



# MLCMS News Briefs

The monthly newsletter of the Mendocino-Lake County Medical Society

Newsletter Editor: Steve Osborn | Executive Director: Cynthia Melody

707-540-5096 | [sosborn@mlcms.org](mailto:sosborn@mlcms.org) | [mlcms.org/news](http://mlcms.org/news)

## July 2010

**Public Health urges physicians to increase pertussis vaccinations**

**Rep. Thompson honored by North Bay physicians**

**Six-month Medicare patch takes effect**

**Doctors need to verify their Medicare PECOS enrollment**

**MBC signage requirements now in effect**

**Save the date: North Bay membership dinner on Oct. 28**

**PEOPLE**

**CLASSIFIEDS**

**ABOUT MLCMS**

### **Public Health urges physicians to increase pertussis vaccinations**

The California Department of Public Health is urging physicians to increase their Tdap vaccinations because of the current statewide pertussis epidemic. To protect infants who are too young to be vaccinated, anyone with potential infant contact should be immunized. CDPH is making additional Tdap vaccine available at no charge to eligible hospitals, so that they can immunize postpartum women and their close household contacts. For more information, visit [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov).

Health care providers are also urged to get Tdap vaccinations to protect themselves and their patients. Effective Sept. 1, the Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Disease Standard requires all hospitals, outpatient medical facilities and other employers covered by the Standard to offer Tdap immunization to their employees who may be exposed to pertussis. Employees who choose not to be vaccinated will be required to sign a declination form.

Pertussis infection rates in California have increased four-fold this year, compared to the same time period in 2009. If current trends continue, the state could experience a 50-year high in pertussis cases, despite wide availability of the Tdap vaccine. So far this year, five California infants less than three months of age have died of the illness.

Physicians are reminded that pertussis immunity from previous infection or vaccination wanes over time. Even fully immunized children become susceptible to pertussis by adolescence. Additionally, because pertussis vaccine for adolescents and adults was not available until 2005, immunization rates in these populations remain low.

## **Rep. Thompson honored by North Bay physicians**

Congressman Mike Thompson, whose district includes several North Bay counties, received the 2010 Legacy Award at the annual CMA District 10 caucus in Santa Rosa on June 26. Thompson was honored for his efforts to promote the health and well-being of California residents.

Among many accomplishments in his long career, Thompson wrote landmark legislation while serving in the California State Senate that required health insurance providers to offer all children comprehensive preventive care. Now, as chair of the Blue Dog Coalition's health care task force, Thompson leads efforts in Congress to correct low Medicare reimbursement rates for physicians and to implement a comprehensive telemedicine initiative.

CMA District 10 includes medical societies in Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Solano and Sonoma counties, representing more than 2,300 physicians in all specialties and modes of practice. At their annual caucus, delegates from the North Bay societies vote on resolutions to be presented at the CMA House of Delegates in the fall.

## **Six-month Medicare patch takes effect**

The new Medicare legislation signed by President Obama in June retroactively raises physician payment rates by 2.2%, effective June 1. The new rates apply only through November, however. If Congress fails to intervene, Medicare cuts mandated by the sustainable growth rate (SGR) will take effect on Dec. 1.

Physicians who submitted June claims with charges less than the 2.2% update amount will need to contact their local Medicare contractor to request an adjustment. Charges on claims cannot be altered without a request from the physician or provider. CMS has directed physicians not to resubmit claims already submitted to their Medicare contractor.

## **Doctors need to verify their Medicare PECOS enrollment**

Physicians who have not updated their Medicare enrollment information in the past five years may need to fill out another application or risk facing payment problems for ordered or referred services.

Under new rules that took effect in July, Medicare is authorized to reject claims if an ordering or referring physician is not identified in Medicare's Internet-based PECOS enrollment system. 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.

Don't know if you're in PECOS? CMA has developed a step-by-step guide to walk physicians through the process, from determining if they are already in PECOS to helping them navigate the Internet-based PECOS enrollment system. This guide is available to members at [www.cmanet.org](http://www.cmanet.org). A previously recorded PECOS enrollment webinar is also available for viewing. Nonmember physicians can call CMA at 800-786-4262 for more information.

## **MBC signage requirements now in effect**

California physicians are now required to inform their patients that they are licensed by the Medical Board of California, and to provide patients with the board's contact information.

CMA has prepared a number of resources to help physicians comply with these new regulations, including downloadable posters and customizable patient notices. The materials

are available to members at [www.cmanet.org](http://www.cmanet.org). Nonmember physicians can call CMA at 800-786-4262 for more information.

According to the medical board, physicians, not facilities, are responsible for compliance with this regulation. In group settings, only one sign must be posted (should that option be chosen), but it must be posted in a location where it can be seen by all patients.

### **Save the date: North Bay membership dinner on Oct. 28**

Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona is the featured speaker at the combined North Bay medical societies' membership dinner on Thursday, Oct. 28. The event, to be held at the San Francisco Yacht Club in Belvedere, begins with a reception at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7. Dr. Carmona, a highly respected trauma surgeon and public health expert, served as surgeon general from 2002 to 2006. He will speak about the role of state and local medical societies in disaster preparedness.

### **PEOPLE**

**Steve Osborn**, editor of MLCMS News Briefs, has changed offices. His e-mail is still [sosborn@mlcms.org](mailto:sosborn@mlcms.org), but his new phone is 707-540-5096.

### **CLASSIFIEDS**

#### **Reimbursement specialist**

Need help with office inefficiencies? Revenue RN provides outsourced billing, coding and revenue cycle services: [www.revenuerecoverynetwork.com](http://www.revenuerecoverynetwork.com).

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

To submit a classified ad for MLCMS News Briefs, contact Erika Goodwin at [solanomedsoc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:solanomedsoc@sbcglobal.net) or 707-548-6491. 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 2010  
3033 Cleveland Ave. #104  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403