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Looking Back & Ahead

I often use the January Director’s message to describe some of the issues, challenges and opportunities that will face us in the coming year. Before we look forward, let’s look back at our accomplishments for 2010. Health reform was passed, opening the doors to health insurance for most; California’s 1115 Waiver was approved and will serve as a bridge to 2014, when most of Health Reform will be effective; and we not only survived another Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) audit, but received high compliments and praise. The audit surveyors were especially impressed with the work that we have done as part of our system transformation efforts and patient-focused changes we made in our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers. We’ve had many successful Lean management events at the hospital, and have begun the work of service integration. With much accomplished, much still lies ahead for 2011, and it probably won’t require a crystal ball for me to predict that closer coordination among our internal operations and with our external partners will be the name of the game.

It’s a hallmark of health reform

We have talked about our integrated health department for years—the uniqueness of having all components of a public health system under one administrative entity. Now we’re going to have to demonstrate that the system really works because creating more integrated health systems—which currently exist in very few places in the United States—is a hallmark of the health reform initiatives.

Although we know what our strengths are as an integrated agency, including the fact we own our health plan and it is integrated into the department’s operations, we also know there is a need to better integrate. And now we have no choice. We are being called to task—as every other health system is—to do it. That’s the buzz across the country, and nowhere was that clearer than at both the recent National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (NAPH) conference and the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (CAPH) conference. Systems like ours were talking about various approaches to integrated services: medical homes, integrating physical and mental health, case management and coordinated care—all the issues that health reform will require of all of us and which my senior staff had already begun discussing and, in some cases, implementing.

Continued next page
Outcomes count

In California, all counties with public hospitals, including ours, will be required by the new Medi-Cal Waiver to demonstrate that we are actually producing outcomes that reflect integration of services. As a condition of the waiver, we developed benchmarks such as providing mental health consultation to ambulatory care patients as well as bringing better physical health services to seriously and persistently mentally ill consumers. These benchmarks acknowledge the staggering statistic that people with serious mental illnesses are known to die 25 years earlier than the general population. We have been less than effective in the past at addressing mental health issues for those patients seeking primary care in our health centers, and at addressing the prevalence of substance abuse problems in our mental health and homeless populations.

What we’ve done

Even before health reform was official, we had begun some of these critical integration efforts, such as developing psychiatric liaisons at our Health Centers in Richmond, Pittsburg and Martinez, and building a new physical health clinic at the Concord Mental Health facility that we hope to open later this year. We are working to use family nurse practitioners to coordinate care for mental health patients receiving services at the El Portal Mental Health program. We are designing the new West County Health Center to create space for group visits and better integration of services. We are also exploring better integration of behavioral health and substance abuse efforts.

A fundamental tool

While we are investing time and energy into improving the patient experience and outcomes at CCRM/HCS, we also will be implementing what I consider to be a fundamental tool for better integration of services: the electronic medical record (EMR). We are committed to accomplishing this at CCRM/HCS by July 2012. We will be using the EPIC EMR, which is known nationwide and is considered the state of the art. It’s currently used by many other health systems. It will require an enormous investment of staff between now and next year.

The work ahead

Implementation of integrated systems, launch of the EMR and establishing a medical home for every patient plus the achievement of nearly universal health insurance coverage by 2014 is the most exciting constellation of progress I’ve seen in my 36 years with Health Services. I look forward to our exciting work ahead, and to the opportunity to continue to serve with you, the dedicated staff of Contra Costa Health Services.

Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

William B. Walker, M.D.
Save the Date for our Regional Health Foundation’s Annual Fundraiser Gala

Mark your calendars for April 16: a night of dinner and dancing to support the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers. The Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation will hold its annual fundraising gala at the Crow Canyon Country Club in Danville. In addition to dinner and dancing, “Jazz in the Canyon” will feature live and silent auctions, as well as music by a band featuring some of our own staff, The Rhythm Method. The Regional Health Foundation is the major fundraising vehicle to support the long-term needs of the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers.

For sponsorship and ticket reservation information for the Regional Health Foundation’s gala, call 925-957-5439.

Regional Medical Center Recognized for Emergency Department Improvements

Our Contra Costa Regional Medical Center continues to receive praise for changes it made to improve patient flow in its Emergency Department. The California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems listed CCRM as an Honorable Mention for its Efficiency and Access Award. Since 2008, the Emergency Department has used an approach that immediately provides brief triage by a nurse and ensures rapid access to a physician. Lean management principles were applied to streamline the Emergency Department and remove barriers to quick treatment. Without adding staff or space, our Emergency Department saw a 50% reduction in patients leaving without being seen. There was also a 20% reduction in length of stay and a 43% decrease in the amount of time from a patient’s arrival to being seen by a physician, despite an annual increase of 10% in patient volume. In 2008, County Supervisor Federal Glover attributed the improvements to our “leaders with a vision and people on the floors who are helping.”

For more information, contact Dr. David Goldstein at david.goldstein@hsd.cccounty.us
Honor Roll
GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Gloria Bravo
Nichol Rocha
Veronica Santolaya
Clerks – Senior Level
Martinez Health Center
For voluntarily extending their knowledge and expertise toward the implementation and facilitation of the telephonic registration process for prenatal patients in the Community Practice Clinics and for their continued enthusiasm, professionalism and willingness to provide Service Excellence, which has contributed to the success of this process.

◆ Nominated by Lorena Garcia and Kathryn McClelland

Arturo Hernandez
Ambulatory Care Clinic Coordinator
Richmond Health Center
For taking the time to keep Richmond Health Center employees informed on safety via a monthly newsletter and updates on a weekly basis of happenings at the clinic. What a great way to keep everyone informed.

◆ Nominated by Sonya Jacoby

Vince Morales, LVN
Martinez Detention Facility
For his willingness to work with others to get the job done, quickly responding to calls, being knowledgeable, resourceful, organized and respectful of other views and for maintaining a good rapport with the Deputies to facilitate caring for inmates.

◆ Nominated by Danilo Ganancial

Sheilah Zarate, PHN
Public Health
For helping a resident by solving a significant issue of food-borne illness. The resident was very happy with her caring and immediate service. She is an asset to Public Health.

◆ Nominated by Francie Wise

Cheryl Chu
Health Services Information Systems Programmer/Analyst
Teri Williams
Health Services Information Systems Specialist
Information Technology
For putting their heads together to figure out and fix a problem that was causing Mental Health PSP reports to print in a large font.

◆ Nominated by Michelle Simes

Behavioral Health Value Stream
Behavioral Health Rapid Improvement Workshops
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center
For their important contribution, hard work, enthusiasm and commitment in working together to create a patient-centered experience for all our patients, consumers and family members who access our behavioral health services.

◆ Nominated by Lynnette Watts
Pam Dodson, RN  
Emergency Medical Services  
For helping set a goal to locate AEDs throughout the county so that witnesses can respond to a victim of sudden cardiac arrest and deliver a shock within three minutes.

♦ Nominated by Anthony T. Gordon, PhD, President, Contra Costa Community College District

Vicky Balladares  
Oliver Symonds  
Community and Media Relations Specialists  
Office of the Director  
For consistently providing quality video recording and photography to document the improvement efforts of CCRMC and Health Centers. Their professionalism and adaptability to the situation, especially at the last minute, has been invaluable.

♦ Nominated by Tess O’Riva and Anna Roth

Counselors and Clerks  
Discovery House  
For using their expertise and compassion to assist an LGBT community member to come out. They helped the individual address substance abuse issues and complete the substance abuse program.

♦ Nominated by Bob Kajdan and Connie James

Tami Stalker  
Financial Counseling  
For exceptional commitment, outstanding quality and quantity of work while going the extra mile to provide clerical assistance to the Financial Counseling staff with a kind, thoughtful and humorous manner.

♦ Nominated by Lorena Barajas and Ward Smedt

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 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.

January Milestones  
Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Albert W. Borden, Juana R. Fon, Kenneth W. Golston, Myra J. Millena, Jenny D. Parecadan, Marie Scannell, Jue Zhang, Sharon M. Cuthbertson, Jessica Lopez, Kevin A. Anderson, Yu F. Zhao, Mercy Faith G. Guardian, Kathryn A. McClelland (10 years); Mireya Diaz, Swarnalatha Srinivasan, Gerald D. Tamayo (15 years); Keith C. White, Jamil R. Augustine, Maria E. Sanchez, Jane A. Yimbo (20 years); Irma R. Lerma, Debra K. Sell, B. Arthur Lathrop (25 years); Craig D. Smith, Sengkham Boungnasith, Ruby L. Kelly (30 years); and William B. Walker (35 years).
New Doc at the Helm of the Healthy Outlook Column

Our Healthy Outlook column is now under the direction of Martinez Health Center physician Dr. David Pepper. Longtime author and editor Dr. Stephen Daniels handed off his duties this month after seven years at the helm. Dr. Daniels has been a driving force behind the column, offering an immense amount of knowledge and flair. Dr. Pepper said he aims to continue the work by Dr. Daniels, who retired, and challenge the way people think about health. Healthy Outlook covers a wide range of topics, including illness prevention, disease control, seasonal maladies, public health issues and much more. The columns have been a regular feature in local newspapers and on our website since late 2003. Health Services staff often contribute to columns that address their areas of expertise.

To find out more about the column or to suggest a topic, contact Dr. David Pepper at theairdoctor@gmail.com or to view previous Healthy Outlook columns, visit www.cchealth.org/topics/column/.

Students Help Promote Lead Poisoning Prevention

Fourth- and fifth-grade Concord students recently participated in a lead prevention calendar contest coordinated by our Lead Poisoning Prevention Project. Eighty after-school students from Meadow Homes Elementary participated in the contest and had their work showcased in an opening last month. Joanne Genet, manager of our Lead Poisoning Prevention Project, said her project often works with schools and students to create a broader base of understanding about the impact lead has on children. A bicycle and art supply baskets were awarded to first-, second- and third-place winners. All the artwork entered was submitted to the California Department of Public Health for possible inclusion in a statewide calendar published by their Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch for 2012–13. Some of the drawings are still on exhibit at the Concord City Hall through mid January.

For more information about lead poisoning prevention and future contests contact Joanne Genet, Lead Poisoning Prevention Project Manager, at joanne.genet@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6763.

Employees Pull Through for Local Charities

It was the season of giving and Health Services employees did not disappoint. Staff donated or pledged $92,972 to the 2010 Combined Charities campaign. That is a remarkable increase over last year’s $54,482. The annual drive is a fantastic display of CCHS employees’ enormous generosity and dedication to the community. A presentation of the 2010 Combined Charities campaign will be made to the County Board of Supervisors on January 18. In all, County employees raised $286,659. The drive benefits the Bay Area Black United Fund, Earth Share of California, Local Independent Charities, United Way and many other worthy causes.

For more information, contact Jackie Peterson at Jackie.Peterson@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5420.
New Law Requires Some Students to Have Whooping Cough Vaccine

There’s a new state law that will help protect our community from whooping cough. The law requires seventh- through 12th-grade students to show proof they received a whooping cough booster—called Tdap—before starting school in the fall. The law aims to reduce the spread of whooping cough, also known as pertussis, which increased dramatically statewide last year. In 2010, Contra Costa recorded more than 200 cases of whooping cough compared to fewer than 20 cases in 2009. Whooping cough is most dangerous for infants, although people of all ages can get it and spread it to others.

To find out more, contact Immunization Coordinator Erika Jenssen at erika.jenssen@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6734.

Perinatal Services Uses Strength-based Approach to Enhance Service Excellence

Public Health’s Family, Maternal & Child Health Program (FMCH) has enhanced Service Excellence by focusing on the strengths, promises and resources of clients and staff. Through the leadership of Nurse Program Manager Dawn Dailey and Perinatal Services Coordinator Itika Greene, FMCH’s Perinatal Services Coordination team took on the challenge of creating a new framework for their unit embodying a strength-based approach. The traditional service delivery paradigm focuses on “at-risk populations, identifying client deficits and problems.” In the strength-based approach, all clients are assisted in exploring what strengths they have and how those strengths have aided them in the past and can now be used to address current needs and issues. A client said, “this program helped me identify strengths I did not know were even strengths.” Key to successfully implementing this approach is creating a work environment for staff that mirrors the approach with clients. The team developed a strength-based approach manual, which describes the unit’s goals, the principles of their strength-based approach model, and provides staff with all appropriate strength-based client intake and evaluation forms. According to Dawn, the new framework “has been linked to improved mental health of clients, positive health practices of patients, better physiological function and a decrease in caregiver burnout.”

For more information, contact Dawn Dailey at 925-313-6325.
Public Health Nurse Volunteers to Fight Cholera Outbreak in Haiti

One of our Public Health nurses recently volunteered in Haiti at a cholera treatment clinic. Sheilah Zarate worked 12-hour shifts for a week last month providing acute care to people suffering from the severe intestinal illness that can kill within hours if untreated. The Caribbean country was hit by an earthquake last January and more recently by the cholera outbreak. Sheilah volunteered to go to Haiti with Medical Teams International, a faith-based non-governmental organization. She worked with Haitian nurses near Port-de-Paix on the North Coast in a clinic where six nurses and one physician treated an average of 150 patients per day. Sheilah’s job was assessing hydration status of patients, starting and maintaining IVs and encouraging patients to take oral rehydration solution. “It was frustrating to see cholera spread among families due to the lack of clean water and public education outside of the clinics, but the work was rewarding,” she said. “Seeing people recover, children opening their eyes and then even smiling—that’s when I felt I made a difference, that I helped save a life,” she said. This was Sheilah’s second deployment with Medical Teams International. She went to Sri Lanka after the tsunami and recommends this type of volunteer work. “I went because I hate to just give money, I wanted to do something about it.” Several other CCHS staff have volunteered in Haiti, including Drs. Brenda Reilly, Bill Peterson, Pramita Kuruvilla and Neil Jayasekera, and nurses Terry Holbrook and Cathy Brandt.

Contra Costa Medical Reserve Program Needs You

The Contra Costa Medical Reserve Corps, which is overseen by our Emergency Medical Services Division, was developed as part of the County’s emergency planning and response system to address the need for medical professionals during local disasters. The team currently has more than 180 volunteers and is hoping to reach 250 to ensure staffing needs during a prolonged emergency. The Corps is seeking trained health care professionals including nurses, physicians, pharmacists, paramedics and emergency medical technicians, dentists, veterinarians, as well as mental health professionals such as psychologists, social workers, family therapists, and psychiatric technicians. Interpreters, chaplains, office workers, legal advisors also are needed. During a disaster or emergency, the Corps responses could include providing mass casualty triage and care, assisting with mass vaccinations or prophylactic medication dispensing or other medical and health-related tasks including ongoing public service to the community.

For more information or to register for the Contra Costa Medical Reserve Corps, visit our website at www.cchealth.org/mrc or contact Juleine Latteri at jlatteri@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-646-4690.

Volunteers Needed to Help Count the Homeless

Volunteer drivers and counters are needed from 6 to 8:30 a.m. January 26 to help count the number of people experiencing homelessness in Contra Costa. The count assists our Homeless Program observe trends in homelessness and ensure Contra Costa receives adequate federal support for homeless services and housing. Volunteers must attend one of the following one-hour trainings at 12:30 p.m. or 6 p.m. January 19 at Grace Lutheran Church in Richmond; 12:30 p.m., January 20 at Impact Church in Brentwood, 6 p.m. January 20 or 12:30 p.m. January 21 at Vineyard Community Center in Concord. Volunteers will report to various East, West and Central Contra Costa County locations. The deadline to register is January 18.

To sign up for training and to volunteer download a volunteer form from our website, www.cchealth.org/groups/homeless/pdf/2011_count_flyer.pdf and fax to 925-313-6761. For more information contact Felix Box at 925-313-6145.