

eProgress Notes . . . September 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.

Senate Finance Committee Adds to Reform Options

With the release in mid-September of the America's Healthy Future Act of 2009 by Senate Finance Committee chairman Max Baucus, the nation is one step closer to final reform legislation. The Senate Finance Committee is the fifth and final one to weigh in on reform options, before both houses of congress vote and then work on compromise legislation.

The Baucus plan resembles what the Finance Committee and White House had agreed to back in July, including key provisions forwarded by the hospital industry. These are Medicare/Medicaid cuts that would provide about \$150 billion in savings over 10 years, offset by coverage expansion of the now uninsured. Reductions in reimbursement would be tied to expansions in coverage to maintain balance and financial integrity for hospitals and the reformed delivery system.

The Finance Committee's plan seeks to expand coverage to 94 percent of people residing in the United States through Medicaid expansions and individual mandate to purchase insurance with subsidized premiums for people with incomes below 300 percent of the federal poverty level. Competition for insurance products would happen by way of state-based insurance exchanges and not-for-profit cooperatives.

The Baucus plan calls for savings gained through the implementation of a variety of data-dependent, quality care measures such as value based purchasing, readmissions reductions, bundled payments, and Medicare cost savings opportunities. The plan also includes proposals to attract more primary care physicians and general surgeons so that there is an adequate workforce available to treat the thousands of previously uninsured.



NSHC CEO Kevin Dahill delivers remarks on federal health care reform proposals

Congressional members have already filed hundreds of amendments to the proposed Baucus bill. The Finance Committee now begins further debate and will move to mark up a final version of the bill in the coming weeks. – Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.

Health Care Workers Line Up for Flu Shots

Vaccine is best defense against widespread infection of patients and staff

Long Island hospitals started vaccinating their health care workers this month in compliance with the New York State Department of Health's mandate issued August 13, 2009. All health care workers engaged in direct patient care are required to receive the seasonal flu vaccine by November 30, 2009. The mandate also applies to H1N1 vaccine, which the FDA recently approved and will make available shortly.

Exemption from the mandate exists if a worker presents evidence of medical contraindication in two instances: allergy to eggs or an incidence of Guillian-Barre Syndrome (a neurological disorder) within six weeks of vaccination against a previous swine flu strain. Health care workers and hospitals face consequences for non-compliance. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

NY's Budget Hole Widens; Hospitals Say No More Cuts

New York State's fiscal situation worsens by the day with Governor Paterson stating that the current budget gap could grow to about \$3 billion. The hole is mostly a result of decreasing revenues and an economy that is having a hard time rebounding. The Governor is urging state lawmakers to return to Albany soon for a special session to solve the crisis.

Long Island's hospitals endured \$123.74 million in cuts between April 1, 2007 and April 1, 2009, as the state struggled to close budget holes. Nearly three-quarters of the facilities on Long Island are now operating in the red. Lawmakers must look elsewhere for budget savings this time around, say hospital leaders, otherwise vital programs and services will be jeopardized. - *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

Strategic Partnerships Benefit Members

- The Hospital Council has reached an endorsement agreement with East Coast Orthotic and Prosthetic Corp., which provides highly customized orthotic, prosthetic and rehabilitation devices manufactured at its headquarters in Deer Park and fitted on-site at hospitals. The Council will be arranging events this fall to introduce member hospitals to the company's services.
- The Council has also extended an existing agreement with the Managed Care Advisory Group, under which MCAG provided audit and recovery services pursuant to the Blue Cross settlement on physician payments. The expanded agreement offers member hospitals the opportunity to file claims for participation in the Ingenix ("usual and customary" charges) and pharmaceutical industry (inflation of average wholesale price) settlements, at a reduced contingency fee.
- HANYS Solutions, an affiliate of the Healthcare Association of New York State, has joined forces with ElderCare Companies to develop and implement innovative strategies that promote improved care delivery to senior populations in communities across New York State.

NSHC Committee News . . .

Human Resources . . . met August 21 and received briefings from HANYS on staff ratio reporting legislation, the mandatory overtime prohibition regulations and the flu vaccine mandate. The committee discussed hospitals; IT and clinical staffing needs that the Hospital Council is working to address. The committee heard a presentation from John Jezsu, managing director of HANYS' Benefit Services, regarding health insurance and retirement benefit options for HANYS members.

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

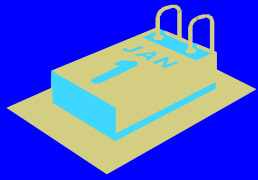
- Eastern Long Island Hospital
- Peconic Bay Medical Center
- Southampton Hospital

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



Mark Your Calendar for NSHC Events in October

- Oct. 1 HHS Briefing on Language/Translation Requirements, 10:30 a.m.
- Oct. 2 Communications Committee Meeting, 8:30 p.m.
- Oct. 8 Executive Committee meeting, 8 a.m.
- Oct. 9 Revenue Cycle Committee meeting, 12:30 p.m.
- Oct. 13 Nurse Managers Committee meeting, 12:30 p.m.
- Oct. 14 Finance Committee meeting, 8 a.m.
- Oct. 27 Corporate Compliance Committee meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- Oct. 28 NYPORTS Committee meeting, 10 a.m.
- Oct. 29 Nassau/Suffolk' TRUSTEES CONFERENCE Hyatt Regency Long Island Hauppauge, NY, 4 – 6:30 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.

News Briefs . . . Managed Care Reform . . . was the subject of a joint briefing with HANYS to explain details of the legislative package that was signed into law this past summer. The legislation, which included many of the provisions negotiated by our Suburban Alliance partnership with the Northern Metropolitan Hospital Association, included an explicit right to external appeal for providers, overpayment recovery protections, limitations on coordination of benefits delays or denials, shorter time period for claim processing, and a requirement that insurers treat services provided at a participating hospital as an in-network visit, regardless of whether the treating physician and covered by the patient's plan. – *Wendy Darwell, wdarwell@nshc.org.*

Quality Workshop . . . about readmission rates was held jointly by the Hospital Council and HANYS' quality department on August 5. Chief medical officers, medical directors, quality managers, and discharge planners discussed 3M's potentially preventable readmission tool. Nearly 50 hospital personnel and medical faculty attended the session, in which 3M sought advice on improving its methodology. The DOH may propose using this data and linking it to reimbursement policy changes in next year's budget. – *Wendy Darwell, wdarwell@nshc.org.*

HANYS Pinnacle Award . . . for Quality and Patient Safety went to two Long Island hospitals. Stony Brook University Hospital was honored in the (unit or division-based category) for its Cardiac Care Unit High Reliability/Exemplary Clinical Unit program. Winthrop-University Hospital received the large hospital award for its program "Changing the Prescribing Culture through Systematic Processes. The awards were presented in June at HANYS Annual Meeting in Lake George, NY.

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.



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