

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, Thursday, May 8, 1975

Medical care at Willowbrook defended by deputy director

The deputy director for clinical affairs at Willowbrook Developmental Center called false yesterday allegations that the Staten Island institution for the retarded did not have adequate medical coverage at night.

Dr. Rangasamy Natarajan

said that charges made earlier in the week by an Albany newspaper had no factual basis. He said that he was at a conference the days the reporters came to visit Willowbrook.

A three-man team from the Albany Times-Union visited Willowbrook last week and subsequently reported that in 6 1/2 hours on the campus, not a doctor or nurse was seen.

About those charges, Dr. Natarajan said: "I do not think it is true."

Dr. Natarajan said that Willowbrook has three levels of medical coverage available in the evenings.

First, is a doctor on duty from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. to handle the needs of the institution's 3,000 residents. When asked if one doctor can handle all needs, Dr. Natarajan said:

"Yes, yes yes."

Second, he said, there is a doctor who resides on the institution grounds who is on standby for any emergency.

And finally, 11 doctors reside on the center's grounds and could be called in case of a major disaster. He said that the system has "worked very successfully."

Dr. Natarajan called the medical care afforded Willowbrook residents "very good." Despite contentions to the contrary by various parent groups, Dr. Natarajan called the preventive medicine at Willowbrook "excellent."

He added that he was at-

tempting to establish a psychiatric service and a neurological service for the residents.

Some Willowbrook doctors have complained to the Advance that they resented having to take orders from administrative staff with no medical background.

Dr. Natarajan conceded that "discipline is a problem." But, he said, "we have a duty to the residents," and must follow administrative orders.

—ROBERT MURPHY