

BMC offers reassurance on insurance

By **RONALD LEIR**
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Bayonne Medical Center says it will continue to treat all patients — at least for now — even if their health insurance is no longer being accepted by the hospital, BMC officials told city residents who attended a town hall meeting Thursday night.

And patients can expect to pay the same out-of-pocket fees as before, hospital officials said.

Interim Mayor Terrence Malloy teamed with BMC owner Vivek Garipalli, president/CEO Daniel Kane, and CFO James Lawlor in explaining to more than 100 residents and doctors

assembled at City Hall where the hospital stood on insurance issues.

After the bankrupt hospital was sold to IJKG LLC as a for-profit care facility on Feb. 1, the hospital discontinued contracts with Aetna, Americhoice, Consumer Health Network, Galaxy Health Network, Multiplan, Oxford, and United Healthcare, saying the rates of payment are not sufficient.

For now, patients with those insurance providers may still go to the hospital and BMC will bill the insurance companies. Hospital officials acknowledge that not all insurance companies are paying and have advised pa-

tients to contact the hospital if they get bills from their insurance companies.

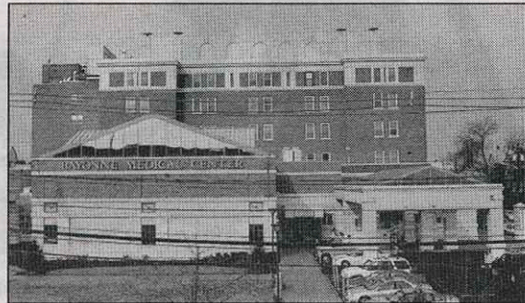
The hospital said it is continuing to talk to insurance companies about re-upping, although United Healthcare spokeswoman Mary McElrath disputed that.

"We're not in negotiations with Bayonne Medical Center," she said. "The last thing we got from them was that they'd canceled our contract."

Aetna, which has contracted with BMC since 1992, didn't learn until Feb. 1 that the hospital was ending that relationship, said Aetna network vice president Joseph DiRienzo. Since

then, he said, the hospital has asked for "massive, staggering increases" over previous rates of reimbursement.

Meanwhile, as talks between the two sides continue, DiRienzo said that Aetna has honored all claims submitted by its subscribers for treatment at BMC and the company will continue to do so, at least though the end of a two-month "cooling off" period which



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expires tomorrow.

Medicare patients and emergency care aren't affected by the hospital's actions, BMC officials said.