



New Yorkers for Patient
& Family Empowerment

Patient & Family Alert
Healthcare Safety in New York

April 2015

SAVE THE DATE!

Monday, June 15 at 6:00 PM will be our annual Spring Event

**- a friendly gathering of wonderful people who care about safety,
transparency and dignity in healthcare in New York!**

In This Issue

What a great victory!!!

When the Governor's January budget proposal called for elimination of the New York Physician Profile website, it didn't attract a lot of attention at first.

But **New Yorkers for Patient & Family Empowerment** knew this was bad, bad news for patients.

The Physician Profile is an informational program run by the NYS Department of Health. Its website tells the public about a doctor's credentials, years of experience, and history of malpractice or penalties. Doctors must, by law, be truthful. And you don't have to wade through ads to get to the information!

Taking a closer look at the actual bill, we saw that the plan was to kill the entire program for reporting information - not just internet access to it. This "sunlight" program has served New Yorkers - anyone, anywhere in New York who wants to know about a doctor's real credentials -- for 15 years!

The amount of money to be "saved" was a tiny fraction of the budget, yet if just one patient in New York avoids death or harm because they find a better, safer doctor using the Physician Profile program, the cost is more than worth it.

So **Patient & Family** launched into action, reaching out to thoughtful organizations throughout New York who care about safety in healthcare.

Fifteen organizations signed a bill memo to the Legislature and 16 organizations signed a letter to Governor Cuomo. These included advocates for people with disabilities, seniors, women at risk of breast cancer, Ground Zero workers, social justice communities and other healthcare consumers.

Working with a leading consumer organization, **NYPIRG**, we co-organized a press conference.

At this event, the **Statewide Senior Action Council**, **PULSE of New York**, **Consumers Union** and the **Citizens Union of New York** joined **Patient & Family** and **NYPIRG** to urge that the Physician Profile Program be protected and strengthened. An early leader in healthcare transparency who helped establish the program, **Arthur Levin** of the **Center for Medical Consumers**, was acknowledged.

Also, speaking at this event were two people who were leaders in getting the original law passed to create the program - **Ilene Corina** of **PULSE of New York** and citizen activist **Patricia Donnelly**.

The national **Consumers Union** sent an action alert to its New York members, and thousands of New Yorkers responded in support of the program.

The result: Instead of eliminating the Physician Profile program, the Legislature made it stronger!

Doctors must update their profile data within 30 days, rather than 120 days, after they receive a profile survey, and must also promptly report any change in required information.

The Department of Health must update a physician's online profile within 30 days of receiving the doctor's information.

Interestingly, the new law also requires the Department of Health to study the feasibility of requiring doctors to report which health plans they participate in. (Patient & Family would like to know what you think about that idea!)

We gratefully thank legislative Health Committee chairs **Senator Kemp Hannon** and **Assemblymember Richard Gottfried** for their special leadership in acting to restore this critical program, and for strengthening it as well! We also sincerely thank Governor Cuomo, State Senate Majority Leader Skelos, and Assembly Speaker Heastie for this restoration.

And the moral of the story is, don't suffer in silence! Your voice can be heard!

Patient & Family is committed to improving healthcare safety and protecting the rights of patients.

You can help!

If you have suggestions for news articles or important new studies about healthcare safety, transparency and dignity for patients and their loved ones, please let us know! You can send us a message through our website at www.patientandfamily.org./contact/ or reach us by phone at 646-278-5689.

And please, please help us improve **safety, transparency and dignity in healthcare in New York** by supporting our work! You can give at www.patientandfamily.org/donate/.

Best regards,
Suzanne Mattei, Executive Director
New Yorkers for Patient & Family Empowerment

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