

N.Y. cracks down on weight-loss surgery

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New York health officials said it plans to restrict the number of hospitals that can perform weight-loss surgery.

State health officials said they plan to reduce the number of hospitals that can seek Medicaid reimbursement for bariatric surgery from 27 to five, the New York Sun said Monday. The newspaper said the decision to reduce eligible hospitals is part of an ongoing effort to reduce costs to the state's \$46 billion Medicaid program.

"Through our purchasing authority, we can purchase high-quality, cost-efficient care, and that's the driver," state Medicaid director Deborah Bachrach told the newspaper.

Alan Aviles, head of the city's Health and Hospitals Corp, said limiting the procedure to five hospitals could present geographic barriers for severely obese patients who have difficulty traveling. The American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery said an estimated 205,000 bariatric surgeries were performed nationwide last year, up from 103,200 in 2003.

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