

# State regulators clamp down on nursing home after deaths

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State regulators said Tuesday that conditions have gotten so bad in a Sacramento nursing home, they have no choice but to try to shut down the 27-year-old facility.

Inspectors blame the home – Arden Rehabilitation and Health Care Center – for the deaths of three elderly patients over the past three years as well as 18 other violations, from letting patients go thirsty to failing to investigate suspicious bruises.

In one case, inspectors allege staff members didn't change the catheter of a 71-year-old Alzheimer's patient for 57 days, causing an infection that ultimately killed the woman. In another case, they say staff members neglected the broken right ankle of an 89-year-old patient, which led to an ulcer, gangrene and the foot becoming so brittle it fell off.

"This facility definitely stands out," said Kathleen Billingsley of the state health department's Center for Healthcare Quality. "The clear message is: Non-compliance will not be tolerated."

Arden Rehabilitation, which opened on Alta Arden Expressway in 1981, is fighting the state's action.

Administrator Don Wessels said the facility has acknowledged problems and is working hard to fix them. He also questioned the timing of the move, saying the most serious violations – including the deaths – occurred in 2005 and 2006.

"If things were that bad back then, why didn't they do something sooner?" asked Wessels, who was brought in by Arden's parent company 13 months ago to turn the center around.

State officials countered that serious investigations take time to develop.

An administrative panel is reviewing the revocation order. No decision is expected for four to 12 months. The 130-patient facility will remain open in the meantime, although Billingsley said state inspectors will make more unannounced visits.

Arden Rehabilitation is owned by Glendale-based Mek Arden LLC.

In a separate case, the state also levied this week a \$90,000 fine against Gramercy Court, an assisted-care facility on Gramercy Drive in Sacramento.

Investigators ruled that a 73-year-old patient suffered an infection in 2006 and ultimately died because Gramercy staff members failed to keep her hydrated.

**Carole Herman, a longtime Sacramento advocate for the elderly who helped file the Gramercy case, applauded the citations but said the state needs to do more, more quickly to protect vulnerable citizens.**

**"Some of them get away with it because families are intimidated, and they don't come forward," said Herman, president of Foundation Aiding the Elderly.**

**"A lot more goes on than we even know about."**