

# MMS News Briefs

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MARIN MEDICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter Editor: Steve Osborn | Executive Director: Cynthia Melody

707-525-4325 | [sosborn@marinmedicalsociety.org](mailto:sosborn@marinmedicalsociety.org)

[marinmedicalsociety.org/news](http://marinmedicalsociety.org/news)

## January 2010

- **URGENT: Physicians need to contact legislators to support Medicare GPCI fix**
- **MMS to publish 2010 Marin County Physician Directory in March**
- **MMS toy drive produces bevy of gifts for kids at Marin Community Clinics**
- **Local medical news roundup**
- **Congress at the brink of health reform**
- **Medicare switches from consultation codes to E&M codes; CMA offers billing guide**
- **CMA hosts webinar on electronic health records on Feb. 2**
- **Yosemite Institute for primary care physicians March 26-28**
- **APPLICANTS**
- **CLASSIFIEDS**
- **ABOUT MMS**
- **TO UNSUBSCRIBE**

### **URGENT: Physicians need to contact legislators to support Medicare GPCI fix**

Congressional leaders are expected to merge the House and Senate health care reform bills into one final bill during the next three weeks. CMA has sent a delegation to Washington, DC, to lobby for improvements, but needs your help to preserve the House bill's update of California's Medicare payment localities, also known as the "GPCI fix."

All physicians are urged to contact the senators and representatives listed below and tell them to update California's Medicare Physician Payment Locality borders by supporting the California GPCI fix in the House bill. Please make all the calls or e-mails you can. If you have only a few minutes, the top priorities are Sen. Feinstein, Sen. Boxer, and Rep. Pelosi. Every call or e-mail counts!

When contacting senators or representatives, give your name, specialty, city and county, and urge the senator or representative to support the California GPCI fix in the House bill. The GPCI fix will improve access to care in 14 California counties, including Marin. (For a sample e-mail and more information on the GPCI fix, visit the "Resources" page at

marinmedicalsociety.org.) When contacting Speaker Pelosi, Rep. Stark and Rep. Waxman, please also thank them for fighting for California physicians on this issue.

- **Sen. Dianne Feinstein.** Send an [e-mail](#) or use the AMA's grassroots hotline at 800-833-6354.
- **Sen. Barbara Boxer.** Send an [e-mail](#) or use the AMA's grassroots hotline at 800-833-6354.
- **Speaker Nancy Pelosi.** Send an [e-mail](#) or call 202-225-4965.
- **Rep. Henry Waxman.** Send an [e-mail](#) or call 202-225-3976.
- **Rep. Pete Stark.** Send an [e-mail](#) or call 202-225-5065.
- **Rep. Lynn Woolsey.** Send an [e-mail](#) or call 202-225-5161.

Final decisions are being made **now**. Please call **today!** Thank you!

### **MMS to publish 2010 Marin County Physician Directory in March**

MMS, whose membership has increased 8% over the past year, will be publishing the 2010 edition of the Marin County Physician Directory in March. The directory, a standard reference book for local medical offices, includes photos and complete specialty, address and training information for MMS members, along with an alphabetical listing of almost all local physicians, various specialty indexes, and a guide to medical resources.

Each MMS member receives one free copy of the directory. Additional copies cost \$30 for members, \$40 for nonmembers and health care facilities, and \$55 for all others. To order, visit [mms.org/directory](http://mms.org/directory) or contact Jessica Whittom at [jessica@marinmedicalsociety.org](mailto:jessica@marinmedicalsociety.org) or 924-3891.

### **MMS toy drive produces bevy of gifts for kids at Marin Community Clinics**

About 40 MMS members attended a reception at the Marin Community Clinic in San Rafael on the evening of Dec. 8. The event included a tour of the facility, but the highlight of the evening was a toy drive that netted dozens of gifts for the clinic's youngest patients. The clinic, which serves thousands of uninsured and underinsured patients, is part of a network that also includes clinics in Novato and Greenbrae. For information on volunteering at the clinics, visit [marinclinic.org](http://marinclinic.org).

### **Local medical news roundup**

- The **Marin Healthcare District** board, which is elected, approved a change in its bylaws to allow for appointment of an "operating board" after Sutter departs **Marin General Hospital** in June. The operating board will share governance of the hospital with the elected board and can include members with a financial stake in the hospital. The elected board also increased the salary of Lee Domanico, the district's CEO, to \$550,000, with almost \$400,000 in additional bonuses and benefits.
- The **Buck Institute** received a \$1.6 million grant for stem cell research from the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine and is poised to break ground on a \$39 million addition to its facilities in Novato. The new building, designed by noted architect I.M. Pei, will house a stem cell repository and research facilities.

- The **American Lung Association** gave mostly D's and F's to 12 Marin cities for their tobacco control efforts during 2009. City officials blamed lax enforcement on budget problems. The only city to score a positive grade was Novato, whose strict anti-tobacco rules were deemed worthy of a B.

### **Congress at the brink of health reform**

After more than a year of debate, Congress is at the brink of passing historic legislation to expand health care coverage to millions of Americans. The final legislation will contain a number of provisions that CMA has been fighting to achieve for years, such as insurance industry reforms to protect patients, measures to make coverage more affordable for low-income families, as much as \$350 billion in physician payment fixes in Medicare and Medicaid, and increased funding for primary care, physician training, and wellness and prevention. Unfortunately, the legislation will also contain some provisions that CMA opposes.

House and Senate leaders are meeting over the next few weeks to reconcile the remaining differences between the House and Senate reform bills. Despite these differences, CMA fully expects that the House-Senate Conference Committee will have the votes to produce legislation that will pass both houses of Congress and be signed by the President as soon as the end of January.

Outstanding issues still remain that CMA believes must be addressed if the legislation is to deliver on its promise of increased access to care. Now is the last chance to improve the legislation on six critical issues:

**Repealing the Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate.** The current formula would cut funding by 40% in future years if left in place and would hurt senior citizens' ability to find a doctor to treat them. The viability of Medicare is crucial as millions of baby boomers retire and enter the program.

**Eliminating or modifying the proposed Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB),** which could slash spending and coverage options for senior citizens with little input from others.

**Increasing Medicaid's low reimbursement rates.** As it is, patients covered by Medi-Cal often struggle to find a doctor because rates are so low that only about one-third of the state's physicians participate in the program. Both bills dramatically expand eligibility, meaning up to 2 million more patients could enter Medi-Cal, further complicating access.

**Updating the Medicare locality system** to reflect changes in practice costs.

**Ensuring that any physician quality reporting program is accurate,** fair, and offers physicians an opportunity to correct mistakes in the data or process.

**Ensuring patients have the right to privately contract with Medicare physicians.**

You can get more information and details in CMA's [letter to the House-Senate Conference Committee](#), which is available on CMA's [health reform webpage](#).

### **Medicare switches from consultation codes to E&M codes; CMA offers billing guide**

Despite strenuous objections from CMA and others in organized medicine, Medicare is no longer recognizing inpatient and outpatient consultation codes. Effective Jan. 1, physicians must instead bill using E&M codes from the Office and Other Outpatient Services, Initial Hospital Care, and Initial Nursing Facility sections of the 2010 CPT. While CMS has increased

the work RVUs for new and established office visits, as well as initial hospital and nursing facility visits, these changes may result in significant losses for some practices.

The new policy—and the short notice—have already caused a great deal of confusion as physicians and billing managers try to make sense of the new rules.

To help you understand what the switch means, CMA has published a 4-page [billing guide](#) that includes an overview of the issue, a code crosswalk, and links to additional resources. The guide is available to CMA members only at [cmanet.org](http://cmanet.org). (You may also request a copy by calling the CMA member help center at 800-786-4262.)

CMA members can get additional information and guidance on this issue through a [members-only webinar](#) with Palmetto Medical Director Arthur Lurvey, MD. Dr. Lurvey will answer physician questions and explain how to bill for these services in 2010 and beyond. This one-hour webinar begins Wednesday, Jan. 20, at 12:15 pm. Registration is free, but space is limited, so [reserve your space today](#). If you are unable to participate in the live webinar, it will be available for on-demand viewing beginning the following day.

Physicians who use a third-party billing service are urged to call their vendors to make sure they are aware and prepared for the rule change. Feel free to provide them with a copy of the CMA consult code crosswalk and [billing guide](#).

CMA is also surveying major payors in California to find out which of them plan to follow Medicare's lead and eliminate consults. Once we have gathered this data, we will make it available to members.

For additional questions about the new rules, call the CMA member help center at 800-786-4262 and ask to speak with a reimbursement specialist.

### **CMA hosts webinar on electronic health records on Feb. 2**

At 12:15 p.m. on Feb. 2, CMA is hosting a webinar titled, "Meaningful Use—Choosing the Right EHR for Your Practice." The webinar will cover the EHR system offered by athenahealth to CMA members. [Click here](#) to register, or visit the members-only section of [cmanet.org](http://cmanet.org).

### **Yosemite Institute for primary care physicians March 26-28**

The 59th annual Postgraduate Institute for primary care physicians will be held at the Yosemite Lodge in Yosemite National Park from March 26 to 28. Tuition is \$375 for physicians, \$300 for allied health professionals, and \$100 for medical students, interns or residents. The event qualifies for up to 16 hours of Category 1 credit. To register, visit [fmms.org](http://fmms.org) or call 559-224-4224.

### **APPLICANTS**

**Shahla Chehrazi, MD**, Psychiatry\*, Child Psychiatry\*, 35 Wolf Grade, Kentfield 94904, 925-1445, Fax 461-6112, shahlachehrazi@pacbell.net, Univ Tehran 1969

**Natalie Karishev, MD**, Family Medicine\*, 101 Rowland Way #220, Novato 94945, 878-7200, Fax 878-7201, karishn@sutterhealth.org, Arkhangelsk Med Inst 1983

**Jason Ruben, MD**, Emergency Medicine\*, 250 Bon Air Rd., Greenbrae 94904, 925-7200, Fax 925-7219, jasonruben@cep.com, UC Los Angeles 1998

\* board certified

## **CLASSIFIEDS**

### **Corrective Exercise/Lifestyle Coaching**

I can help your patients make and keep realistic health resolutions. I specialize in individualized weight loss and strength and conditioning programs to improve function for life or sport. Located in Petaluma, I have coached clients through pregnancy, rehabilitation, chronic pain and lifestyle changes. I offer a free in-depth functional assessment to physicians interested in making referrals. Michael Finn. 707-781-3466.

[Michael@finnfitusa.com](mailto:Michael@finnfitusa.com)

### **How to submit a classified ad**

To submit a classified ad for MMS News Briefs or Marin Medicine, contact Nan Perrott at [nperrott@rhscommunications.com](mailto:nperrott@rhscommunications.com) or 707-525-4226. The cost is one dollar per word.

## **ABOUT MMS**

The Marin Medical Society, a 501(c)(6) nonprofit association, supports local physicians and their efforts to enhance the health of the community. We are affiliated with the California Medical Association and the American Medical Association.

© MMS 2010

PO Box 246

Corte Madera, CA 94976

## **TO UNSUBSCRIBE**

You are receiving MMS News Briefs because you are a physician or an affiliated medical professional in Marin County. If you wish to unsubscribe, contact Steve Osborn at [sosborn@marinmedicalsociety.org](mailto:sosborn@marinmedicalsociety.org) or 707-525-4325.