



WWW.LSUHOSPITALS.ORG

- BOGALUSA MEDICAL CENTER - BOGALUSA
- EARL K. LONG MEDICAL CENTER - BATON ROUGE
- HUEY P. LONG MEDICAL CENTER - PINEVILLE
- LALLIE KEMP REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER - INDEPENDENCE
- LEONARD J. CHABERT MEDICAL CENTER - HOUMA
- MEDICAL CENTER OF LOUISIANA - NEW ORLEANS
- UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER - LAFAYETTE
- W.O. MOSS REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER - LAKE CHARLES

IN THE NEWS

[[HTTP://WWW.LSUHOSPITALS.ORG/MEDIA-RELATIONS/IN-THE-NEWS.HTM](http://www.lsuhs.com/media-relations/in-the-news.htm)]

[FRIDAY, JUNE 08, 2007]

Teens get intro to surgery
The Town Talk | 06.08.07

PAR says bills erode public access law
The Advocate | 06.08.07

Our Views: Let sun shine on records
The Advocate | 06.08.07

Sinking in New Orleans By Marc Siegel
USA Today | 06.08.07

Teens get intro to surgery

The Town Talk | 06.08.07

By Warren Hayes

Grant High School senior John Guillory told the doctors at the Huey P. Long Medical Center to take the day off.

He would handle the surgery.

A cut and some sutures was all it took for Guillory to receive the real-life experience of being a surgeon.

Guillory, along with 10 students from Pineville, Buckeye, Tioga high schools, completed surgery on the foot of a pig in a classroom at Huey P. Long's Annex Building on Wednesday. The students' surgery was part of the Central Louisiana Area Health Education Center (AHEC) -- a five-week course designed to show students different aspects of the medical profession, AHEC health career coordinator Jan Schmitt said.

Recruiting opportunity

"This program gives us an opportunity to recruit students into the medical profession," Schmitt said. "The Rapides Parish school system supports AHEC by providing a teacher, and even if students don't want to pursue a medical career, this program will save parents money in the future by not having students waste their time on a medical career in college."

High school students weren't the only ones learning.

Tulane University medical students worked towards completing class hours by showing the high school students how to operate on a pig's foot.

Buckeye junior Cody Edwards asked Tulane University student Irene Caillouet how to sew the pig's foot.

Wrap twice, loop and pull was all it took to tighten the opening in the foot, Caillouet said.

"The surgery is pretty cool, and it makes me consider a career as a surgeon," Edwards said. "I'm not afraid of seeing blood, so I should be a good surgeon."

Caillouet said she is pursuing a medical career as a result of helping sick family members.

"We are in rotation at the University, and we're learning OB-GYN (Obstetrics and Gynecology)," Caillouet said. "We will learn internal, emergency and family medicine and neurology, surgery, radiology and psychiatry. This profession is perfect for me, because I like to help people."

Kayla Hendrix, a Tioga junior, completed a suturing of the pig, and said the most difficult part of the surgery was the way one has to hold their hands.

"You have to hold your arms in the air with your palms out, holding the small surgery tools -- you can feel the pain," Hendrix said. "I watch medical shows on Discovery Health Channel, so I could see myself in the medical profession."

Tulane University medical student Sarah Helmig called Natalie Mazhambe, a Pineville senior, a speed demon.

Helmig said Mazhambe was one of the first students to finish her suturing with no problems.

"Holding the little needle to do the surgery is difficult," Mazhambe said. "If I go to medical school, it will be at LC (Louisiana College), and I don't mind seeing blood as long as it isn't my blood."

Helmig said her goal is to become a pediatrician after graduating from Tulane.

[BACK TO TOP]

"I worked at a children's camp in Texas, and Louisiana and Texas lacks when it comes to providing health care for kids and adults," Helmig said. "Being a pediatrician would be a good way for me to give back to needy kids."

Changed his mind

Guillory said he has changed his mind about the medical profession after high school students participated in a contest.

The high school students judged each surgery on a pig's foot by placing straws next to the best-looking surgery.

The pig foot with the most straws won the contest.

Guillory had eight straws next to his pig, and said he didn't think he would win a award for his surgery.

"Performing a surgery is difficult, but I think if you develop a pattern, then the surgery will flow smoothly," Guillory said. "I want to go into the medical field, but I'm not sure on what I want to do. I have a strong stomach, so I can handle blood and guts."

<http://www.thetowntalk.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007706070314>

[BACK TO TOP]

PAR says bills erode public access law

The Advocate | 06.08.07

By MARSHA SHULER

The Public Affairs Research Council on Thursday said secrecy provisions included in health-care and airports legislation could have “devastating effects” on Louisiana’s public records law.

PAR said passage of the bills would further erode public access to government and encourage more such attempts.

Keeping the records of groups dealing with health-care quality and construction of a proposed mega-airport near Donaldsonville “shielded in secrecy makes no sense from a public point of view,” said Jim Brandt, president of the governmental research group.

“We are very concerned about the erosion of public access to records. These two laws would seriously erode the public records law to the extent the business of government is private and off the radar screen,” Brandt said in an interview.

At issue are provisions in House Bill 964 by Rep. Lelon Kenney, D-Columbia, and House Bill 841 by Rep. Roy Quezaire, D-Donaldsonville.

HB964 would shield the work product, proceedings and records of certain nonprofit, health-care-quality improvement corporations from public review as well as from the discovery process in administrative or civil actions.

The protection would apply to nonprofits that would partner with the state Department of Health and Hospitals to improve the quality of health care in Louisiana.

HB964 is awaiting a vote by the full House.

In its commentary, PAR notes that quasi public-private organizations typically are required to abide by the public records law.

“With passage of HB964, however, a corporation such as the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum, would be given special treatment,” PAR said. “The Forum, which is presently requesting more than \$1 million of state funding, would have no duty to share its proceedings, findings, research or recommended initiatives with Louisiana citizens.”

PAR said health-care outcome and performance data would be shielded from public view. And it said the bill is drafted so broadly that other nonprofits unrelated to the Forum or its work could also be given the same secrecy rights.

HB841 would shelter certain records of the Louisiana Airport Authority from the public. Off-limits would be records pertaining to site acquisition, operation, planning, design, construction or lease of an airport facility until negotiations are done.

The House voted 97-2 to pass HB841 on Tuesday. It was assigned Thursday to the Senate Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works.

PAR noted in its commentary that the LAA has broad authority and is requesting \$300 million from the state to begin developing an international cargo airport that could be “potentially the largest economic development project in the history of the state.”

<http://www.theadvocate.com/news/politics/7896582.html>

[BACK TO TOP]

Our Views: Let sun shine on records

The Advocate | 06.08.07

A new national survey conducted by LSU's Public Policy Research Lab shows that many people outside Louisiana believe the state has a problem with corruption.

Is Louisiana really more corrupt than other states? We can argue at length about the degree to which this perception is correct, and the degree to which it's a bum rap. But the perception is there nonetheless, and the best answer to that perception is to make our government open and accountable.

That is why we are troubled by the latest attempts in the Legislature to exempt certain institutions from the state's public records law, an important law that allows citizens to review the work of government.

We are already on record in opposition to House Bill 841, which would hide all records of the Louisiana Airport Authority pertaining to site acquisition, operation, planning, design, construction or lease of an airport being promoted near Donaldsonville until negotiations are complete. Advocates of the legislation say such secrecy is necessary to protect sensitive negotiations. As we have said before, we do not agree that such secrecy is necessary, and we believe the granting of such exemptions to the public records law will encourage other agencies to seek similar exemptions. A loss of transparency in our government will be the inevitable result.

Yet another piece of legislation, House Bill 964, would shield the proceedings and records of certain nonprofit health-care corporations from public review. The exemption from public scrutiny would apply to nonprofits that partner with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals to improve the quality of health care in Louisiana.

In other words, quasi-public institutions such as the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum could be allowed to spend millions in public dollars, but many records of their work would not be open for public inspection. As the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana has noted, the forum's health-care outcome and performance data would be shielded from public view.

Even worse, the bill is drafted so broadly that other nonprofits unrelated to the forum or its work could be given the same rights to secrecy. Does this sound like a good idea?

PAR, a nonprofit, nonpartisan government watchdog group, doesn't think so, and we agree with PAR's opposition to both pro-secrecy bills. As PAR notes, in 2002, Louisiana ranked among the top five states in granting citizens access to public records, according to the Better Government Association's Integrity Index.

A PAR survey of legislation passed since 2003 shows that lawmakers have passed about 45 laws dealing with public records. Twenty-four of the laws have expanded the realm of what Louisiana citizens are allowed to inspect, while 21 have exempted certain records from the public eye.

These numbers demonstrate the constant struggle between the ideal of government transparency and a more-troublesome impulse toward secrecy.

"While attempting to achieve balance between open government and legitimate privacy concerns, transparency must still remain a primary goal for policymakers," PAR notes in a recent position paper.

Approval of either of these two pro-secrecy bills would, in PAR's estimate, "encourage further deterioration of citizen access to open government."

Those in government power typically can find a hundred reasons to shield their work from public scrutiny. But where secrecy thrives, public confidence in government declines.

That is a result this struggling state simply cannot afford.

<http://www.2theadvocate.com/opinion/7895747.html>

[BACK TO TOP]

Sinking in New Orleans By Marc Siegel **USA Today | 06.08.07**

We're about to head full-force into the hurricane season, and invariably the country will spend a few moments revisiting the stricken Gulf Coast region, but particularly New Orleans. It's the city's biannual checkup (the other being on the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina). We'll hear questions about levies, rebuilding and the city's economy.

What you're unlikely to hear about, though, is the mental health of the city's residents and the treatment crisis still brewing nearly two years after Katrina.

I visited the Big Easy recently and came across a tour guide who seemed to be in a particular funk. A destroyed home we passed on the tour had once been his. You could see the weight of this once-great city resting on his shoulders. He told me, matter-of-factly, that he was depressed. Whether he was merely despondent or clinically depressed, I'll never know, but the sad thing is, he may never know either. You see, his city is not equipped to handle basic psychiatric needs such as his and won't have these services established anytime soon. For him, it was a matter of cost and access. For the city, the problem is much more insidious.

Starting over

Kathleen Crapanzano, medical director for the Office of Mental Health for Louisiana, acknowledges that the state has primary responsibility for helping to restore mental health care to New Orleans. But she also recognizes that the city is virtually starting over. "We lost the whole mental health infrastructure in the storm," she says. "It was inadequate before. Then we lost the clinics, the hospitals, the staff and the administration."

Compounding the problem: More people are suffering from mental ailments. The city has seen a dramatic increase in depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress.

What the city is facing:

- The two major hospital centers, Louisiana State University and Tulane, lost their inpatient psych units in the storm.
- The state mental health facility, which is run by LSU, had more than 100 beds before the storm and was where police brought suspects who appeared to have mental issues. It was severely damaged and remains closed.
- The Tulane Behavioral Health Center, which included a 110-bed psych hospital, was damaged and has been transformed to an outpatient clinic at the university. Each doctor has a full panel of patients.
- Tulane's emergency room has only one psychiatrist on duty, yet the facility is overrun with patients in the midst of psychiatric crises. The average stay is two to three days, thus interfering with other medical services. Psychiatric inpatients are being sent to Baton Rouge - 100 miles away.
- New Orleans doesn't have enough trained psychiatric nurses, aides or security personnel.
- Not enough buildings are available to house psychiatric facilities. Rebuilding is complicated by a methodical bidding process in place before the storm.

With the city's psychiatric care structure still in shambles, it would be tempting to blame the government for not taking the issue seriously. But that's not quite the story. The government - local, state and federal - is doing a good bit.

[[BACK TO TOP](#)]

After Katrina, the Louisiana Recovery Authority received \$80 million from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help restore core social services. HHS provided an additional \$55 million to the Louisiana state Office of Mental Health and is spending \$15 million to lure back health care workers. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, which was maligned for its slow-moving response before Katrina, granted \$50 million toward crisis counseling and outreach under the Louisiana Spirit program. Six outpatient clinics have opened, with more on the horizon.

The list goes on. What's needed, though, is a full-scale all-hands-on-board effort that recognizes this not as a problem, but as a crisis.

"Some progress is being made," says Fred Cerise, secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals in Louisiana. But "some," in this case, won't do. Many good people are working to heal this wounded city, but the problems are too pervasive and too dangerous to allow for gradual solutions.

Jack Finn, president of the Metropolitan Hospital Council of New Orleans, is not exaggerating when he says a state of psychiatric emergency still exists. Government leaders must treat the mental health crisis like a fire engulfing the city. A fire house here and a garden hose there will help, but many many lives will be left in the ashes unless drastic action is taken.

A quick fix

What can be done now?

Temporary facilities need to be built. More grant money should be used to lure mental health providers. State laws and regulations should be amended or suspended so that the rebuilding can speed along. (Psych beds require less equipment than medical beds and can be outfitted quickly.) The American Psychiatric Association, which is having a "recovery" conference here in October, can urge residency programs across the country to send in rotating doctors.

Until New Orleans redevelops its psychiatric services to the point where it can properly triage most of its mentally ill patients, the entire city will suffer - and we as a society will suffer for allowing the problem to fester. After all, rebuilding this city's psyche is at least as important as rebuilding its homes.

Marc Siegel is an associate professor of medicine at New York University School of Medicine and a member of USA TODAY's board of contributors.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/2007-06-06-oplede_N.htm

[BACK TO TOP]