

Nursing Home Patient Transfer Delay Sought

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By LINDSAY MILLER

A Greenwich Village community group is going to State Supreme Court today in an effort to see that nursing home patients get "adequate preparation" before being moved from one home to another.

"A move can be devastating for an old person. Even if they've been in a substandard home, it's still been home to them," said Florence Galkin, an organizer of the Ad Hoc Committee to Save the Village Nursing Home.

The Village is a 328-bed proprietary nursing home at 607 Hudson St., at W. 12th St.

Last month the State Health Dept. ordered the transfer of 110 patients from the home and threatened to cut off the home's Medicaid money if it were not done. The state cited overcrowding, lack of sufficient bathrooms and other structural deficiencies as reasons for the move.

Morris Berkowitz, the administrator and one of the home's 10 owners, replied that he would make the transfers as soon as possible.

Seven patients were actually transferred before Sept. 10, when the Ad Hoc group got a temporary restraining order from State Supreme Court Justice Thomas J. Hughes, barring any further moves without due process.

Today the group, which includes patients' relatives as well as community activists, is asking for a three-week extension of the order.

In the meantime, the home's owners have announced that structural improvements ordered by the state would cost \$500,000, and they are going out of business instead. The Ad Hoc group is now trying to convince St. Vincent's Hospital to take the home into receivership and turn it into a model non-profit institution.

The main issue at today's hearing, however, is whether patients are moved so quickly out of non-complying homes that they suffer

"transfer trauma."

"As Medicaid recipients, at the very least these people and their families are entitled to a written notice and the chance for a fair hearing," said Andrew Zweban of Legal Services for the Elderly Poor, lawyer for the group.

He said in most cases patients at the Village Nursing Home have simply been told they were being transferred to certain skilled nursing facilities or health-related facilities in Queens or Brooklyn. "This has made them very tense and ill at ease," he said.

Mrs. Galkin added that the City Social Services Dept. has written guidelines for transferring nursing home patients, but, she said "most caseworkers say they've never heard of them."

She said the guidelines specify, for instance, that patients should visit or see slides of the new nursing home before making the transfer.

"In an ideal world, slides and visits are very nice. But we've been under tremendous pressure just to get these people out of the non-complying homes," said Andrew Krieger, assistant director of the State Health Dept.'s New York City office.

He said 3000 patients have been transferred from non-complying homes in the city over the last year. "I would guess there were fewer instances of transfer trauma than some people imagine," he said. But, he added, no statistics are available.

"No statistics are available because there is no adequate monitoring," insisted Mrs. Galkin, who is also active

in a small, non-profit group called the Consumer Commission for the Accreditation of Health Services.

She wrote a report on transfer trauma for this group last summer after the closing of the 288-bed Garden Nursing Home in Brooklyn. "According to the State Public Health Council, patients were transferred without charts or identification. Their clothes were thrown into unmarked plastic bags. They had no idea of where they were going, and some died in the process," she said.

Krieger called this "not a typical case." He said criminal charges had been filed against Aaron Maged, owner of the Garden.