

eProgress Notes . . . February 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.

National Health Care Debate Takes Center Stage

Democrats and Republicans spent a long day in Washington with President Obama on Thursday, February 25, 2010 at the historic health care summit at Blair House, yet nothing concrete emerged in the way of consensus. Both parties, however, do agree that the American health care system needs reform, but differ on their approach to achieve the overhaul.

For Long Island hospitals and the nearly half million uninsured who reside on Long Island, coverage expansion is an important first step in improving health and access. Congressional members are divided, however, on the issue of an individual insurance mandate with some questioning the legality of insisting an American buy an insurance product. Many economic studies, on the other hand, point to the leveled risk pool and lowered premiums that mandated insurance would bring to everyone.

“We will be watching this debate very closely in the weeks ahead,” said Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council (NSHC). “Health care spending, which now comprises nearly one-sixth of the nation’s economy and a large chunk of every working American’s paycheck, must be wrestled. If we do nothing, these costs will escalate, more will become uninsured, Medicare will go broke in a half dozen years, and insurance premiums will surely rise.”

Reforms the president has proposed also hold the promise of improving quality and outcomes in the nation’s Medicare system. These include bundled payments through accountable care organizations, reimbursement tied to readmission percentages, and an expansion of the CMS value-based purchasing program. Sensitivity to geographic costs variations must be factored into these reforms, maintain Long Island’s hospital leaders. Here on Long Island there are much higher labor and utility costs, making care more expensive to provide. – Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.

Long Islanders Call on Albany to Halt Harmful Taxes, Cuts to Hospitals



On March 2nd and 3rd, a significant number of hospital administrators and trustees from Long Island hospitals will join their fellow hospital colleagues from other regions in the state in Albany to protest the Medicaid cuts proposed by the Governor. The event, known as Advocacy Day, is organized by the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS) for its member hospitals and regional association affiliates.

For Long Island, the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council has organized a contingent of several dozen high level hospital leaders and their board members to meet with legislators. The message they bring to Albany is clear – no new taxes

and no more Medicaid cuts.

Long Island’s hospitals are poised to lose \$46 million in Medicaid cuts and taxes under the Governor’s budget plan. More than half of the proposed Medicaid cuts are in the form of a gross receipts tax (GRT) on inpatient services. The GRT was originally instituted as a temporary assessment. Now, the governor seeks to make it a permanent tax. Also included in the governor’s proposal is an elimination of the Medicaid trend

factor (an index tied to inflation), a \$186 million cut to indigent care, and a proposed reimbursement cut to hospitals with high rates of readmission.

Advocates will also be pushing for Albany lawmakers to exclusively earmark any increase in FMAP (Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage) money from Washington to health care. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

Help Your Hospital Website Engages Powerful Advocacy

Click on www.helpyourhospital.org now to make a difference

The helpyourhospital.org website, developed by the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS), is zip code driven and with one click immediately displays the cuts that hospitals in a specific area will sustain with this proposed budget. Even more dramatic, the site also lists the cumulative cuts absorbed by these hospitals during the past two years.

Transitional Care Units Needed in New York

Lawmakers urged to pass legislation

Governor Paterson's proposed 2010 – 2011 budget includes a provision for the expansion of New York's Transitional Care Unit Demonstration project to 10 sites. Currently, there are five demonstration projects in New York, including one at John T. Mather Memorial Hospital in Port Jefferson. This is the only one on Long Island. The five projects, originally legislated as part of the state budget in 2005, will expire on April 1, 2010.

Transitional Care is a level of service provided through Medicare and as such does not cost the state any money. It is a specialized level of care always provided in a hospital. Usually three to five days in length, the care is specifically geared for the patient who is recovering from an acute care episode, but is not quite ready medically to be discharged to any type of aftercare.

The demonstration projects in place have shown improvement in quality and care outcomes for patients in these units and patient satisfaction with them runs high. These units also show promise in reducing readmissions. This is an important consideration for lawmakers and policy makers on both the state and federal levels.

The Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council has embarked on a community outreach campaign and is bringing information about these units and pending legislation to Long Island's senior population. Sample letters to legislators and more about this highly efficacious level of care can be found at www.nshc.org/pending issues. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

Member Hospitals

- Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Medical Center
- Catholic Health Services of Long Island
 - Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center
 - Mercy Medical Center
 - 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
- New Island Hospital
- 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

Albany Advocacy Days ... March 2 and 3... tell your legislators why cuts and taxes on hospitals won't work

News Briefs . . .

NSHC CEO Leads Roundtable

Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council, led a roundtable discussion on Wednesday, February 24, 2010 on the future of health care reform for the Long Island Association's Health Care Committee. His presentation touched on the themes of health information technology as a major transformative force in the future of health care, as well as how the business model of health care is changing. Health care is currently delivered on a per episode basis. This will change, he notes, as providers and payers strive for more efficiency, improved quality, and better outcomes. Both state and federal reform efforts are pointing in this direction.

NSHC Staffer Offers Nurses Legislative Update

NSHC Chief Operating Officer, Wendy Darwell, gave a presentation to the Nassau-Suffolk Nurse Recruiters Association regarding the mandatory overtime prohibition and staff reporting laws, as well as other legislative and regulatory issues affecting nurses the expertise and accumulated wisdom of two health and economic policy experts whose careers have been entrenched in the interplay between health-care economics and the delivery of services by providers.

State Association Leadership Named

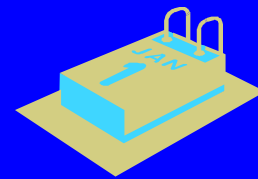
South Nassau Communities Hospital president and CEO **Joseph Quagliata** will lead the Healthcare Association of New York State as chairman for 2010. **John Lane**, a trustee at Winthrop-South Nassau University Health System in Melville, was named vice chair of the board of governors of the Healthcare Trustees of New York State for 2010.

Partnership to Offer NSHC Members Savings

The Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council entered into a partnership in February 2010 with MedSave USA Inc., a Hauppauge-based corporation offering medical record retrieval services to Hospital Council members. MedSave delivers a secure, web-based application for retrieval and delivery of documents demanded for malpractice claims, Medicare, Medicaid and private payer audit and other purposes that can help hospitals reduce costs and alleviate the burden on hospital staff. Providers interested in learning more about MedSave's services should contact Wendy Darwell at wdarwell@nshc.org; 631-963-4152.

Joint Commission Associate Director Speaks to Facilities Engineers . . .

on March 9 at the Long Island Healthcare Life Safety Association's educational seminar from 8 am to noon at South Nassau Communities Hospital in Oceanside. George



Mark Your Calendar for NSHC Events in March

- Mar. 9 Nurse Managers Committee, 12:30 p.m.
- Mar. 10 Finance Committee meeting, 8 a.m.
- Mar. 19 Nurse Managers Committee, 12:30 p.m.
- Mar. 17 NYPORTS Committee, 10 a.m.
- Mar. 19 Nurse Executives Committee, Friday, March 19, 2 p.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.

**MARCH 16
TEACHING
HOSPITAL
ADVOCACY DAY IN
ALBANY**

**Register now...
631-963-4151**

Mills, associate director and senior engineer for the Joint Commission's Standards Interpretation Group, will discuss those life safety, emergency management, and health care issues most recently cited in 2009 surveys and will review the Joint Commission's scoring and survey process. Cost of the seminar is \$150, which includes the 2010 membership fee for the Life Safety Association. To register contact: tomsalamone@msn.com.

NSHC Committee News ...

Finance Committee ... met February 24 and was briefed on the impact of the 21-day budget amendments on hospitals' Medicaid reimbursements, ongoing health care reform negotiations in Washington, and the anticipated start of Medicare RAC audits. The Hospital Council's wage index consultant reported on the results of this year's review.

Human Resources Committee ... met February 19 and received two special educational presentations. Dan Murphy of Putney, Twombly provided an overview of the League of Voluntary Hospitals' revised labor agreement, and Rosemary Mascali of the MTA Transit Solutions Group discussed hospitals' opportunity to offer a tax-free transit benefit to their employees. The group was also briefed on the state budget process and implementation of the staff ratio reporting law enacted by the state legislature in 2009.

Nurse Managers Committee ... heard from Wendy Darwell, chief operating officer of the Hospital Council, about the mandatory overtime prohibition law, staff ratio reporting and other regulatory issues.

Revenue Cycle ... met February 12 and discussed process changes to the Medicare RAC audits and PCAP billing. Hospital Council COO Wendy Darwell briefed the committee on the implementation schedule for the 2009 managed care reform law, and Healthcare Association of New York State (HANY) staff provided an update on Medicaid audits.

**Legislative Briefing for State Legislators
Friday, March 12, 2010 at 2 PM. NSHC Offices in
Hauppauge, New York... An opportunity to let
legislators hear hospitals' concerns about proposals
in the 2010 – 2011 state budget.**



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*The collective voice of Long Island's
not-for-profit and public hospitals.*