

MMS News Briefs

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MARIN MEDICAL SOCIETY

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Public Health urges physicians to increase pertussis vaccinations

The California Department of Public Health is urging physicians to increase their Tdap vaccinations because of the current statewide pertussis epidemic. To protect infants who are too young to be vaccinated, anyone with potential infant contact should be immunized. CDPH is making additional Tdap vaccine available at no charge to eligible hospitals, so that they can immunize postpartum women and their close household contacts. For more information, visit www.cdph.ca.gov.

Health care providers are also urged to get Tdap vaccinations to protect themselves and their patients. Effective Sept. 1, the Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Disease Standard requires all hospitals, outpatient medical facilities and other employers covered by the Standard to offer Tdap immunization to their employees who may be exposed to pertussis. Employees who choose not to be vaccinated will be required to sign a declination form.

Pertussis infection rates in California have increased four-fold this year, compared to the same time period in 2009. If current trends continue, the state could experience a 50-year high in pertussis cases, despite wide availability of the Tdap vaccine. So far this year, five California infants less than three months of age have died of the illness.

Physicians are reminded that pertussis immunity from previous infection or vaccination wanes over time. Even fully immunized children become susceptible to pertussis by adolescence. Additionally, because pertussis vaccine for adolescents and adults was not available until 2005, immunization rates in these populations remains low.

Rep. Thompson honored by North Bay physicians

Congressman Mike Thompson, whose district includes several North Bay counties, received the 2010 Legacy Award at the annual CMA District 10 caucus in Santa Rosa on June 26. Thompson was honored for his efforts to promote the health and well-being of California residents.

Among many accomplishments in his long career, Thompson wrote landmark legislation while serving in the California State Senate that required health insurance providers to offer all children comprehensive preventive care. Now, as chair of the Blue Dog Coalition's health care task force, Thompson leads efforts in Congress to correct low Medicare reimbursement rates for physicians and to implement a comprehensive telemedicine initiative.

CMA District 10 includes medical societies in Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Solano and Sonoma counties, representing more than 2,300 physicians in all specialties and modes of practice. At their annual caucus, delegates from the North Bay societies vote on resolutions to be presented at the CMA House of Delegates in the fall.

Dr. Bretan begins term as MMS president

Peter Bretan, MD, a urologist and transplant surgeon in private practice in Novato, began his one-year term as president of MMS on July 1. A California native, he received his MD from UCSF in 1980 and then completed residencies in general surgery and urology, along with postdoctoral fellowships in radiology and transplantation surgery. He moved to Novato in 1991 and became an associate professor at UCSF, leaving in 1999 to enter private practice.

In a wide-ranging interview in the current issue of *Marin Medicine*, Bretan discusses the state of medicine in Marin County and his commitment to performing transplant surgeries in the Philippines. The interview can be read online at www.marinmedicalsociety.org/magazine.

Six-month Medicare patch takes effect

The new Medicare legislation signed by President Obama in June retroactively raises physician payment rates by 2.2%, effective June 1. The new rates apply only through November, however. If Congress fails to intervene, Medicare cuts mandated by the sustainable growth rate (SGR) will take effect on Dec. 1.

Physicians who submitted June claims with charges less than the 2.2% update amount will need to contact their local Medicare contractor to request an adjustment. Charges on claims cannot be altered without a request from the physician or provider. CMS has directed physicians not to resubmit claims already submitted to their Medicare contractor.

The new legislation does not include the California geographic payment (GPCI) fix, which would have provided \$400 million so that 14 currently underpaid counties, including Marin, would be reimbursed based on more accurate geographic practice costs. CMA will pursue that provision in other legislation.

Doctors need to verify their Medicare PECOS enrollment

Physicians who have not updated their Medicare enrollment information in the past five years may need to fill out another application or risk facing payment problems for ordered or referred services.

Under new rules that took effect in July, Medicare is authorized to reject claims if an ordering or referring physician is not identified in Medicare's Internet-based PECOS enrollment system. 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.

Don't know if you're in PECOS? CMA has developed a step-by-step guide to walk physicians through the process, from determining if they are already in PECOS to helping them navigate the Internet-based PECOS enrollment system. This guide is available to members at www.cmanet.org. A previously recorded PECOS enrollment webinar is also available for viewing. Nonmember physicians can call CMA at 800-786-4262 for more information.

MBC signage requirements now in effect

California physicians are now required to inform their patients that they are licensed by the Medical Board of California, and to provide patients with the board's contact information.

CMA has prepared a number of resources to help physicians comply with these new regulations, including downloadable posters and customizable patient notices. The materials are available to members at www.cmanet.org. Nonmember physicians can call CMA at 800-786-4262 for more information.

According to the medical board, physicians, not facilities, are responsible for compliance with this regulation. In group settings, only one sign must be posted (should that option be chosen), but it must be posted in a location where it can be seen by all patients.

Save the date: LifePlant fundraiser on Sept. 11

A wine-tasting fundraiser for LifePlant will be held at Novato City Hall from 4 to 8 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 11. LifePlant sponsors kidney transplant missions in the Philippines. More details about the fundraiser will appear in the August issue of MMS News Briefs.

Save the date: North Bay membership dinner on Oct. 28

Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona is the featured speaker at the combined North Bay medical societies' membership dinner on Thursday, Oct. 28. The event, to be held at the San Francisco Yacht Club in Belvedere, begins with a reception at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7. Dr. Carmona, a highly respected trauma surgeon and public health expert, served as surgeon general from 2002 to 2006. He will speak about the role of state and local medical societies in disaster preparedness.

PEOPLE

Brian Kennedy, PhD, is the new president and CEO of the Buck Institute in Novato. Kennedy, who previously worked at the University of Washington, is widely known for his research on the basic biology of aging. The Buck Institute employs scores of doctors and

other scientists involved in research on aging. An article about the institute's Alzheimer's research appears in the current issue of Marin Medicine, available online at www.marinmedicalsociety.org/magazine.

Steve Osborn, editor of Marin Medicine and MMS News Briefs, is now directly employed by MMS as its communications director. He previously worked for Redwood Health Services. The move comes as MMS assumes responsibility for all aspects of its publications, including editorial services, graphic design and advertising. Osborn will continue to edit the magazine and newsletter, in addition to administering the MMS website and handling public relations. His e-mail is still sosborn@marinmedicalsociety.org, but his phone has changed to 707-540-5096. His old phone at RHS is no longer active.

CLASSIFIEDS

Medical office space to share

Dermatology practice seeks full- or part-time physician to share medical space in San Rafael. Office is a beautifully remodeled building in great location. Two exam rooms with exam tables are available and use of additional rooms is negotiable. Shared restrooms and staff lounge. Contact Kathleen at 415-259-0131 or kdupirak@yahoo.com.

How to submit a classified ad

To submit a classified ad for MMS News Briefs or Marin Medicine, contact Erika Goodwin at solanomedsoc@sbcglobal.net or 707-548-6491. 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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