

State Vows Cleanup of Nursing Homes

BY WILLIAM JONES AND PAMELA ZEKMAN

A controversial 32-year-old physician appointed Wednesday by Gov. Ogilvie to crack down on substandard nursing homes promised yesterday to revamp state inspections and insure that the nursing home scandal exposed by THE TRIBUNE "never happens again."

Dr. Bruce Flashner, who two years ago led a protest by County Hospital doctors and interns against what they described as intolerable conditions, was named deputy director of the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Dr. Flashner said he received specific instructions from Ogilvie to "tighten up"

nursing home operations throughout the state, but added he will be active in all phases of public health.

"I am looking forward to this job and seeing that something is done about the nursing home probe," said Dr. Flashner, who once told County Board members that County Hospital care was hampered by political interference.

Dr. Flashner praised the work done by THE TRIBUNE and Better Government Association in disclosing nursing home abuses and said the weeklong series of articles is "providing

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New State Health Aide Vows Tighter Rein on Nurse Homes

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the stimulus it takes to make the state and city get out and do something about nursing homes. This is an area in which action is very badly needed.

"We will step up the inspections both in the city and the rest of the state," Dr. Flashner said. "But the solution, if there is one, to the whole nursing home problem takes a state and federal effort.

A Nationwide Problem

"I must emphasize that the problem of nursing home care is nationwide. It is a symptom of the whole disease of the public attitude toward the elderly. I think you could have gone to any state and found these conditions. Now we must do something about it."

Dr. Flashner said he will begin an immediate reevaluation of the state's role in nursing home care and a study



Dr. Bruce Flashner

of how inspections of such facilities can be improved. Flashner said his statements should not be interpreted as criticism of the policies of Dr. Franklin Yoder, director of the state public health agency.

In a related development, attorneys for the Ivory Nursing

Home, 5839 S. Calumet Av., voluntarily withdrew a suit they had filed Wednesday objecting to an order by the Chicago Board of Health that the nursing home be closed until it corrected a number of code violations.

Mrs. Marian Ivory, the owner and operator of the home, refused for six hours Wednesday to permit the transfer of 33 public aid patients, even the 15 patients said they wanted to leave. Her attorneys told Judge Samuel Epstein in Circuit Court yesterday that the transfers began yesterday morning.

Home Reported Closed

They also told the court that the nursing home has closed and will attempt to reopen as soon as the violations are corrected.

The Ivory Home is one of four ordered closed by the Board of Health following the disclosures of filth and patient neglect in Chicago area nursing homes. No action has been taken against nursing homes outside the city.