

## Zapping hospital bugs Albany OKs bill to report infections

Originally published on June 24, 2005

By JOE MAHONEY  
DAILY NEWS ALBANY BUREAU CHIEF

ALBANY - Lawmakers launched a war yesterday on infections that claim the lives of an estimated 90,000 hospital patients a year across the nation.

Legislation passed by the Assembly and Senate would require New York hospitals to report their infection rates to the state Health Department, which would then have to share that information with the public.

The action drew praise from victims' loved ones, such as Maureen Daly of Brooklyn, whose 64-year-old mother, Johanna, died last year from a staph infection that raced through her body after she was hospitalized for a broken shoulder.

"What happened to my mother shouldn't happen to anyone," said Daly, 38, now a volunteer with the Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths, an advocacy group that helped push through the legislation.

"I'm thrilled this legislation passed because I think it will save lives," she said.

The measure now goes to Gov. Pataki, who said he'll have to study the fine print before he decides to sign it. The state Health Department declined comment.

Advocates for the measure argue that disclosure of infection data will help patients make informed choices when they select a hospital.

"No one should ever enter a hospital and contract an infection, illness or disease," said Senate Health Committee Chairman Kemp Hannon (R-Nassau).

The Health Department, under the legislation, would have to put the infection data online regularly, following a year-long pilot program.

One of the leaders of the push for the measure was former Lt.Gov. Betsy McCaughey, who parted company with Pataki in 1998 and waged an unsuccessful run for governor that year. Despite their political differences, she's optimistic the governor will sign the bill.

"I can't imagine the governor would favor secrecy for the hospital industry over safety for families," said McCaughey, the founder of the Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths.

McCaughey said preventable infections add \$2 billion a year to New York's health care costs and could be reduced through improved hygiene, mandated hand-washing and more frequent cleaning of equipment.