

MMS News Briefs

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MARIN MEDICAL SOCIETY

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marinmedicalsociety.org/news

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Medicare rate cuts still pending, despite passage of health reform

The clock keeps ticking on Medicare rate reductions. Lost in the discussions over passage of health reform legislation is the fact that physicians are scheduled to get a 21% Medicare rate reduction by mid-April if Congress fails to act. The rate reductions, mandated by the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula, were originally scheduled to take effect March 1. Congress postponed that deadline to April 1, and now Medicare has effectively extended the deadline another two weeks by asking carriers not to process claims with April service dates for 10 business days.

The net effect of these delays is that Congress will have to act immediately upon its return from recess on April 12. While both the House and Senate are expected to postpone the SGR cuts once again, the big question is whether they will do away with the SGR formula

for good. The House did vote to repeal the SGR formula last fall, but the Senate has so far failed to act.

CMA and AMA are calling on all physicians and patients to help repeal the SGR formula once and for all. Please contact Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Sen. Barbara Boxer and your local House Representative and deliver a simple message: **It's time to repeal the SGR formula.** As noted by AMA President Dr. James Rohack, "Congress' failure to act on permanent repeal of the broken Medicare physician payment formula has put access to health care for seniors and military families in jeopardy."

When contacting your representatives, give your name, specialty and practice location. Then tell your representative to stop the 21% cut and repeal the SGR formula once and for all. Contact information for your representatives appears below.

- 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.

Please direct any feedback or questions from your representative to MMS's executive director, Cynthia Melody, at cynthia@marinmedicalsociety.org or 924-3891. MMS will also be sending physicians an e-mail survey on the potential impact of Medicare cuts.

CMA has also 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.

Details about health care reform posted on MMS website

Two detailed CMA documents about health care reform have been posted on the MMS website at marinmedicalsociety.org/resources. The first, "[The pros and cons of health care reform](#)," provides an overview of the benefits and shortcomings of the recently signed legislation. The second, "[What CMA did for physicians in health care reform](#)," describes CMA's many successful efforts to advocate on behalf of physicians and patients.

New CMA leader to speak at MMS dinner on April 13

Dustin Corcoran, the new chief executive of the California Medical Association, will be the featured speaker at the MMS spring membership dinner on Tuesday evening, April 13. The event, to be held at the San Francisco Yacht Club in Belvedere, begins with a social hour at 6 p.m., followed by dinner and speeches at 7 p.m.

Corcoran, who has worked for CMA since 1998, became the association's head lobbyist in 2004, serving as the main spokesperson for organized medicine in the state Legislature. He brings an outstanding track record for skilled advocacy to his new role as CEO. He will be available after his speech to answer members' questions and discuss CMA activities.

The dinner costs \$45 per person. Menu choices are rosemary chicken, petrale sole or vegetarian. To RSVP or to purchase tickets, contact Jessica or Rachel at 924-3891 or mms@marinmedicalsociety.org. The Yacht Club is located at 98 Beach Road in Belvedere.

Marin Community Foundation awards \$1.25 million in health care grants

Using funds supplied by Sutter Health, the Marin Community Foundation has awarded \$1.25 million in grants to health organizations throughout Marin to improve oral health care, boost vaccinations, and integrate medical and behavioral care.

Marin Community Clinics received \$500,000 to increase services for adult patients at its dental facilities in San Rafael and Novato. "In Marin," said Foundation President Dr. Thomas Peters, "our public health officials tell us that dental disease is the number one unmet health care need of uninsured and underinsured residents."

The Marin County Department of Health and Human Services received \$250,000 to fund vaccinations for adults. The vaccinations will be provided at community clinics, with oversight from the health department.

The health department will also administer a \$500,000 grant to coordinate medical and behavioral services provided by Coastal Health Alliance, Marin Community Clinics, and the Ritter Center.

"This is a promising beginning to our partnership with Sutter Health," said Peters. Earlier this year, Sutter donated \$10 million to the foundation, to be distributed over the next five years.

Dr. Irina deFischer nominated as MMS president-elect

Dr. Irina deFischer, a Petaluma family physician and gerontologist who lives in Marin, has been nominated as president-elect of MMS. She will be joined on the MMS election ballot by Dr. Georgianna Farren, nominee for secretary/treasurer, Dr. Anne Cummings, nominee for the board of directors, and Drs. Helen Biren and Barbara Nylund, nominees for the CMA delegation.

MMS members will vote on the nominees in May. For more information, contact Cynthia Melody at cynthia@marinmedicalsociety.org or 924-3891.

MMS sponsoring disaster preparedness training session on June 5

MMS is sponsoring a disaster preparedness training session on Saturday morning, June 5, at Novato Community Hospital. The session is intended for physicians in MMS's Disaster Preparedness Physician Volunteer Group (DPPVG), but other physicians are invited to attend as well.

The session will focus on the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which emphasizes efficient communications and rapid deployment. During the session, instructors from FEMA will present basic courses 100 and 200, each of which lasts 1-2 hours.

To register for the session, or to volunteer for the DPPVG, contact Dr. Peter Bretan at bretan.surgery@usa.net, 382-0339 (voicemail) or 892-0904 (office). If you are not already a member of the DPPVG, please list your specialty, cell phone number and e-mail address. About 40 local physicians have volunteered for the DPPVG, but more are needed.

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.

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. Appointments for MMS members have been arranged with Assemblymember Jared Huffman and Sen. Mark Leno.

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 chief executive, Dustin Corcoran.

To RSVP, contact Jessica Whittom at jessica@marinmedicalsociety.org or 924-3891.

State expands scope of practice for nonphysicians

Despite continued opposition from CMA, the California Office of Administrative Law has removed requirements that physicians be involved in critical health care activities in hospitals, such as patient admissions, medical examinations and patient transfers. Instead, new regulations will allow these activities to be performed by a "licensed health care provider acting within the scope of his or her licensure."

The regulations also allow each facility to decide who can do what under a welter of competing advice from 30 licensing boards. CMA believes differing practices among facilities will cause confusion, thus endangering patients and inviting expensive and unnecessary lawsuits.

Portions of the regulations that would have weakened medical staff self-governance and mandated that clinical psychologists be granted medical staff membership in private hospitals were removed because of opposition from CMA and the Psychiatric Association.

CMA remains concerned about the impact of these regulations on patient care and is exploring all appropriate avenues to seek relief. The regulations take effect on April 2.

CMA offers free subscriptions to practice-management newsletter

CMA is offering free subscriptions to a new monthly publication, "CMA Practice Resources." The first issue, to be published later this month, is filled with tips and tools to help physicians and their office staff improve practice efficiency and viability. Physicians, office managers, administrators and billing staff can subscribe by visiting www.cmanet.org/news/cpr.

EVENTS

The Institute for Medical Quality is offering a **one-day training program** for new medical staff leaders in Irvine on Tuesday, April 13. The program, which costs \$405 for CMA members and \$445 for nonmembers, features sessions on the role of medical staff leaders, how to run effective meetings, and tips for staying accredited and licensed. To register, visit www.img.org or call Leslie Iacopi at 415-882-5167.

Easter Seals Northern California is sponsoring an all-day **Physician Symposium** on Saturday, May 15, at the Petaluma Community Center. The topic is developmental and behavioral screening in primary care. Presenters include Dr. Barbara Bennett, a professor of pediatrics at UCSF, and Dr. Maria Pilar Bernal, chief of autism spectrum disorder services at Kaiser Permanente. The symposium offers 5.75 hours of CME. To register, visit noca.easterseals.com or contact Cindy Fasano at 415-382-7450 or cfasano@noca.easterseals.com.

APPLICANTS

Wendell Butler, MD, Internal Medicine, 2250 Tennessee St., Vallejo 94591, 707-644-7277, Case Western Reserve Univ 1955

Anna Kourmalos, MD, Internal Medicine, 99 Montecillo Rd., San Rafael 94903, 444-8460, Fax 444-4627, Univ Southern California 2006

* board certified

CLASSIFIEDS

Office to share in Novato

165 Rowland Way #303. Medical office to share with urologist. 2100 sq ft. Three exam rooms. One small conference room. Rent completely negotiable dependent on level of service use and overhead. Contact Dr. Peter Bretan at 892-0904 or bretanp@msn.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 or 707-525-4226. The cost is one dollar per word.

CORRECTIONS

The listing for **Dr. Timothy Dawson** in the 2010 Marin County Physician Directory is incomplete. Dr. Dawson is board certified in Pain Medicine, which is his primary specialty.

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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