

Hospital receives \$121,000-a-year per patient

Retarded get care they no longer need

By BRUCE ALPERT

A Manhattan hospital still receives record annual Medicaid payments of \$121,000 for each of the 151 retarded patients it cares for — although most of the patients no longer need the facility's specialized services.

State and hospital officials concede that more than 100 of the patients, most former residents of the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook, were ready for transfer to less expensive community-based programs months ago.

But the patients are caught in a dispute between the state and civil liberties groups over the size of community facilities that would be most appropriate for the residents, most of whom are both physically and mentally

handicapped.

As a result of the dispute, state Mental Retardation Commissioner James E. Introne has suspended transfers out of Flower & Fifth Ave. Hospital in Manhattan, believed to be the most expensive retardation facility in the world.

Transfers are likely to remain suspended either until the two sides agree on guidelines for community placements or until a court rules on the issue. No court hearing is expected before the fall.

Both hospital and mental retardation officials agree that the state is paying for specialized services no longer needed by most of the patients. The facility offers sophisticated, but temporary care designed to prepare

profoundly retarded people to move into community residences, according to John Keane, its executive director.

"Believe me, nobody wants them out of here more than we do," said Keane, adding that there are more than enough retarded patients waiting to be admitted to the facility. Keane said he shares the view of most retardation experts that the retarded will progress more if given a chance to exist in a community setting, rather than a hospital or large institution.

Gov. Carey, who helped open Flower & Fifth Ave. Hospital as a mental retardation facility, is scheduled to tour the hospital today.

Introne is pushing for approval of a plan that would allow the

state to transfer the residents to 25-bed community residences. But the New York Civil Liberties Union and other groups representing the retarded contend that three-bed facilities would be more in keeping with the goal of allowing the retarded to live in the most home-like atmosphere possible.

Small facilities, Introne argues, are not economically feasible for the Flower & Fifth Ave. patients because many of them require around-the-clock medical supervision as well as sophisticated medical equipment.

Cora Hoffman, an aide to Introne, said the state has also been unable to find sufficient three-bed residences located

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