

### **Garthwaite no guru**

Re "Oversight overdose,"  
(Jan. 14):

I would have to agree with the Star-News editorial that if the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors does not cede control to an independent body, then that body would become just another layer in the already-bloated county bureaucracy.

However, the Star-News is wrong to think that Dr. Thomas Garthwaite needs more freedom to get the job done. When it comes to the issue of King/Drew Medical Center, for once the board actually gave up control. For more than one year, Garthwaite, his hand-picked team of experts (his words not mine), and two separate consulting firms (of which one was awarded a sole-source contract) had free rein to make all necessary changes as they applied to King/Drew.

In that year we saw a bad situation get progressively worse and left on the brink of collapse. Now, because of Garthwaite's inability to make changes, the county had to sign a memorandum of understanding with the feds (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) to hire an independent hospital management turnaround team, Navigant, at the cost of \$13.2 million-plus.

If Garthwaite was the health guru the editorial makes him out to be, we would not have the results we have today, and the Navigant team might not have come to the conclusions that one of the problems was that at times Department of Health Services

(that would be Garthwaite, et al) failed to give the board the appropriate information to make sound decisions.

Does the board deserve blame for this current debacle? Of course. But do not attempt to paint Garthwaite as helpless and blameless in this matter. If he was a true health guru he would have stood up to the board; instead he was too busy playing politics and being a good sycophant.

**GENEVIEVE M. CLAVREUL**  
PASADENA

# Oversight overdose

**L**OS Angeles County's failing health care system certainly could use strong oversight, as the decades of mismanagement at the Martin Luther King Jr.-Drew Medical Center illustrate.

But the proposal by the Board of Supervisors to explore creating an independent authority to run the county's hospitals runs the risk of adding yet another layer of bureaucracy that does nothing.

There is a strong case to be made for having health-care professionals run the operations of the hospitals. But unless the supervisors craft a plan that truly cedes control to this independent authority, such a body would be just another level of bureaucracy that only impedes actual reform.

A better first step would be

to extend that level of independence to current health guru Dr. Thomas Garthwaite, who also was promised a certain amount of authority.

But when it comes to patronage, and pacification, the supes will go to any length to keep their fingers on that political pulse, which very much determines their decisions.

They need to own up to their part in the abysmal conditions at the county hospitals and give Garthwaite the means and the authority to begin changes now instead of hiring yet another high-paid administrator they can blame later.

Based on their record, however, the supervisors appear to be more interested in avoiding responsibility than actually fixing what's broken. This could be their chance to change.