

Strike averted at Retardation Institute

VALHALLA, N.Y. (UPI) — Representatives of a hospital workers union reached a tentative agreement with New York Medical College in Valhalla last night, averting a threatened strike.

A spokeswoman for District 1199 of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees said the proposed agreement would come up for ratification by employees today.

The agreement came shortly after technicians and clerical and maintenance workers at the facility voted overwhelmingly to strike unless an agreement was reached.

Details of the agreement were not released.

The college is affiliated with Flower Hospital in Manhattan, both owned by the New York Archdiocese. Flower Hospital has been affiliated with a walkout by physicians and dentists since the last week of August.

The dispute at the Manhattan facility, where most of the 151 retarded patients are former residents of the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook, centers on a demand by the striking doctors for a 40-hour work week.

Union vice president Steve Frankel said a key issue at the college was the school's attempt to divide the 180-member union into two units — one for the college itself and one for the debilitated Mental Retardation Institute.

He said the college was seeking givebacks from the union.

They included: The lifting of current restrictions on subcontracting, cutting sick leave in half, eliminating tuition reimbursements, eliminating union coverage for part-time workers and increasing the number of temporary employees, Frankel said.

In addition, the college was offering 3.3 percent in each year of a three-year agreement, he said.

College negotiators said they would have no

comment during the talks.

Recently the college announced it would transfer the Mental Retardation Institute to Flower Hospital, but then said that institution did not have the facilities to administer the program.

MRI is primarily an outpatient program that provides medical care for 6,000 mentally retarded persons in Westchester and six other mid-

Hudson region counties. It has accumulated large debts through the operation.

At least five patients at the center are former residents of the Willowbrook center.

After the initial announcement, state legislators intervened and won commitments from the college and the state Office of Mental Retardation, which provides reimbursement funding, to postpone any action until Nov. 1.