

NEWSDAY, THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 1974

Hospital Invites Public Questions

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Manhasset—North Shore University Hospital is inviting consumers to meet with an inspection team that will check the facility next month—marking a new policy of asking the public to take part in the hospital's accreditation process.

The medical institution, which got a provisional one-year rating last year (instead of the usual two years), will be surveyed Friday, Feb. 1, and Monday, Feb. 4, by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals. A hospital has to be accredited to continue getting Medicare and Blue Cross funds.

North Shore is scheduling a public information meeting at 9 AM on the first inspection day. John Gallagher, hospital administrator, said two consumer groups had already asked to appear. But Gallagher said it was now the hospital's policy to invite the public to participate in its accreditation, and it would have done so even if the groups had not made their requests. He disclosed the inspection dates in response to a reporter's phone call.

For years, hospital accreditations were made without public participation. But under the pressure of the

consumer movement, the commission recently revised its policy to permit consumers to meet inspectors and express concerns about a hospital as they relate to commission standards.

Under a controversial directive, however, hospitals are not required to publicize inspection dates, but merely to respond to queries. Last month, Long Beach Memorial Hospital failed to publicize its inspection days and several interested community groups did not learn them until after the inspection.

A similar situation almost occurred at Nassau County Medical Center in August. But consumers were able to learn the inspection dates a few days in advance, request a hearing—the first on Long Island—and then detailed a long list of grievances. The county-owned center got a one-year rating.

In addition to North Shore, other Long Island hospitals scheduled for accreditation during the first quarter are: Pilgrim State, West Brentwood, Jan. 11, 14 and 16; Community, Glen Cove, Feb. 5 and 6, and Syosset, Feb. 7 and 8.

Exact dates are not yet available for Southside, Bay Shore; St. Charles, Port Jefferson; Lakeside, Copiague, and Mather Memorial, Port Jefferson.