

MMS News Briefs

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MARIN MEDICAL SOCIETY

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November 2009

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MMS membership reception and toy drive in San Rafael on Dec. 8

All MMS members are invited to attend a membership reception at the Marin Community Clinic in San Rafael from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 8. In addition to food, drink and collegiality, the reception will include a toy drive for the clinic's pediatric patients and a tour of the facility. Members are encouraged to bring new, unwrapped toys of all types for collection at the door.

The reception is FREE for MMS members and their spouses or one guest. Tickets for additional guests are \$45 each. To RSVP, contact Jessica Whittom at

jessica@marinmedicalsociety.org or 924-3891. The MCC clinic is located at 3110 Kerner Blvd. in San Rafael.

Marin County physician named CMA president-elect

Dr. James Hinsdale, MMS member and director of trauma at Marin General Hospital, is the new president-elect of CMA. He will become president in October 2010, after the current president, Dr. Brennan Cassidy, completes his one-year term.

In addition to his post at Marin General, Hinsdale also serves as executive director of trauma at Regional Medical Center in San Jose. He has chaired the CMA board of trustees for the past year and is a past president of the Santa Clara County Medical Association.

More physician volunteers needed for H1N1 Alternate Care Site

Almost 20 local physicians have volunteered to staff an H1N1 Alternate Care Site (ACS), but more are needed, particularly Kaiser physicians. The ACS will only be activated if all local hospitals are filled beyond functional surge capacity by the H1N1 pandemic. If this scenario occurs, physician volunteers will be needed for 8-hour shifts at the ACS, which will function around the clock.

To volunteer for the ACS, contact Dr. Peter Bretan by e-mail at Bretan.surgery@usa.net. In your e-mail, list your specialty, your cell phone number and your e-mail address. You can also reach Dr. Bretan by phone at 382-0339 (voicemail) or 892-0904 (office).

Physicians from all specialties are encouraged to volunteer for the ACS, a key component of the H1N1 pandemic disaster response plan developed by Public Health and MMS earlier this year. Physician staffing at the ACS will be provided by the MMS Disaster Preparedness Physician Volunteer Group, which Dr. Bretan is organizing. Even if the group is not needed for H1N1 response, it may be required for future disasters.

Reminder: Directory Verification forms due Dec. 1

All local physicians are reminded to return their 2010 Marin County Physician Directory verification forms by Dec. 1. The forms were mailed earlier this fall. If you need a copy, contact Jessica Whittom at jessica@marinmedicalsociety.org or 924-3891.

Along with their verification forms, MMS members received dues invoices for next year. Members who pay their dues by Dec. 31 qualify for a 5% discount. Payments need to be at MMS by Dec. 31; **there is no grace period**. Installment payments can be arranged.

Nonmember physicians can complete a simple online application for MMS and CMA at marinmedicalsociety.org/join.asp.

CMA working with Congress to shape health reform bills

House Democratic leaders have unveiled their latest version of health reform in HR 3962, "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009," and HR 3961, "Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act of 2009." A summary and timeline for HR 3962, along with an update by CMA Vice President Elizabeth McNeil, have been posted at marinmedicalsociety.org/resources.

In her update, McNeil states: "CMA is still reviewing the bills, but will likely continue to support some provisions and oppose others. CMA is continuously working to improve the bill

and indeed, several improvements were made to HR 3962. However, there are two enormously important reforms that are vital to physicians and their patients. Those reforms include 1) the SGR repeal and the \$400 billion in Medicare and Medicaid physician payment fixes; and 2) the insurance industry reforms and a repeal of health plan anti-trust exemptions.”

“The CMA will continue to fight,” writes McNeil. “Most predictions are that health reform will happen this year. Therefore, physicians must work now to improve the bills. We must let Members of Congress and the public know that the coverage expansions are an empty promise unless patients can find a doctor.”

CMA survey: Do you need HIT assistance?

CMA has developed a statewide coalition seeking federal funds to create a Regional Extension Center (REC) to provide technical assistance to physicians and other providers in their transition to electronic health records (EHR).

The California REC will offer technical assistance and services to help the state’s physicians overcome the challenges of selecting, implementing, and becoming “meaningful users” of health information technology (HIT).

To assist CMA in its federal grant application, visit marinmedicalsociety.org/resources and download the CMA HIT survey, which takes just a minute to complete. Then fax the survey to CMA at 916-551-2036. Questions should be directed to 800-786-4262 or memberservice@cmanet.org.

Health Forum at Marin County Civic Center on Nov. 12

A forum titled “Successful Healthcare Models in the Bay Area” will be held at the Marin County Civic Center from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Nov. 12. Speakers include Dr. Mitch Katz, director of the San Francisco Dept. of Public Health; Dr. Kevin Grumbach, chief of family medicine at UCSF; State Sen. Mark Leno; and Jack Horn, CEO of Partnership HealthPlan. The forum will be hosted by Susan Adams, Marin County District 1 supervisor, and Larry Meredith, director of the county’s Health & Human Services department.

The forum is open to the public and will be held in Room 329 at the Civic Center, located at 3501 Civic Center Dr. in San Rafael.

RotaCare Clinic receives \$25,000 grant; needs volunteers

The RotaCare Clinic of San Rafael, which offers free primary medical care to uninsured and underinsured residents of Marin County, has received a \$25,000 grant from Marin General Hospital.

“Last year, the RotaCare clinic served over 2,000 patients,” said Dr. Michael Osborne, chair of the clinic’s advisory board. “We are seeing more unemployed persons who no longer have health insurance as well as workers who receive no health coverage from their employer. Without the clinic many of these patients would be utilizing the hospitals’ emergency rooms as their only treatment option.”

The clinic operates with more than 200 volunteer physicians and other medical personnel. Specialized clinics in dermatology, podiatry, psychiatry and neurology are offered once a month. “We are always looking for health care professionals who are willing to volunteer

their time for this important service," noted Osborne. To volunteer, contact Marcia Amada at 479-8889 or mgamada@earthlink.net.

Four District 10 resolutions adopted at CMA House

Four resolutions from District 10, which includes Marin County, were adopted at the CMA House of Delegates in October. The resolutions will be used to set CMA policy and priorities for 2010. Summaries and authors of the resolutions appear below.

- **Health policy and practice management** (Goodwin and Bretan) would encourage the inclusion of health policy and practice management courses in the standard medical school curriculum.
- **Criminalization of marijuana** (Bedard) asks CMA to regard the criminalization of marijuana as a failed public health policy and encourages CMA to participate in the debate about changing current policy.
- **End-of-life care** (Bedard) asks CMA to petition Congress to hold public hearings on end-of-life care.
- **Cigarette filters** (Klay and Goodwin) would impose a fee on each cigarette filter to mitigate the environmental and public health risks from discarded filters.

All SCMA members are invited to submit resolutions for consideration at next year's House of Delegates. For details, contact Cynthia Melody at cynthia@marinmedicalsociety.org or 924-3891.

CMA sues state to end medical board furloughs

CMA filed a lawsuit last month seeking to end furloughs for the staff of the Medical Board of California, which is backlogged with physician license applications and other important administrative work affecting the quality and accessibility of medical care.

Because the governor has furloughed state employees three days per month, the medical board can no longer maintain adequate staffing, resulting in an unprecedented buildup of license applications and disciplinary investigations and enforcements. Qualified physicians who are unlicensed but ready and able to practice medicine must sit idle.

"There is already a physician shortage in California," said Dr. Dev GnanaDev, past president of CMA. "Because the medical board cannot keep up with current licensing demand, communities lacking access to health care will have to wait even longer to attract new physicians."

The lawsuit says the furlough order is illegal because the medical board is funded by physician fees. CMA is also objecting to the redirection of \$6 million of medical board contingency funds into the state's general fund.

Possible data breach for Anthem and Blue Shield physicians

More than 10,000 California doctors contracted with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield of California are being notified that their personal information, including Social Security, taxpayer ID, and NPI numbers, may have been compromised when a laptop containing sensitive data was stolen. While there have been no reported misuses of this information, physicians are urged to take steps to protect themselves from identity theft.

The theft occurred in late August in the Chicago area when a Blue Cross-Blue Shield Association employee's laptop was stolen from a car. The breach involved a data set containing information on as many as 800,000 physicians, including names, addresses, tax ID numbers, and NPI numbers. Physicians who use their Social Security numbers as their taxpayer ID numbers should have received a letter notifying them of the data breach, urging them to take advantage of the free credit monitoring services being offered to affected physicians by the insurers.

Questions about the data breach should be directed to Blue Shield at 800-258-3091 or Anthem at 800-933-6633.

Webinar on Medicare RAC audits on Nov. 19

The Alameda-Contra Costa Medical Association (ACCMA) is sponsoring a webinar on Medicare RAC audits from 12:30 to 1:45 p.m. on Nov. 19. The 2009 audits are underway, and Medicare expects to recover \$18 billion in payments from physicians and other Medicare providers. The webinar will highlight the items RAC auditors are looking for and the compliance steps physicians can take to minimize the amounts recovered. Cost is \$20 for CMA members or \$75 for nonmembers. To register, visit marinmedicalsociety.org/resources and download the Medicare RAC Audit Webinar registration form. Then complete and fax the form to ACCMA at 510-654-8959. You will be sent further registration instruction by fax or e-mail.

Nov. 22 run on Mare Island to benefit local nonprofits

Touro University Medical School and several other organizations are cosponsoring a 5K charity run on Mare Island on Nov. 22 to benefit local nonprofits. Registration is \$30 for adults and \$15 for students. To register, visit www.mareislandrun.com.

APPLICANTS

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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.

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