

# MMS News Briefs

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MARIN MEDICAL SOCIETY

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### **Act now to repeal the 21% Medicare rate cut**

Medicare has stalled a 21% physician rate cut until March 15, giving Congress another two weeks to modify or eliminate the Sustainable Growth Rate formula that prompted the rate reduction. CMA is calling on all physicians to help repeal the SGR once and for all. Please contact Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Sen. Barbara Boxer and your local House Representative and urge them to:

- Stop the 21% physician rate cut.
- Repeal the Medicare SGR once and for all.
- Restore stability to the Medicare program.
- Protect access to doctors for seniors.

When contacting your representatives, give your name, specialty and practice location. Contact information:

- Sen. Feinstein - [Click Here](#) or use the AMA's grassroots hotline at 800-833-6354.
- Sen. Boxer - [Click Here](#) or use the AMA's grassroots hotline at 800-833-6354.
- House Representative - [Click Here](#) or use AMA's grassroots hotline at 800-833-6354.

In November, the House passed HR 3961, which repealed the current SGR as a pathway to improved reimbursement. The Senate, however, has not passed a bill to repeal the SGR, so Medicare payment problems remain unresolved.

CMA has prepared a flyer that you can use to get patients involved in the fight to protect Medicare. The flyer is available at [marinmedicalsociety.org/resources](http://marinmedicalsociety.org/resources).

### **New chief executive of CMA to speak at MMS dinner on April 13**

Dustin Corcoran, the new CEO of the California Medical Association, will speak at the MMS Spring Membership Dinner on Tuesday evening, April 13. The dinner, to be held at the San Francisco Yacht Club in Belvedere, costs just \$45 per person. The event begins with a social hour at 6 p.m., followed by the dinner and program at 7.

Corcoran, formerly CMA's chief lobbyist and senior vice president, became CEO of the statewide association earlier this year. He has worked for CMA since 1998, guiding many health-related bills through the Legislature.

All MMS members and their spouse or guest are invited to attend. Nonmember physicians are also invited. To RSVP, contact Jessica or Rachel at [mms@marinmedicalsociety.org](mailto:mms@marinmedicalsociety.org) or 924-3891.

### **Physician directories set for delivery**

The annual Marin County Physician Directory published by MMS is at the printer and will be delivered to all members later this month. The publication includes complete specialty, certification, training and contact information for all MMS members, along with basic specialty and contact information for nonmembers. Of particular note is a growing list of special medical interests, which are self-designated areas of expertise that are not ABMS or AOA specialties or subspecialties. An index of physicians by foreign languages spoken is also included.

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

### **Nominations needed for MMS election**

In preparation for the upcoming MMS election, all members are urged to submit nominations for leadership positions by March 19. Nominees must have been MMS members for at least one year. Nominations are requested for the following positions:

- MMS president-elect
- MMS secretary/treasurer
- MMS board representatives (4)

- CMA delegate
- CMA alternate delegate

All positions require a three-year commitment, beginning July 1. Nominations can be e-mailed to [cynthia@marinmedicalsociety.org](mailto:cynthia@marinmedicalsociety.org), faxed to 924-2749, or mailed to MMS, PO Box 246, Corte Madera, CA 94976. Each nomination should include a brief statement about the nominee's qualifications.

For more details, contact Cynthia Melody at [cynthia@marinmedicalsociety.org](mailto:cynthia@marinmedicalsociety.org) or 924-3891.

### **Early-bird registration for CMA Leadership Academy closes March 9**

Registration is now open for CMA's annual Health Care Leadership Academy, scheduled for April 9-11 in San Diego. This year's conference will assess the status and impact of federal health reform efforts, including provider payment incentives that may change the organizational forms of medical practice.

MMS gets a group discount, so you can save \$100 if you register with MMS by March 9 rather than online. Early bird registration is \$645 for members, \$945 for nonmembers, and \$295 for allied health professionals. Early-bird tuition for practice managers and other non-MD staff is \$295 for CAMGMA members, \$395 for nonmembers.

The 2010 Academy, approved for 18.25 hours of Category 1 CME credit, will feature three main breakout tracks: health information technology, leadership skills development, and practice management.

To register, contact Jessica Whittom at 924-3891 or [jessica@marinmedicalsociety.org](mailto:jessica@marinmedicalsociety.org).

### **RSVPs needed for April 27 Legislative Day in Sacramento**

Local physicians interested in attending CMA's free Legislative Leadership Conference in Sacramento on April 27 should RSVP by April 2. MMS will be renting a van to travel to Sacramento, so reservations are requested.

The annual conference, which last year drew more than 400 physicians and CMA Alliance members, allows doctors to meet with legislators and express their views on pending health legislation. The conference also includes a morning session featuring speakers from across the political spectrum. This year's presenters include Assembly Speaker John Perez, Speaker Emeritus Robert Herzberg, CMA President Dr. J. Brennan Cassidy, and CMA's new CEO, Dustin Corcoran.

To RSVP, contact Jessica Whittom at 924-3891 or [jessica@marinmedicalsociety.org](mailto:jessica@marinmedicalsociety.org).

### **CMA coalition receives \$31 Million EHR grant; EHR webinar on March 2**

CMA, the California Primary Care Association, and the California Association of Public Hospitals & Health Systems have been awarded \$31 million in federal grant money to help primary care providers implement electronic health records (EHRs). The grant will help make support services available throughout most of California, including Marin County.

The grant is one of many awarded nationwide as a result of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act of February 2009. The HITECH act establishes both Regional Extension Centers (RECs) and Local Extension Centers (LECs) to provide education, outreach, and technical assistance to help primary care providers select,

implement and achieve “meaningful use” of certified EHR technology. MMS will be collaborating with the LEC for Marin County once it is identified.

“This is an exciting opportunity for California physicians and the patients they serve,” said CMA President Dr. Brennan Cassidy. “There are many challenges physicians face in implementing EHRs. The Cal-REC services will be invaluable in helping physicians address these challenges and implement and use EHR systems.”

The REC funding is in addition to incentive payments that providers can receive for demonstrating “meaningful use” of EHRs. For more information on the incentive payments, join CMA for a [members-only webinar](#) on March 2 from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. The webinar will walk physicians through the proposed rule and offer practical tips for receiving incentive payments in 2011. Registration is free, but space is limited. To reserve your spot, [click here](#) or visit [cmanet.org/calendar](http://cmanet.org/calendar).

### **PECOS enrollment policy delayed; CMA publishes enrollment guide**

With a nearly impossible April deadline looming, Medicare has delayed its PECOS enrollment policy until January 1, 2011.

Medicare physicians who have not updated their PECOS enrollment information in the past five years may need to fill out another application or risk facing payment problems for ordered or referred services. The new rules taking effect next January authorize Medicare to reject claims if an ordering or referring physician is not identified in Medicare’s PECOS enrollment system.

CMA and others in organized medicine pushed for a delay in implementing the new policy, which could negatively impact many physicians and other health care providers. If the rule were enforced today, thousands of otherwise acceptable Medicare claims could go unpaid merely because they were submitted by providers who enrolled in Medicare before the PECOS database was developed.

Because PECOS enrollment can be quite confusing, CMA has developed a step-by-step guide to walk physicians through the process, from determining if they are already in PECOS to accessing the Internet-based PECOS enrollment system. This guide is available in the members-only section of [cmanet.org](http://cmanet.org).

### **Medicare participation status deadline is March 17**

Physicians have until March 17 to change their Medicare participation status for 2010. Physicians who have not already changed their status can still do so, and those who have already made changes can still retract them.

The effective date of any decision is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2010. Participation decisions are binding for one year, unless you choose to opt out of Medicare entirely. Once you opt out, you cannot opt back in for two years.

Be aware that because changes in participation status are retroactive to Jan. 1, physicians who switch from “nonparticipating” to “participating” will have to refund to patients any balance billing collected between Jan. 1 and their new decision date.

For more information on physicians’ Medicare participation options, see CMA On-Call document #0151, “Medicare Participation (and Nonparticipation) Options.” On-Call documents are free to members in the members-only of [cmanet.org](http://cmanet.org). Nonmembers can purchase On-Call documents for \$2 per page at [cmanet.org/bookstore](http://cmanet.org/bookstore).

### **Novato Hospital hosts free seminar on joint surgery and replacement**

Novato Community Hospital is hosting a free public seminar on joint surgery and replacement from 10 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 6. Participants will learn about advancements in joint surgery, joint replacements, and the hospital's program of care, from pre-operative instruction through post-surgery physical therapy.

Speakers include orthopedic surgeons Drs. Raymond Bonneau and Daniel Solomon. To register or obtain information for your patients, call 209-1348.

### **PFMC grant deadline is April 1**

Nonprofit health organizations in Marin County are encouraged to apply for Community Grants from the Pacific Foundation for Medical Care. The grants, generally in the \$10,000 range, are awarded twice a year by the nonprofit foundation to support local projects that enhance health services.

The application deadline for the next round of grants is April 1. For application materials, contact Kathy Pass at 707-525-4281 or [kpass@rhs.org](mailto:kpass@rhs.org). For more information, visit [www.pfmc.org](http://www.pfmc.org).

### **CMA announces 2010 webinar series**

Access valuable educational resources without taking time off from work or paying travel expenses!

CMA's webinars are live, interactive, online educational events designed to provide members and their staff with access to industry experts for guidance on timely topics such as best practices for your practice, health information technology, and reimbursement, legal, and regulatory issues. And, as an added benefit to CMA members, each webinar is archived online for viewing at your leisure with links to the PowerPoint presentations and additional topic-related documents.

March webinars include:

- 3/2: Meaningful Use for Your EHR
- 3/3: Documentation – Medi-Cal Fraud and Abuse Series
- 3/10: Medicare – New Year, Fresh Start
- 3/18: HIPAA – How to Be Compliant with Recent Changes

To view the full webinar calendar, visit [cmanet.org/calendar](http://cmanet.org/calendar).

### **CLASSIFIEDS**

#### **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.

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