

Hospitals must tell of infections

Originally published on July 21, 2005

By JOE MAHONEY
DAILY NEWS ALBANY BUREAU CHIEF

New York became the fifth state in the nation to require hospitals to report their infection rates, a move designed to protect patients from quick-spreading germs in health-care facilities.

Gov. Pataki ended weeks of silence on the issue by signing the measure yesterday, which was backed by a battery of health-care experts including his former lieutenant governor, Betsy McCaughey.

"This is a victory for patients over secrecy," McCaughey said yesterday.

"When you have to be hospitalized, you should be able to find out which hospital in your own area has a serious infection problem."

Hospitals will have to file reports with the state Health Department within two years on the number of infections their patients contract while getting treatment. The Health Department is expected to begin sharing that data with the public by 2008.

Too often, hospitals do not do enough to enforce their own rules on combating infection, said Assembly Health Committee Chairman Richard Gottfried (D-Manhattan), a prime sponsor of the measure.

"We know how to control infection," Gottfried said. "The question is making sure that everyone in the hospital does what they are supposed to do, and that's what this new system will encourage every hospital to do."

Pataki also signed legislation that allows New York City to do away with its 4% sales tax on clothing and footwear costing less than \$110. Though the city tax goes away Sept. 1, shoppers will still have to pay the state sales tax of 4.365% on those purchases.

All contents © 2005 Daily News, L.P.