



MLCMS News Briefs

The monthly newsletter of the Mendocino-Lake County Medical Society

Newsletter Editor: Steve Osborn | Executive Director: Cynthia Melody

707-525-4325 | sosborn@mlcms.org | mlcms.org/news

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MLCMS survey responses needed by Sept. 8

All MLCMS members are urged to complete the society's membership survey by Tuesday, Sept. 8. The brief survey, which was mailed out in August, asks members to rate the challenges, strengths and weaknesses of MLCMS, and to identify their primary reason for belonging to the society. It also asks for suggestions on increasing membership, improving services and allocating resources.

If you have not already done so, please complete the survey online at surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=AOPrL892SYI8hK3fHPEuMw_3d_3d.

The MLCMS board of directors will use the survey results at its Sept. 16 retreat to determine the society's strengths, clarify main issues, and design the society's future. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

For questions about the survey, contact MLCMS executive director Cynthia Melody at 525-4359 or cynthia@mlcms.org.

Physicians urged to order H1N1 vaccine

The California Department of Public Health is urging physicians to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus by ordering vaccine free of charge from a new website, CalPanFlu.org. The vaccine, which is expected to become available in mid-October, will probably need to be given in two doses, 3-4 weeks apart. Target populations for the vaccine include:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or provide care for infants less than 6 months old
- Health care and emergency services personnel
- Children and young adults aged 6 months to 24 years
- People 25-64 who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for flu-related complications

The vaccine will only be available through the CalPanFlu.org website and local health departments; it will not be carried by private organizations. Physicians may bill public and private insurers for vaccine administration fees.

Sutter North Bay Foundation to merge with CPMC

Sutter Medical Foundation North Bay, which includes several physicians in Lake County, will merge with the Physician Foundation at California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco on Jan. 1. The combined foundation, with more than 220 doctors, will be called Sutter Pacific Medical Foundation. Doctors in the foundation will provide services at Sutter facilities in Lake, Sonoma, Marin and San Francisco counties, with additional locations throughout Northern California.

Chris Rogers, the incoming executive director of Sutter Pacific, said, "We are focusing on building a robust primary care and specialist network so that patients all along the 101 corridor have access to comprehensive medical care." The foundation's CEO will be Morris Flaum, MD.

Need help with Medicare billing?

PalmettoGBA, the new Medicare administrator for Northern California, has offered to conduct workshops this fall about new billing procedures and other topics of interest to physicians. Possible subjects include E&M services, preventive medicine services, RAC and CERT audits, and e-prescribing. A particular area of concern is downcoding or denials for E&M services.

The workshops will be coordinated by local medical associations. If you are interested in having PalmettoGBA conduct a workshop in your area, contact Rachel Pandolfi at rachel@scma.org or 525-4375.

California Supreme Court upholds MICRA

The California Supreme Court has declined to review an appeals court ruling that upheld the constitutionality of California's landmark Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act (MICRA). Under MICRA, patients can recover up to a quarter of a million dollars in noneconomic or "pain and suffering" awards. Injured patients are also entitled to unlimited medical and economic compensation, which often amounts to millions of dollars to cover true damages, such as lost wages, medical expenses, and long-term care costs.

CMA sponsored and won passage of MICRA in 1975 in response to runaway medical liability costs and the resulting shortage of health care providers, predominantly in high-risk specialties.

In the most recent case, lawyers argued that the MICRA cap violates constitutional provisions that prohibit the Legislature from exercising judicial powers, as well as the equal

protection clauses of the state and federal constitutions. The court, however, ruled that the state has a legitimate interest in limiting medical malpractice insurance costs because without MICRA insurance rates would pose "serious problems for the health care system in California."

EVENTS

Web conference on asthma control set for Sept. 16

Breathe California is hosting a web conference, "Quick fixes for poor asthma control," from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 16. The presenter is Barbara Langham, RN, a pediatric care manager for Kaiser in Napa and Fairfield. The conference qualifies for 1 hour of CME. To register, visit qgbreathe.org or call 650-994-1903.

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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Santa Rosa, CA 95403

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