

**NEW YORKERS FOR PATIENT & FAMILY EMPOWERMENT (NYPFE)
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP (NYPIRG)**

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE: January xx, 2018

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**STUDY: HOSPITAL PATIENTS' VISITORS GET BETTER ACCESS;
NYC-AREA HOSPITALS IMPROVED POLICIES ON PRESENCE OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

**ADVOCATES URGE HOSPITALS TO STRENGTHEN THEIR POLICIES AND WEBSITE
COMMUNICATIONS TO ENGAGE FAMILY CAREGIVERS AS PARTNERS IN CARE**

New York City-area hospitals now grant family and trusted friend visitors greater access to patients, according to a new report by New Yorkers for Patient and Family Empowerment (NYPFE) and the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). Researchers tracked hospitals' visitation policies before and after hospital administrators met with national experts to reviews such policies. That review included educating hospital leaders about the best practices in connecting patients with loved ones. The research project was carried out with the Institute for Patient- and Family-Centered Care (IPFCC), which conducted the reviews. As a result of that experience, most hospitals expanded visitors' access to patients.

The report, *Sick, Scared, and Separated from Loved Ones Third Edition: A Pathway to Improvement in New York City*, evaluated hospital policies, and website communications, on the presence of family caregivers/care partners and well-wishing visitors, of 49 hospitals in New York City. NYPIRG and NYPFE surveyed the hospital websites twice rating them for the quality of its policy and its website communications.

- Of the 10 hospitals whose scores improved during the survey period, eight had participated in the IPFCC training or, in one case, were part of a hospital network that did so.
- Six of these improved hospitals are part of the New York City Health + Hospitals ("H+H") system, which participated very actively in the training and follow-up process.
- Fifteen hospitals citywide received a "perfect 10" for their policies. (Many also received an additional bonus point for their policy on children as visitors.)

When NYPFE and NYPIRG last conducted a survey in 2013 on hospital compliance with rules on the patient's right to choose visitors, six hospitals in New York City had language conflicting with these rules. *This time, researchers found that all the hospitals surveyed now comply with the patient's right to choose who can visit.*

In addition, the groups reported that 70% (34) of the hospital websites take the responsible step of affirmatively and clearly explaining this important right to patients, compared with only 10 websites of New York City area hospitals doing so in 2013.

The researchers noted that there is still room for improvement. Several hospitals still provide no visiting hours whatsoever in the morning. A patient of such a hospital could go more than 15 hours without seeing anyone she or he knows, while medical staff would miss important observations or information that a family member or trusted friend could call to their attention.

Hospital website communications, moreover, remain disappointing. No hospital received a "perfect 10" regarding the quality of its website communications to family caregivers/care partners and well-wishing visitors on safety and on the potential role of partner-in-care. Indeed, over a third of the hospital websites receiving a score of only "3" or below.

Again, however, the IPFCC training program had an impact. While it did not focus on safety communications for visitors, it did address communication regarding the designation and role of the family caregiver/care partner. Seven of the eight hospitals whose scores improved during the survey period participated in, or were part of a hospital network that participated in, the training. And all the website communication improvements related to the designation or role of the family caregiver/care partner, or the patient's right to choose visitors and family caregivers/care partners.

The report provides eight recommendations to improve hospital policies and communications.

The Joint Commission (TJC), which accredits hospitals based on quality and safety, urges patients to have a trusted family member or friend with them, at all times, while in the hospital to assist and advocate for them. The report is available at: www.nypirg.org.