

## ***Hepatitis victim harming no one***

A recent article in the Advance reported the concern of members of the Dongan Hills United Civic Association over the presence of a hepatitis carrier in a group home in the community. They are requesting an investigation by public officials and Community Board 2. This careful vigilance is commendable. However, an investigation will show that there is no cause for alarm.

Hepatitis is a disease which affects the liver and is usually caused by viruses. There are two major types of hepatitis, infectious hepatitis and serum hepatitis. Each is caused by a different virus. The resident of the group home was identified in the article as a carrier of infectious hepatitis, or Hepatitis-A. This is inaccurate — there are no carriers of infectious hepatitis. The young man is a carrier of serum hepatitis, or Hepatitis-B.

Prior to the 1960's, it was believed that this form of hepatitis was transmitted only by contaminated needles, blood transfusions, or tattooing. It has now

been demonstrated that the disease is also spread by close contact which allows the viruses in the blood or saliva of the infected person to be transmitted through an open cut or through the surface of the eyes, gums, or mouth. Close contact with blood or saliva is necessary. Hepatitis-B is not spread through the air, or by coughs or sneezes. Toilet seats and swimming pools are not involved in the transmission. Information on hepatitis may be obtained from the New York City Department of Health, Bureau of Preventable Diseases.

In the general population, approximately three individuals in 1,000 are carriers of this virus. There are probably several carriers presently living in Dongan Hills, harming no one. It would be very unfair to deny to this particular young man, whose carrier status has been identified, the opportunity to attend church and enjoy his neighborhood when he presents no danger to others.

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