

"The Michael Jackson Burn Center" Closing

Date confirmed in [*"Los Angeles Times"*](#) ([archived](#)) (*"Friday [August 28, 1987]"*)

[*"Los Angeles Times"*](#) (August 29, 1987) ([archived](#))

Amid tears from staff members, Brotman Medical Center closed its Michael Jackson Burn Center on Friday.

Brotman spokeswoman Diane Sherman said the Culver City hospital shut the 23-bed burn center, which had only four patients Friday, with "deep regret." She blamed it on the center's "significant losses."

Sherman, without disclosing the amount, said the center has been losing money because of a reduction in government reimbursements for Medicare and Medi-Cal patients and a declining number of burn patients. Similar problems also prompted the recent shutdown of four of the county's private hospital trauma centers, specially equipped facilities for treating victims of serious emergencies.

The loss of the Brotman unit leaves only three burn centers in Los Angeles County: the 30-bed burn center at Sherman Oaks Community Hospital, the eight-bed unit at Torrance Memorial Hospital and the 16-to-19-bed unit at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center.

The mood among employees was somber Friday as rumors circulated that the closing of the burn center and other cutbacks this month indicated deeper financial problems at Brotman Medical. Brotman and 103 other hospitals, most of them considered weak financial performers, are about to be sold by Nashville, Tenn.-based Hospital Corp. of America to a newly formed firm called HospitalTrust Inc. owned by HCA employees.

The burn center was opened in 1972 and given its current name in 1984 after pop singer Michael Jackson gave it an endowment. At the time, the money was said to be earmarked for research into burn treatment, but Sherman said the burn center received no operating money from the fund. The funds were used for patient entertainment.

Jackson's contribution, described by officials three years ago as "a lot," was made in thanks for treatment he received after the back of his head was burned during the filming of a Pepsi commercial.

Hospital employees and Jackson's representatives learned of the closing only hours before it happened.

Through his publicist Lee Solters, Jackson labeled the closure "deplorable, cruel and for commercial reasons." Jackson is looking for another hospital to house a burn unit bearing his name, Solters said.