

Consumer Notes N.Y. TIMES

The Public Gets a Voice in Hospital Accreditation

By GERALD GOLD

Opportunities for direct action by consumers on many important issues are not that frequent; often an event has passed before individuals and groups can make their voices felt. Now, recent changes in hospital accreditation procedures provide a chance to be heard on the state of hospital care in your community.

For consumers with complaints about a hospital—in care, equipment, cleanliness and so on, there is now a procedure by which they can have an effect on the accreditation process, either through the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals or through the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Under regulations enacted by the joint commission, a consumer organization now can learn when a hospital's biannual accreditation survey is scheduled and can be present at an information interview to state complaints as they relate to the commission's standards. The purpose is not to adjudicate your complaint, but rather to see whether there are shortcomings in a hospital's care that the commission might miss.

The commission, a private nonprofit organization, has been criticized in the past because of its links to the American Medical Association and the American Hospital Association, and it is hoped that consumer involvement may lead to better accreditation procedures.

The Consumer Commission on the Accreditation of Health Services, a nonprofit organization based here, is taking an active role in calling for consumer action on hospital care. It will tell you how to become involved in accreditation procedures in your community if you write to the commission's office at 4 West 56th Street.

In the New York area, the following hospitals are scheduled for surveys in the first quarter of 1974:

Brooklyn—Adelphi, Brooklyn Eye and Ear, Cumber-

land, Letterts, Samaritan, Brooklyn Veterans Administration, Bay Ridge, Community Hospital, Greenpoint, Lutheran Medical Center and Brooklyn.

Queens—Booth Memorial, Hillcrest, Bronx — Westchester Square.

Staten Island—Richmond Memorial, Staten Island, Public Health Service, Doctors, St. Vincent's.

Long Island — Syosset, Southside, North Shore, St. Charles, John T. Mather, Community Hospital of Glen Cove.

Consumer involvement was a factor yesterday when the joint commission, in issuing its recommendations for the Nassau County Medical Center, incorporated a number of points raised by Community Advocates, a public-interest consumer group. These included proposals for more doctors to handle the outpatient load, for confidentiality and privacy in outpatient service and for interpreters to aid doctors and foreign-speaking patients. The joint commission's decision to make the recommendations public was in itself a landmark, according to Edward Gluckmann, executive vice president of the commission.

In addition to getting in touch with the Consumer Commission, you can ask the hospital for the date of its survey and request a hearing; the hospital is obligated to give you the date (when it has it) and to inform the joint commission of the request for an information interview. In additional the joint commission suggests notifying it as well, at 875 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60611.

To work through the Federal Government, you can write your complaints to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington. Under a law passed last year, the department, if it finds substantial complaints about a hospital, can undertake its own independent accreditation survey under the authority granted to it in dispensing Medicare funds.

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Medical Monitor Outfit That Accredits Hospitals Helps Set Quality of Patient Care Criticism and Competition Spur Tougher Inspections; Giving a Six-Week Notice Are Surveys 'A Whitewash'?

By JOANN S. LEBLIN

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

CHICAGO — You're a little nervous as you enter the hospital for a gallbladder operation. You've heard so many horror stories about hospitals. How can you be sure this is a good one?

There's a framed certificate on the lobby wall that reads: "The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals (JCAH) has accredited St. Jones Hospital." You never heard of the organization. Does the certificate mean anything?

"It's the best guarantee a man on the street has that when he goes into a hospital, he won't be butchered," says John Norwood, administrator for St. Louis' Bethesda General Hospital.

Not so, counters Dr. Sidney Wolfe. "The comfort of going to a JCAH-approved hospital is illusory at best," argues Dr. Wolfe, director of Ralph Nader's Health Research Group in Washington.

The debate concerns organization's private policeman, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals. Nearly 25 years, this little-known corporation has been the primary of safety, cleanliness and care of most of the nation's hospitals. Surveys of 4,800 Hospitals

The commission draws up standards, evaluates health institutions biennial surveys of the 4,800 U.S. that request and pay for its visits. 8,200 hospitals in this country. Ho JCAH motivates hospitals to improve care affects the well being of millions of the 34 million American admitted to hospitals each year.

The present dispute over the functions and effectiveness cast the tangles that plague the hospital field. That's important because no other industry needs go-control mechanisms more than which spend \$36 billion annual lives and restore health.

To begin with, the Joint Commission just one of a dozen or so private mental groups that are involved in hospital performance. Other state health departments, which regularly inspect hospital buildings, soundness, and Medicare, while certification inspections of hospitals don't choose to seek JCAH accreditation which isn't mandatory. Medicare is patterned after the JCAH medical and nursing services a survey and maintenance of hospitals.

In addition, PSROs, Standards Review Organizations, up nationwide to scrutinize the quality of medical services provided by federally financed programs for the elderly.

Unclear Enforcement
Besides this overlapping, an item is that the JCAH's enforcement are unclear. A hospital must be to receive Medicare funds, accreditation and residency programs for

Hospital Data to Be Disclosed In an Effort to Analyze Costs Ap. 29 1974 (circulation) NYTIMES By NATHANIEL SHEPPARD JR.

In a reversal of longstanding policy, the Social Security Administration has decided to make public detailed financial and statistical records filed annually by the 14,000 hospitals and nursing homes that participate in the Medicare program.

A spokesman for the Bureau of Health Insurance, the component of the Federal agency that administers the Medicare program, said the action was taken in response to numerous consumer requests for data under the Freedom of Information Act of 1969. Institutions partic-

ipating in the medicare program are required to file detailed reports each year to Social Security on statistical and financial matters.

Manuel Levine, the spokesman, said its records would be opened to the public beginning Wednesday, unless hospital interests obtained an injunction before that.

Donald Rubin, director of the New York-based Consumer Commission on the Accreditation of Health Services, one of several groups that requested the confidential data, said consumers would now be in a po-

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