
Boro's bad medicine costs \$147M

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Friday, August 2, 2008 9:27 AM

Brooklyn hospitals led the city in malpractice payouts last year, with Kings County Hospital paying a whopping \$33.6 million in claims, according to a report issued yesterday.

Two other municipal hospitals, Woodhull Hospital and Coney Island Hospital, shelled out millions in malpractice claims - even as the total cost of claims to the city plunged by 10%.

"Medical malpractice claims continue to represent the largest claims costs for the city and has been a persistent concern," said Laura Rivera, a spokeswoman for Controller William Thompson, whose office released the study.

The total cost of claims to the city last year totaled \$496.4 million, a 6.3% decrease from last year when claims totaled \$529.8 million.

In Brooklyn, the total cost of claims rose, from \$144 million in 2005 to \$147.7 million last year, Rivera said.

Among the largest medical malpractice payouts in Brooklyn last year involved a Bedford-Stuyvesant infant, Alexis Williams, who suffered brain damage at Kings County Hospital when doctors delivered her.

The city paid \$5.5 million to the infant's family in 2006.

Williams' attorney, Kenneth Wilhelm, said many of the medical malpractice claims he has litigated originated at Kings County, Coney Island and Woodhull Hospital.

"It may be because the areas where those hospitals serve are less economically advantaged and may be getting less than sterling treatment because of that," said Wilhelm.

At Kings County Hospital, which led all city hospitals in malpractice payouts, the cost of claims rose from \$26.6 million in 2005 to \$33.6 million in 2006.

A Health and Hospitals Corp. spokeswoman said Kings County "is one of the busiest and largest operations in our system. It carries a large load of neediest patients with among the most medically complicated cases - so the number of claims and payout amounts may reflect that."

Woodhull Hospital in Bushwick racked up \$15.1 million in claims last year, an increase from 2005, when it paid out \$10.3 million.

Coney Island Hospital, meanwhile, was forced to cough up \$6.6 million in claims, a \$2.7 million increase from 2005.

The report also revealed the total cost of personal injury claims increased slightly in Brooklyn, from \$142.2 million to \$145.3 million.

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