



SCMA News Briefs

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SONOMA COUNTY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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October 2009

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Drs. Mills, Sugarman and Drexler to receive SCMA awards

Drs. Walt Mills, Jeff Sugarman and Brad Drexler will receive Outstanding Contribution awards at the SCMA Awards Dinner on Dec. 2. Awards will also be presented to the Santa Rosa Family Medicine Residency Consortium and for the Sonoma Medicine Article of the Year.

Mills, a family physician at Kaiser Santa Rosa, will receive the Outstanding Contribution to the Community award for his work with the residency program, the Southwest Community Health Center and the Northern California Center for Well-Being.

Sugarman, a dermatologist and pediatric dermatologist in private practice in Santa Rosa, will receive the Outstanding Contribution to Sonoma County Medicine award for establishing the dermatology clinic at Alliance Medical Center and for his leadership activities on the SCMA Specialty Access Task Force, which has expanded access to specialists throughout the county.

Drexler, a Healdsburg obstetrician and gynecologist and past SCMA president, will receive the Outstanding Contribution to SCMA award for his leadership at the medical association and his continuing commitment to public health and Medicare reform.

The residency consortium will receive a special Recognition of Achievement award for their efforts to ensure a stable future for the family medicine residency. The Article of the Year winner will be announced in late October.

The awards dinner—scheduled for 6 to 9 p.m. at the Vintner's Inn, 4350 Barnes Rd., Santa Rosa—is **free** for SCMA members, but RSVPs are required. Tickets for spouses, guests and nonmembers are \$50 each. To RSVP and/or to purchase tickets, contact Rachel Pandolfi at 525-4375 or rachel@scma.org.

SCMA membership up 3% since 2008; invoices in the mail

Despite the recession and continuing turmoil in the health care system, membership in SCMA has increased 3% since 2008. The current total is 641 active members and 144 retired, with several applicants waiting in the wings. Membership in CMA increased this year as well, rising about 1% from 33,648 to 34,088, including retired members.

SCMA members are reminded to return their 2010 Sonoma County Physician Directory verification forms, which were mailed in September along with dues invoices for next year. Members who pay their dues by Dec. 31 qualify for a 5% discount. Payments need to be at SCMA by Dec. 31; **there is no grace period**. Installment payments can be arranged.

If you need a copy of your invoice or have any questions about dues, contact Rachel Pandolfi at rachel@scma.org or 525-4375. Nonmember physicians can complete a simple online application for SCMA and CMA at www.scma.org/join.asp.

Partnership Health Plan starts in Sonoma County

Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC) began implementing its managed Medi-Cal program in Sonoma County on Oct. 1. More than 80% of the 48,000 Medi-Cal enrollees managed by PHC have selected a primary care provider; those that did not were assigned to open practices.

PHC will work with local physicians to maintain continuity of care and resolve any issues related to the transition to managed Medi-Cal. Training sessions for physician offices are available by contacting the PHC provider relations department at 863-4100.

Important PHC phone numbers include:

- Provider relations: 863-4100
- Member services: 863-4120
- Health services: 863-4133 (referral or TAR information)
- Pharmacy Services: 863-4414
- Claims: 863-4130
- Automated eligibility verification: 863-4140

Claims for services provided to PHC members on or after October 1st should be sent to:

Partnership HealthPlan of California
PO Box 1368
Suisun City, CA 94585-1368

Providers should use Quest Lab for all diagnostic procedures for PHC members. For the provider directory, formulary and additional information, visit www.partnershiphp.org.

Memorial Hospital rated No. 1 in nation for rapid heart attack response

Contrary to popular belief, the fastest “door-to-balloon” time for patients with ST segment myocardial infarction (STEMI) isn’t at some big-city medical center—it’s at Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital. The most recent rankings of 949 U.S. hospitals by the American College of Cardiology found that Memorial offered the quickest response for STEMI patients, averaging just 66 minutes from presentation at the ER to restoration of blood flow. The national standard of care is 90 minutes or less.

Memorial officials attributed the No. 1 ranking to recent innovations at Coastal Valleys Emergency Medical Services and the hospital’s Cardiac Catheterization Lab. “We wanted a 90-minute limit between detection of STEMIs by paramedics treating patients at their homes or in the community and any Cath Lab intervention,” said Coastal Valleys administrator Bryan Cleaver. “For us, it’s home-to-balloon time.”

Coastal Valleys paramedics using a 12-lead electrocardiogram can now identify STEMI patients on scene and alert the hospital, which recently moved its Heart & Vascular Institute next to the ER. When paramedics arrive, an already assembled team of cardiologists, emergency physicians and nurses moves STEMI patients quickly through the ER and into the Cath Lab for treatment. Because of better coordination, pre-Cath Lab prep time was reduced to as little as 13 minutes in some cases.

Management shuffle at Sutter Medical Center of Santa Rosa

Sutter Medical Center of Santa Rosa has a new chief administrative officer, but the old one is still close at hand. The new officer is Michael Purvis, who took over on Sept. 28. His predecessor, Mike Cohill, now a senior vice president of Sutter Health, will continue to lead efforts to build a new Sutter hospital in Santa Rosa. He will also retain his post as CEO of Sutter Medical Foundation North Bay.

Purvis, a hospital consultant, was previously a regional director for Saint Joseph Health System and a hospital and clinic administrator in Arizona.

Feds take baby steps on medical liability reform

In his Sept. 9 speech to Congress on health care reform, President Obama ruled out caps on non-economic damage awards, such as the \$250,000 cap in California’s landmark Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act (MICRA), in effect since 1975. Obama did, however, indicate that he supports pilot projects for reducing the financial impact of medical liability lawsuits. Accordingly, the Department of Health and Human Services in late September unveiled a modest plan that would examine ways to discourage frivolous medical malpractice lawsuits. Under the plan, the federal government would provide \$25 million in grants to identify practices that reduce medical errors, lower malpractice insurance premiums, and prevent frivolous lawsuits.

Meanwhile, concern is growing among physicians about the liability implications of “comparative effectiveness” research, which attempts to objectively demonstrate the effectiveness of medical treatments. CMA and other advocacy groups are trying to ensure that physicians are protected if they deviate from any clinical guidelines produced through such research. CMA believes that physicians must be allowed to deviate from practice

guidelines when in their clinical judgment it is in their patient's best interest, without being exposed to increased liability. CMA also believes that data gleaned from such research must not be independently used to establish standards of care or deny coverage, or be used as evidence in medical malpractice cases.

Even as these new challenges arise, CMA continues to defend MICRA, which has kept malpractice premiums in California low, compared to those in other states without such laws. Once the highest in the nation, California malpractice premiums fell 12% from 1986 (the year the constitutional challenges to MICRA were exhausted) to 2000, while rising 55% nationally. Today, the average California physician saves \$58,000 a year in malpractice insurance premiums when compared to colleagues in Florida, New York, and Michigan.

Three CMA-sponsored bills await Schwarzenegger's signature

Three CMA-sponsored bills have passed the Legislature and now await the governor's signature:

Unlawful rescission. AB 2 (De La Torre) would prevent the practice of health plans and insurers wrongfully rescinding coverage for patients after they become seriously ill. The bill would require insurers to obtain approval from an independent review organization before rescinding a patient's health insurance.

Peer review. AB 120 (Hayashi) bill would increase fairness and transparency in the peer review system, helping to ensure high quality care in California hospitals.

Osteopathic physicians. SB 606 (Ducheny) would make osteopathic physicians eligible for the Steven M. Thomson Loan Repayment Program. The program, currently open only to MDs, provides medical school loan repayment grants of up to \$105,000 in exchange for a three-year service commitment in a medically underserved area of the state.

For more information on these and other bills, visit CMA's Legislative Hot List at www.cmanet.org/news/hotlist.asp.

Physicians urged to preregister for H1N1 vaccine

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is urging physicians to preregister for the H1N1 vaccine, which is expected to be available in mid to late October. Even if you are not ready to place an order, you must register now to inform CDPH of your interest in being a vaccinator.

Unlike seasonal flu vaccine, H1N1 vaccine will be distributed by CDPH, rather than regular suppliers. California is expected to receive 8 million doses by late October, with an additional 2 million doses per week thereafter.

Physicians are being asked to register as vaccinators so CDPH can get a realistic assessment of physician capacity and interest in vaccinating. When registering, be prepared to submit your National Provider Identification number, the projected number of doses of the vaccine your practice expects to use, and the number of patients your practice has that fit into high-risk groups. By registering, you are not making a commitment to administer the same quantity of vaccine.

To register, visit www.CalPanFlu.org.

EVENTS

Interested in attending a seminar on risk management?

NORCAL Mutual Insurance has offered to provide free two-hour seminars on risk management to interested physicians. The seminars, which would include CME, would help physicians improve patient follow-up and tracking, understand informed consent, and apply risk-management documentation practices.

If you are interested in such a seminar, contact Rachel Pandolfi at rachel@scma.org or 525-4375. Seminars will be scheduled based on physician response.

Latino Health Forum in Santa Rosa on Oct. 8

An all-day forum on Latino health will be held at the Flamingo Hotel in Santa Rosa on Thursday, Oct. 8. The featured speaker is Dr. Anthony Iton, the public health officer of Alameda County, who will discuss how social concerns relate to health outcomes and inequities. Iton's speech will be followed by a series of workshops on social and economic factors that affect health access and quality of care.

The conference qualifies for up to 6.25 hours of CME; cost is \$125. To register, visit www.scafem.org or call 527-6223.

Wine tasting on Oct. 10 to benefit student AMA/CMA chapter

A wine tasting to benefit the student AMA/CMA chapter at Touro University Medical School will be held in St. Helena on Saturday afternoon, Oct. 10. Medical students, physicians, spouses and guests from throughout the North Bay are invited to enjoy fine wines and cheeses at the Ehlers Estate Winery, 3222 Ehlers Lane, St. Helena. Cost is \$40 per person (\$20 for students). To RSVP, contact Sarah Zitsman at sarah.zitsman@tu.edu or 415-894-5250.

Adolescent Health Conference in Santa Rosa on Oct. 13

An all-day conference on adolescent health will be held at the DHS Conference Center (475 Aviation Blvd., Santa Rosa) on Tuesday, Oct. 13. Topics include an update on adolescent health in Sonoma County, use of the AHWG Behavioral Health Toolkit, and serving gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth. Cost is \$50. To register, contact Adrienne Davis at adrienne.l.davis@kp.org or 566-5278.

PEOPLE

CEO of Colorado Medical Society to take helm at CMA

Alfred Gilchrist, CEO of the Colorado Medical Society and former director of government advocacy for the Texas Medical Association, will become chief executive of CMA in November. Gilchrist brings 30 years of experience to CMA, including groundbreaking achievements in patient rights, medical liability, and tobacco control measures.

"Alfred Gilchrist's invaluable experience and demonstrated talents at the state and federal level could not come at a more crucial time, as our nation discusses how to improve our health care system," said CMA President Dr. Dev GnanaDev. "Alfred's leadership and vision will greatly enhance our efforts to expand access to quality health care, improve the public health, and maintain practice viability for the physicians of California."

Drs. Baginsky, Miller and Richards retiring

Three longtime SCMA members have announced their retirement plans.

Dr. Peter Baginsky, who has been on medical leave from his diabetes specialty at Sutter Medical Group since January, will not be returning to practice. He can still be reached at baginsp@sutterhealth.org.

Dr. Mike Miller, a psychiatrist at Kaiser Santa Rosa, and Dr. Alfonso Richards, a Petaluma urologist, will also be retiring this fall.

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CLASSIFIEDS

Collections Seminar

Cal Coast Credit is pleased to present a collections seminar, "Improve Your Bottom Line."

Date: Thursday, October 22

Time: 2 to 4 p.m.

Location: 1150 State Farm Dr., Santa Rosa

Telephone Collections, Asset Searches and Locating Debtors will be the main topics in this exciting and informative two-hour seminar. Learn relevant information and techniques to help you keep your edge. If you are a collections practitioner and want to collect more money faster, then this collection seminar is for you.

Call today and reserve your seat. Only \$49 for CCCS clients; \$79 for non-clients. Contact Teresa at 707-542-6495, Ext. 114, or calcoast@cccs1.com.

TEMPORARY Medical Biller Needed

* Billing/coding experience

* Intergy software

* 32 +/- hours per week

* Salary DOE

Contact Stacy at Dr. Roger Klein's office: 707-576-0366 or stacy_rogerkleinmd@yahoo.com.

Medical Office For Rent

Suited for ophthalmology, optometry or other use of 1,560 square feet. Includes equipment. Prime location with great patient parking. Four exam rooms. Immediate occupancy. Call 538-4865.

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 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

A story in our September issue misspelled the name of the county's director of alcohol and drug services. The correct spelling is Gino Giannavola.

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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