

Patients unaware of rights

Re The difficult journey to a nursing home, Column, Nov. 4

Unfortunately, in reviewing the "process," from hospital to long-term care, Carol Goar has reinforced some of the key elements about which people are misinformed. For example, when a patient is waiting for admission to one of their chosen homes, the maximum amount that can be charged by the hospital by law is \$53.07 a day, although many people with low incomes are entitled to a reduction in this fee. While we advise clients that lengthy hospital stays may not be in their best interests, patients or their decision-makers do not have to choose homes from a "short list" where there is, or will soon be, an available bed.

Many hospitals have such "first available bed policies," which result in the "penalties" discussed in the article. However, most of these policies are contrary to the legislation governing the placement system. Unfortunately, patients and families are often unaware of the law and their rights because most of the information comes from the hospital. To counter this problem, we have published a paper entitled "First Available Bed Policies and Discharge to a Long-Term Care Home from Hospital" which is available at www.acelaw.ca.

Jane E. Meadus and Lisa Romano, Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, Toronto