Reality and the Unpleasant Truth

I was at a meeting recently in which County Administrator David Twa said that the role of county government used to be to help people survive and thrive—now it’s just about surviving. And with a directive to cut our budget which we expect this week, it will be a tremendous challenge to even protect the programs we need to survive.

The money isn’t there

There was a lot of other grim news at that meeting, including that both property and sales tax revenues, which feed the County General Fund, are projected to decrease for several more years—property taxes by $13 million and sales taxes by $20 million this year. The County, along with cities and school districts, may have to pay Chevron $60 million to $100 million in property taxes the court has decided were overcharges. And in five years, the county will have a $90.9 million deficit created by its employee pension fund obligation.

If there was anything good said at that meeting, it was when Mr. Twa said that even if there were no mandates, “we’d still provide services—maybe in a different way. We aren’t going to let people suffer.” It is hard to imagine how that is going to work if we begin slashing away again at the local level while the State is also cutting and eliminating. And for those of us who every day see sick people, poor families, the newly uninsured and people who can’t buy vital medications and keep food on their tables, we know many people are already suffering. Protecting them is our mission. Finding a way to do that is our challenge.

Board of Supervisors call for new approaches

The Board of Supervisors had their annual reorganization meeting and lunch last month and while they did mention a good number of things we should feel happy about, including the $12 million grant we received to build the West County Health Center, their speeches included the reality facing us—and the need to look at our operations from a different angle.

Supervisor Susan Bonilla pointed out that we came through last year’s crisis by collaboration and partnerships, including ours with the community clinics to serve Contra Costa residents who have no legal documentation. “We have to think of new ways to meet the needs.”

Emphasizing that anything we create must be sustainable, Supervisor Gayle B. Uilkema said we have to figure out how to develop a new organiza-
tion that preserves as much as possible. She predicted a very different service delivery system would emerge.

“We must do more with less and recognize we can’t be all things to all people,” Supervisor Mary Piepho said. Doing more with less is definitely what is ahead of us as more people lose their health insurance and strain the capacity of our Health Centers, Emergency Department and Regional Medical Center.

Supervisor Federal Glover said we would have to look at our core responsibilities, look at things in a different light and be creative. “We can roll up our sleeves and find solutions,” he said. He’s right and we know that it won’t be easy.

Mixing hope with gloom and doom, new Board Chair Supervisor John Gioia shared an inspirational thought from the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. “We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.” He acknowledged that we are all disappointed in the situation we are in; we can’t do the things we believe are necessary to improve the quality of life of County residents.

Finding a way to survive

I didn’t need the Board reorganization meeting to realize how difficult things are going to be for us. I am concerned about how we are going to be at the end of this process. We have always been an incubator of innovative ideas. From our pioneering efforts to protect residents from secondhand smoke several decades ago to the Regional Medical Center’s current improvement efforts, staff have rolled up their sleeves, engaged their creativity and harnessed their passions to produce magnificent results. We have also been an organization filled with compassionate, hardworking people who go the extra mile to deliver services to the most vulnerable. There are more of those people now than ever before and they need our care and compassion.

I hope that we don’t lose our capacity to innovate and improve. That said, I have seen a disconnect recently in what staff propose as solutions and where our capacity is. It disturbs me when solutions are proposed that clearly involve additional funding. It also upsets me when I see people at odds over small issues when we have so many big concerns before us.

A model we can follow

On the plus side is the amazing event I attended at CCRMC several weeks ago to hear about the improvement efforts that have been underway there for the past five years through CCRMC’s system redesign and more recently through Lean and the Kaizen efforts. Dozens of doctors, nurses, medical records staff and other employees reported on where they found waste and made recommendations for streamlining operations and improving patients’ outcomes. Most impressive was what I perceived was a cultural change—staff working together and invested in finding the most effective way to deliver quality care (see story on Page 3). I hope we can take that Lean philosophy to other parts of Health Services and that the spirit of participation and improvement will help us endure the next few months.

Thoughts to remember

I was inspired at the Board reorganization lunch by what Rabbi Dean Kertesz from Temple Beth Hillel in Richmond said. “We are judged by how we treat the most vulnerable. Not by might, not by power. Our task is to be compassionate, listen to the needs of those who need us the most. Weak and vulnerable do not have representatives in the halls of government. You must speak for them—widow, orphan, stranger. When things are hard remember who you serve.”

Sincerely,

William B. Walker, M.D.

Patient Privacy

Check iSite for an important message from Dr. William Walker about California privacy laws. This message will also be included with your next paycheck.

Click image to view
Medical Center Examines Ways to Improve Patient Care

Last month staff from Contra Costa Regional Medical Center convened to brainstorm how to make surgical care as efficient and robust as possible. The event was part of an ongoing effort to introduce Lean methodology to CCRMC, with an aim to improve all aspects of patient care. The event also recognized the years of Quality Improvement efforts that led up to the Lean process. Lean is based on the Toyota Production System and focuses on creating more value with less work. After four days of examining the surgical care experience, the team—as well as other improvement teams—presented the identified improvements to a packed audience at CCRMC. Adjustments varied from identifying and reducing redundant forms to exploring possible reassigning of tasks. Some of the changes are small, but the overall impact would be huge. CCRMC CEO Anna Roth said with the introduction of Lean we are able to accelerate our efforts to meet our aim of providing safe, effective, timely, efficient, patient-centered and equitable care to every patient every time.

Learn more about Lean on Anna Roth’s blog: http://safetynethospital.blogspot.com

Flu Vaccine for CCHS Employees

**WHERE:** Occupational Medicine, 10 Douglas Drive Suite 110, Martinez.

**WHEN:** 8 to 11 a.m. Fridays while supplies last. No appointment necessary.

**COST:** $15 H1N1 flu vaccine; $25 seasonal flu vaccine; free to CCHS members with blue CCHS card.

Public Health Urges Preparedness After Second Wave of H1N1 FLU

Serious illness related to H1N1 flu may have slowed in recent months but Public Health’s Immunization Coordinator Erika Jenssen urges anyone who hasn’t been vaccinated to do so now to be protected for the rest of this flu season. Nearly 400,000 doses of H1N1 vaccine have arrived in Contra Costa and should be available from most providers and chain pharmacies. Our Public Health Division and Health Centers have given out a total of nearly 70,000 doses. Starting this month, nurses will revisit more than 50 elementary schools to provide second doses of H1N1 vaccine to students, parents and staff. Public Health Director Dr. Wendel Brunner will provide an update of our H1N1 vaccination efforts to the County Board of Supervisors at 9:30 a.m. February 2 at 651 Pine Street in Martinez.

To stay current with H1N1 flu in Contra Costa, visit www.cchealth.org/topics/swine_flu/ or call 1-888-959-9911.

Four of our doctors with Contra Costa Regional Medical Center left January 25 for Haiti to help with the relief effort there. Drs. Brenda Reilly, Neil Jayasekera, Pramita Kuruvilla (pictured above left to right) and Dr. Bill Peterson (not pictured) volunteered to provide medical care to children and through the nonprofit group No Time For Poverty, which is bringing health care workers to Haiti to work with Partners in Health. Drs. Reilly, Peterson and Jayasekera all work in CCRMC’s Emergency Room and Dr. Kuruvilla works in the Critical Care Unit. Retired Public Health Nurse Terry Holbrook, CCRMC Dr. Brian Blaisch and Family Nurse Practitioner Laura Miller have also spent time in Haiti with relief efforts. Terry said the experience was both gratifying and humbling. These employees follow in the steps of the late CCRMC emergency room Dr. Mark Stinson, who was quick to help whenever and wherever disaster struck. Check our Facebook page for updates: www.facebook.com/pages/Contra-Costa-Health-Services/62698904738
Do you know someone who’s going the extra mile?
To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the commendation form by email to ServicEX@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.

The Director’s Report is published monthly. Deadline for the March edition is February 17. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Kate Fowlie at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, or email: kfowlie@hsd.cccounty.us The Director’s Report is available online at www.cchealth.org and on iSITE.

Beverly Annis
Jo-Ann Lee
Deloris McDonald
Shirley Peterson
Volunteers
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center

For making beautiful layettes for all of the mothers delivering at CCRMC.

♦ Nominated by Michelle Bushong

Dawn Dailey
Public Health Nurse Program
Manager Public Health

For serving as an enthusiastic, dedicated and active volunteer member and current Secretary of the California Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Advisory Council since 1998.

♦ Nominated by Thomas G. Keens, Chair, California SIDS Advisory Council

Leilani Hernandez
Account Clerk—Advanced Level
Payroll

For the great effort she provided that made it easy for me to get back on the payroll system after being on leave.

♦ Nominated by Razhel Sendaydiego

Yolanda Jaro, RN
CCRMC Operating Room

For being thorough, conscientious, dedicated and hard working, providing high quality care and for making sure all surgery supplies and equipment are available at the lowest cost, saving thousands of dollars.

♦ Nominated by Nikki Robinson and Ellen Watman

Rebecca Lee, MD
CCRMC Emergency Department

For excellent, competent, concerned care and for making the patient feel safe.

♦ Nominated by a patient

Sandra Sosa-Morales
Clerk—Senior Level
Environmental Health

For working diligently to improve all aspects of the Contra Costa Solid Waste Program, taking on challenging assignments, using her talents to streamline and better organize the program while keeping a helpful and friendly demeanor toward her colleagues, the business community and the general public.

♦ Nominated by the Environmental Health Solid Waste Team
Elise Lewis, MD
Brentwood Health Center

For her leadership that has been essential to the strength of the Residency program for many years and for working tirelessly to systematize residents’ clinics and preceptor schedules.

♦ Nominated by Jeremy Fish

Hazel Maldonado
Sterile Processing Technician
Pittsburg Health Center

For her dedication, hard work and competency in making sure clinics have needed supplies and medical equipment and for her unending support of patients and staff.

♦ Nominated by Patty Christman and Bev Frazier

Jeanette Peel
Medical Staff Coordinator
Medical Staff Office

For working tirelessly to arrange staffing for cold and flu clinics and staff requests for time off so that we were able to meet the increased demand for appointments during this winter’s H1N1 flu season.

♦ Nominated by Chris Farnitano

CCHP Names 2009 Manager of the Year

Kudos to this year’s Contra Costa Health Plan Manager of the Year, Terri Lieder.

Terri, the Supervisor of Credentialing in the Provider Relations Unit, was selected for her Service Excellence, willing spirit and cheerful demeanor, according to Health Plan CEO Patricia Tanquary. Under Terri’s watch streamlined processes were put in place, saving time and money.

Milestones Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Josefina A. Lanzas, Luisa P. Medrano, Aina M. Wirthlin, Cheri L. Stingly, Linda J. Woods, Larry C. Carlson, Robert E. Christensen, Veronica Gonzalez-Heredia, Cecilia Ramirez, Aery J. Upton (10 years); Brenda J. Latimer, Blanca Brossa, Cindy J. Howell, Rosaria M. Mann, Jason A. Sahagon, Lianne M. Gill, Chisara Ohanele, Jonathan Perales, Rosemarie Sandoval, Irma L. Suniga (15 years); Michelle Williams, Balwinder Gill, Roberta M. Martinez, Nancy Baer, Mariano O. Mendoza, Monalisa M. Gorman (20 years); Phyllis M. Johnson, Richard Gutierrez (25 years); Vicente Aguigui Jr., Mary J. Harvey (30 years); and Patricia Malicoat-Becks (35 years).

Health Services Tops Large Departments in Annual Food Drive

Your generosity in this year’s Food Fight put Health Services in first place among large departments for the first time since 2005 and increased per employee contributions by 72% over last year. The annual Food Fight is a competition between Contra Costa and Solano counties to raise money for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. Despite Contra Costa’s first-ever leap beyond the $100,000 barrier, Solano County managed to take the Big Apple trophy in the employee-to-employee challenge. The County Board of Supervisors will hold trophy presentations at 9:30 a.m. February 9 at 651 Pine Street in Martinez.
cchS has made a commitment to reducing health disparities. Each month the RHD page will focus on the progress made by our Division programs and units in implementing activities that respond to the goals of the RHD Five-Year Plan outlined above.

**Personal Stories to Raise Awareness**

Personal stories about how some of our staff and patients, clients or consumers feel about interacting with Health Services will be posted on iSite beginning this month. The RHD PRIDE Initiative launches the series to illuminate the way biases regarding sexual orientation and gender identity have affected the experiences of our co-workers and those who use our services. The stories, drawn from life experiences, were first shared at the PRIDE launch held in October 2009. The stories will be accompanied by relevant data and resources about the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning and Intersex (LGBTQQI) population and links to websites, tools and resources. A comment form will allow cchs staff to share their comments, experiences and questions. The Pride Initiative committee will use the input to develop future stories and PRIDE activities. Committee members are Joanne Genet, Anthony Sanders, Ramona Chavez, Wendy Mailer, Teresa O’Riva, Donna Garro, Sue Hilbun, Sue Meltzer, Rossio Aliaga-Caro and Concepcion James.

For more information about the PRIDE story series contact Concepcion James at cjames@hsd.cccounty.us. iSite is available by typing cchs in the browser address of any CCHS computer.

**RHD Hosts San Mateo Health Equity Team**

One of the exciting aspects of engaging in Reducing Health Disparities is the opportunity to share and learn from other health organizations. Case in point, the meet and greet with staff of the San Mateo County Health Equity Initiative that was hosted by the Reducing Health Disparities Unit last month. With several CCHS staff also presenting (Otilia Tiutin of Health Plan, Sam Kahn of Information Systems, Karen Jovin of Personnel, Anthony Sanders of Mental Health and Jeff Gould, Joanne Genet and Chuck McKetney of Public Health), a few CCHS reducing health disparities efforts were highlighted, such as the CCHP Language Access Database, CCHS REAL (race, ethnicity, and language) Data Task Force, Service Excellence Training, PRIDE Initiative and the Community Health Indicator Report. In turn, San Mateo staff shared information on the history of their department’s efforts with health equity. As often happens with these types of meetings, common areas of focus were identified and as well as differing methodologies, which enhanced the learning for all. We committed to meeting again in the next few months.

For more information about this meet and greet contact RHD Manager Concepcion James at cjames@hsd.cccounty.us
Hundreds Trained in Service Excellence Principles

“Being present, assuming goodwill, letting go, both/and thinking.” If these terms mean something to you and have been incorporated into your “way of being,” you were probably one of the nearly 700 CCHS employees who has attended Service Excellence trainings since the summer of 2008. Attendees have come from all divisions, with the majority participation from Contra Costa Regional Medical Center, Public Health, and Information Systems. Nearly half of senior leadership (division or program directors) has also attended the full-day management session. Service Excellence is the demonstration of attitudes and behaviors that allow the creation of meaningful connections with patients, clients, customers, consumers and each other. Through these trustworthy relationships, mutual purpose and mutual respect are established, bringing forth a collaborative process providing high quality, culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate care and services with respect and responsiveness. Personnel Trainer and Analyst Karen Jovin and RHD Education Coordinator Dawna Vann continue to offer the training to support programs and units to fully implement the CCHS Service Excellence Policy. Additional trainings are available in communication, team building and conflict management. Learning management software (e-learning) will soon allow for more flexibility and autonomy in registering for and checking on availability of and attendance at classes.

For more information contact Karen Jovin at kjovin@hsd.cccounty.us or Dawna Vann at dvann@hsd.cccounty.us.

CCRMC Team Developing Physician Resident Patient Feedback Tool

With our patient population becoming evermore diverse it is critical that our health care providers know how cultural factors can influence health care behaviors. This notion is the basis of an effort that began last year to ensure our Regional Medical Center resident doctors are culturally competent. Residency Director Dr. Jeremy Fish leads the team, which consists of Ann Harvey, Mitch Applegate, Patty Hennigan, Linda Nakel, Chuck McKetney, Concepcion James, Tiombe Mashama, Estela Cerda, LeAndra Turner, Anthony Sanders and Joanne Genet. Since September, the team—with assistance from the Promotoras, African American Health Conductors and members of the PRIDE Initiative—has held a series of six focus groups with more than 30 of our patients. The results found that demonstrating respect, practicing listening, supporting patients being heard and being thorough with exams and being fully prepared were all desirable traits. Next, the team will work with Quality Improvement staff to develop and implement the assessment tool at our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers.

For more information about this project contact Chuck McKetney at cmcketne@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6171.
**STEMI System Recognized Among Nation’s Best**

The County’s STEMI System, which is overseen by our Emergency Medical Services Division, has improved in each performance benchmark since it was launched more than one year ago. A STEMI—or high risk—heart attack is one that needs rapid cardiac intervention. The most notable advance from this year over last is the time it takes to get from door to intervention with field activation: 48 minutes. That time is 12 minutes faster than the national benchmark for ideal STEMI systems. Program Manager Patricia Frost said Contra Costa is known as one of the leading “high performance” STEMI Systems in the nation. Patricia said the system’s success is due to the hard work of prehospital and STEMI Center providers in Contra Costa. Despite these successes, Patricia said more than half of all STEMI patients still take themselves to the hospital. The best and fastest way to get treatment, she says, is to call 911.

*The entire STEMI performance review of 2009’s third quarter is available at [www.cccems.org](http://www.cccems.org) EMS is now on Twitter follow them at [www.twitter.com/ContraCostaEMS](http://www.twitter.com/ContraCostaEMS)*

**CCHS, Coalitions Help Create Alcohol & Tobacco Laws**

The City of Richmond, with advocacy efforts from the Tobacco Prevention Coalition and the West County Alcohol Policy Working Group, recently adopted a tobacco and alcohol retailer licensing law. The law includes a fee that will fund efforts to reduce sales of alcohol and tobacco to minors and encourage compliance with other sales laws. Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Program Manager Fatima Matal-Sol said funding for compliance checks of alcohol retailers will mean better compliance with alcohol sales laws. Tobacco Prevention Policy Coordinator Jaime Jenett said setting fees and suspending licenses for those retailers found in violation of the law has reduced sales of tobacco products to minors from 37% to 7% in the unincorporated county after implementation of a similar law. The American Lung Association recently awarded Richmond an A for its tobacco prevention efforts. Unincorporated Contra Costa received a B.

*For information on tobacco prevention efforts, call Denice Dennis at 925-313-6214. For information on alcohol prevention efforts, call Fatima Matal-Sol at 925-313-6311.*

**Mental Health Division Prepares to Launch Suicide Prevention Campaign**

Did you know that there were 120 reported deaths by suicide in Contra Costa County in 2008? Or that of these 91 were Caucasian men? Staff from our Mental Health Division have been gathering information about suicide in Contra Costa and plan to launch a suicide prevention campaign in the coming year. The County Suicide Prevention Campaign is a Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) program, funded through the Mental Health Services Act. The campaign will be co-chaired by our Mental Health Division and the Contra Costa Crisis Center, our nationally recognized crisis provider. PEI Coordinator Mary Roy said the goal of the campaign is to raise the awareness of suicide and examine our system of care to improve education and intervention strategies. Suicide deaths are preventable.

*To find out more about the campaign or to get involved, contact Mary Roy at mroy@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5169.*