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CRAIN'S HEALTH pulse

A daily newsletter on the business of health care

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Monday, November 27, 2006

TODAY'S NEWS

METROPOLITAN SUPPORT

Anxious about the fate of Metropolitan Hospital, elected officials and supporters of the city-run facility staged a demonstration Friday and have scheduled a second for today. Supporters say that East Harlem's only public hospital provides a safety net for the uninsured and those fearful of seeking private hospital care because of their immigration status. Though HHC has not poured the resources into Metropolitan that it has into its other acute-care hospitals, many observers believe Mayor Michael Bloomberg would protect the hospital. But a spokesman for the supporters says they are holding the demonstration "to make sure Metropolitan Hospital is not recommended for closure."

REINING IN INSURERS

The momentum for tightening regulatory controls on health plans in New York state appears to be growing. Testifying at a Nov. 21 joint hearing of the Assembly committees on health and insurance, Kevin Dahill, head of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council, says recent consolidations are bad news for hospitals and consumers. He cites "insurer market dominance, inadequate reporting requirements, and unfair holds on employer-paid premiums coupled with unfounded payment delays and denials." Further, Mr. Dahill says, New York providers receive 18% to 38% less for their services than their peers in New Jersey and Con-

Commission's methods criticized

The Berger commission will release its report tomorrow, but groups are already criticizing its methods and questioning its motives. The Primary Care Coalition says the panel's job is not complete without a mandate for new funding for preventive and basic care to take up the slack when hospitals close.

The Save Our Safety Net group doubts closings will save Medicaid much money. It says the panel's goal instead is to protect Wall Street from hospital bond defaults. The state plans to accept \$1.5 billion in F-SHRP funds to retire bonds, but the money comes with the condition of cutting \$3 billion from Med-

icaid programs such as Family Health Plus. Such cuts could mean poor people will get less generous health insurance and will be forced to turn to emergency room care, increasing the financial burden on hospitals that survive, says SOS' Judy Wessler.

In a seven-page analysis, the group says the panel's criteria are weighted against community hospitals in favor of academic medical centers. The group suggests closing one of the powerful and expensive teaching hospitals. "There's no way that will ever happen, of course. This panel is about protecting the rich and powerful," Ms. Wessler says.

necticut. A paper outlining the council's concerns, "The Need to Rebalance Market Forces for New York Suburban Hospitals and Physicians," is available at www.nshc.org.

BANKRUPTCY TALK

NYU's Wagner School of Public Service will hold a panel discussion, "Bankruptcy in the Health Care Sector," Nov. 28 from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Puck Building, 295 Lafayette St. Speakers will be Richard Braun of Brooklyn Hospital; Lora Lefebvre and Jeffrey Pohl of DASNY; and Dr. Jo Ivey Boufford, designated president of The NY Academy of Medicine. For information, visit [\[.nyu.edu/events/bankruptcy.php\]\(http://nyu.edu/events/bankruptcy.php\).](http://www.wagner</p>
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AT A GLANCE

RECOUNT: New York Methodist Hospital says its bed count after a proposed merger with New York Community Hospital would be 604 beds, not 580.

CORRECTION: The City Council has not yet voted on changing the definition of ambulance response time; the Nov. 21 *Pulse* incorrectly reported that it had approved the change.

Comments? Pulse@crain.com

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