



MLCMS News Briefs

The monthly newsletter of the Mendocino-Lake County Medical Society

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Medicare rate cuts still pending, despite passage of health reform

The clock keeps ticking on Medicare rate reductions. Lost in the discussions over passage of health reform legislation is the fact that physicians are scheduled to get a 21% Medicare rate reduction by mid-April if Congress fails to act. The rate reductions, mandated by the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula, were originally scheduled to take effect March 1. Congress postponed that deadline to April 1, and now Medicare has effectively extended the deadline another two weeks by asking carriers not to process claims with April service dates for 10 business days.

The net effect of these delays is that Congress will have to act immediately upon its return from recess on April 12. While both the House and Senate are expected to postpone the SGR cuts once again, the big question is whether they will do away with the SGR formula for good. The House did vote to repeal the SGR formula last fall, but the Senate has so far failed to act.

CMA and AMA are calling on all physicians and patients to help repeal the SGR formula once and for all. Please contact Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Sen. Barbara Boxer and your local House Representative and deliver a simple message: **It's time to repeal the SGR formula.** As noted by AMA President Dr. James Rohack, "Congress' failure to act on permanent repeal of

the broken Medicare physician payment formula has put access to health care for seniors and military families in jeopardy.”

When contacting your representatives, give your name, specialty and practice location. Then tell your representative to stop the 21% cut and repeal the SGR formula once and for all. Contact information for your representatives appears below.

- 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.

Please direct any feedback or questions from your representative to MLCMS’s executive director, Cynthia Melody at cynthia@mlcms.org or 525-4375. MLCMS will also be sending physicians an e-mail survey on the potential impact of Medicare cuts.

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.

Details about health care reform posted on MLCMS website

Two detailed CMA documents about health care reform have been posted on the MLCMS website at mlcms.org/resources. The first, “[The pros and cons of health care reform](#),” provides an overview of the benefits and shortcomings of the recently signed legislation. The second, “[What CMA did for physicians in health care reform](#),” describes CMA’s many successful efforts to advocate on behalf of physicians and patients.

New CMA leader to speak at MLCMS dinner on April 29

Dustin Corcoran, the new chief executive of the California Medical Association, will be the featured guest at the MLCMS membership dinner on Thursday evening, April 29. The event, to be held at the Hampton Inn in Ukiah, begins with a reception at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner and speeches at 7 p.m.

Corcoran, who has worked for CMA since 1998, became the association’s head lobbyist in 2004, serving as the main spokesperson for organized medicine in the state Legislature. He brings an outstanding track record for skilled advocacy to his new role as CEO. He will be available at the reception to answer members’ questions and discuss CMA activities.

The dinner costs \$25 per person. Menu choices are braised chicken, roasted tri-tip, or stuffed portobello mushroom. To RSVP or to purchase tickets, contact Rachel or Jessica at 525-4375 or mlcms@mlcms.org. The Hampton Inn is located at 1160 Airport Park Blvd. in Ukiah.

RSVPs needed for April 27 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. MLCMS will be renting a van to travel to Sacramento, so reservations are requested.

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. Appointments for MLCMS members have been arranged with their legislators.

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 chief executive, Dustin Corcoran.

To RSVP, contact Rachel or Jessica at 525-4375 or mlcms@mlcms.org.

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.

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.

State expands scope of practice for nonphysicians

Despite continued opposition from CMA, the California Office of Administrative Law has removed requirements that physicians be involved in critical health care activities in hospitals, such as patient admissions, medical examinations and patient transfers. Instead, new regulations will allow these activities to be performed by a "licensed health care provider acting within the scope of his or her licensure."

The regulations also allow each facility to decide who can do what under a welter of competing advice from 30 licensing boards. CMA believes differing practices among facilities will cause confusion, thus endangering patients and inviting expensive and unnecessary lawsuits.

Portions of the regulations that would have weakened medical staff self-governance and mandated that clinical psychologists be granted medical staff membership in private hospitals were removed because of opposition from CMA and the Psychiatric Association.

CMA remains concerned about the impact of these regulations on patient care and is exploring all appropriate avenues to seek relief. The regulations take effect on April 2.

CMA offers free subscriptions to practice-management newsletter

CMA is offering free subscriptions to a new monthly publication, "CMA Practice Resources." The first issue, to be published later this month, is filled with tips and tools to help physicians and their office staff improve practice efficiency and viability. Physicians, office managers, administrators and billing staff can subscribe by visiting www.cmanet.org/news/cpr.

EVENTS

The Institute for Medical Quality is offering a **one-day training program** for new medical staff leaders in Irvine on Tuesday, April 13. The program, which costs \$405 for CMA members and \$445 for nonmembers, features sessions on the role of medical staff leaders, how to run effective meetings, and tips for staying accredited and licensed. To register, visit www.imq.org or call Leslie Iacopi at 415-882-5167.

Easter Seals Northern California is sponsoring an all-day **Physician Symposium** on Saturday, May 15, at the Petaluma Community Center. The topic is developmental and behavioral screening in primary care. Presenters include Dr. Barbara Bennett, a professor of pediatrics at UCSF, and Dr. Maria Pilar Bernal, chief of autism spectrum disorder services at Kaiser Permanente. The symposium offers 5.75 hours of CME. To register, visit noca.easterseals.com or contact Cindy Fasano at 415-382-7450 or cfasano@noca.easterseals.com.

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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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