

SCMA News Briefs

The monthly newsletter of the
Sonoma County Medical Association
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June 2009

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TOP NEWS

Dr. Kirk Pappas nominated for Partnership HealthPlan board

SCMA President Dr. Kirk Pappas has been unanimously nominated by the SCMA board of directors to serve on the board of Partnership HealthPlan, which will begin managing care for almost 50,000 Medi-Cal beneficiaries in Sonoma County this fall.

The nomination was the result of an open process in which SCMA solicited nominations from its entire membership through News Briefs and personal contacts. Several applications were received, but Dr. Pappas emerged as the strongest candidate because of his past service on a Partnership planning group and his familiarity with the health plan. His nomination will be forwarded to the Department of Health Services and then to the county board of supervisors.

Meanwhile, Partnership is looking for a part-time regional medical director for Sonoma County. A job description has been posted at www.partnershiphp.org.

SCMA NEWS

SCMA launches Lunchtime Legal Seminars

Do you have a legal question related to your practice? Do you have concerns about employment issues and requests for medical records? What about the Red Flag Rule?

Answers to these and other questions will be provided by SCMA attorney Larry McLaughlin at a series of free lunchtime seminars this summer. The monthly sessions will run from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Participants need to bring their own lunch.

Only SCMA members and their staff are eligible to attend. To RSVP and receive the location, contact Rachel Pandolfi at rpandolfi@scma.org or 707-525-4375.

The following topics are scheduled:

June 25: CMA and SCMA legal services. CMA legal resources; SCMA legal services; most common legal questions members pose.

July 23: Employment issues. At-will employment and termination; disability and leave laws.

August 27: Medical records. Patient access; transmitting records between physicians; access for divorced parents.

September 24: The Red Flag Rule. New identity theft protection requirements that apply to many physicians.

Specialty task force increases access to local specialists

Access to local specialists is slowly improving, thanks to the efforts of a specialty task force formed last year by SCMA and the Redwood Community Health Coalition. To date, the task force has focused on orthopedics and endocrinology and has secured commitments from a significant number of those specialists to provide care to the under- and uninsured.

Specialty clinics have been established at the Southwest Community Health Center (orthopedics) and the Chanate Family Practice Center (endocrinology). In addition, Kaiser has agreed to perform one unfunded orthopedic surgery per month.

Cast your vote in the annual SCMA election by June 30

As a member of SCMA, you are entitled to vote for SCMA officers and board representatives, and for delegates and alternate delegates to the CMA House of Delegates.

For the SCMA board of directors, you are allowed one vote in the district in which your primary office is located. (TPMG physicians constitute their own district.)

For the CMA House of Delegates, vote for two delegates and two alternate delegates.

To vote, print out the ballot below, then **sign** and **fax** to **525-4328** by June 30.

SCMA President-Elect

Catherine Gutfreund, MD, family medicine

Yes No

SCMA Board of Directors (three-year terms, July 2009 to June 2012)

Healdsburg District

Brad Drexler, MD, ob-gyn

Yes No

Santa Rosa District

Leonard Klay, MD, ob-gyn

Yes No

Phyllis Senter, MD, family medicine

Yes No

The Permanente Medical Group

Jose Morales, MD, pediatrics

Yes No

CMA Delegation (three-year terms, July 2009 to June 2012)

Lela Emad, MD, ob-gyn

Yes No

Catherine Gutfreund, MD, family medicine

Yes No

Leonard Klay, MD, ob-gyn

Yes No

Phyllis Senter, MD, family medicine

Yes No

Signature (required)

LOCAL MEDICAL NEWS

Latino Health Forum seeks donations for student scholarships

The Latino Health Forum, now in its 17th year, is seeking donations from local physicians to help fund student scholarships for this year's forum, scheduled for October 8. The scholarships are given to local college and high school students interested in medical careers.

This year's forum, organized by the Santa Rosa Family Medicine Residency and the Sonoma County Academic Foundation for Excellence in Medicine (SCAFEM), will focus on healthy communities and non-medical determinants of health. More than 200 physicians and other providers are expected to attend.

Donations for student scholarships should be mailed to Latino Health Forum, SCAFEM, 3324 Chanate Rd., Santa Rosa 95404. For more information, contact Dr. Enrique Gonzalez-Mendez at 576-4770 or gonzale4@sutterhealth.org.

iWalk strolls into view

iWalk, a community walking program organized by Health Action, has taken its first steps by opening a website at iwalksonoma.org and placing ads in local media.

The website offers detailed information about the benefits of walking, along with a calendar of walking events and a list of walking groups. Maps, starter kits and walking tools are included as well.

Health Action has also prepared iWalk "prescription pads" that physicians can use to encourage their patients to walk. Plans are afoot to distribute the pads to SCMA members.

STATE AND NATIONAL NEWS

CMA proposes Medicare overhaul

As the health care reform battle heats up in Congress, CMA has proposed several changes to Medicare, including:

- * Eliminating the SGR (sustainable growth rate) formula.
- * Providing physicians with a 10% payment increase to make up for the last seven years of inadequate updates.
- * Establishing a new physician payment system that allows physicians to select among six payment tracks based on their mode of practice.
- * Updating the GPCI (geographic practice cost index) formula to accurately reflect practice costs.

Court of appeal upholds MICRA

In late May, a California court of appeal upheld the state's longstanding MICRA malpractice statutes in a case that pitted a national law firm against a California surgical group. The surgeons' lawyers, supported by a CMA amicus brief, successfully argued that a malpractice award against the group should be limited to \$250,000, per the MICRA statutes.

In its ruling, the court noted that MICRA benefits the state by keeping malpractice insurance rates low. The court further observed that insurance rates uncontrolled by MICRA would pose "serious problems for the health care system in California, threatening to curtail the availability of medical care in some parts of the state."

New Medicare enrollment rules could have costly consequences

New Medicare enrollment rules that took effect in April limit physicians' ability to retroactively collect from Medicare. The rules shorten the time frame during which physicians can bill retroactively for

Medicare services after enrolling or otherwise changing their enrollment status. Under the new rules, enrollment will be retroactive to 30 days prior to the receipt date of a complete application, or for new physicians joining Medicare, the date the physician saw his first Medicare patient, whichever is latest.

This change could result in physicians not being paid for services to Medicare beneficiaries if they do not submit applications or other status changes in a timely fashion. For example, if Dr. Jones relocates her practice on September 1, but does not submit an address change to Medicare until December 1, she could lose two months' worth of Medicare payments.

The new rules also require physicians to alert Medicare of a change in practice location within 30 days, or risk expulsion from Medicare for up to two years. Physicians are strongly urged to submit new applications and reportable changes to Medicare accurately and immediately. To avoid unnecessary delays, physicians should use Medicare's web-based PECOS enrollment system.

PEOPLE *****

Dr. Elise Sullivan joins SCMA board

Elise Sullivan, MD, a resident in the Santa Rosa Family Medicine Residency, has been named to the SCMA board of directors to represent the residency program. She replaces Ian Hoffman, MD, who is graduating from the residency and moving to Oakland.

Drs. Severt and Mazur combine forces at new Hand Center in Santa Rosa

Dr. Raymond Severt, a Santa Rosa orthopaedic and hand surgeon, has joined the Santa Rosa Orthopaedics group, where he will work with hand surgeon Dr. Kai Mazur in a new Hand Center scheduled to open on July 1. Services at the center, located at 131B Stony Circle in Santa Rosa, will include treatment of fractures

and injuries, congenital defects, arthritis, tendon disorders and repetitive stress.

Dr. Tom Crane's daughter named top Berkeley grad

Emma Shaw Crane, the daughter of social worker Susan Shaw and Kaiser family physician Dr. Tom Crane, has been named the top graduate in the UC Berkeley class of 2009, which includes 6,800 students. An Interdisciplinary Studies major, she maintained a perfect 4.0 average at the university while working on a variety of global and community projects.

RESOURCES *****

Three CMA webinars in June

CMA is sponsoring three one-hour webinars during June. The webinars are for **CMA members only**. To register, visit www.cmanet.org/calendar.

June 4, 12:30 p.m. How the stimulus bill impacts your HIPAA obligations.

June 17, 5:30 p.m. Long-term planning in a recessionary environment.

June 18, 12:30 p.m. Medical staff challenges for the future: Are we helping or hurting ourselves?

June 9 AMA webinar on accessing HIT funding

The American Medical Association is sponsoring a free webinar on June 9 to help physicians understand the health information technology provisions in the federal stimulus bill, which includes \$19 billion in funds to help physicians purchase and use HIT. To register, visit www.ama-assn.org/go/hit.

June 24 webinar on new asthma guidelines

A webinar on asthma diagnosis and screening guidelines will be held from

noon to 1 p.m. on June 24. Information on the webinar, part of a new asthma education project in Sonoma County, will soon be posted on www.ggbreath.org. For details, contact Cerissa MacNichols at 707-217-5160 or cerissam@ggbreath.org.

Volunteers needed for Jewish Community Free Clinic

The Jewish Community Free Clinic in Rohnert Park needs physician, nurse and other volunteers for its four-hour drop-in clinics on Mondays, Tuesdays or Thursdays. Typical commitment is four hours per month. To volunteer, contact the clinic at 585-7780 or VolunteerCoordinator.JCFC@gmail.com.

Volunteer for Neighbors in Health

Last year, more than 500 children participated in Neighbors in Health, a day-long event that provides medical care, immunizations, well checks and dental exams to uninsured and underinsured youngsters. Organizers hope to serve even more children at this year's event, scheduled for August 2. To volunteer, visit www.unitedwaywinecountry.org/nih.

APPLICANTS *****

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CLASSIFIEDS *****

Regional medical director for Partnership HealthPlan

Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC), a regional health plan providing services

to Medi-Cal enrollees in Napa, Solano and Yolo counties, is expanding to Sonoma County in the fall of 2009 and seeks a part-time regional medical director (20 hours per week). The position is responsible for the quality and appropriateness of medical care delivered by PHC to 47,000 Medi-Cal enrollees in Sonoma County. A job description is posted at www.partnershiphp.org. For questions, contact Dr. Chris Cammisa at ccammisa@partnershiphp.org or 707-863-4261.

Medical transcription

Digital Medical Records Management. Local medical transcription service. Latest technology, great service, reasonable rates. Medical language specialists with over 20 years' experience in all specialties. Easy phone-in system with toll-free number or digital recorder. Speech recognition editing, EMR/EHR interface. Call Lisa at 707-889-2749 or Paula at 707-484-2070. Offices in Santa Rosa and Windsor.

Medical office space

Small suite available for reasonable rent. Three exam rooms, southeast Santa Rosa. Call Connie, 707-525-0211.

How to submit a classified ad

To submit a classified ad for News Briefs or Sonoma Medicine, contact Nan Perrott at nperrott@rhscommunications.com or 707-525-4226. The cost is one dollar per word.

TO UNSUBSCRIBE *****

You are receiving SCMA News Briefs because you are a physician or an affiliated medical professional in Sonoma County. If you wish to unsubscribe, contact Steve Osborn at sosborn@scma.org or 707-525-4325.

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