

New Yorkers for Patient & Family Empowerment
- a joint project of -
New York Public Interest Research Group
Center for Justice & Democracy

NEWS RELEASE

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**New Website Offers Information to Help Patients and Families
Cope with the Medical System**
Joint Campaign to Focus on Improving Patient Experience and Safety in New York

New Yorkers for Patient & Family Empowerment (Patient & Family campaign), a joint project of the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) and the Center for Justice & Democracy, has launched a new website to help patients and their loved ones cope with today's increasingly complex medical system. The website (www.patientandfamily.org), a joint effort by the groups' newly formed Patient & Family campaign, is designed to promote patient safety and boost patient satisfaction with healthcare quality.

"The website is designed for use by both patients and those who care about them," explained Suzanne Mattei, director of the joint initiative. "For example, it includes a link to an important yet little-known program under the New York State Office for the Aging that helps many caregivers obtain 'respite services' on a sliding scale fee. This program can provide temporary relief from the often exhausting efforts required to care for loved ones."

"Patients with serious health issues and their families are confronted with a complicated, confusing health care system when they're extremely vulnerable. If they encounter a problem, they often don't know where to go for help," explained NYPIRG's Russ Haven. "This website is designed to provide 'one-stop shopping' for the resources that New Yorkers need."

The website provides telephone numbers for State agencies that receive and respond to complaints about hospitals, nursing homes, adult homes, and managed care. It includes links to websites that allow consumers to compare safety information on doctors, hospitals, and nursing homes. The site furnishes other useful sources of information, such as the State Department of Financial Services' website for comparing the performance of health insurers.

Ilene Corina, President of PULSE of New York, an organization that works to improve patient safety and reduce the rate of medical errors, stated that the new website is "an easy and reliable way for patients and their family to help take control of their medical treatment and be part of the treatment team."

Maria Alvarez, Executive Director of the New York StateWide Senior Action Council, observed, "Seniors and their loved ones often have to struggle through a maze of bureaucracies just to get answers to basic questions about healthcare safety and rights. This website will help New Yorkers find the answers they need."

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Geoffrey Lieberman, Executive Director of the Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled, said, “Consumer empowerment must be an essential component in our work to improve the healthcare system. The Patient & Family campaign website goes a long way to helping us realize that goal.”

The groups noted that the Kaiser Health’s national 2011 Medicare patient satisfaction survey, released this month, found that several New York regions ranked at the low end of the scale. The survey asked hospital patients whether their pain was always controlled, medicines always explained, and quick help always received, among other questions. Manhattan and the Bronx received the lowest scores, with East Long Island, Buffalo, and White Plains among the lowest 30 out of 295 hospital regions analyzed.

“Daily patient care in New York hospitals is not what it should be,” said Ms. Mattei. “People need better access to information and helpful hotlines. But most importantly, they need better safety measures in healthcare.”

The groups highlighted the website’s information on one of the campaign’s first efforts, which is to educate the public about the need for hospitals and nursing homes to provide equipment and training to their staff to avoid manual lifting of patients. This “Safe Patient Handling” initiative, promoted by the New York State Department of Labor, helps reduce the risk of injuries and discomfort for both staff and patients.

“The campaign is reaching out to a broad range of community, nonprofit, civic, labor, and faith organizations as well as public officials to inform them of the existence of this new information resource and to encourage more engagement in the important issue of patient safety,” said Ms. Mattei.

New Yorkers for Patient & Family Empowerment (Patient & Family campaign) is a patient-centered campaign to promote greater transparency and safety in healthcare. Its mission is to empower patients, their families, and caregivers in interacting with the healthcare system, strengthen New Yorkers’ access to information on issues important to patients and improve healthcare quality and safety. The new website is located at www.patientandfamily.org.