

On Compliance With Title VI Of The Civil Rights Act

MILLIONS OF AMERICANS over the age of 65 years will become eligible for the benefits of Medicare on July 1. In order to bring these benefits to all who need them, hospitals throughout the nation must demonstrate that they are in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Most hospitals have already done so. But hundreds of others require help with procedural and other problems. This help is being provided not only by the Federal Government but by the American Hospital Association and its State affiliates. I am confident that all hospitals want to comply with the provisions of Title VI and that every effort will be made to enable hospitals to serve their communities through the Medicare program.

Secretary John W. Gardner of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has emphasized that the Department and its constituents are extending full cooperation to all hospitals faced with compliance problems. He has delegated to the Public Health Service the responsibility for the civil rights activities of all agencies of the Executive Branch which administer Federal assistance funds in the health and medical fields. Hospitals and other institutions receiving Federal assistance will now deal with only 1 department of the Federal Government instead of with 15. To provide a point of contact for those with whom we are dealing, we have established within the Office of the Surgeon General an Office of Equal Health Opportunity as the organizational unit to carry out this responsibility.

Our first priority is to ensure compliance by hospitals. Administrators have received "Guidelines for Compliance," and they are aware that their hospitals must be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act if they are to be eligible to receive Federal assistance. Hospitals are required to file statements of their intention to comply with the provisions of the law. They are also required to submit reports providing specific information on civil rights practices within the hospital.

As of mid-May, 62 percent of the nation's hospitals had been certified as being in compliance with Title VI. We hope that the rest of the nation's hospitals will be in compliance by July 1.

Through the voluntary action of hospital administrators and civic leaders in all parts of the country, a great deal of progress has been made in the past year in eliminating discrimination. I believe that solutions will be found for most of the remaining problems and that the bulk of American hospitals will make a major contribution to the new Medicare program and to the millions of citizens who will share its benefits.