

# eProgress Notes . . . April 2010

A Monthly Publication of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council, Inc.

*eProgress Notes publication is a summary of regulatory and legislative news, advocacy messages, and other relevant issues affecting the delivery of hospital and health care on Long Island.*

## Long Island's Hospital Leaders Convene at the Heart of Health Reform

### *AHA Annual meeting provides opportunity for reform analysis*

The massive and comprehensive Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and its companion legislation the Health Care Education and Affordability Reconciliation Act of 2010, both signed into law just about a month ago, are challenging health policy experts and administrators at all levels, as they work to implement provisions of the bill. The American Hospital Association's annual meeting in Washington, held April 24 – 28, brought senior hospital administrators from this region, led by Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council representatives, alongside their counterparts from other regions of the country. Together, these leaders acknowledge that the health reform package makes major steps toward bringing health insurance to 92 percent of the population, clamping down on abusive commercial insurer practices, and enhancing affordable market choices for health insurance.

Many view interpretation and implementation of the law's provisions as phase two of the national health care overhaul. For Long Island hospitals that means dealing this year with a projected loss of \$2.3 million in Medicare reimbursement between April 1 and September 30, as agreed upon reductions in the annual Medicare inflationary adjustment take hold. Massive cuts to Disproportionate Share Payments (DSH) start in 2014, when coverage expansion begins.

"We've had discussions with members of Senator Schumer's local and Washington-based health care staff," said Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council. "We want them, and of course all members of the New York Congressional delegation, to fully understand the impact DSH cuts will have on Long Island hospitals if they are not matched by proportionate increases in the number of newly insured patients.

The readmissions penalty is another area of concern for Long Island hospitals. In 2013, Medicare will stop paying for excessive preventable readmissions. Providers argue that the window to define excessive readmissions is too wide, the policy doesn't adjust for socioeconomic status, and that post-discharge behaviors, such as medication compliance, play a large role in readmissions.

One of the first reform actions taken by the Obama administration was the establishment of an Office of Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight under the Department of Health and Human Services. The new office will address oversight, insurance programs, consumer support, and health insurance exchanges. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

### **Related Federal Agenda Items**

While in Washington DC, hospital administrators met with congressional members and their aides and brought these related items to their attention:

- Extension of FMAP
- Permanent fix for physician Medicare pay cut
- COBRA extension

# New York's Budget Struggles Continue

New York is nearing its fifth week without a budget. Essential departments and services are being kept afloat by emergency funding bills. However, in the last week of April, the governor proposed a budget gap closing plan that builds on the budget the executive branch unveiled in January and the subsequent 21-day amendments presented in February.

According to the governor's office, an additional \$620 million budget gap has emerged since February, and these additional revenue and reduction actions will close all current budget gaps and put New York on a path to fiscal recovery. One of these actions calls for an additional one-time Medicaid cut of \$42 million. This would affect payments to hospitals, nursing homes, home care, and personal care agencies.

While the 2010 – 2011 state budget remains stalled, so do other key legislative items. One of these is the extension and continuation of Transitional Care Unit demonstration sites. – *Janine Logan, [jlogan@nshc.org](mailto:jlogan@nshc.org)*.

## News Briefs . . .

### Local Media Listen Attentively

The Nassa-Suffolk Hospital Council has embraced opportunities to meet with media representatives eager to learn about the new health care reform legislation and other issues related to the delivery of hospital care on Long Island.

In early April, six hospital CEOs and the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council's senior leadership met with members of Newsday's editorial board. In addition to discussing reform issues, the board members expressed interest in palliative care and the business interplay between for-profit insurers and not-for-profit hospitals.

In late March, Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of the Hospital Council, appeared as a guest on TV 55's Long Island Focus program. He discussed the impacts of health care reform on Long Island hospitals and the potential changes in insurance and delivery systems that may result.

### Tobacco Control Efforts

On behalf of the hospitals in Nassau and Suffolk counties, the Hospital Council has taken an active role in helping each member hospital and the respective counties meet their community health goal of tobacco cessation. The Hospital Council maintains representation on both county tobacco cessation work groups and will be working with them and member hospitals to institute an island-wide public awareness campaign about these collective efforts later this year. Recently, the Council's director of communications, Janine Logan, participated in a tobacco policies panel at Suffolk County's tobacco control and treatment event that marked Suffolk County's 10<sup>th</sup> year of its Learn to be Tobacco Free program. The event was held at Brookhaven National Laboratory on April 28.

### EPA Welcomes Environmental Sustainability

The North Shore/LIJ Health System signed an agreement on April 21, 2010 with the Environmental Protection Agency to voluntarily participate in that agency's

#### Member Hospitals

Brookhaven Memorial Hospital  
Medical Center

Catholic Health Services of Long  
Island

- Good Samaritan Hospital  
Medical Center
- Mercy Medical Center
- New Island Hospital
- St. Catherine of Siena Medical  
Center
- St. Charles Hospital
- St. Francis Hospital

East End Health Alliance

- Eastern Long Island Hospital
- Peconic Bay Medical Center
- Southampton Hospital

Long Beach Medical Center

John T. Mather Memorial Hospital  
Nassau University Medical Center  
North Shore-Long Island Jewish  
Health System

- Franklin Hospital
- Glen Cove Hospital
- Huntington Hospital
- North Shore University Hospital
- Plainview Hospital
- Southside Hospital
- Syosset Hospital

Stony Brook University Hospital

Veterans Affairs Medical Center –  
Northport

Winthrop South Nassau University  
Health System

- South Nassau Communities  
Hospital
- Winthrop-University Hospital

environmental sustainability program for hospitals. North Shore is the first hospital system in the metropolitan area to subscribe to the program. Stony Brook University Hospital was the first independent hospital provider to partner with the EPA on this program last year. The Hospital Council's CEO, Kevin Dahill, was influential in bringing the idea of the EPA environmental sustainability program to both hospitals.

Under the EPA agreement, hospitals participate in a scope of environmental programs, including energy and water conservation, solid waste recycling, environmentally sensitive landscaping projects, a commitment to use energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly designs in future new buildings, and other "green" initiatives for healthier communities.

## Recent Activities . . .

**NSHC Facilitated Enrollment Program . . .** will soon begin to offer enrollment services at Stony Brook University Medical Center and Long Beach Medical Center. The Hospital Council also hosted an educational session on April 6 with Nassau hospital staff to address a number of chronic Medicaid application processing issues.

**Wage and Salary Surveys . . .** are available through the Association of Healthcare Human Resources Administration. Member hospital human resource directors are encouraged to participate in crafting the 2010 survey.

**Long Island Regional Planning Board . . .** featured the participation of Hospital Council CEO Kevin Dahill at its roundtable on April 6, 2010. He offered his expertise on the role of health care in Long Island's economy.

**Health information workforce needs . . .** were the focus of a roundtable discussion hosted by the Hospital Council in conjunction with its health IT staffing partner Lloyd Staffing Inc. on April 22, 2010. Hospital and health system chief information officers had the opportunity to tour Lloyd's training facility and review the services available to their institutions.

**The Small Business Commerce Association . . .** recently named the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council for inclusion in the 2009 Best of Business Award in the hospital and health services consultant category.

**Emergency Preparedness Activities . . .** continue to hold high priority at the Hospital Council and its emergency preparedness coordinator, Linda Wenzel PhD, assists hospitals in completion of their grant deliverables. Linda Wenzel serves as an outside evaluator for hospitals' alternate triage exercises. Her feedback helps member hospitals complete their grant work and remain better prepared for real disaster events. The Long Island City Emergency Management Conference is being held June 2 and 3. This year there is a hospital/health care track. The link to register is:

<http://www.lincemconference.com/sponsors.html>. Related news includes the award of \$13.3 million to New York State from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the fiscal year 2010 – 2011 Hospital Preparedness Program. This is an increase from last year's award amount.

## NSHC Committee News ...

**Communications Committee . . .** met on April 9 at Southampton Hospital. Members discussed the importance and possibility of developing an island-wide public awareness campaign on patient safety and quality issues.

**Corporate Compliance Committee . . .** met on April 27 and received a briefing from NSHC Counsel Mark Thomas on a pending Fair Labor Standards Act class action lawsuit, anti-fraud provisions in the health care reform law, and OMIG activities. Hospital Council staff members Wendy Darwell and Maria Gallina



## Mark Your Calendar for NSHC Events in May

- May 3 Audit committee, 1 p.m., South Nassau Communities Hospital, Oceanside
- May 5 Special Meeting, LI Patient Safety Advisory Council, 8:30 a.m. in conjunction with PULSE
- May 11 Nurse Managers Committee, 12:30 p.m.
- May 12 Finance Committee, 8 a.m.
- May 14 "Meet the Legislative Aide" sponsored by the Communications Committee, 10 a.m.
- May 19 Nurse of Excellence Award Ceremony and Reception, 3 p.m., Woodbury Country Club
- May 21 Human Resources Committee, 9 a.m.

\*Meetings for NSHC members only and are held at the Hospital Council office in Hauppauge unless otherwise noted. To register/info call: 631-963-4153.

discussed the Family Health Care Decisions Act, which takes effect on June 1, and the staffing ratio disclosure law, which took effect on March 16, among other topics.

**Finance Committee . . .** met via conference call in April. The call featured a HANYS briefing on Medicaid rate updates and the projected annual impacts of health care reform. Wendy Darwell reported on OMIG and RAC audit activity and the implementation of managed care reforms. The Council's wage index auditor, Tracey Roland of The Reimbursement Alliance, discussed efforts to appeal the disallowance of several hospitals' defined benefit pension contributions.

**Revenue Cycle Committee . . .** met April 9. The meeting included briefings from HANYS staff on mental health clinic billing and the physician fee carve-out from APG billing. Elizabeth Carnevale, Asst. Vice President of Revenue Cycle at South Nassau Communities Hospital and New York's representative to the National Uniform Billing Committee, provided a thorough report on proposed and enacted coding changes. Wendy Darwell reported on several managed care legislative and regulatory issues, changes to the Medicaid Serious Adverse Event billing policy and a statutory change to the Medicare timely filing requirement.

**Nurse Managers Committee . . .** met April 13. The committee received a presentation on "Team Steps," an evidence-based initiative to improve patient safety through improved teamwork and communications, offered by Patricia Magnotta, a nurse manager from North Shore University Hospital.

**\*\*\* SAVE THESE DATES\*\*\***

**Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council Annual Meeting** June 14, 4 to 7 p.m., Crest Hollow Country Club, Woodbury..

**HANYS Annual Meeting** June 23 – 25 at the Sagamore Hotel and Resort in Bolton Landing.

*Health Care Auxilian Day is May 12*  
*National Hospital Week is May 9 - 15*

## **Hospital Council Announces \$2,000 Non-Clinical Scholarship**

Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council (NSHC) announces a \$2,000 scholarship with optional internship for college juniors/seniors or post graduate students who are studying **Journalism, Communication Arts, or Healthcare Administration**. The Ann Marie Brown Memorial Scholarship honors the late Ann Marie Brown, who served as vice president for government and public relations for the Hospital Council from 1983 to 1993. The scholarship is administered by the Hospital Council's Communications Committee. Filing deadline is May 28, 2010. Recipient is expected to attend the award luncheon on June 11, 2010. For more information and an application go to [www.nshc.org/programsandservices](http://www.nshc.org/programsandservices) or call 631-963-4156.



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