

Ex-pol's crusade led to hosp infection bill

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The death of a young man she'd never met spurred former Lt. Gov. Betsy McCaughey to launch a crusade last year to clean up New York's hospitals.

Thanks to her efforts, a bill that requires hospitals to publicly report serious infections that take thousands of lives each year appears on its way to becoming law.

The measure would allow hospitals to see how they stack up against competitors and improve performance - and give patients the option to take their business elsewhere.

The Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths, which McCaughey founded, began pushing for the legislation last year with forums, radio ads, press conferences with victims and talks with lawmakers.

Although she had been researching the problem of hygiene in hospitals for some time, the death of 28-year-old Rob Moore of upstate Washingtonville brought it home hard.

Moore was mugged in 1992 and suffered a head injury. Three weeks later he was dead - not from the injury but from a bacterial infection he picked up in an Orange County hospital.

McCaughey was swept with sorrow as Moore's mother showed her Rob's baby pictures last year. She decided that it was time to take action.

"I don't want to see another mother lose her child," she said.

If it becomes law, the measure would encourage tough enforcement of simple and basic hygiene procedures such as thorough hand washing and equipment cleaning, and the use of disposable gowns and aprons to prevent the spread of germs.

McCaughey said poor hygiene in hospitals takes more than 100,000 lives and adds \$30 billion to health care costs nationwide every year.

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