

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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near medical facilities, a necessity of the medical needs of the patients.

Chris Hansen, a New York Civil Liberties Union attorney, said small apartments are available and that the state has overstated the medical needs of the patients.

"It's not a matter that the state can't do what is required," Hansen said, "it's a case where the state won't do what is re-

quired," Hansen said.

Hansen noted that just last year the state agreed to place Flower & Fifth Ave. patients in three- and six-bed facilities, a decision the state now says was a mistake. Only 25 hospital residents were placed in community facilities before Introne ordered a suspension.

Negotiations between state officials and the New York Civil Liberties Union as well as other groups representing the Flower & Fifth Ave. patients have con-

tinued through the summer. But Hansen said he doubts an agreement will be reached, predicting the impasse will have to be resolved in the courts.

When Flower & Fifth Ave. Hospital was converted from an acute-care hospital to a retardation center in 1978, Manhattan Borough President Andrew Stein and other officials charged that its Medicaid rate — which was then \$89,000 a year per patient — was excessive. The financially strapped hospital had been taken

over by the Archdiocese of New York just weeks before the conversion was approved by state health officials.

State officials insisted the high cost of the facility could be justified by the tremendous needs of the former Staten Island Developmental Center residents, many of whom they said had been neglected for years following their transfer from the Willowbrook institution to the Manhattan Developmental Center 17 years ago.

Introne set to join Carey's brain trust?

By ANEMONA HARTOCOLLIS and BRUCE ALPERT

The state's commissioner of mental retardation, James E. Introne, has emerged as a prime candidate to fill the No. 3 job in the Carey administration, sources in state government said yesterday.

Introne, 34, is being considered as a successor to Michael J. DeGiudice, Gov. Carey's director of policy management, who is resigning effective in September to return to the private business sector, the sources said.

The position held by DeGiudice since January 1979 is second

in authority only to the governor's secretary, Robert J. Morgado.

Introne denied that he already had been selected for the position, when reached yesterday through an aide, Ann Marie Zadny.

But an official in the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities said it is certain Introne will resign as the agency's chief in September and accept the post being vacated by DeGiudice.

Other sources in the Carey administration agreed that Introne is a likely choice for the key position, but said they did not know

whether it had yet been offered to him.

The position is considered particularly important in light of Gov. Carey's expected bid for re-election next year. Under a scenario outlined by the governor's aides, the director of policy management would oversee the day-to-day operations of state government while Carey and Morgado concentrated on the campaign.

Earlier this year, rumors had surfaced that Introne intended to resign as commissioner and that he would be replaced by Robert Schonhorn, executive director of United Cerebral Palsy Associa-

tions of New York State, a private agency funded by the state to care for the mentally retarded.

Both Schonhorn and Introne denied the rumors, although Introne added that he had fulfilled many of the goals he set when he accepted the commissioner's job in August 1979.

Before joining the Office of Mental Retardation, Introne was a deputy state budget director and reputed to be a protege of Morgado, whom Carey has described as his most trusted adviser.