

# eProgress Notes . . . April 2009

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

*Welcome to the second electronic edition of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council's eProgress Notes publication, a summary of regulatory and legislative news, advocacy messages, and other relevant issues affecting the delivery of hospital and health care on Long Island. If you know of others on your staff or in the healthcare community, please contact Janine Logan at (631) 963-4156 to subscribe.*

*Kevin W. Dahill,  
President and CEO*

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## **Long Island's Hospitals Take \$40 Million Cut in Medicaid Reimbursements**

*Legislature approves \$131.8 billion 2009 – 2010 state budget*

Long Island's not-for-profit and public hospitals lost an estimated \$40 million in Medicaid reimbursements when the state legislature approved the 2009 -2010 budget on April 1, 2009. Although the NSHC and other hospital advocates successfully fought off more than half of the cuts initially proposed by Governor Paterson, which would have cost hospitals in the region \$82 million, the final budget agreement still will severely impact the availability of care and the financial stability of providers. The budget cuts were achieved predominantly in three ways:

- The application of a gross receipts tax (GRT) of .35 percent on all hospital inpatient revenue, from all payers, before any accounting for expenses necessary to render that care. The GRT accounts for about 45 percent of the cut.
- Elimination of Medicaid trend factor, the annual adjustment hospitals receive to reflect increases in costs to provide care. The trend factor is tied to inflation.
- About another 15 percent of the net cuts to hospitals in the LI region are the result of reimbursement reform and complex re-distributive funding mechanisms. These inpatient payment changes expose too many safety net hospitals to significant payment disruptions. Long Island's public and teaching hospitals will be especially hard hit, due to the elimination of graduate medical education funding.

This budget will inevitably force many of Long Island's hospitals to curtail programs and services, which inevitably will be followed by staff reductions. -*Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

## **NSHC Pushes State Legislative Agenda**

With the state budget complete, NSHC has begun work on other legislative issues for consideration by the Senate and Assembly before their session concludes in late June. A key priority for Long Island is legislation to expand the Transitional Care Unit (TCU) demonstration project, which NSHC was key to securing in 2005. TCUs provide interim care for Medicare beneficiaries whose acute conditions have

been stabilized but who are not well enough to be discharged or transferred to a nursing home. Under current law, only five sites are allowed; NSHC is advocating for approval of 15 sites.

NSHC is also working with HANYS on the reintroduction of common sense managed care reforms, many of which were nearly enacted in 2008. The reforms include requiring insurers to pay electronically submitted claims within 15 days, giving hospitals an explicit right to an independent appeal of an insurer's payment denial, and protecting patients by requiring that their insurer treat services provided at a participating hospital as an in-network visit, regardless of whether the treating physician is covered by their plan.-*Wendy Darwell, wdarwell@nshc.org.*

## Employers and Hospitals Talk about the Insurance Process

NSHC hosted a small executive Lunch and Learn Roundtable on Friday, April 17, 2009 at their offices in Hauppauge with a handful of local businesses and hospital CEOs. The purpose of the meeting was to foster dialog between insurance purchasers and health care providers, with the intent of providing better insight into how care is delivered and reimbursement, and how the health insurance contract negotiation process works. The meeting was an extension of Action Long Island's Subcommittee on Education of Physicians, Hospital, and Employers. For the past 18 months, NSHC has held a seat on Action Long Island's Healthcare Task Force.- *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

## Levy Program to Cover Uninsured Residents of Suffolk

*NSHC Participates in "Hotline for the Uninsured"*

In March, Suffolk Executive Steve Levy announced a program that will help county residents who meet qualifying standards secure health insurance. The program makes use of newly available federal funds. These funds are the result of the expanded eligibility standards for the federal Child Health Insurance Plus, or SCHIP, program enacted by President Barack Obama in January. Suffolk County Health Department's Division of Preventive Medicine is operating a new "**Hotline for the Uninsured**" that advises callers about health insurance programs for which they may qualify. Qualified callers needing enrollment assistance are directed to the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council's Facilitated Enrollment Program, the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island, or one of the county's 11 health care centers. **The "hotline" number is 631-853-3032. Residents can call the NSHC Facilitated Program office directly at 631-656-9783.** – *Stacey DiGerardo, sdigerar@nshc.org.*

## Medicare RAC Audits Resume

More than 60 hospital patient accounting and compliance staff turned out for an educational session at the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council on March 31 regarding the resumption of Medicare Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) audits. The RAC pilot program, in which New York was a participant, wrapped up in 2008; this month marks the beginning of audit activities under the permanent, nationwide program. The medical director and program manager for New York's assigned contractor, Diversified Collection Services, the national RAC program manager from CMS, and other CMS officials, spent three hours briefing hospital staff on updates to the

### 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

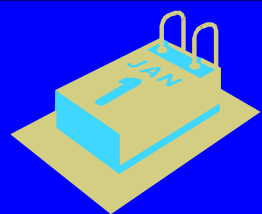
Stony Brook University Hospital  
Veterans Affairs Medical Center –  
Northport  
Winthrop South Nassau University  
Health System

- South Nassau Communities  
Hospital
- Winthrop-University Hospital

program and answering questions. Hospitals may begin seeing audit requests as soon as the last week of April.-Wendy Darwell, wdarwell@nshc.org.

## Workforce Development Opportunities Available for Health Care Jobs

A yearlong workforce development initiative by the Long Island Forum for Technology, in which the Hospital Council has been an active partner, came to fruition in March. The program, funded through state and federal grants, focused on the identification of specific skill sets needed by multiple local industries. Long Island hospitals participated in a survey that identified both industry-specific needs as well as gaps in skills that crossed industrial sectors, such as critical thinking, writing and oral communication skills. The CONNECT L.I. initiative has now moved to the next stage: offering training opportunities to meet those needs. There is no cost for the staff of any member hospital to enroll in one of the training programs. Information on the scheduled courses is available at <http://www.lift.org/training.php>.



### Mark Your Calendar for NSHC Events in May

- May 7: Board of Directors Meeting, 8 am.
- May 8, Revenue Cycle Committee Meeting, 12:30 p.m.
- May 12, Nurse Managers Committee Meeting, 12:30 p.m.
- May 12, Finance Committee Meeting, 8 a.m.
- May 15, Human Resources Committee Meeting, 9 a.m.
- May 20, Nurse of Excellence Reception, Woodbury Country Club, 3 p.m.
- May 29, Meet the Legislator Breakfast Meeting, 8:30 a.m.
- May 13 is Health Care Auxilian Day in NYS

### News Briefs . . .

**Auxiliaries recognized . . .** HANYS announced the recipients of the 2008 Auxiliary Advocacy Recognition. This award honors auxiliaries who “committed significant time and effort to serving as advocates for their health care facilities and communities during the past year.” Qualified auxiliaries must participate in HANYS’s legislative letter writing campaigns and community outreach activities. Several of the recipients are NSHC members: *Eastern Long Island Hospital Auxiliary, Guilds of Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center, Huntington Hospital Auxiliary, Southside Hospital Auxiliary, The Auxiliary of North Shore University Hospital, The Auxiliary of Peconic Bay Medical Center, and Central Council of Auxiliaries-South Nassau Communities Hospital, and Winthrop-University Auxiliary.*-Stacey DiGerardo, sdigerar@nshc.org

**Stony Brook University’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Clinical Lab Science Expo . . .** takes place on May 8, 2009, 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Health Sciences Center Galleria, Level 3 at the University. Admission is **FREE**. For further information, contact the Department of Clinical Laboratory Studies at 631-444-3925 or clavalle@notes.cc.sunysb.edu

**North Shore/LIJ Health System – Katz Women’s Hospital/Women’s Health Institute . . .** in collaboration with the National Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women’s Health has been designated as the New York Women’s Checkup Pledge Center. *Women’s Health Week is May 10 – 16 and Women’s Checkup Day is May 11.* The goal is to get at least 10,000 New York women to pledge to get a health checkup. Access the pledge and information about women’s health and disease management by clicking on <http://whi.northshorelij.com>.

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