



MLCMS News Briefs

The monthly newsletter of the Mendocino-Lake County Medical Society

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Physician writers needed for Mendo-Lake newspaper column

MLCMS members with a penchant for writing are invited to submit articles for a medical column to be published by newspapers in Mendocino and Lake counties. Tentatively titled "What's Up, Doc?" the column will probably appear every other month. Possible topics include pertussis vaccine, mammography, and other medical themes of interest to the public. Articles should be about 750 words long and oriented to the general reader.

If you are interested in writing articles for "What's Up, Doc?" please contact Steve Osborn, MLCMS publications director, at sosborn@mlcms.org or 525-4325. He will edit the articles and coordinate publication. A previous version of "What's Up, Doc?" ran locally for several years.

MLCMS offers \$5,000 scholarship for student pursuing medical career

Mendocino County high school seniors planning a career in medicine are invited to apply for a \$5,000 scholarship from MLCMS. The scholarship is restricted to students who have been accepted to a university, college, or related technical school. The student must show an interest and aptitude for medicine, with the goal of becoming a physician, nurse or other medical professional.

Scholarship applications have already been mailed to all local high schools. Additional copies are available from Rachel Pandolfi at 525-4375 or rachel@mlcms.org. Applications have also been posted on the MLCMS website at mlcms.org/resources.

The deadline for submitting applications is April 15. The MLCMS Health Careers Scholarship Committee will review the applications and announce a winner in May.

Local physicians are encouraged to recommend the scholarship to any high school seniors they know who are interested in pursuing a medical career.

Dr. Craig McMillan named interim Public Health Officer for Mendocino County

Craig McMillan, MD, MPH, a pediatrician and former health officer, has been named interim Public Health Officer for Mendocino County. He replaces Dr. Marvin Trotter, who resigned earlier this month after more than a decade of service to the county.

In addition to his duties as the county's health officer, McMillan will assist in the search for a permanent officer and will continue to work part-time at the Mendocino Community Health Clinic in Ukiah. His contract with the county runs until June 30.

McMillan, who received his MD from UC Irvine in 1968, previously served as health officer for Mendocino County from 1976 to 1990, and for Lake County from 2002 to 2008. He retired in 2008, but then served as interim health officer in San Luis Obispo County for several months before returning to Mendocino County.

CMA members split on stalled health care legislation

While CMA member physicians are unified in their support for health reform, they are evenly split (44% to 44%) on whether they favor or oppose the health reform legislation that is currently stalled in Congress. That split was one of the main findings of a survey CMA sent to members in late January. Of the 407 members who responded, 97% indicated that they favor either incremental or fundamental health care reform over no reform.

For the preferred system of health care financing, nearly two-thirds of the respondents (66%) favored a mix of government and private payers over single-payer (19%) or a free market system without public insurance (13%).

In addition to unified support for the concept of health reform, CMA members showed support across all demographics for specific provisions of health reform legislation, including:

- Protecting MICRA, California's law limiting noneconomic damages in medical liability cases (94% favor).
- Prohibiting insurance companies from denying health coverage because of pre-existing conditions or changes in health status (89% favor).
- Providing tax credits and subsidies to low-income families and small employers so they can purchase health insurance (88% favor).
- Expanding health insurance coverage to 95% of the uninsured (82% favor).
- Providing funding to develop best practices and quality measures for health care providers (76%).

Throughout the health reform debate, CMA has relied on policy developed by the democratically elected CMA House of Delegates to formulate its position and priorities for health care reform. The poll was undertaken at the request of the House of Delegates to

ensure that CMA members had an opportunity to voice their opinions and have an impact on health care reform legislation.

While health reform has been sidetracked by recent events, congressional leaders continue to debate the issue. CMA will use the results of this poll to represent the interests of California physicians in that debate.

Medicare may reject claims if physician is not in PECOS system

Medicare physicians who have not updated their enrollment information in the past five years may need to fill out another application or face payment problems for ordered or referred services. The new rules, which take effect at the end of the year, authorize Medicare to reject claims if an ordering physician is not identified in Medicare's PECOS enrollment system.

If you are unsure of your status in the PECOS system, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has posted a list of all physicians enrolled in PECOS on cms.hhs.gov. Be aware that this is an enormous document, containing over 13,000 pages, and as such it will take time to download. To see if you are on the list, go to the search tool and enter your type 1 (individual) NPI number, or last name, and hit enter. If you do not appear on the list, you will need to revalidate your enrollment with Medicare.

If you determine that you need to submit a new enrollment form, you can do so online using the web-based PECOS system at pecos.cms.hhs.gov or by filling out the appropriate paper enrollment form(s) (CMS-855I and CMS-855R, if appropriate) and mailing the forms to Palmetto, which will enter your information into PECOS and process your enrollment application. If you enroll online, be sure to also mail to Palmetto the signed and dated Certification Statement within seven days.

For further information about PECOS from CMA, contact Michele Kelly at 213-226-0338 or mkelly@cmanet.org.

Registration open for CMA Leadership Academy in San Diego

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.

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.

MLCMS gets a group discount, so you can save \$100 if you register with MLCMS 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.

To register, contact Rachel Pandolfi at 525-4375 or rachel@mlcms.org.

CMA files lawsuit against governor over scope-of-practice laws

CMA and the California Society of Anesthesiologists have filed a lawsuit asking a court to overturn a decision by Gov. Schwarzenegger to opt out of the federal requirement for physician supervision of anesthesia care for Medicare patients. The governor's decision

would enable hospitals to allow nurses to administer anesthesia on Medicare patients without physician supervision.

Schwarzenegger in June 2009 requested and received an exemption from the federal Medicare requirement that physicians supervise nurse anesthetists. The exemption was requested without input from any professional medical organization and with disregard for state law that requires physician supervision of nurse anesthetists.

"If the governor had followed the law, he would have seen that reducing the standards for anesthetists could have a detrimental impact on patient safety," says CMA President Brennan Cassidy, MD. "As doctors, our No. 1 priority is the health and safety of our patients and that's why the governor is taking a step in the wrong direction."

Dustin Corcoran named chief executive of CMA

Dustin Corcoran, CMA's head lobbyist and senior vice president, has been named CEO of the association. He replaces Alfred Gilchrist, who resigned unexpectedly in January.

Corcoran joined CMA in 1998 as the membership coordinator for its political action committee. He soon began working as a lobbyist under the late Steve Thompson, guiding bills related to access to care, emergency medicine, hospitals, tobacco usage, public health and health care system reform.

After Thompson's death in 2004, Corcoran took over as CMA's head lobbyist and went on to become senior vice president. Corcoran was named the "most effective lobbyist under 40" in 2005 by "Around the Capitol" and one of the most powerful political brokers in California in 2009 by "Capitol Weekly."

CLASSIFIEDS

How to submit a classified ad

To submit a classified ad for MLCMS News Briefs, contact Nan Perrott at nperrott@rhscommunications.com or 707-525-4226. The cost is one dollar per word.

ABOUT MLCMS

The Mendocino-Lake County Medical Society, a 501(c)(6) nonprofit association, supports local physicians and their efforts to enhance the health of the community. Founded in 1938, MLCMS is affiliated with the California Medical Association and the American Medical Association.

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