



SCMA News Briefs

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SONOMA COUNTY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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September 2009

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SCMA members invited to informal lunch with Assemblymember Huffman

All SCMA and Marin Medical Society members are invited to an informal lunch with Assemblymember Jared Huffman on Wednesday, Sept. 16, in Groverman Hall at Petaluma Valley Hospital. The lunch, scheduled for 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., will allow SCMA and MMS members to speak with Huffman regarding health care financing, the recent state budget, and pending health legislation (see link to CMA's Legislative Hot List below).

Petaluma Valley Hospital is located at 400 N. McDowell Blvd. in Petaluma, near the Washington Blvd. exit from Highway 101. To RSVP, contact Rachel Pandolfi at rachel@scma.org or 525-4375.

CMA's Legislative Hot List at cmanet.org/news/hotlist.asp provides a summary and current status of CMA-sponsored bills in the California Legislature, as well as the progress of other significant legislation followed by CMA's Center for Government Relations. For more information on a specific bill, contact the lobbyist identified at the end of each bill summary.

Local physicians rally in Courthouse Square

"Medicare works for seniors. Why not for juniors?" That question from Dr. Rick Flinders reflected the strong support for a "public option" among physicians who attended a spirited late-August rally for health care reform in Santa Rosa's Old Courthouse Square. The rally was the second in as many weeks, and more are planned during September.

The rally, which is featured in a YouTube video called "[Doctors Demonstrate for Public Option](#)," was the brainchild of Drs. Rachel Friedman and Veronica Jordan at Santa Rosa's family medicine residency. "Our main goal in organizing these rallies was to inspire the physicians, nurses, and other healthcare workers who are on the front lines of the healthcare crisis to speak out in favor of healthcare reform and specifically, the public option," said Friedman.

Both rallies drew more than 100 people, including several dozen physicians and other providers. "It was a peaceful expression of support for a public option in health reform," said Flinders, who noted that recent opinion polls show that three out of four Americans favor such a plan, including many physicians. He added, "I would only encourage other physicians to express what they believe, in the way that suits them best."

Managed Medi-Cal begins Oct. 1

Physicians who care for Medi-Cal patients in Sonoma County will have to follow new procedures beginning Oct. 1, after the county switches from fee-for-service to managed Medi-Cal. Most of the 47,000 Medi-Cal enrollees in the county will be placed in the new program, and each one is being asked to select a primary care physician who will coordinate the patient's care.

The program, described at length in the current issue of [Sonoma Medicine](#), will be administered by Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC). Primary care physicians will need to contract with PHC to provide care to new or existing Medi-Cal patients. Specialists are not required to contract with PHC, but those who do will receive 130% to 165% of current Medi-Cal rates. For contracting details, contact Darryl Crowder at DCrowder@partnershiphp.org or 863-4535.

New ID cards will be issued to all PHC Medi-Cal members. Effective Oct. 1, claims should be sent to PO Box 1368, Suisun City, CA 94585. For questions about claims, call 863-4130.

PHC will be opening an office at 415 Humboldt St. in Santa Rosa during September. Services will include provider relations, a medical director and care coordination staff. The temporary phone number for provider relations is 863-4100.

Physicians urged to order H1N1 vaccine

The California Department of Public Health is urging physicians to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus by ordering vaccine free of charge from a new website, CalPanFlu.org. The vaccine, which is expected to become available in mid-October, will probably need to be given in two doses, 3-4 weeks apart. Target populations for the vaccine include:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or provide care for infants less than 6 months old
- Health care and emergency services personnel
- Children and young adults aged 6 months to 24 years
- People 25-64 who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for flu-related complications

The vaccine will only be available through the CalPanFlu.org website and local health departments; it will not be carried by private organizations. Physicians may bill public and private insurers for vaccine administration fees.

Save the date: SCMA Awards Dinner set for Dec. 2

This year's SCMA Awards Dinner will be held on Wednesday evening, Dec. 2, at the Vintners Inn in Santa Rosa. The event begins with a social hour, followed by dinner and presentation of the association's annual Outstanding Contribution awards.

Tickets are free for SCMA members and award recipients; tickets for spouses, guests and nonmembers cost \$50 each. To RSVP, contact Rachel Pandolfi at rachel@scma.org or 525-4375. When reserving your spot, please indicate your dinner choice: "duet" (chicken breast and pork tenderloin), chicken breast only, pork tenderloin only, or vegetarian.

Sutter North Bay Foundation to merge with CPMC

Sutter Medical Foundation North Bay, which includes about 80 local doctors, will merge with the physician foundation at California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco on Jan. 1. The combined foundation, with more than 220 doctors, will be called Sutter Pacific Medical Foundation. Doctors in the foundation will provide services at Sutter facilities in Sonoma, Marin, Lake and San Francisco counties, with additional locations throughout Northern California.

Chris Rogers, the incoming executive director of Sutter Pacific, said, "We are focusing on building a robust primary care and specialist network so that patients all along the 101 corridor have access to comprehensive medical care." The foundation's CEO will be Morris Flaum, MD.

Healdsburg Hospital seismic upgrade costs slashed by 70%

Bucking the trend of runaway costs, the price of state-mandated seismic upgrades at Healdsburg Hospital will be about 70% less than anticipated. Instead of the original \$2.2 million plan, the state has approved a version that will cost only \$600,000. "This will allow us to remain in our current building and continue to meet the health care needs of our community until at least 2030," said Healdsburg CEO Evan Rayner.

Seismic upgrades were mandated for all California hospitals in 1994, in the wake of the devastating Northridge earthquake, which forced almost two dozen hospitals to suspend services and caused about \$3 billion in damages.

Orenda Center patients shifted to new providers

Because of budget cuts, two substance abuse programs at the Orenda Center in Santa Rosa were shifted to other providers in mid-August. The Drug Abuse Alternatives Center (DAAC) took over the 31-day residential services program, and California Human Development (CHD) began offering outpatient services. "Selection of these two qualified organizations is an important first step in preserving the continuum of addiction treatment services in Sonoma County," said Gina Giannavola, the county's director of alcohol and drug services.

Some services will remain at the Orenda Center, including the detoxification program, which was recently reduced from 30 to 15 beds. The "4-to-6 hour hold" program is no longer available, so all detox patients arriving at Orenda will be admitted for full services.

Physicians referring patients to the residential services program (Turning Points) should call DAAC at 284-2950. The CHD number for outpatient services is 521-4737, and the Orenda number for detox is 565-7460.

Need help with Medicare billing?

PalmettoGBA, the new Medicare administrator for Northern California, has offered to conduct workshops this fall about new billing procedures and other topics of interest to physicians. Possible subjects include E&M services, preventive medicine services, RAC and CERT audits, and e-prescribing. A particular area of concern is downcoding or denials for E&M services.

The workshops will be coordinated by local medical associations. If you are interested in having PalmettoGBA conduct a workshop in your area, contact Rachel Pandolfi at rachel@scma.org or 525-4375.

CPPI request deadline extended to Sept. 4

The deadline to request patient lists for the California Physician Performance Initiative has been extended to Sept. 4. CPPI will be using the lists to generate "physician quality" scores that may be used by payors for pay-for-performance, economic profiling or tiered networks.

Physicians can obtain their patient lists at the CPPI website, cchri.org. Changes to the list must be submitted to CPPI by Sept. 18. Physicians should verify whether CPPI correctly listed the patient name, physician name and specialty, and whether the physician performed the procedure.

California Supreme Court upholds MICRA

The California Supreme Court has declined to review an appeals court ruling that upheld the constitutionality of California's landmark Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act (MICRA). Under MICRA, patients can recover up to a quarter of a million dollars in noneconomic or "pain and suffering" awards. Injured patients are also entitled to unlimited medical and economic compensation, which often amounts to millions of dollars to cover true damages, such as lost wages, medical expenses, and long-term care costs.

CMA sponsored and won passage of MICRA in 1975 in response to runaway medical liability costs and the resulting shortage of health care providers, predominantly in high-risk specialties.

In the most recent case, lawyers argued that the MICRA cap violates constitutional provisions that prohibit the Legislature from exercising judicial powers, as well as the equal protection clauses of the state and federal constitutions. The court, however, ruled that the state has a legitimate interest in limiting medical malpractice insurance costs because without MICRA insurance rates would pose "serious problems for the health care system in California."

PEOPLE

Drs. Bo Greaves and Tom Dunlap receive Physician Leader awards

Dr. Bo Greaves, a Santa Rosa family physician, and Dr. Tom Dunlap, a Santa Rosa cardiologist, will receive Physician Leader awards from the Center for Well-Being at its annual Celebration of Dreams luncheon on Sept. 18. Both will be honored for their long careers as leaders in the Sonoma County medical community.

EVENTS

Web conference on asthma control set for Sept. 16

Breathe California is hosting a web conference, "Quick fixes for poor asthma control," from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 16. The presenter is Barbara Langham, RN, a pediatric care manager for Kaiser in Napa and Fairfield. The conference qualifies for 1 hour of CME. To register, visit ggbreathe.org or call 650-994-1903.

Heart disease grand rounds at Kaiser Santa Rosa on Sept. 29

Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, the author of "Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease," will give a grand rounds on that topic at Kaiser Santa Rosa, 401 Bicentennial Way, on Sept. 29. The presentation will run from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. in Conference Rooms H1-H3. Esselstyn, formerly at the Cleveland Clinic, will also give a public presentation on Sept. 28, at 12:30 p.m. in MOB East, Conference Rooms E3-E4.

Felix String Quartet to play at Kaiser Santa Rosa

The Felix String Quartet, a local classical ensemble, will play two free lunchtime concerts at Kaiser Santa Rosa during September as part of the ArtsSonoma music festival, which brings music and other arts into unusual locations. Both concerts will begin at 12:15 p.m. and last for about an hour. The first is on Sept. 28 in the lobby of MOB East, 401 Bicentennial Way, and the second on Sept. 30 at MOB 5, 3925 Old Redwood Highway. Both concerts feature quartets by Beethoven and Mendelssohn.

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Regional Medical Director

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 707-863-4261 or ccammisa@partnershiphp.org.

How to submit a classified ad

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

CORRECTIONS

An article in the August SCMA News Briefs failed to mention that a recent grant to the Northern California Center for Well-Being was made by the Northern California Physicians Council (NORCAP), using funds provided by NORCAL.

ABOUT SCMA

The Sonoma County Medical Association, a 501(c)(6) nonprofit association, supports local physicians and their efforts to enhance the health of the community. Founded in 1858, SCMA is affiliated with the California Medical Association and the American Medical Association.

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