jeopardizing nursing home patients' lives and welfare by failing to ensure the patients' safe and orderly transfer to other facilities, the Consumer Commission on Accreditation of Health Services charged July 17.

When patients are transferred, the New York City-based commission said, their "welfare is precariously balanced between the strained resources of the state, the benevolence and capabilities of the receiving homes, and the angered disinterest of the decertified facilities."

Supporting the commission's allegations of transfer abuses were records from a state health department onsite visit chronicling the closing of a home.

Among the findings in the report were that patients were partially clad, untidy, and had poor hygiene; that they were unaware of where they were going; and that their unlabeled clothing was jammed collectively into plastic bags.

Several recommendations were made by the commission relating to patient transfers.

It said that procedures outlined by the state for transferring patients should be followed. The procedures are based on an intensive study by the Institute of Gerontology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and contain directives aimed at easing shock by providing patients with an introduction to new facilities.

Additional funds should be ap-

propriated to hire staff to effect the transfers and an Office of Relocation should be created to coordinate all government units involved in discharge procedures and conduct studies on the patients, the commission said.

In addition, it said that patients should be allowed to be involved in decisions affecting relocation; that the timetable for transferring patients be made more flexible; and that utilization review personnel consider adverse affects of transferring patients.

"Patients should not be transferred as a result of this procedure without implementing adequate provision for the move," the commission said. ■