Transformation of U.S. Health System

The U.S. health care system and our own health care system are experiencing revolutionary and transformational change. This exciting change will lead us to a new era of health care delivery. Our payment mechanisms are changing, integrated systems are being formed and new expectations are being placed on providers for obtaining and documenting good outcomes for their patients.

With this change come challenges and opportunities. Challenges include those to our primary care system as demand for services increase and the shortage of primary care providers continues. There currently are huge demands for primary care in our system and this will only increase as more folks are insured in 2014. Implementation of an electronic health record (EHR) is both a challenge and an opportunity for health care systems such as ours and also for private health care providers in the community. We are all required by the federal government to institute EHRs and it will be a necessity for continued participation in many payment programs on which we depend for our revenues.

EHRs and community health indicators

As you know, we implemented our version of Epic, ccLink, on July 1. Epic is used by Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Delta, UC Davis, UC San Francisco and, in the future, John Muir Health. Having most Contra Costa residents on the same EHR database system presents huge opportunities and extraordinary new abilities for medical records to be shared as patients move between institutions to meet their health care needs. This will not only help improve the quality of patient care, but it also will allow us as a health department to more effectively measure community health indicators and develop treatment and interventions to improve the health of our residents.

Price of progress

Implementing such revolutionary change comes with a price. First of all, ccLink was very expensive and we were fortunate to obtain federal funding to help cover the cost. More importantly, the launch of ccLink has hugely impacted our already overburdened staff as they struggle to provide care with a new tool while still trying to meet the demand for services.

We launched ccLink simultaneously in our hospital, outpatient clinics, detention health clinics and Contra Costa Health Plan. We chose to use this approach as opposed to incremental implementation with part paper and...
part EHR because the latter would have led to even more confusion during implementation. We know and acknowledge that the implementation has been painful.

**ccLink—responding to concerns**

We first heard concerns from detention health operations that the system wasn't working for them. With staff efforts and technical assistance, it is now working much better. Now we are hearing from our clinics and emergency department (ED) providers that ccLink slows them down in their clinical interactions with patients. We knew this would happen and planned ahead by reducing roster sizes. We also are hearing from our ED doctors that many of their patients are presenting with issues that can and should be treated in our clinics. This is an obvious outcome of reducing roster size. Our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers CEO Anna Roth and her team are working now with medical staff representatives to determine appropriate roster sizes and other ways for patients to access services.

We took steps before go-live to anticipate some of the concerns that we are now experiencing, such as providing recommended training, and training an army of super users to be available to help staff both during and after go-live. We also knew that we would need additional training and system refinements for a period of time after go-live and we now are working to address all issues and concerns. We know that this has been a very difficult implementation, but ultimately ccLink will be a great asset to our patients and those of us providing health care services. In the future, patients will have the ability to access their own medical record and communicate with their provider electronically.

**Better times ahead—stay on course**

I am in my 39th year with Contra Costa Health Services and throughout the years I have seen a lot of changes in our system. ccLink’s implementation is the most monumental, revolutionary and painful transition that Contra Costa Health Services has experienced during my tenure. I recognize the stress, frustration and pain that you are experiencing as you adapt to the new system.

I am also concerned about diminished ambulatory care access and overwhelming demand on our ED. Anna Roth and the administration team at our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers are working diligently with medical staff to address both issues in ways that address our patients’ and staff’s concerns.

We have begun a journey of transformation, and we expect it to get better soon. With full development of the patient-centered health home and team-based care, I believe we will better serve the needs of our patients and enrich the experience of our staff. Stay the course with me and we will reach our destination: access to high-quality health care for our residents. It may not be a smooth ride, but it will be well worth the journey.

Sincerely,

William Walker, M.D.

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The next Director’s Report will be the November issue. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information by October 19 to Kate Fowlie at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, or email kate.fowlie@hsd.cccounty.us. The Director’s Report is available online at http://cchealth.org/topics/publications/ and on iSite at http://cchs/
Community Celebrates Opening of West County Health Center

Hundreds of community members, elected officials and Health Services staff came together September 4 to celebrate the opening of our new West County Health Center in San Pablo. The event featured food, live music and tours of the new state-of-the-art facility, which will replace the aging Richmond Health Center. Speakers at the event included Congressman George Miller, Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia, Health Services Director Dr. William Walker, Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers CEO Anna Roth, San Pablo Mayor Cecilia Valdez and other elected officials. The West County Health Center will open to patients October 9. The Richmond Health Center will shut down most operations at the end of the business day on October 4. Some services offered through our Public Health Division will remain at the Richmond facility, including WIC and the walk-in immunization clinic on Monday afternoons. Our Behavioral Health Services Division will continue to operate its mental health clinics at the Richmond Health Center. The Impact Program, which provides counseling for seniors with depression, and the Wright Institute Health Coaching Program will be transferred to the West County Health Center.

For more information, visit cchealth.org/topics/west_county_center/ and see more photos on iSITE.

New Mandate Requires Flu Vaccination or Mask for Health Care Workers

Health care workers throughout Contra Costa County must now get an annual flu vaccine or wear a mask. The mandate, which came down last month from Health Services Director and County Health Officer Dr. William Walker, applies to anyone who works in a patient care setting, including local hospitals, emergency medical service providers, ambulatory health clinics, skilled nursing and other health facilities. Dr. Walker said the new mandate will help protect both patients and workers from the flu virus and reduce the spread of illness in the community. Health care workers who cannot receive flu vaccine for medical or religious reasons must wear a mask while in a patient care setting. The mandate is in effect from November 1 to March 31. Employee flu vaccination at local hospitals ranged from 44 to 72 percent during the 2010–11 flu season.

To find out more about the new flu vaccine mandate, contact your supervisor or visit http://cchealth.org/flu/providers.php
EMS Debrief Meeting Unveils Problems, Successes in Chevron Fire Response

When the shelter-in-place order was lifted shortly after 11 p.m. the night the Chevron Refinery caught fire, few expected our emergency medical system to be strained for nearly three weeks. In the days following the incident, thousands flooded into area hospitals creating long wait times in emergency departments. Our Emergency Medical Services Division hosted a meeting with 24 partner agencies to focus on the medical response to the incident. The meeting included representatives from our Hazardous Materials Division as well as hospitals, fire departments, county agencies and others, who described their organization’s response, what went well and what needed improvement. Our EMS Director Patricia Frost said the debriefing allowed each agency to reflect on its response efforts in a greater context and enhance its emergency response planning.

To find out more about the Chevron incident, visit http://cchealth.org/special/richmond-refinery-response.php To find out more about the debrief, contact Patricia Frost at patricia.frost@hsd.cccounty.us

Training Program Aims to Improve In-Home Supportive Services Care

Our Contra Costa Health Plan is partnering with Contra Costa In-Home Supportive Services and organizations throughout the state, including SEIU United Healthcare Workers West, to improve care for people who receive In-Home Supportive Services. The partnership, funded by a grant from the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation, plans to train IHSS home care workers to become part of the patient-care team. Los Angeles and San Mateo counties are also participating in the partnership. Initially, 600 IHSS home care workers in Contra Costa will receive the training, which is expected to reduce emergency room visits, hospital admissions and nursing home stays. Health Plan CEO Patricia Tanquary said health outcome data will be evaluated for IHSS recipients whose providers received training to determine the impact of the curriculum. She said this effort will also prepare CCHP for future care of seniors and persons with disabilities.

To find out more about this partnership, contact our Contra Costa Health Plan at 925-313-6004.

Art Show at Hospital Hits Right Notes

The seventh annual Health Care Workers as Creators event at CCRMC on September 18 featured the artistic and musical talents of our staff. Doctors, nurses and other CCHS staff played music and showed off their paintings and sculptures. People who attended also got to paint a flower mural that will be displayed at the hospital.

To see more pictures from the event, check out our “Health Care Workers as Creators 2012” photo album on CCHS’ Facebook page.
Public Health Joins Environmental Health in Handwashing Blitz

Handwashing is the single most important action people can do to stop the spread of illness. That’s the message our Environmental Health and Public Health Divisions were hoping to spread last month during Handwashing Awareness Week, an international effort to promote better hand hygiene. The Divisions partnered with our communications unit, Community Education and Information, to create videos, a podcast, a newspaper column and other materials that would help educate food handlers, teachers and the general public about the importance of handwashing. Supervising Environmental Health Specialist Vanessa Cordier said handwashing violations at local restaurants have remained steady in Contra Costa and they could be lower. Additionally, diseases like the flu tend to pick up in late fall and throughout the winter. Proper handwashing could help prevent some of the germs that cause those illnesses.

To view the materials created for Handwashing Awareness Week, visit www.cchealth.org To find out more about the efforts, contact Vanessa Cordier at vanessa.cordier@hhs.cccounty.us

HCIN Builds on Innovations to Increase Access to Culturally Competent Interpreters

Less than one year after being called an Innovations Exchange Best Practice by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Innovations Exchange, our Linguistic Access Unit got to work trying to do more. In April, the unit invested in a major system upgrade that increased bandwidth for the Health Care Interpreter Network, a statewide service designed to remove language barriers and give patients the best possible care. The upgrade improves the quality of video interpretation and supports wireless video equipment, which allows greater mobility for providers at our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers. Linguistic Access Manager Sally McFalone said to handle the roughly 3,500 calls per month our interpreters take, the unit has expanded its language capability to include additional Russian and Farsi interpreters. Sally and HCIN Executive Director Frank Puglisi were interviewed after receiving last year’s recognition for a profile called “Health System Improves Access to Culturally Competent Interpreters Through Participation in Telephone and Video Interpretation Network.” The AHRQ Innovations Exchange assists others wanting to undertake a similar innovation.

For more information about the Linguistic Access Unit, contact Sally McFalone at 925-313-6242.
Behavioral Health Services Walks to Celebrate Recovery

This year’s Recovery Walk had a few new faces. Just as Mental Health and Homeless Programs joined Alcohol and Other Drugs Services to form our newly created Behavioral Health Services Division, the programs again joined AODS in September for its annual Recovery Month event. Program Manager Fatima Matal Sol said by increasing awareness and information about treatment resources, we can provide healing, hope and support to those who bravely embark in a lifelong journey toward recovery. The eighth annual Recovery Walk, which took place in Martinez, promoted the societal benefits of prevention, treatment and recovery for mental and substance use disorders.

To find out more about the Recovery Walk, contact Fatima Matal Sol at fatima.matalsol@hsd.cccounty.us

Social Worker Co-authors Article for Palliative Care Journal

As communication brokers and context interpreters, palliative care social workers at public hospitals must wear many hats and try innovative approaches to meet the needs of patients nearing the end of life. This was the topic discussed in an article published in a recent issue of the Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care co-authored by six public health palliative care social workers, including Linda Russell from our Regional Medical Center. Linda, who began working in palliative care in 2010, said palliative care in a public hospital can be challenging given the sensitive nature of the conversation, but also a real opportunity to deliver therapeutic customer service to those who may not have had that experience in their medical care.

To find out more about the article, contact Linda Russell at linda.russell@hsd.cccounty.us

RotaCare Opens Free Clinic in Richmond

A new free urgent care clinic is opening next month to assist low-income and uninsured families in West County with acute or chronic medical conditions. The RotaCare Richmond Free Medical Clinic at Brighter Beginnings aims to provide compassionate health care services to children and adults who might otherwise go without medical care. It is the third RotaCare Clinic in Contra Costa County. To find out more about low- and no-cost services in Contra Costa County, visit http://cchealth.org/insurance/transition.php. To find out more about RotaCare Richmond, contact Drea Riquelme at 510-903-7516 or richmondclinic@rotacarebayarea.org
Coalition Establishes Day of Recognition for Disease Intervention Technicians

This month—for the first time ever—the National Coalition of STD Directors launched a day of recognition on October 5 to recognize Disease Intervention Technicians (or DITs). Our STD-HIV Program Manager Christine Leivermann said DITs play a crucial role in controlling and containing the spread of hepatitis, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, and other communicable diseases. DITs provide education to various communities to reduce the risk of transmission of communicable diseases, provide community-based testing services, follow up on patients who need treatment, ensure patients follow their provider’s plan and take medicine as prescribed, assist in reporting requirements, work at immunization and STD clinics, and communicate with other providers. Additionally, DITs assist immigrants with tuberculosis screening and assist patients to access health care through the Health Care Interpreter Network.

To find out more about our Disease Intervention Technicians and what they do, contact Christine Leivermann at christine.leivermann@hsd.ccounty.us or Erika Jenssen at erika.jenssen@hsd.ccounty.us

October Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Stephen C. McDonald, Patricia L. Weisinger, Mayra L. Arriola, Kathy M. Jalali, Ray A. Thomas, Christopher L. Davis, Lisa D. Browne, Jolsyn R. Windham (10 years); Saraphi Chawengchot, Herbert A. Chew, Teresa D. Gibson, John L. Gragnani, Sandra Marsh, Radhika J. Miles, Ziba Rahimzadeh, Leda I. Mullen, Chekesha N. Jackson, Wendy A. Katchmar, Elmer M. Taglorin, Charles E. Holley, Donald R. Maree (15 years); Katherine Hudson, Susan C. Conner, Jacqueline Maguire (20 years); May A. Riley, Marlene Uri Stanton, Minda V. Lejano, Sigmund Moskovitz, Beth A. Chew, Sylvia Elizararraz (25 years); Sally V. McFalone (30 years); and Kim D. Law (35 years).
Ursula Haynes, RN  
Public Health  
For her outstanding clinical astuteness, communication and dedicated patient care. For her observation that dramatically advanced the understanding of a patient’s health issues.

Nominated by Jamie Pehling

Steve Huck  
Administrative Intern – Deep Class  
Public Health  
For an outstanding job helping update Public Health’s health and safety plans and procedures, and for assisting the health emergency unit with developing an inventory management system for disaster medical supplies.

Nominated by Kim Cox and Bill Sorrell

Fatima Matal Sol  
Substance Abuse Program Manager

Priscilla Olivas  
Planner/Evaluator-Level B

Caroline Sison  
Planner/Evaluator-Level B

Kimberly Thai  
HMIS Administrator
Behavioral Health and Homeless Services

For their masterful creation of the Behavioral Health Connection newsletter

Nominated by Cynthia Belon

Joe Barger, MD  
Maria Fairbanks, RN  
Brian Henricksen  
Bruce Kenagy  
Emergency Preparedness Training Coordinator

Emergency Medical Services Program Coordinator

Judy Smith  
Pre-Hospital Care Coordinator

Rafael Vargas  
Emergency Preparedness Manager
Emergency Medical Services

For outstanding emergency and operational response to the Richmond Chevron Fire Incident and subsequent medical surge of more than 15,000 patients affecting West County emergency departments.

Nominated by Patricia Frost

Michelle Sharman, RN  
Public Health

For being proactive, helpful and instrumental in supporting PHCS staff to learn EPIC. And for her patience and leadership

Nominated by Leigh Pierson-Brown

Do you know someone going the extra mile?  
To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the commendation form by email to wanda.session@hsd.cccounty.us or fax to 925-957-5401. Forms are on our website (www.cchealth.org on About Us page) or iSITE, our intranet, at http://cchs/ Nominations are subject to approval by Division Directors.