

Los Angeles Emergency Care Crisis
New York Times August 21, 2004
By Nick Madigan

People who work for Los Angeles County said Friday that the oldest hospital in San Fernando Valley will close by December 31st. In the last two years, four other emergency rooms, mostly in low-income neighborhoods, have also closed. This is mostly because of the high cost of paying for thousands of people without health insurance.

“We have to help anyone who walks in the door, even if they can’t pay,” said Tracey Veal, who works at the hospital.

Ms. Veal guessed that the hospital spent \$13 million dollars to pay for treatment for people who didn’t have insurance. In addition, there is also a shortage of nurses, and more and more doctors don’t want to work in emergency rooms, which makes helping people even harder.

Since 1990, 70 hospital emergency rooms have been closed in California. “We are in real rough times here,” said Carol Meyer, director of Los Angeles County Emergency Services. “I don’t know what the solution will be. It’s not going to change until someone in a high position has a family member die because they couldn’t get treatment in the emergency room.”

Vocabulary

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|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. low-income | a. don't have enough |
| 2. "someone in a high position" | b. help fix the problem |
| 3. rough times | c. things are not good |
| 4. solution | d. a person who has power, like the President |
| 5. treatment | e. help you get from the doctor |
| 6. shortage | f. people who don't have a lot of money |

True/False

1. The hospital emergency rooms in Los Angeles have a lot of money. T F
2. The emergency rooms can tell people "no" when they can't pay. T F
3. All the hospitals that have closed were in neighborhoods where people had a lot of money. T F
4. People who work for the hospitals have solutions to the problem. T F
5. The emergency rooms don't have enough nurses. T F
6. Many doctors want to work in the emergency rooms. T F
7. People who don't have insurance also don't have a job. T F

What do you think?

1. Why don't people have health insurance?

2. Why does it cost so much to go to the hospital?

3. Why are they only closing hospitals in low-income neighborhoods?

4. Do you agree with the woman who said the problem won't change until someone in a high position has a family member die? Why or why not?
