

eProgress Notes . . . September 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.

Six-Month Mark Triggers Enactment of Health Reform Regulations

September 23, 2010 marked the six-month anniversary of the signing of the comprehensive Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the date when several reforms outlined in the legislation kicked in. The ACA will forever change the way health care is delivered and reimbursed in this country. That massive task begins immediately with the following measures now law.

- Children up to 26 years of age are covered under family plans. New York's law, enacted last year, provides for coverage up to age 29.
- Annual and lifetime monetary limits on insurance coverage no longer exist.
- Insurers must immediately cover children 18 years of age and younger who have a pre-existing condition; the same protection will extend to adults in 2014. In the interim, adults with pre-existing conditions who are uninsured can access insurance through New York's Bridge Program, which will offer coverage until state insurance exchanges open in 2014. The Bridge Program begins October 1.
- Policies cannot be cancelled when expensive illness strikes; policies can only be rescinded for fraud, not unintentional errors.
- No prior authorization from insurer needed for emergency services and co-payments, co-insurance cannot be higher if emergency care is rendered out-of-network.
- Enhanced preventive care that requires no co-payment, co-insurance fees for routine preventive services like immunizations and a variety of health screenings.
- Insurers must provide consumers with internal and external appeals process, if a claim for medical treatment is denied by insurer. New York previously enacted this protection.
- Insurers in the large group market (101 or more employees) must maintain a minimum medical loss ratio (MLR) of 85 percent; insurers in the small group market (100 or fewer employees) and the individual market must maintain an MLR of 80 percent. If plans fail to meet these levels, the plans must offer rebates to beneficiaries. The Suburban Alliance, which includes the NSHC and NorMet, helped forward MLR legislation in New York, prior to the federal legislation.

Health plans that were in place prior to September 23, 2010 are considered "grandfathered" as long as the plans do not significantly change their benefit offerings and/or increase out-of-pocket spending for beneficiaries. Consumers can expect these provisions to start when their new insurance policy year starts - January 1 for most policy holders. However, certain insurers voluntarily offered some of these protections prior to the September mandate. – Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.

Ravitch Medicaid Plan Unsettles Legislative Process

Among the changes called for in Lt. Governor Richard Ravitch's Medicaid overhaul plan released September 20, 2010 is the removal of Medicaid rate setting authority from the state legislature. It suggests relegating that authority to the state Medicaid director. Hospitals and other providers argue that the legislative process is the only way that Medicaid recipients' needs can be adequately represented and debated.

“Nearly a quarter of the state’s population receives some Medicaid benefits,” said Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of the Hospital Council. “Legislators represent diverse communities throughout the state and in that regard perform a vital public service to their constituents.”

The U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey results released September 28 show a slight uptick in the number of Medicaid enrollees in Nassau County from the previous year’s survey, while the Suffolk number remained relatively stable. Medicaid consumes about a third of the state budget.

Medicaid has been growing at a rate of about seven percent each year Ravitch notes in his report. Other ideas contained in the plan include requiring that dual eligibles enroll in managed care, establishing an independent rate-setting panel to advise the Medicaid director, and reforming medical malpractice through legislative measures. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org*.

Congressional members have returned to their home districts for election season and will not return to Washington until November 15. Before leaving, Congress passed a resolution to keep the government funded as it enters the new federal fiscal year on October 1. Members of both chambers will take up tax cut legislation and other matters upon their return.

State lawmakers have not returned to Albany and, as a result, legislation was not forwarded to fix the FMAP contingency plan. That plan, enacted as part of the state budget in August, calls for Medicaid cuts to account for the budget shortfall. Although Congress did pass an extension of enhanced FMAP money prior to New York State’s September 16 deadline for FMAP contingency plan activation, it was a smaller percentage than originally sought and not enough to adequately close New York’s budget hole. Hence, until a law to repeal the contingency plan is passed by state legislators, Medicaid cuts of about 1.1 percent are in effect. HANYS and its regional partners, including NSHC, continue to challenge the FMAP contingency plan, while working with legislators to find other revenue means to close the remaining budget hole.

Suburban Hospitals Emerge As Influential Advocacy Base

NSHC and the Northern Metropolitan Hospital Association (NorMet), both now under the leadership of Kevin Dahill, represent a powerful force that can affect positive change for the employers, providers, and payers in the suburban regions that comprise Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley. Dahill reinforced this message during his keynote remarks presented at the Westchester County Association/NorMet Annual Wine Dinner held September 23, 2010 in Tarrytown, New York.

“The suburban regions represent more than 5.1 million New Yorkers, which is more than a quarter of the state’s population, 36 members of the Assembly, 18 members of the Senate and 10 members of Congress,” said Dahill. “This is a powerful voting bloc that hasn’t been effectively leveraged to the advantage of our regions.

Dahill acknowledged the efforts of **Neil Abitabilo**, who recently retired as CEO of NorMet, for his visionary efforts in connecting

business and health provider communities. Abitabilo was also instrumental in bringing the two hospital associations together so the interests of these unique suburban regions could be more comprehensively represented on the state and federal levels. That relationship developed into the Suburban Alliance about five years ago expressly to address managed care reforms in the marketplace. The Alliance also includes employers from these regions, as well as physicians.

Staff from NSHC and NorMet met in August to begin planning for joint activities under the Suburban Alliance.

In October, a joint planning committee featuring representatives from both hospital associations will discuss the Alliance’s continuing managed care reform agenda, as well as other issues common to both suburban regions.

A joint trustees dinner for both associations, featuring American Hospital Association president Rich Umbdenstock as the keynote speaker, is set for December 6, 2010 at the LaGuardia Marriott. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org*

Understanding Health Care Reform

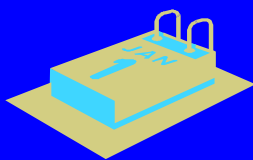
Hospital Council Educates Colleagues, Media

Staff of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council has been tapped for their expertise in deciphering the complex policy implications of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. At forums, summits, symposia, and through media interviews, Council staff has responded to the call for clear, consistent, and concise information about this federal legislation and how hospitals and health care on Long Island will be affected. Past and upcoming presentations/events include:

- Healthcare Financial Management Association, Hudson Valley New York Chapter “Healthcare Legislative Update”
- New York State Public Health Association “Recession: Its Impact on Long Island’s Public Health”
- Health Reform Symposium “Economic Impact of the ACA on Hospitals”
- Brookhaven Memorial Hospital “Accountable Care Organizations: Pathway to Integrated Care, Enhanced Value and Payment”
- Catholic Health Services of Long Island Strategic Planning Committee “Strategies for Success in the Health Care Reform Era”

Recent Media Encounters

- *Newsday* - Special health care section, featuring comments of Kevin Dahill about state of health care on Long Island
- *Westchester County Business Journal*, feature story covering dynamics of the NSHC/NorMet alignment and the efforts of the Suburban Alliance
- *Newsday* – Feature story about hospital construction and economic benefit of hospitals to LI region
- *Long Island Business News*, News 12, National Public Radio – commentary about county, state, and national health care issues related to budgeting, health care delivery models and regulations, Medicaid issues and the state budget, national reform measures.



Mark Your Calendar for NSHC Events in October

- Oct 8 Revenue Cycle Committee, 12:30 p.m.
- Oct 12 Nurse Managers Committee, 12:30 p.m.
- Oct 13 Finance Committee, 8 a.m.
- Oct. 26 Corporate Compliance Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- Oct. 27 NYPORTS Committee, 10 a.m.
- Oct. 28 Communications committee, 9 a.m. at Stony Brook University Hospital

*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.

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

NSHC Committee News ...

Communications Committee . . . met September 22 and mapped out a media relations and public relations strategy for the upcoming six months. Plans include a Press Briefing in November featuring county healthy commissioners, hospitals, and Tobacco Cessation Workgroups from both counties. The event is designed to call attention to the smoking cessation efforts these entities engage in. The November event will place an emphasis on youth smoking

cessation education and outreach, as well as the influence of point of sale merchandising. The committee continued its discussion of developing an island-wide public awareness campaign around patient safety and quality.

Finance Committee . . . met on September 8 and received a special presentation by HANYS staff on drawing down federal health IT incentive funding for hospitals that have achieved “meaningful use” of electronic health records.

Nurse Executives . . . met September 17 and listened to a presentation by NSHC COO Wendy Darwell explaining the provisions of health care reform that have particular implications for the profession of nursing. The group also discussed the first semester’s implementation of the universal student orientation program.

News Briefs . . .

HFMA Region 2 Annual Fall Institute . . . will be held October 13 – 15 at the Adams Mark Hotel in Buffalo. The keynote presentation will be provided by Michael Leavitt, former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. For more information, go to www.hfmametrony.org. Healthcare Financial Management Association members can earn up to 11.5 CPE credits.

Updated Health Care Career Guide . . . is now available from NSHC for a nominal fee of \$4 per book to cover production costs. Supplies are limited. To order contact Janine Logan at jlogan@nshc.org.

Great Prostate Cancer Challenge of 2010 . . . takes place Sunday, November 14 at 8 a.m., Town of Oyster Bay Golf Course, Woodbury. Event coordinated by Integrated Medical Foundation. More info go to www.IMFCARES.com

2010 Start! Long Island Heart Walk . . . sponsored by the American Heart Association happens **Saturday, October 16, 2010 at Stony Brook University**, West Campus, Stony Brook, NY. Donation turn in is 8:30 a.m. and the walk starts at 10 a.m. **Start!** Is the American Heart Association’s new movement to get America walking. Chair for Long Island’s event is Dr. Lee Xippolitos, chief nursing officer and dean of the Stony Brook University School of Nursing. To register go to www.longislandheartwalk.org. The Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council has a team walking at the event.

SAVE THE DATE . . .

December 6, 2010 . . . NSHC/NorMet Trustees Briefing and Dinner at the LaGuardia Marrriott. Event features American Hospital Association President Richard Umbdenstock as keynoter and presentation of the NSHC 2010 Excellence in Patient Safety Award to a member hospital.

Details: davolese@nshc.org.



NASSAU-SUFFOLK HOSPITAL COUNCIL
1383 Veterans Memorial Highway, Suite 26
Hauppauge, NY 11788 • (631) 435-3000
www.nshc.org
*The collective voice of Long Island's
not-for-profit and public hospitals.*