



# 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](mailto:sosborn@mlcms.org) | [mlcms.org/news](http://mlcms.org/news)

## November 2009

- **CMA working with Congress to shape health reform bills**
- **CMA survey: Do you need HIT assistance?**
- **Four District 10 resolutions adopted at CMA House**
- **Orange County physician named CMA president**
- **CMA sues state to end medical board furloughs**
- **Possible data breach for Anthem and Blue Shield physicians**
- **Webinar on Medicare RAC audits on Nov. 19**
- **CLASSIFIEDS**
- **ABOUT MLCMS**
- **TO UNSUBSCRIBE**

### **CMA working with Congress to shape health reform bills**

House Democratic leaders have unveiled their latest version of health reform in HR 3962, "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009," and HR 3961, "Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act of 2009." A summary and timeline for HR 3962, along with an update by CMA Vice President Elizabeth McNeil, have been posted at [mlcms.org/resources](http://mlcms.org/resources).

In her update, McNeil states: "CMA is still reviewing the bills, but will likely continue to support some provisions and oppose others. CMA is continuously working to improve the bill and indeed, several improvements were made to HR 3962. However, there are two enormously important reforms that are vital to physicians and their patients. Those reforms include 1) the SGR repeal and the \$400 billion in Medicare and Medicaid physician payment fixes; and 2) the insurance industry reforms and a repeal of health plan anti-trust exemptions."

"The CMA will continue to fight," writes McNeil. "Most predictions are that health reform will happen this year. Therefore, physicians must work now to improve the bills. We must let Members of Congress and the public know that the coverage expansions are an empty promise unless patients can find a doctor."

### **CMA survey: Do you need HIT assistance?**

CMA has developed a statewide coalition seeking federal funds to create a Regional Extension Center (REC) to provide technical assistance to physicians and other providers in their transition to electronic health records.

The California REC will offer technical assistance and services to help the state's physicians overcome the challenges of selecting, implementing, and becoming "meaningful users" of health information technology (HIT).

To assist CMA in its federal grant application, visit [mlcms.org/resources](http://mlcms.org/resources) and download the CMA HIT survey, which takes just a minute to complete. Then fax the survey to CMA at 916-551-2036. Questions should be directed to 800-786-4262 or [memberservice@cmanet.org](mailto:memberservice@cmanet.org).

### **Four District 10 resolutions adopted at CMA House**

Four resolutions from District 10, which includes Mendocino and Lake counties, were adopted at the CMA House of Delegates in October. The resolutions will be used to set CMA policy and priorities for 2010. Summaries and authors of the resolutions appear below.

- **Cigarette filters** (Klay and Goodwin) would impose a fee on each cigarette filter to mitigate the environmental and public health risks from discarded filters.
- **Health policy and practice management** (Goodwin and Bretan) would encourage the inclusion of health policy and practice management courses in the standard medical school curriculum.
- **Criminalization of marijuana** (Bedard) asks CMA to regard the criminalization of marijuana as a failed public health policy and encourages CMA to participate in the debate about changing current policy.
- **End-of-life care** (Bedard) asks CMA to petition Congress to hold public hearings on end-of-life care.

All MLCMS members are invited to submit resolutions for consideration at next year's House of Delegates. For details, contact Cynthia Melody at [cmelody@mlcms.org](mailto:cmelody@mlcms.org) or 525-4359.

### **Orange County physician named CMA president**

Orange County physician Dr. Brennan Cassidy is the new president of CMA. "It's our mission to restore the health of our patients," he said in an address to nearly 1,000 physicians at last month's CMA House of Delegates. "As the national debate on health care reform moves forward, it's crucial that physicians communicate clearly and loudly about what we need to do our jobs and provide the high quality of care that is today's standard."

Delegates also chose Bay Area trauma surgeon Dr. James Hinsdale as CMA president-elect. Hinsdale is director of trauma at Marin General Hospital and executive director of trauma at Regional Medical Center in San Jose.

### **CMA sues state to end medical board furloughs**

CMA filed a lawsuit last month seeking to end furloughs for the staff of the Medical Board of California, which is backlogged with physician license applications and other important administrative work affecting the quality and accessibility of medical care.

Because the governor has furloughed state employees three days per month, the medical board can no longer maintain adequate staffing, resulting in an unprecedented buildup of license applications and disciplinary investigations and enforcements. Qualified physicians who are unlicensed but ready and able to practice medicine must sit idle.

"There is already a physician shortage in California," said Dr. Dev GnanaDev, past president of CMA. "Because the medical board cannot keep up with current licensing demand, communities lacking access to health care will have to wait even longer to attract new physicians."

The lawsuit says the furlough order is illegal because the medical board is funded by physician fees. CMA is also objecting to the redirection of \$6 million of medical board contingency funds into the state's general fund.

### **Possible data breach for Anthem and Blue Shield physicians**

More than 10,000 California doctors contracted with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield of California are being notified that their personal information, including Social Security, taxpayer ID, and NPI numbers, may have been compromised when a laptop containing sensitive data was stolen. While there have been no reported misuses of this information, physicians are urged to take steps to protect themselves from identity theft.

The theft occurred in late August in the Chicago area when a Blue Cross-Blue Shield Association employee's laptop was stolen from a car. The breach involved a data set containing information on as many as 800,000 physicians, including names, addresses, tax ID numbers, and NPI numbers. Physicians who use their Social Security numbers as their taxpayer ID numbers should have received a letter notifying them of the data breach, urging them to take advantage of the free credit monitoring services being offered to affected physicians by the insurers.

Questions about the data breach should be directed to Blue Shield at 800-258-3091 or Anthem at 800-933-6633.

### **Webinar on Medicare RAC audits on Nov. 19**

The Alameda-Contra Costa Medical Association (ACCMA) is sponsoring a webinar on Medicare RAC audits from 12:30 to 1:45 p.m. on Nov. 19. The 2009 audits are underway, and Medicare expects to recover \$18 billion in payments from physicians and other Medicare providers. The webinar will highlight the items RAC auditors are looking for and the compliance steps physicians can take to minimize the amounts recovered. Cost is \$20 for CMA members or \$75 for nonmembers. To register, visit [mlcms.org/resources](http://mlcms.org/resources) and download the Medicare RAC Audit Webinar registration form. Then complete and fax the form to ACCMA at 510-654-8959. You will be sent further registration instruction by fax or e-mail.

### **CLASSIFIEDS**

#### **How to submit a classified ad**

To submit a classified ad for MLCMS News Briefs, contact Nan Perrott at [nperrott@rhscommunications.com](mailto: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.

© MLCMS 2009  
3033 Cleveland Ave. #104  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

**TO UNSUBSCRIBE**

You are receiving MLCMS News Briefs because you are a physician or an affiliated medical professional in Mendocino County and/or Lake County. If you wish to unsubscribe, contact Steve Osborn at [sosborn@mlcms.org](mailto:sosborn@mlcms.org) or 707-525-4325.