Meeting Health Care Demand

The Governor signed the state budget last month paving the way to expand Medi-Cal and fully implement the Affordable Care Act in California. Beginning January 1, 2014, there will be many newly insured residents needing access to health care and we are in full swing in our efforts to meet the expected increased demand for care.

Our Contra Costa Health Plan is gearing up to receive new members. Some of these members will access care in our delivery system and others will receive care from our partners in the community.

We started preparing our health care delivery system to meet the challenges and expected increased demand for health care back in 2010 and have made significant access and quality improvements and are continuing to improve and expand.

Medical-Home Models of Care

We’ve partnered with Institute for Healthcare Improvement on a year-long Ambulatory Care Redesign project to develop five pilot medical-home teams across our ambulatory care system. These teams consist of clinicians, medical assistants, nurses, care coordinators, health-home coordinators and other key staff. A combination of our small, medium and large health centers are involved. These pilot medical-home teams will develop best practices, share and learn from each other, and then expand their new standard care practices across their sites and across the system. The teams will focus on team care, further improving access to care and panel management. We have already begun to see significant decreases in our appointment wait times and broken appointment rates, and increases in our continuity of care rates.

Increasing Access to Care

We will soon start testing mycclink, the patient portal part of our electronic health record software that will give patients access to their medical records, online appointment scheduling and email access to their primary care provider. We expect to launch this by the end of the year.

We have broken ground on the primary care and mental health walk-in facility in Martinez near the Emergency Department (ED) at the Regional Medical Center. Thanks to a federal grant, we acquired the building next to the Concord Health Center and have begun remodeling the space to make it conducive to an enhanced medical home model with full time behaviorists able to do warm handoffs and counseling for patients as well as public health nurses able to do community outreach.
The building is scheduled to open its doors to patient care on August 28, 2013. We plan to start adding new providers and other staff this month.

In addition to capital projects we are recruiting staff to maximize use of evening and Saturday clinics. We also are proud that most of our graduating residents will stay with us (see story on page 5) at our Regional Medical Center and health centers.

**Helping Patients Access Care in the Right Place**

We have nearly completed a study to measure access to the ED, patient flow, staff to patient ratio, and capital expansion needs for the ED. We continue to have good experience with the Advice Nurse Unit and telephone appointments to avoid unnecessary ED visits. In addition, we now have a partnership with Doctor’s Medical Center (DMC) to help direct patients discharged from their emergency department into follow-up care at the West County Health Center. This partnership will help patients connect to a health home and avoid unnecessary visits to DMC’s emergency department.

**Preparation Continues**

We are busy preparing our delivery system to provide high quality health care and to expand access to health care for the newly insured both within our system of care and through our community partners. We also are working with the state and others to ensure a smooth transition for the Low Income Health Plan members. I look forward to the day when every person has access to health insurance and health care. I know that challenging days are still ahead, and I also know that the challenges are well worth it.

Sincerely,

William B. Walker, M.D.
Contra Costa Health Plan Celebrates 40th Anniversary

On Friday, July 26, Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP) will hold its 40th anniversary celebration from 4-6 p.m. in the courtyard at 595 Center Avenue in Martinez with Congressman George Miller as a featured speaker. CCHP’s membership has grown from a few hundred to more than 120,000 lives today. From its early days in 1973 when it began enrolling Medi-Cal recipients, CCHP has had a history of innovation. CCHP was the first federally qualified, state-licensed, county-run HMO in the country. It was the first county-sponsored health plan to offer coverage to Medicare beneficiaries, and the first federally qualified, county-run HMO to offer coverage to county employees. CCHP partners with providers at Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers and the Community Provider Network to offer a choice of care networks for the different populations it serves. Now, in the first year of the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, CCHP is one of the 13 plans chosen by the state to participate in Covered California, the state insurance exchange. “In recognizing our 40 years as a culture of caring for vulnerable and underserved populations, we are pleased to be part of the health care solution - past, present and into the future,” said Health Plan CEO Patricia Tanquary.

For more information on the celebration, visit contracostahealthplan.org or call Wendy Mailer at (925) 957-7224

Homeless Court Program Returns

After being eliminated in December 2012 due to lack of funding, the Homeless Court program will resume this summer. A collaboration between our Behavioral Health Services Division and Contra Costa Superior Court, the Homeless Court helps homeless people resolve outstanding minor offenses and warrants that can arise out of the condition of homelessness. Unresolved citations and warrants can be significant barriers to a homeless person’s efforts to obtain a job, a driver’s license, housing and medical benefits. Homeless Courts have been found to reduce court and jail costs and assist the homeless in getting needed services and jobs. Proceedings will take place at the Concord Adult Shelter, which will improve access to court for homeless people and also allow hearings to take place in familiar surroundings for the population being served.

For more information on the Homeless Court Program, please visit cchealth.org/groups/homeless/homeless_court.php
Triage Effort Improves Flow in Emergency Department

The number of patients leaving without being seen and the length of stay have improved in our Emergency Department thanks to triage efforts. In January, a triage area staffed with a physician was set up in the ED lobby to help speed up evaluation of patient needs and start the ordering of any needed tests as early as possible. Though more work is needed, the results are encouraging: the rate for patients leaving without being seen (because of long wait times) dropped from 10% to 4% since last September, according to Dr. Brenda Reilly, who was ED chief when the effort was launched. The average length of stay for patients also dropped by 18% from five-and-a-half hours to four-and-a-half hours, Dr. Reilly said. The process was shepherded Dr. Tom McCoy, who took over as the head of the ED on July 1. Dr. Reilly credited the success of the triage effort to the entire ED team, including nurses, registration staff, financial counselors, and doctors. She points out that all service providers in the ED had to work differently in order to make the effort successful, and it would not have worked without all of their commitment.

Forum Breaks Down the ACA

Wanda Session, assistant to Contra Costa Health Services Director William Walker, and other local health leaders participated in “Understanding the Affordable Care Act,” a forum sponsored by Kaiser Permanente last month designed to help demystify the ACA for nonprofit agency representatives. Wanda, whose background is in health administration, was part of a three-person panel that also included Alvaro Fuentes, Executive Director of the Clinic Consortium of Contra Costa County, and Ronald Wetter, a local Community and Government Relations Manager for Kaiser. The ACA goes fully into effect on January 1, 2014, but, as Wanda noted, the state and local health departments like CCHS have been preparing for its arrival for years. For instance, she said, CCHS has enrolled thousands of people into the Low-Income Health Plan (LIHP) who, once the ACA fully kicks in next year, will be eligible for free or subsidized health coverage through Medi-Cal or Covered California, the statewide insurance exchange. Alvaro Fuentes, meanwhile, discussed how community clinics are preparing to care for the “residually uninsured,” including undocumented immigrants in Contra Costa who don’t qualify for government assistance. And Ronald Wetter explained health-plan pricing tiers, eligibility thresholds and insurance options available to individuals and employers.

For more information on Covered California, visit www.coveredca.com
Residency Program Honors Graduates, Welcomes New Additions

Fourteen doctors finished their residencies at our Regional Medical Center and 14 new residents joined our program last month. The outgoing class celebrated at a graduation ceremony June 28 at the Crowne Plaza in Concord. But for most there were no goodbyes – nine of them will remain with Contra Costa Health Services, as many of our residents traditionally do. The nationally recognized Family Medicine Residency Program, meanwhile, added 14 new doctors to the mix of medical professionals working to help our patients while learning more about their craft. These new residents were selected from an applicant pool of more than 600, based on their qualifications and interviews. Each tested high for resourcefulness, social consciousness and enthusiasm for our local brand of family medicine. Dr. Kaitlyn Van Arsdell, a new resident, said the emphasis on full-spectrum care and care for the underserved attracted her to the program. “The staff has been really great,” Van Arsdell added. “They are very supportive, and I have felt very welcome.” Congratulations to the graduates and the newcomers.

Gift Shop at Regional Medical Center Needs Volunteers

Want to give something back to the community or know someone who does? Our Regional Medical Center urgently needs new volunteers to staff the hospital gift shop. Proceeds from the gift shop benefit patient care in the hospital. Volunteers are entitled to discounts at the gift shop and free beverages during their shifts. They also receive free annual flu shots and a letter of recommendation after completing 200 hours of service.
Communicable Disease Program Responds to Hepatitis A Outbreak

Health Services joined in a multi-state response to protect the public from hepatitis A last month after learning that bags of a frozen berry mix sold at Costco stores this spring were associated with cases of hepatitis A. The recall effort spanned 12 states, and 120 people were sickened, including one resident of Contra Costa County. Several hundred bags of the mix were sold at Contra Costa’s Costco stores. Workers from Environmental Health and Public Health collected bags of berries from symptomatic residents who still had them, and ensured that the recalled product was pulled from shelves at our four local stores. Public Health’s Communicable Disease Program, meanwhile, investigated those infected to prevent further transmission, and provided factual information to the public and providers about the disease, risk factors, and what to do if exposed through our website, social media, and our local media partners. At our Public Health Immunization Clinics, we also vaccinated about two dozen people who ate the berry mix to help prevent them from getting ill.

For more information, visit: http://cchealth.org/hepatitis-a/

Videos Explain How to Apply for Medi-Cal

Our Community Education & Information Unit has produced two short videos that explain the Medi-Cal application process. About 50% to 60% of Medi-Cal applications are unsuccessful, generally because the application is incomplete. These videos, which were produced in English and Spanish, provide clear and concise application instructions, explain the documents required for a complete application and informs where to get more information and help. The project was a collaboration between CCHS, Kaiser, John Muir Health, Sutter Health, La Clinica de la Raza, Planned Parenthood. Employment and Human Services and Contra Costa Television. The videos air on CCTV, Walnut Creek TV, Concord, City of Pinole, City of Richmond, the City channel, Delta TV and CCHS’ Youtube and Vimeo channels.

A limited number of DVDs are available by contacting Victoria Balladares at victoria.balladares@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6268
Column Explains How Easy Hands-Only CPR Is To Learn

While more people than ever are learning CPR, only 32% of all cardiac arrest victims receive it from a bystander, according to the American Heart Association. Dr. Joe Barger, the medical director of our Emergency Medical Services Division, pushes for improvement of that figure in a recent Healthy Outlook column. Dr. Barger promotes the merits of hands-only CPR and dispels some common misperceptions that create barriers to learning, such as fear of legal liability for getting involved or fear of mouth-to-mouth contact with another person. (Hands-only CPR requires only the rhythmic application of pressure, using hands.) Word does seem to be getting out about modern CPR. In Contra Costa, the rate of CPR done by bystanders has increased by 37% in the last 4 years, and overall survival from sudden cardiac arrest has increased by 17%.

For more information about the forum, contact Michael Kent at (925) 313-6587. To find a drug disposal site near you, visit baywise.org

To read Dr. Barger’s entire piece and other Healthy Outlook columns, visit cchealth.org/column
You are a GEM for Going the Extra Mile

Monica Murphy
Administrative Intern–Deep Class
Public Health

For guiding a family through a stressful time and for providing valuable information that helped the family make decisions regarding their treatment.

♦ Nominated by a community member

Kathy Jalali, RN
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers

For going above and beyond for patient care and for being an asset to the 5D surgical floor night shift.

♦ Nominated by Maria Regina Panaligan

Aida Camarillo-Avila
Health Education Specialist
Public Health

For teaching pregnancy prevention to teenage students in junior and senior high school in the Pittsburg and West Contra Costa Unified School Districts and for being thorough, calm and professional during her classroom presentations.

♦ Nominated by Cristina Perez

Abby Rardin, MD
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers

For her compassion and calm demeanor while encouraging a patient to receive treatment.

♦ Nominated by a patient's family member

Health Information Management Staff
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers

For their excellent work with primary care appointments that is making a difference for our patients.

♦ Nominated by Donna Page

July Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Maribel Zarate-Rodriguez, Roxana G. Osegueda, Silvia Arita, Jenny T. Blackman, Christina E. Foote-McDermont, Jannet N. Garcia, Pamela D. MacCallister, Joshua S. Nogarr, Angelica V. Rubio, Rio Rose G. Salandanan, Linda M. Wallgren, Shanda M. Schmitz, Dionne I. Uribe, Chaedina R.L. Caldwell, Benita L. Smith, Wayne T. Dixon, Xochitl I. Saldana (10 years); Theresa B. Ronquillo, Eva Z. Vera, Theresa L. Nino, Claude D. Visak, Lorena Martinez-Ochoa, Ngozi U. Emenalom, Susan J. Martini, Cristina M. Perez (15 years); Francine Jolton (20 years); and Linda M. Estrada-Reyes (25 years).