



Empowering New York Consumers in an Era of Hospital Consolidation

NYS Health Foundation

October 11, 2019

Lois Uttley, MPP

Women's Health Program Director

Community Catalyst

Founder, MergerWatch

Hospital Consolidation in New York State



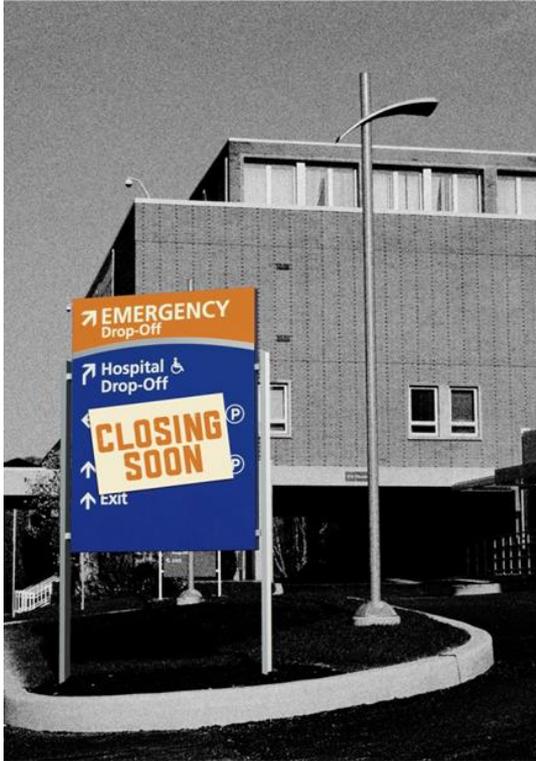
41 acute care hospitals have closed over the last 20 years.

Many remaining hospitals have joined large regional health systems

- 12 large systems now control more than half the acute care hospitals and 70% of the beds in the state
- **Four mega-systems** have acquired multiple hospitals, physician practices and outpatient centers.



Potential impact of hospital consolidation on patients



- Patients may have to **travel farther** to receive care if local hospitals are closed or downsized.
- Patients may be treated by **unfamiliar providers.**
- When hospitals merge and reduce or eliminate competition in a local health care “market,” **health care prices could increase.**

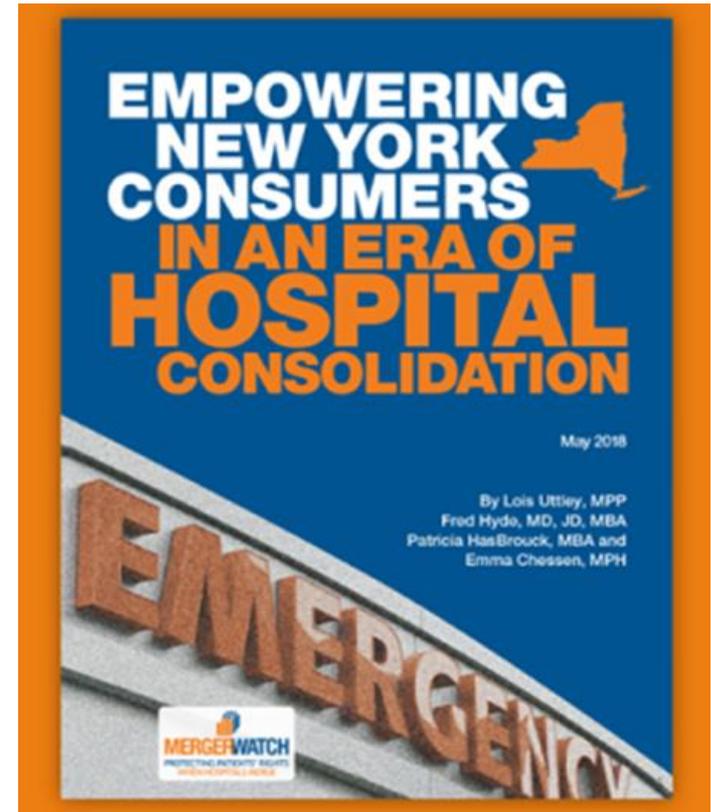
Communities are protesting, but having little real effect

- Consumers who use Beth Israel have protested closure of maternity care, cardiac surgery and plan for smaller replacement hospital.
- Eastern Niagara County residents protested closure of maternity services at one hospital and now closure of the remaining hospital.
- Cornwall residents protested loss of their local emergency department.



How can we give consumers a greater voice?

- State oversight of consolidation through the Certificate of Need (CON) process **lacks transparency and consumer engagement.**
- Consumers have **little or no notice or say** when their local hospitals are downsizing, closing or joining large systems.



Barriers to consumer engagement in CON review: A few examples

- There is only one “consumer” seat on the 24-member state CON review body – the Public Health and Health Planning Council (PHHPC).
- PHHPC committee meetings, when public comment is allowed, are held on weekdays in NYC or Albany, with one week’s notice of what’s on the agenda.
- There no recommendations from local officials about CONs affecting their communities.
- There is no requirement for a public hearing before a hospital closes or eliminates its ER or maternity care.

Changing the system to give consumers a greater voice

- **Increase the number of consumer representatives** on the PHHPC from **one to four**.
- **Require a public hearing if** a hospital plans to close entirely or eliminate the ER or maternity care.
- Create a **NYC Office of Patient Advocate** to receive and track consumer complaints, and use that information to comment on CONs from NYC providers.
- **Require every hospital to have a consumer advisory board**, and involve that board in review of proposed consolidation.



NYS HEALTH

FOUNDATION

Improving the state of New York's health