

Reveal Recommendations to Improve Nursing Homes

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A panel of experts that studied nursing home conditions at the request of the Chicago Board of Health has called for an end to profiteering by nursing home owners who are pocketing profits of up to 40 per cent.

The committee also concluded in a five-page report to Dr. Murray Brown, city health commissioner, that nursing homes should be approved by hospital accreditation boards and be required to employ qualified medical directors.

The report also describes public aid payments for care for the elderly poor as "too low" and criticizes the welfare point system of payments to nursing homes which allows more for a bedridden patient than one who is ambulatory. The report concludes that such a practice encourages some nursing home owners to keep their patients bedridden because the profits are greater.

Seeks Uniform Payment

The committee suggests a uniform payment for all nursing home welfare patients as a first step in doing away with such policies.

Cochairmen of the committee were Dr. Leroy P. Levitt, dean of the Chicago Medical School and Howard F. Cook, executive director of the Chicago Hospital Council.

"The committee feels that there is support for a home being operated with a reasonable profit," the report said. . . . We have a strongly negative reaction toward profiteering and exploitive motive in warehousing of sick older people and treating them as commodities to be used for making a profit rather than as a human being in need of humane care and assistance."

In an interview, Levitt said it

would be difficult to reverse the policies of some nursing homes to make them "patient centered" rather than "profit centered." He said a first step would be the accreditation of all homes and the creation of boards of trustees with no financial interests in the home.

The report also takes issue with the present hiring of nursing home administrators, describing these employees as "the apex" from which a home treats its patients.

"The qualifications for these positions, even the minimally set by regulations, are not enforceable," the report said.

Brown said yesterday that portions of the report will be used in his testimony before the United States Senate Committee on Aging that will open hearings tomorrow at the University of Illinois Circle Campus. The hearings were called following disclosures of nursing home abuses uncovered by TRIBUNE Task Force reporters working in cooperation with

the Better Government Association.

Sends Investigator

Sen. Frank Moss [D., Utah], chairman of the committee's subcommittee on long term care, said yesterday that he has sent a special investigator to Chicago to study nursing homes handling mental patients.

The investigator, Val Halamandaris, also served subpoenas on Daniel Slader, operator of the Melbourne Nursing Center, 4621 N. Racine Av., and Rabbi Benjamin Cohen, owner of the Kenmore House Nursing home, 5517 N. Kenmore Av. Both homes were cited as substandard by Task Force reporters and the B. G. A. Slader and Cohen will testify before the subcommittee Moss said.

In a speech before the Senate, Moss said, "The series in the CHICAGO TRIBUNE is another example of the expanded public interest in the operation of nursing homes. The series asserted that widespread irregularities exist in inspection procedures."