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CT VIEWPOINTS

# Stop the Yale acquisition of hospitals

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Where is the Connecticut Department of Public Health? Where is the state Office of Health Strategy?

Now is the time for the state to put some serious brakes on the ongoing shrinking of medical providers in the state.

Is the state going to allow a continuation of Yale New Haven Health's acquisitions? This time, Yale wants to buy two more

health systems and three more Connecticut hospitals. The Yale medical behemoth is planning to add Waterbury Hospital, Manchester Memorial Hospital and Rockville Hospital to its ever-growing system.

The lame reasons given by Dr. Christopher O'Connor, President of Yale New Haven Health and Dr. Keith Churchill, the president of Yale New Haven Hospital for the acquisitions do not disclose the real reason. Controlling a larger and larger percentage of the hospital beds in Connecticut gives Yale New Haven an extremely strong position when negotiating with medical insurance companies [i.e., Blue Cross] for the inpatient per diem reimbursement. Of course, any increase in payment to Yale New Haven is passed on to the consumer by the insurance companies.

The Yale health system already includes five hospitals on seven campuses: Yale New Haven Hospital, Bridgeport Hospital, Greenwich Hospital, Lawrence and Memorial Hospital, New London, and Westerly Hospital, Rhode Island. It also owns the massive, constantly expanding medical practice Northeast Medical Group.

At what point is it enough? Yale New Haven just announced that it ran a deficit this year. Was that an accounting fiction to help justify the latest acquisition? That's at the same time the institution's executive salaries are just about obscene! How about lowering patient charges instead of raising executive salaries?

Putting so much of our state's medical care under a single roof will allow a continual increase in consumer costs. Why wouldn't Yale increase fees? Where is the true competition? There is really no incentive to keep costs down.

Medical care in Connecticut already has, essentially, only two choices: the Yale system and the Hartford Hospital system. I have no doubt that if Yale raises the price for a particular service, Hartford will quickly follow. They have nothing to lose.

Now is the time for those who care about health care in Connecticut to write or call your state senator and state representative. Speak up! It is only through public pressure that we will be able to halt this reduction in consumer options.

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