

Progress Notes August 2011

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

Progress 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.

“Super Committee” Faces Tough Challenge

Medicare cuts to hospitals almost certain, as additional deficit reduction measures considered

With the debt ceiling/deficit reduction agreement behind us, the focus now moves to the bi-partisan congressional committee charged with finding at least another \$1.2 trillion in savings over the next decade. The so-called “Super Committee” is comprised of Senate Democrats Patty Murray (WA), Max Baucus (MT), and John Kerry (MA); Senate Republicans John Kyl (AZ), Rob Portman (OH), and Patrick Toomey (PA); House Democrats James Clyburn (SC), Chris Van Hollen (MD), and Xavier Becerra (CA); House Republicans Jeb Hensarling (TX), Dave Camp (MI) and Fred Upton (MI).

The Budget Control Act of 2011 seeks to control escalating federal deficits by reducing spending. Trigger mechanisms in the bill assure that some level of cuts will occur. If the “Super Committee” deadlocks or if the Congress rejects the committee’s recommendations or fails to send a balanced budget amendment to the states before the end of the year, then hospital providers will endure a two-percent across-the-board Medicare cut each year for 10 years.

The committee must work under a tight timeframe, as the recommendations are due by November 23, 2011. When the deal was initially struck in early August, about \$900 billion in cuts to discretionary spending over 10 years was part of the agreement. Medicare, a mandatory spending program, was spared in this initial round. That may not be the case as the “super committee” deliberates its options in the coming months. That will certainly not be the case if deadlock occurs and the automatic spending cuts kick in.

Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council leadership is working diligently with the Long Island congressional delegation and impressing upon them the negative consequences additional cuts to Medicare and Medicaid will have on patients throughout Long Island.

“There comes a point when repeated reimbursement cuts break a sustainable balance,” said Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council. “That point has arrived.”

- Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.

In other federal news . . . the Medicare Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS) rule for fiscal year 2012 provides some short-term relief to the impact of the coding offset rule that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) applied to providers through Accountable Care Act-mandated productivity reductions. CMS maintains increased inpatient payments to hospitals are simply due to coding changes and improvements when, in fact, hospitals are caring for much sicker and more complex patients, as outpatient services and procedures become more commonplace for the majority of patients. The fiscal year 2012 rule defers part of the total 3.9 percent multi-year coding offset to future years. As a result, the rate will increase by one percent in the upcoming fiscal year, instead of decreasing by 0.6 percent, as originally proposed by CMS. The agency had pegged the fiscal year 2012 decrease at 3.15 percent, but now it will be two percent. - Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.

State Legislature's Return Likely; Health Insurance Exchange Legislation Facing Deadline

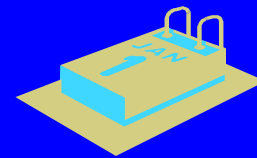
While the legislature has not formally announced its immediate return to Albany, indications are that the state's senators and assembly members will re-convene to discuss health insurance exchange legislation sometime soon rather than risk losing millions of dollars in federal grant money. New York has already received some exchange start-up grant funding from the federal government, but could lose out on lots more if exchange legislation and a plan for the state's exchange is not in place by the September 30, 2011 deadline.

Prior to the close of the 2011 legislative session in June, the Senate and Governor Cuomo had introduced versions of an exchange bill, but no final bill was passed. States have the option of establishing their own exchange or allowing the federal government to establish one for the state. State exchanges must be fully operational by January 1, 2014.

Meanwhile, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on July 15 issued the first of several proposed rules to implement the state health insurance exchanges for individuals and small businesses established by the Affordable Care Act. These proposed rules create a framework with significant flexibility to help states set up exchanges that work for them. Comments on these rules will be accepted through September 28. The agency is also planning a series of regional listening sessions and meetings.

Earlier this month, the CMS issued more draft rules that complement July's draft proposals. The additional proposed rules pertain to exchange eligibility and employer standards, health insurance premium tax credit, and Medicaid eligibility.

New York's legislators will no doubt be studying these rules and determining how to incorporate them into New York State's exchange legislation and exchange framework. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org*



Mark Your Calendar for NSHC Events in September

- Sept. 8 NSHC Board Meeting, 8 a.m.
- Sept. 13 Communications Committee, 9 a.m.
- Sept. 14 Finance Committee, 8 a.m.
- Sept. 21 Nurse Executives Committee, 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.*



Seated left is Mary Jane Milano, the recently appointed Director of Quality and Education for NSHC and its sister associations. Seated center is NSHC NYPORTS/Quality Committee chairperson Jean Magni, Director of Quality Management for Southside Hospital and at right is Wendy Darwell, COO of the Hospital Council.

Focus Is on Quality

In a robustly attended meeting on August 24 the Council's former NYPORTS committee extended its reach to encompass broader quality issues. The new committee, which welcomes clinical and administrative professionals focused on quality issues, is now the Quality/NYPORTS Committee.

Toward that goal, **Mary Jane Milano**, an expert on quality collaboratives and best practices, **recently joined the Hospital Council as Director of Quality and Education** and was introduced to members of the NSHC NYPORTS/Quality Committee. Mary Jane also serves in this role for the Northern Metropolitan Hospital

Association, located in Newburgh, New York, and the Rochester Regional Healthcare Association, located in Rochester, New York. She will assist members regarding all areas of quality, including compliance, joint initiatives, and advocacy.

Representatives from the New York State Department of Health also participated in the meeting via conference call. Members had the opportunity to talk to the DOH staffers about the revised and streamlined NYPORTS reporting system, particularly the synchronization of National Quality Forum definitions/guidelines with the state's reporting system and requirements. – Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.

News Briefs . . .

Warm Welcome . . . to **Denise Gandolfo**, who is the new executive assistant to NSHC CEO/president Kevin Dahill. Denise has an extensive background in hospital and health care administration, serving most recently as the executive assistant to the Chief Medical Officer at Wyckoff Heights Medical Center in Brooklyn. She holds a degree in business



Mary Jane Milano

administration from Florida Atlantic University. Denise can be reached at 631-963-4151 – dgandolf@nshc.org. A warm welcome also to **Mary Jane Milano**, who is Director of Quality and Education for the Hospital Council and its sister associations, the Northern Metropolitan Hospital Association and the Rochester Regional Healthcare

Association. (See *Quality story on page 2.*) Mary Jane most recently served as director of the Physician Quality Collaborative for Monroe County Medical Society in Rochester and as project director, Emergency Preparedness Program for the Rochester Regional Healthcare Association. She holds a Masters in Health Services Administration degree from the University of Michigan at Ann



Denise Gandolfo

Arbor. Mary Jane can be reached at 585-214-2415 – mmilano@seagatealliance.com.

Long Island Regional Economic Development Council . . . one of several business-minded think tanks formed by the Governor's office - welcomes the appointment of **NSHC president/CEO Kevin Dahill** as a member of the Economic Development Council's Innovation and Industry Work Group here on Long Island.

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
 - St. Joseph 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

Printing Services . . . are available to members through HANYS' printing shop. To find out more about the full range of services offered go to <http://hanysprintingservices.com>.

Academy for Healthcare Leadership Advancement . . . is recognized as one of the most innovative leadership development tools available to today's health care professionals. It provides participants with skills, insight, and knowledge to effectively lead their organizations during this time of uncertainty and change in the health care environment. Seats for the 2011 program are filling up quickly and limited space is available. The fall program begins September 25 at Cornell University. Contact Rachel Hajos, VP, Healthcare Education and Research Fund at (518) 431-7838 or at rhajos@hanys.org.

Per Minute Rate Drop . . . for HANYS Solutions and Language Line Services became effective July 1, 2011. The per-minute rate for HANYS' members who use Language Line's telephonic interpretation services was reduced to \$1.10 per minute for any language, any time of the day. For more information about all of Language Line's services contact Marty Conroy, Senior Manager, Health Care and Public Sector Programs, Language Line at (877) 862-1285.

Transitional Care Units . . . prove to be one way to reduce hospital readmissions for seniors, according to two new studies. In one study, patients were followed by a coach during and after a hospital stay. The hospital readmission rate for this group was 12.8 percent compared to 20 percent for patients who did not have a coach. In another study, Baylor Health Care Systems followed 56 heart failure patients over the age of 65 who were discharged from the hospital to their homes. Advanced practice nurses visited patients once in the hospital and eight times at home. The readmission rate for the group receiving the house calls was 48 percent lower than for patients who did not receive the intervention. In June, the Public Health and Health Care Planning Council (PHHCPC) approved seven additional Transitional Care Unit demonstration sites. John T. Mather Memorial Hospital in Port Jefferson has operated a TCU since 2007. Three other Long Island applications/sites were approved by the PHHCPC in June. They are Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Medical Center in Patchogue, St. Francis Hospital in Roslyn and South Nassau Communities Hospital in Oceanside.

Joint Commission New Tobacco Measure Sets . . . will be the focus of a September 8 webinar "Implementing Joint Commission's Tobacco Treatment Measures." The one-hour webinar begins at noon. This Part I webinar features Nancy Lawler, the key developer of the new tobacco measures from The Joint Commission and Sue Ellen Wagner, from the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS). On October 20 at noon Part II of the series takes place with "Bedside Counseling for Tobacco Users: Implementing the New Joint Commission Tobacco Measures." For more information contact Pat Folan, director of the Center for Tobacco Control at North Shore/LIJ Health System, at pfolan@nshs.edu.

Health Home Initiative Website . . . provides preliminary standards and guidance about the state's health home initiative. It includes federal requirements, state legislation, the Medicaid Redesign Team's (MRT) proposal, and draft standards for providers seeking to qualify as health homes and details about the characteristics of high-cost populations. Access it at:

http://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/medicaid_health_homes/index.htm.

Website Helps Patients . . . compare local hospitals and physicians. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation launched the nation's most comprehensive online directory for patients to find reliable information on the quality of health care provided by physicians and hospitals in their communities. Go to www.rwjf.org.

Community Service Plans (CSP) . . . are due to the Department of Health by September 15, 2011. The DOH is asking hospitals to provide an update of activities, improvements, and any changes regarding the collaborative efforts with local health departments in working to achieve the state's *Prevention Agenda* goals for each community. The Hospital Council, on behalf of all member hospitals, worked with the tobacco cessation task forces of both Nassau and Suffolk counties last year. The culmination of the work of these task forces and the Council was a press briefing/educational forum held at Hofstra University in November 2010 that promoted county and hospital-based tobacco cessation efforts and programs. It was announced at that briefing that Long Island is a tobacco-free hospital region. Hospitals are required to develop and distribute a summary of their CSP to the public; however, the summary does not need to be submitted with the 2011 update. The DOH is strongly encouraging hospitals to post this information on

their websites. The CSP update can be submitted electronically. Go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2011csp>.


Partnership for Patients Proposal . . . was submitted by the Healthcare Association of New York State and the Greater New York Hospital Association (GNYHA) to become a Hospital Engagement Contractor (HEC) under the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Partnership for Patients initiative. Under this three-year national program, CMS will provide grants to HECs to assist hospitals in meeting partnership goals of reducing avoidable harm by 40 percent and preventable readmissions by 20 percent. The HANYS/GNYHA proposal would be responsible for providing participating hospitals with intensive technical assistance, designing and conducting training events and learning sessions, and establishing mechanisms to measure and evaluate hospital progress on key clinical focus areas. CMS will announce winning proposals on September 30.

2011 Long Island Heart Walk and 5K Run . . . sponsored by the American Heart Association takes place September 25, 2011 from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Jones Beach State Park, Field 5. Tom Ockers, CEO of Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Medical Center, is the Suffolk County chair. The NSHC has a team participating. To join our team call captain Stacy Villagran at 631-963-4160 or start your own team. Go to longislandheartwalk.org.

Committee News ...

Revenue Cycle: At its August 13 meeting, committee discussion focused on a series of Medicare reimbursement changes and processing issues and several changes to Medicaid benefits that resulted from provisions in the 2011-12 state budget, including changes in presumptive eligibility for pregnant women and coverage changes for mental health and pharmacy benefits.

Corporate Compliance: On August 23, the committee agenda included briefings by Mark Thomas, NSHC general counsel, and Wendy Darwell, NSHC COO, regarding the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General's (OMIG) issuance of effective compliance program guidelines, legislation addressing permissible deductions from employee payroll, and a proposal to broaden consumers' rights to accounting of disclosures of health information under HIPAA. The group also shared their experiences with implementing the 2010 HIV Testing Act.



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