



MLCMS News Briefs

The monthly newsletter of the Mendocino-Lake County Medical Society

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March 2010

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Act now to repeal the 21% Medicare rate cut

Medicare has stalled a 21% physician rate cut until March 15, giving Congress another two weeks to modify or eliminate the Sustainable Growth Rate formula that prompted the rate reduction. CMA is calling on all physicians to help repeal the SGR once and for all. Please contact Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Sen. Barbara Boxer and your local House Representative and urge them to:

- Stop the 21% physician rate cut.
- Repeal the Medicare SGR once and for all.
- Restore stability to the Medicare program.
- Protect access to doctors for seniors.

When contacting your representatives, give your name, specialty and practice location. Contact information:

- 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.

In November, the House passed HR 3961, which repealed the current SGR as a pathway to improved reimbursement. The Senate, however, has not passed a bill to repeal the SGR, so Medicare payment problems remain unresolved.

CMA has prepared a flyer that you can use to get patients involved in the fight to protect Medicare. The flyer is available at mlcms.org/resources.

New chief executive of CMA to speak at MLCMS dinner on April 29

Dustin Corcoran, the new CEO of the California Medical Association, will speak at the MLCMS Spring Membership Dinner on Thursday, April 29. The dinner, to be held at the Hampton Inn in Ukiah, costs just \$25 per person. The event begins with a reception at 6:30 p.m., followed by the dinner and program from 7 to 8:30.

Corcoran, formerly CMA's chief lobbyist and senior vice president, became CEO of the statewide association earlier this year. He has worked for CMA since 1998, guiding many health-related bills through the Legislature.

All MLCMS members and their spouse or guest are invited to attend. Nonmember physicians are also invited. To RSVP, contact Rachel or Jessica by April 23 at 525-4265 or mlcms@mlcms.org. Cash, checks or credit cards are accepted.

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. 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.

Nominations needed for MLCMS election

In preparation for the upcoming MLCMS election, all members are urged to submit nominations for leadership positions by March 19. Nominees must have been MLCMS members for at least one year. Nominations are requested for the following positions:

- MLCMS president-elect
- MLCMS secretary/treasurer
- MLCMS board representatives (3)
- CMA delegates (2)
- CMA alternate delegates (2)

All positions require a three-year commitment, beginning July 1. Nominations can be e-mailed to cynthia@mlcms.org, faxed to 525-4328, or mailed to MLCMS, 3033 Cleveland Ave. #104, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. Each nomination should include a brief statement about the nominee's qualifications.

For more details, contact Cynthia Melody at cynthia@mlcms.org or 525-4359.

Mendocino County adds 2-1-1 line for nonemergency services

Patients in Mendocino County who require nonemergency medical services are urged to call the county's new 2-1-1 line, which provides information on a wide range of community services, from counseling to transportation. By some estimates, only about 20% of calls to 9-1-1 are actual emergencies. The new 2-1-1 line—funded by United Way, First 5 Mendocino and the county's Health and Human Services Agency—is intended to relieve some of the burden placed on the 9-1-1 line and provide residents with better links to community services. The information is also available on a website, www.211mendocino.org.

Early-bird registration for CMA Leadership Academy closes March 9

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.

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

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.

To RSVP, contact Rachel or Jessica by April 23 at 525-4265 or mlcms@mlcms.org.

RSVPs needed for April 27 CMA 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. 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 CEO, Dustin Corcoran.

To RSVP, contact Rachel or Jessica by April 23 at 525-4265 or mlcms@mlcms.org.

CMA coalition receives \$31 Million EHR grant

CMA, the California Primary Care Association, and the California Association of Public Hospitals & Health Systems have been awarded \$31 million in federal grant money to help primary care providers implement electronic health records (EHRs). The grant will help make support services available throughout most of California, including Mendocino and Lake counties.

The grant is one of many awarded nationwide as a result of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act of February 2009. The HITECH act establishes both Regional Extension Centers (RECs) and Local Extension Centers (LECs) to provide education, outreach, and technical assistance to help primary care providers select, implement and achieve "meaningful use" of certified EHR technology. MLCMS will be collaborating with the LEC for Mendocino and Lake counties once it is identified.

"This is an exciting opportunity for California physicians and the patients they serve," said CMA President Dr. Brennan Cassidy. "There are many challenges physicians face in implementing EHRs. The Cal-REC services will be invaluable in helping physicians address these challenges and implement and use EHR systems."

PECOS enrollment policy delayed; CMA publishes enrollment guide

With a nearly impossible April deadline looming, Medicare has delayed its PECOS enrollment policy until January 1, 2011.

Medicare physicians who have not updated their PECOS enrollment information in the past five years may need to fill out another application or risk facing payment problems for ordered or referred services. The new rules taking effect next January authorize Medicare to reject claims if an ordering or referring physician is not identified in Medicare's PECOS enrollment system.

CMA and others in organized medicine pushed for a delay in implementing the new policy, which could negatively impact many physicians and other health care providers. If the rule were enforced today, 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.

Because PECOS enrollment can be quite confusing, CMA has developed a step-by-step guide to walk physicians through the process, from determining if they are already in PECOS to

accessing the Internet-based PECOS enrollment system. This guide is available in the members-only section of cmanet.org.

Medicare participation status deadline is March 17

Physicians have until March 17 to change their Medicare participation status for 2010. Physicians who have not already changed their status can still do so, and those who have already made changes can still retract them.

The effective date of any decision is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2010. Participation decisions are binding for one year, unless you choose to opt out of Medicare entirely. Once you opt out, you cannot opt back in for two years.

Be aware that because changes in participation status are retroactive to Jan. 1, physicians who switch from "nonparticipating" to "participating" will have to refund to patients any balance billing collected between Jan. 1 and their new decision date.

For more information on physicians' Medicare participation options, see CMA On-Call document #0151, "Medicare Participation (and Nonparticipation) Options." On-Call documents are free to members in the members-only section of cmanet.org. Nonmembers can purchase On-Call documents for \$2 per page at cmanet.org/bookstore.

CMA announces 2010 webinar series

Access valuable educational resources without taking time off from work or paying travel expenses!

CMA's webinars are live, interactive, online educational events designed to provide members and their staff with access to industry experts for guidance on timely topics such as best practices for your practice, health information technology, and reimbursement, legal, and regulatory issues. And, as an added benefit to CMA members, each webinar is archived online for viewing at your leisure with links to the PowerPoint presentations and additional topic-related documents.

March webinars include:

- 3/3: Documentation – Medi-Cal Fraud and Abuse Series
- 3/10: Medicare – New Year, Fresh Start
- 3/18: HIPAA – How to Be Compliant with Recent Changes

To view the full webinar calendar, visit cmanet.org/calendar.

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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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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 or 707-525-4325.