

RECOMMENDATION NO. 58

The Commission recommends that the community nursing home program be expanded as rapidly as possible, and that after such expansion, direct admission from a private hospital should be considered, with such safeguards as may be deemed necessary.

Background to Recommendation:

At present, a veteran, to be eligible for placement in a community nursing home must first have been admitted and received medical care at a VA hospital. The patient's selection for placement in a community nursing home is a team effort made at the ward level by the patient's physician, nurse, and social worker. The veteran's family is encouraged to participate in the discharge planning and thereby facilitate the transition from the hospital to the community nursing home. When feasible, the patient is given the privilege of selecting a nursing home, and every effort is made to place him close to his family. However, patients are not admitted to veterans' hospitals for the sole purpose of transferring them to a community nursing home. There are some veterans who have elected to have their hospitalization in private hospitals but who need extended nursing home care. It is the opinion of the Commission that these veterans are unduly penalized by not having been hospitalized in veterans' hospitals and should have the opportunity for nursing home care under Veterans Administration auspices.

However, the Commission is completely aware of the fact that the nursing home program operated by the Veterans Administration is a new program and that the present type of control is considered essential by the Veterans Administration. The Commission therefore recommends that the nursing home care program be expanded as soon as practicable and that when such expansion takes place the Veterans Administration should consider receiving patients in community nursing homes directly from private hospitals, with safeguards determined necessary to assure that nursing home care at government expense is warranted. A requirement of at least ten days' hospitalization might provide such a safeguard.