

eProgress Notes . . . July 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.

Health Reform Moving Forward

Achieving Near Universal Health Insurance Coverage Top Priority

The America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009, released in the House in mid-July, presents a combination of provider payment reductions, individual and employer "play or pay" provisions, a public policy option, health insurance exchange, and a surtax on upper incomes. The Senate version continues to unfold, with the recent agreement between the White House, Senate Finance Committee, and the hospital industry driving much of the discussion and debate. The dominant public policy goal for both chambers and the White House is to expand health insurance coverage to all Americans.

How to finance the massive overhaul continues to perplex legislators and leaders from key sectors such as hospital, home health and long-term care, physician, insurance, pharmaceutical, business, and government. It is, however, only through the shared sacrifice of these stakeholders that national health reform can take place. Several of these key players have already stepped up to the plate and offered concessions that would help fund the estimated one trillion dollar program.

The hospital industry, which has endured years of Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement cuts alongside dwindling commercial insurance payments, is especially mindful of the sacrifices that can reasonably be made in the reform effort. The concept that insurance expansion will eventually lower and eliminate uncompensated care costs will be a sensitive public policy option to design and implement. The Senate/White House agreement links coverage expansion with provider payment reductions at certain triggers, while still preserving disproportionate share (DSH) payments at current levels for six years; 60 percent of these payments would remain after 10 years. The current House bill would trigger DSH cuts sooner and grant the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) authority to determine DSH fund distribution across states.

Long Island's hospital leaders and the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council will be working with their legislators throughout the coming weeks and the August congressional recess to ensure that the interests of hospitals in this region are articulated and that the final health reform outcome will include measures beneficial to all patients on Long Island. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

Advocacy at Its Best

A first-ever "Meet the Legislative Aide" breakfast meeting was sponsored by the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council and its Communications Committee on Friday morning May 29, 2009. In this unique, informal setting aides representing federal, state, and local legislators met senior public affairs representatives and administrators from Long Island's hospitals. They engaged in a free-flowing dialog about pressing hospital and health policy issues, pending legislative items, and how each could best meet the needs of constituents. Legislative panelists were: Kristin Walsh (Senator Gillibrand) Gordon Canary (State Senator Owen Johnson) Rafe Lieber (State Senator Craig Johnson) John Andrew Kay (State Senator Flanagan) Josh Slaughter (Suffolk County Legislator Browning). – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*



From left: John Andrew Kay (State Senator Flanagan); Gordon Canary (State Senator Owen Johnson); Kristin Walsh (Senator Gillibrand); Rafe Lieber (State Senator Craig Johnson); Josh Slaughter (Suffolk County Legislator Browning). The five participated in the first “Meet the Legislative Aide” breakfast sponsored by the Communications Committee of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council.

NSHC Committee News . . .

Finance Committee . . . met on June 2 . Members entertained vendor proposals for the review of hospitals’ wage index data, the regional geographic adjustment of Medicare reimbursement to reflect regional labor costs. For the past seven years, the Hospital Council has negotiated a group arrangement for this audit, the results of which benefit all hospitals.

Revenue Cycle Committee. . . met on June 12 to discuss the updated timeline for Medicare Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) audits, Medicare secondary payer questionnaires and managed care reform legislation. The committee also received a presentation regarding software that can assist hospitals in screening patients for eligibility for Medicaid and other public insurance programs.

NYPORTS Committee. . . met on June 17 and was briefed by the director of the Long Island DOH office on the department’s conversion of NYPORTS incidents to patient complaints, and streamlining of the complaints process.

Communications Committee . . . at its June 5th meeting appointed the following members to its executive committee: Terry Lynam, (North Shore-LIJ Health System) Chair; Brian Mulligan (North Shore-LIJ Health System) Vice Chair; Theresa Jacobellis (Huntington Hospital) Secretary; and Lauren Sheprow (Stony Brook University Hospital) Treasurer.

News Briefs . . .

Emergency Preparedness . . . challenges inherent in a hospital evacuation were the focus of a briefing hosted by the Hospital Council on June 22 and presented by Dr. Kevin Chason, director of emergency management at Mount Sinai Hospital. More than 60 administrators, emergency planners, facilities and engineering staff

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

listened to Dr. Chason discuss his hospital's evacuation of 600 patients during a fire this past January.



Mark Your Calendar for NSHC Events in August

- Aug. 5, Seminar: Preventable Readmissions Evaluation Tool, 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., NSLIJ Exec Conf Rooms 2,3
145 Community Dr.
Great Neck
- Aug. 11, Life Safety Committee, 10 a.m.
- Aug. 17, Congressional Briefing, 8:30 a.m.
- Aug. 21, Human Resources Committee, 9 a.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.

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 be directed to the program's website at <http://www.nshc.org/chpfhp.cfm> for information on the documents needed to apply for coverage and the calendar of open house events.

HANYS Annual Membership Conference . . . attracted hundreds of hospital leaders from across New York State, including ten member hospitals from Long Island. They joined representatives from the Hospital Council in sessions that covered health information technology adoption and quality-driven reimbursement systems, a discussion with the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General's first deputy, and an update on health care reform from Rick Pollack, executive vice president of the American Hospital Association.

Hospital Auxiliaries Honored . . . at the Awards Dinner, HANYS Annual Membership Conference, June 24. AHA president Rich Umbdenstock provided a video tribute to his mother Eileen, former president of the Nassau-Suffolk Council of Hospital Auxiliaries. The tribute was part of the Distinguished Service Award presentation made by HANYS to all New York's Auxiliaries.

Did you know . . . *Annual family health insurance premiums in New York State average \$13,971, about the yearly earnings from a full-time minimum wage job. Since 2000, premiums have risen 97% for the average family, and 16% of middle-income New York families spend more than 10% of their income on health care.*
Source: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services



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*The collective voice of Long Island's
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