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## Letter to Patients: July 14, 2009

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Dear Patient of Stony Brook University Hospital,

In the past few days, we have been getting calls from patients who have received letters and phone calls from Empire BlueCross BlueShield (BlueCross) relating to services provided at Stony Brook University Hospital (SBUH).

These letters and calls, with statements about what may or might happen, have caused concern among our patients. We want you to know the facts about what actually is happening today.

**First:** We are still a member of the BlueCross network. Negotiations are continuing, and we are committed to finalizing a fair contract with BlueCross by July 31. Any statement that implies we will not be in the network as of August 1 is incorrect and premature. In fact, we are working diligently and making every effort to maintain our participation in the BlueCross network.

**Second:** If your BlueCross contract has an out-of-network benefit, there is no need for patients who see SBUH doctors on the medical staff, and who use SBUH services to seek new physicians or new hospitals, now or in the future. Your benefits will not change, so BlueCross' advice to you to seek healthcare from the list of hospitals they provided is unnecessary. If your BlueCross contract does not offer such an out-of-network benefit, we are willing to work with BlueCross to ensure that you may continue to receive your healthcare at SBUH. However, your benefit plan may require that you use in-network providers for your care. Please call your benefits administrator to determine how this may affect you.

**Third:** The statements made by BlueCross in some letters stating what actions SBUH "may" or "might" take in the future if negotiations are not successful are inaccurate. I can personally assure you that despite these allegations, we will never refuse to care for a patient who comes through our Emergency Department, we will never transfer emergency patients to other hospitals for reasons related to insurance coverage, nor will we require BlueCross patients to make payment in full before we provide services. Contract or not, we will do everything we can to facilitate the billing process directly with BlueCross on your behalf for services provided.

I am disappointed that BlueCross has chosen to make these statements and send these letters, and to make phone calls, all of which may have caused you unnecessary concern. We are concerned on your behalf that you continue to have freedom of choice and access to the hospital you wish to use, and that your relationship with your own physician is not interrupted. We are one hospital, committed to the health and well being of the people of Long Island, and we are negotiating with a huge corporation, headquartered in Indianapolis, that last year made \$2.5 billion in profits alone. We believe that you should make your own decisions about the physicians and hospitals you want to use, without an insurance company getting in the middle.

If you wish to contact BlueCross and tell them to finalize a fair arrangement with SBUH, you can contact Mark Wagar, BlueCross President and CEO by calling (212) 476-1685, and Angela Braly, President and CEO of WellPoint, Inc., the parent company, at (317) 532-6000.

We will keep you apprised of the situation as it develops via a special section on the homepage of our Web site ([www.stonybrookmedicalcenter.org](http://www.stonybrookmedicalcenter.org)). If we can help you with any additional information, please feel free to contact our Information Hotline at (631) 444-4392.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Strongwater, MD  
Chief Executive Officer  
Stony Brook University Hospital

**To view this letter in PDF format [click here](#).**

*Note: You will need [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#), available free from Adobe.*

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