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Health Center OK, With Reservations

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By David Zinman

Newsday Science Writer

East Meadow—The Nassau County Medical Center has received a one-year accreditation rating instead of the usual two-year rating from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals, which means that the center must bring certain areas of its performance up to standard.

"It is full accreditation," said a spokesman for the commission, a private, Chicago-based group that sets national standards and evaluates all hospitals every two years. "But one year's accreditation means a facility has some problems that need to be corrected in a year's time. Some people consider it a provisional rating."

Just what areas the commission found below standard could not be determined; both commission and center officials declined to disclose what they were. Dr. James F. Collins, superintendent of Nassau's tax-supported county hospital, said he first wanted to clarify some criticisms that seemed, he said, "ambiguous." Collins said he would release the commission's full report along with his own statement "by the end of the week."

Loss of accreditation can lead to cancellation of a hospital's contracts with the federal Medicare and private Blue Cross programs as well as jeopardize its intern and resident teaching status.

The commission, which inspected the center for three days in August after meeting with irate consumer advocates, can confer one of three ratings.

It can accredit for two years, the maximum duration of accreditation, which is achieved by about 77 per cent of all hospitals; it can accredit for one year, a rating given about 20 per cent of all hospitals, or it can withhold accreditation, an action taken in only three per cent of its hospital surveys.

In cases of one-year ratings, a hospital must apply to be reinspected one year later to maintain accreditation. A hospital may be granted one-year's accreditation no more than three times in succession.

In the most recent prior inspections, in 1965 and 1968, the center received three-year accreditations—at that time the maximum duration of accreditation. However, it had received one-year ratings in the early 1960s, Collins said.

During the commission's survey last August, inspectors heard consumers voice a long list of grievances ranging from charges of job discrimination against blacks to complaints that patients are not told where they can complain.

Consumers complained about a lack of full-time translators for non-English-speaking patients, a lack of women on the policy-making board of managers, and a need for 24-hour emergency room coverage by social service workers, who help with social problems related to patient care. Inspectors were also told of the center's controversial open-heart surgery program which has been criticized for doing far fewer operations than the number recommended for optimum proficiency.

Nursing Home Expansion Is Scaled Down

Lynbrook—Faced with community opposition and the possibility of a long court battle, the owners of a 25-bed nursing home here dropped yesterday their plans to replace it with a modern, 120-bed facility.

Michael Ricigliano, attorney for the owners, told the Board of Zoning Appeals at the start of a public hearing in Hempstead Town Hall that his clients wished to withdraw their request for a variance.

Willis and Eleanor Baldwin, owners of the home at 1801 Broadway, and the 1801 Broadway Corp., are expected to try to erect an 80-bed facility, which probably would not require a zoning variance. Alan A. Bergstein, attorney for the Grant Park and Vicinity Civic Association, which staged meetings and a demonstration against the 120-bed expansion plan, said, "I imagine the association will try to find another way to block that plan too."

The variance sought by the Baldwins would have allowed use of part of a residentially zoned lot adjacent to the home for off-street parking. Less space for off-street parking would be required for a smaller building. The owners hope that a satisfactory plan can be developed for a complete facility on their commercially zoned land on Broadway, between Prospect and Linden Avenues.

CCAHB - arranged to have consumers involved in that accreditation