



# NEW YORK POST

**METRO EDITION**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 5, 1989** Sunny, cold, mid 20s today; cloudy, light snow, upper 20s tonight / Details, Page 2

# MANY OGRES IN HOSPITAL NIGHTMARE



Yesterday's Page 1.

By JOE NICHOLSON  
and MARSHA KRANES

Who created New York City's hospital nightmare — the emergency room gridlock that threatens the lives of the city's poorest, sickest and most vulnerable?

The overcrowded, understaffed, underequipped conditions in the emergency room at Kings County Hospital were spotlighted in a chilling series of articles in The Post in the past two days.

Today, medical experts and city and state officials familiar with the crisis point fingers of blame. Here's what they have to say:

■ Dr. Barry Liebowitz,

president of the Doctors Council, a union representing 3,000 city hospital and Health Department doctors:

"The major cause of the crisis was the state's reduction in hospital beds.

"They wanted to close 5,000 beds, and did close 2,000 or 3,000. ... At the same time, there was a greatly increased demand for services.

"Another cause was [former] Gov. Carey, who closed mental hospitals,

but never built the ambulatory care centers he promised to build. He has literally littered the streets with mentally ill homeless."

■ Joseph Lisa, chairman of the City Council Health Committee:

"I attribute this directly to the policies the state Health Commissioner, Dr. [David] Axelrod, has pursued for the last eight years of eliminating hospital beds.

"And this has happened

while each year the AIDS epidemic has become more visible.

"It is bordering on criminal negligence to have created a hospital shortage of this magnitude."

■ Robert Gumbs, executive director of the city- and state-funded Health Systems Agency:

"The causes of the crisis include AIDS, psychiatric and substance abuse problems and the health per-

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sonnel shortage.

"I blame both the city and state government for not responding quickly enough to the crisis."

■ City Council President Andrew Stein:

"The failure of the city and state to open drug treatment facilities over the last 10 years and their complete failure to develop alternative-care beds for people who are in the hospital but don't have to be."

■ Mayor Koch:

"Only the state of New York can authorize an increase in nursing beds and an increase in the [reimbursement] rate. . . . I urged them to do that. They declined."

■ Dr. Jo Ivey Boufford, city hospitals chief:

"The state's policies of the past have led to a problem of inadequate acute-care capacity and inadequate incentives for long-term care and ambulatory facilities."

■ Gary Fryer, spokesman for Gov. Cuomo, who declined to comment directly:

"Look, it's the city's responsibility. These are city hospitals, not state hospitals."

"We've bailed the city out repeatedly in the past. We took over the cost of CUNY [the city university]."

"It is their responsibility to run the hospitals properly."

■ Peter Slocum, spokesman for Dr. Axelrod:

"Increasing AIDS and drug abuse-related illnesses; the absence of adequate prenatal care and an acute shortage of nurses and other key health personnel

...  
"Diseases and conditions traditionally associated with poverty are playing a bigger role. . . ."

"No one has successfully begun to deal with that, either the state or the federal government or the city," Slocum said.