



(TRIBUNE Staff Photo by James Mayo)

Dr. Murray Brown, Chicago health commissioner, is flanked by deputy commissioners Jack Zackler (left) and Edward King as he accuses state public health department of "playing politics."

# Crisis in Nursing Homes Is Blamed on State Policy

BY WILLIAM JONES  
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City health officials charged yesterday that the transfer of thousands of former mental patients into Chicago area nursing homes since 1969 has created a crisis in care for mentally disturbed and elderly patients. They urged that the transfers be stopped.

Dr. Eric Oldberg, president of the Chicago Board of Health, Dr. Murray Brown, city health commissioner, and Edward F. King, deputy health commissioner, also accused the Illinois Public Health Department of "playing politics" with nursing home investigations.

## Demoralizes staff

King described the state program of transferring mental patients into private nursing homes as a "disservice to the community, a disservice to the patients and a disservice to the nursing home itself."

"It demoralizes the staff and creates intolerable conditions for the mentally incompetent, not to mention the lack of care for the elderly," he added.

The transfer program, aimed at relieving overcrowding in state mental institutions, was first announced in 1969 by Gov. Ogilvie.

Brown said the owners and operators of nursing homes are not without blame because they agreed to accept the extra patient loads in order to make more money.

## Want State Records

The three health officials, at a press conference in Board of Health offices in the Civic Center, said efforts to obtain state records on where these transferred patients are housed have been ignored by Dr. Franklin Yoder, director of the Illinois Public Health Department.

"The thing that hurts me and makes me feel very badly is that our relationship with Dr. Yoder should have degenerated to a political basis," said

## Review Position

The executive director of the Metropolitan Chicago Nursing Home Association admitted last night that the association is reviewing its membership policies in the wake of TRIBUNE disclosures that some of its top officers operate nursing homes where patients are neglected and abused.

Rabbi Hillel Yampol, the director, said on the Howard Miller Show on WLS-TV, "If THE TRIBUNE reports are true, then these homes should be closed." He emphasized that the association is not a policing agency and charged that THE TRIBUNE disclosures were narrow in scope.

Brown. "We now find ourselves in the midst of an attack that is pure partisan politics to the detriment of the sick and elderly."

Yoder and Dr. Robert Glass, director of the Illinois Mental Health Department, denied the city charges.

## Denies Politics Involved

"I'm directing a nonpolitical health department," Yoder said. "I deny categorically that any politics are involved. This is true under my jurisdiction the past 10 years and of my predecessors."

Yoder refused to comment on whether his office will supply Brown with lists of nursing homes and shelter care facilities where former mental patients are housed.

Glass said city health officials have licensing power at their disposal to prevent overcrowding. However, he said the transfer program is being reevaluated as a result of

TRIBUNE disclosures. He said the transfer program has evolved gradually since the early 1960s. It was the first such protest he has heard from the City Health Department, he said.

Yoder announced last week that state inspectors will no longer rubber stamp the nursing home inspection reports of city inspectors, but will instead be assigned to work permanently out of a Chicago office.

## Criticizes Inspections

Brown criticized state inspectors for not policing the 900 nursing homes outside Chicago and said they are relying on annual inspections that are frequently made with advance notice.

Brown and King said they have studied TRIBUNE Task Force and Better Government Association reports and praised their efforts as a "tremendous public service." Disclosures by THE TRIBUNE and the B. G. A. in recent weeks have exposed patient neglect and abuse in Chicago area nursing homes and have prompted a federal grand jury, state and city investigations.

## Wants Stiffer Fines

"Reform of overcrowded conditions cannot start with the [city] Board of Health because they [mental patients] are wards of the state and the state has to mind its own Ps and Qs," said Oldberg. "I think the state should look after its own to relieve overcrowding."

Oldberg said the city's present nursing home code is now under study by a board staff with an eye toward stiff increases in fines that can be levied against nursing home operators who violate city codes. The present maximum punishment is six months in jail and a \$200 fine.