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Charlotte Observer, The (NC)

June 20, 1991

Section: METRO**Edition:** TWO**Page:** 2B**HOSPITAL LOSES NONPROFIT MAIL RATE FOR ITS MONEYMAKING MAGAZINE***CAROL D. LEONNIG, Catawba Valley Bureau*

Catawba Memorial Hospital has lost its half-price discount on mail.

The U.S. Postal Service recently ordered the public hospital to stop using a nonprofit mailing stamp on its money-making magazine.

The hospital, which is appealing the order, will now have to pay 19.8 cents to mail each copy of HealthFirst, instead of the 11.1-cent discount rate. If

the order sticks, the magazine mailing budget could jump from \$40,000 to about \$80,000 a year.

The hospital must ditch the nonprofit stamp, Alexandria, Va., postal authorities wrote last month, because ``its income is derived from the county and state budgets.``

Catawba Memorial officials vehemently argue that point.

Hospital spokesman Dale Brill said the hospital may be county-governed, but it receives no county or state money.

``We're confident that through the appeal process, the right information will get to the authorities,`` Brill said.

HealthFirst is not the only hospital correspondence losing the discount

rate. The hospital would have to pay full price for about 50,000 patient survey forms it sends out each year.

But the magazine, published six times a year with a circulation of about 32,000, is the most controversial.

HealthFirst is the product of Advertising Associates, a for-profit advertising agency the hospital founded last year. The magazine, stuffed with ads and health articles, makes about \$60,000 a year for the hospital endowment.

The postal service's order that the hospital pay full price mail rates comes after much rumbling from several Hickory ad agencies. Those agencies complained both when the hospital opened Advertising Associates and when that agency mailed out HealthFirst with a nonprofit stamp.

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