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N to cut off funds if hospitals charge Haitians

By Frank Bajak and Paisley Dodds ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITERS

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -The United Nations has warned that it will cut off shipments of free medicine beginning immediately to any Haitian hospitals that it finds are charging patients.

When the catastrophic earthquake struck Jan. 12, authorities immediately decided to make all medical care free. More than 200 international medical relief groups have sent in teams to help, and millions of dollars of donated medicine has been flown in.

The officials told U.N. Associated Press that about a dozen hospitals — both public and private — have begun charging patients for medicine. The officials said they could not immediately

but said they were in several parts of the country, including Port-au-Prince.

"The money is huge," said Christophe Rerat of the Pan American Health Organization. the U.N. health agency in the region. He said about \$1 million worth of drugs have been sent from U.N. warehouses alone to Haitian hospitals in the past three weeks.

Hospitals don't need to charge patients to pay their staff, because Haitian Health Ministry employees are getting paid with donated money, Rerat added.

Haiti now has about 90 hospitals, including public and private hospitals and field hospitals set up in the quake's aftermath.

A member of the Haitian gov-

provide the names of the hospitals ernment commission created to deal with the medical crisis, Dr. Jean Hugues Henry, said he had no knowledge of any hospitals charging for services or medicine.

U.N. officials said beginning immediately, any hospital found levving fees for medicine will be cut off. But the U.N. would consider continuing to supply non-governmental groups working at private hospitals with drugs if those groups can make a convincing case that none of their patients are being charged.

U.N. goodwill ambassador Angelina Jolie, meanwhile, was heading to Haiti to meet with victims on earthquake hospitalized quake survivors in neighboring Dominican the Republic.



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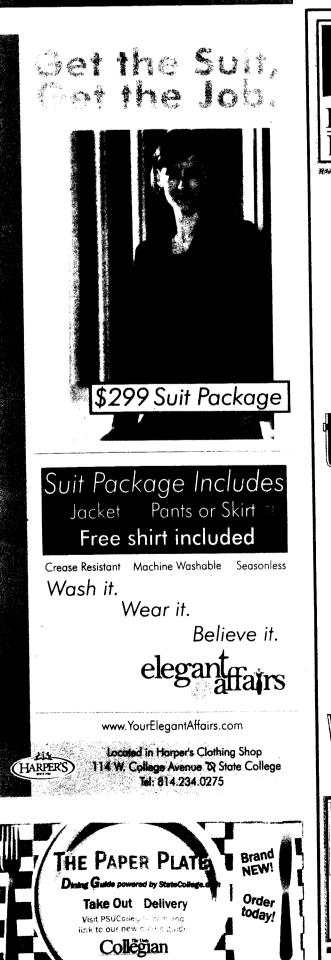
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Tuesday after speaking with A dehydrated baby is given fluids by a nurse of the Children's Memorial Hospital of Chicago at the makeshift camp in Port-au-Prince. The UN has warned that it will cut off shipments of free medicine beginning immediately if it finds that any Haitian hospitals are charging patients.



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