

# eProgress Notes . . . November 2009

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.*

## Trustees Key Advocates for Hospitals

Long Island hospital trustees were reminded of their significance in influencing current efforts to shape national health care reform and the importance of their voices locally as New York State works through another round of proposed cuts to solve its immediate budgetary crisis. Some 100 trustees and senior hospital administrators gathered at the Hyatt Windwatch Hotel in Islandia on Thursday, October 29, 2009 for a Trustee Retreat sponsored by the Healthcare Trustees of New York State and the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council (NSHC).

With coverage payment reforms at the center of Congressional bills to overhaul our nation's health care system, trustees are challenged to help their hospitals strategically plan for the way care will be delivered in the future, explained John Combes, president and CEO of the Center for Healthcare Governance, the retreat's keynote speaker. Value-based purchasing, bundled payments and readmissions policies – all payment reforms that hinge on quality benchmarks – will require a keen understanding of data and seamless integration with physicians and other providers.

“The [new] delivery system is all about achieving integration with physicians,” said Combes. “Accountable care organization, an integrated health care delivery system that relies on networks of care to keep the patient population well, is the way we are heading,” said Combes. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

## Hospital Stroke Program Earns Top Quality Award; Fall Prevention Program Also Honored

The Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council (NSHC) presented the 2009 Excellence in Patient Safety Award to North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System for its comprehensive stroke program. The recognition took place on Thursday October 29, 2009 at The Hyatt Windwatch Hotel during a hospital trustee briefing/reception sponsored by the Hospital Council and the Healthcare Trustees of New York State. NSHC is the membership association that represents Long Island's not-for-profit and public hospitals. The award recognizes one member's distinguished achievement in patient safety and quality improvement. Twenty-four programs were entered into this year's competition, which seeks to highlight best practices.

“Long Island hospitals are engaged in innovative quality improvement programs each and every day,” said Wendy Darwell, chief operating officer for the Hospital Council. “The hospitals' commitment to the highest level of quality and patient safety was evident in every nomination we received, but North Shore's application was truly exceptional.”

This year's competition was extremely close, almost too close to call, said the panel of judges. As a result, a first runner up went to Southampton Hospital for that facility's innovative Fall Prevention program.

The nominations were scored for their impact on patient care and safety, innovation, adherence to quality improvement principles and methodologies, use of relevant process and outcome measures and systems through the improvement process, sustainability, evidence of cost-consciousness, and demonstration of effective use of human and material resources. - *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*



At left: Dr. Kenneth Abrams, Sr VP Clinical Operations, North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System and Wendy Darwell, COO, Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council.



Photo at right: (L to R): Robert Chaloner, President/CEO of Southampton Hospital; Wendy Darwell, COO of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council; Eileen Newell, Director of Nursing Quality and Education, Southampton Hospital and Patricia Darcey, VP Patient Services, Southampton Hospital.

## Long Island Hospitals Discuss H1N1 Flu Readiness

Joined by both county health commissioners and several infectious disease physicians, the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council (NSHC) briefed the media on November 12, 2009 about the region's H1N1 flu readiness activities, including vaccine availability and distribution points, surge capacity plans, and disease prevention and treatment. The briefing took place at the North Shore-LIJ Center for Emergency Management Services in Syosset. County health departments, community physicians, and hospitals are coordinated in their efforts to monitor, control, and manage the H1N1 flu epidemic, according to Dr. Linda Wenzel, emergency preparedness coordinator for the NSHC, the organization that represents Long Island's not-for-profit and public hospitals.

At this time, the Centers for Disease Control's surveillance monitors report widespread H1N1 flu in the Long Island area with most of the cases appearing in the community as opposed to the hospital setting. Infectious disease experts and public health officials continue to urge Long Islanders to practice good illness prevention techniques such as hand washing and covered coughs and to remain home from work or school if flu symptoms arise. Based on availability, H1N1 vaccination is encouraged, with high risk groups identified by the CDC receiving the vaccine first.

Long Islanders should check regularly with the county health departments and/or their local hospitals for availability of H1N1 vaccine. For hospitals call the Public Information office; for Suffolk County call 631-787-2200 and for Nassau County call 1-888-684-4271. - *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

**ACT NOW . . . Hospital employees and patients are urged to contact their state legislators now. Tell them indiscriminately cutting hospitals is no way to solve a budget crisis. Go to [www.helpyourhospital.org](http://www.helpyourhospital.org) for a direct link to your legislators and information on how your local hospital is affected.**

# H1N1 Flu Briefing and Update



From left: Aaron Glatt MD, CEO of New Island Hospital and spokesperson for Infectious Disease Society; Dr. Linda Wenzel, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council; Dr. Jorge Gardyn, Director of the Flu Program at Nassau University Medical Center; Dr. Thomas Kwiatkowski, Medical Director for North Shore-LIJ Center for EMS; Dr. Maria Carney, Nassau County Health Commissioner and Dr. Linda Merlmelstein, Acting Commissioner of the Suffolk County Department of Health Services.

## State Fiscal Crisis Still Unsettled

*With state due to run out of cash in December, governor and party caucuses float alternate plans*

### *LI hospitals remain vulnerable to Medicaid cuts*

Even with Governor Paterson calling a special session of the legislature in mid-November, the state has still not come to a conclusion as to how to solve New York's impending cash crisis. Paterson has asked the legislature to consider his plan to cut about \$500 million in Medicaid funding to hospitals, which would force about another \$200 million loss in federal Medicaid matching money. The cut to Long Island hospitals would result in a \$46 million loss in Medicaid revenue beginning now and through the next state fiscal year.

Meanwhile, Senate Democrats proposed another plan to raise revenue without massive health and education cuts. It includes a \$1 billion tax on health medical services that would be passed on to insurers and local governments. The Republican conference is looking to trim the budget by reductions in optional Medicaid services, consolidation of some state agencies and tuition hike for SUNY and CUNY programs.

The state faces a \$3.2 billion budget shortfall for this fiscal year, which ends March 31, 2010, and anticipates another \$6.8 billion shortfall for next fiscal.

New York's hospital have endured four previous rounds of Medicaid cuts in the past 24 months. So far, the damage to Long Island's not-for-profit hospitals totals \$123.74 million in direct Medicaid cuts.

Hospital leaders are outraged that the governor is once again targeting hospitals, a group that has already borne a

### Member Hospitals

Brookhaven Memorial Hospital  
Medical Center

Catholic Health Services of Long  
Island

- Good Samaritan Hospital  
Medical Center
- St. Catherine of Siena Medical  
Center
- St. Charles 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

disproportionate share of budget balancing cuts on behalf of the state. The cuts are unsustainable, say hospital administrators, and will result in staff reductions, program closures, and other disruptions in patient services.

About two-thirds of Long Island's 24 not-for-profit hospitals are operating with a daily margin of one percent or less, affecting their ability to meet payroll, utilities, and other basic expenses. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

## **NSHC Committee News...**

**Finance Committee...** met October 14 and the committee discussed economic forecasts for 2010, psychiatric rate reform and the state budget deficit. Kevin Dahill gave a report on national health care reform. Tracey Rowland of the Reimbursement Alliance group gave an update on the wage index review project and reported on a pension issue the Alliance is disputing with CMS.

**Revenue Cycle ...** met October 9 and the meeting included discussions of the state's implementation of a new system for Medicaid/Medicare payment crossovers, and Medicare billing procedures for serious adverse events. Stacy Villagran, NSHC Facilitated Enrollment program director, gave a presentation on best practices for getting uninsured patients enrolled in public insurance programs.

**Corporate Compliance...** met October 27 and, the committee received a briefing by NSHC General Counsel Mark Thomas on recent OMIG activities, including home health third party liability demand billing, nursing home rate appeal audits and 90-day exception code audits. Wendy Darwell discussed compliance concerns for H1N1 preparations, the new privacy breach notification policy under HIPAA and the smoke-free hospital campus initiative incorporated in both county health departments' community health assessments and endorsed by the NSHC board.

**NYPORTS...** met on October 28 to discuss the joint Senate/Assembly hearing on NYPORTS, which focused on localized reporting problems and potential reforms.

## **News Briefs ...**

**Flu Response Coordination...** Council staff, particularly emergency management coordinator Linda Wenzel, have been working closely with public health agencies and member hospitals on preparations for distributing the H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines and for treating flu patients. In September and October, Dr. Wenzel served as an evaluator at point of distribution exercises at eight Nassau County hospitals and eight Suffolk County hospitals, and has participated in numerous conference calls and other educational events with the county, state and federal public health agencies. On October 16, she and Kevin Dahill met with Nassau County health officials to discuss hospitals' participation in H1N1 vaccination clinics.

**Nursing Training Grant...** With support from the chief nursing officers, human resources executives and education partners at Adelphi and Stony Brook Universities, the Council submitted an application for a state workforce retraining grant. The Council proposed creating a fast-track fellowship program to general RN employees for medical/surgical, critical and emergency care. If approved, the program would begin in January.

**HHS Briefing on Translation Services...** On October 1, the Hospital Council hosted a briefing for hospital translation coordinators and nurse administrators on federal requirements for Limited English Proficient and deaf/hard-of-hearing patients. Representatives of the Office of Civil Rights at HHS provided an update on changes in federal regulations and resources available to hospitals as part of their agency's Effective Communication Initiative, developed in partnership with the AHA.

**Accessing Health Insurance . . .** the Hospital Council's Facilitated Enrollment Program, which provides application assistance for the Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus and Medicaid programs, hosts open houses across Long Island, including in most member hospitals. Uninsured patients and community members can go to <http://www.nshc.org/chpfhp.cfm> for information on the documents needed to apply for coverage and the calendar of open house events.



### **NASSAU-SUFFOLK HOSPITAL COUNCIL**

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