Preparing for Health Care Reform

I recently sent an “All Staff” message to CCHS employees announcing a number of restructuring actions especially affecting the service portions of Health Services that I feel are essential if we are going to prepare ourselves for the health reform coming as a result of the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and extension of the California Medi-Cal waiver.

This month I want to explain a little more about what I see ahead for us. I’ve been working on health reform for so long I sometimes forget that not everyone realizes what a profound impact these changes can have on the delivery of health care and on health outcomes for all of our population.

Patient-centered incentives

Often overlooked is the fact that the legislation contains built-in incentives for creating health systems that are patient-centered. Through medical homes, bundled payments and accountable care organizations where all providers share decision making and medical records—terms we’ll be hearing much more about in the coming years—providers will be rewarded for improving patient outcomes and ensuring that patients don’t fall through the cracks. Systems that excel at achieving the Institute of Medicine’s six aims for health care improvement—safe, effective, efficient, timely, patient-centered and equitable care—will thrive. Our current health system throughout the United States, with some notable exceptions, has serious barriers to accomplishing these goals. In general, there is no oversight by a primary care provider responsible for the whole patient, no case management and no care coordination, particularly between systems and silos.

Even before the passage of the health reform act, we had already begun efforts to integrate behavioral health services into our primary care settings and primary care into our mental health programs and those pilot efforts continue.

Nevertheless, and even though we have many of the pieces we need, we have a long way to go to ensure patients don’t fall through the cracks, to have adequate hand-offs between...
our Medical Center and our Health Centers, appropriate consultation, full integration of Alcohol and Other Drugs Services, Mental Health, Public Health and the rest of our system. We need to make the pieces we have work and we are starting that process with the restructuring of our Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers under one administrative unit.

**Beyond our walls**

Beyond the direct delivery of service, the health reform legislation also acknowledges the need to look beyond the walls of the providers to the community to conduct prevention work to address obesity, cardiovascular diseases and other chronic conditions and to work toward integration of substance abuse and mental health services with the more traditional health system.

I have been saying for a long time that Health Services is uniquely positioned to take advantage of what health reform offers. We have been pioneers, for example, in the areas of prevention and working with community, and we continue to do innovative work with cities in encouraging the inclusion of a health element in their general plans and with a wide range of partners around nutrition and physical activity promotion.

We must look hard at the valuable partnerships we have built over the years with hospitals and other stakeholders. Our Health Plan, in preparation for taking on the responsibility for hundreds of more Seniors and Persons with Disabilities this coming January, is re-examining those networks. We have a track record with health systems like Kaiser, John Muir Health, Sutter Delta and others. Those relationships, as well as others, must be expanded.

After I sent out the All Staff message, I received a heartening response from Tanir Ami, the Executive Director of the Community Clinic Consortium, with which we have been working very closely. She said, “There is so much mentioned below that is of particular interest to us. We hope to help work with you on strengthening key political relationships, building new community partnerships and developing new models of service integration. As we all work toward implementing electronic medical records, I also believe this is the optimal time to be thinking about how all our systems of care can exchange information in the most efficient way possible. We look forward to being a part of many of these discussions and are very excited about working together to help shape the new care delivery system in our community.” I anticipate similar reactions from other partners.

**Working with communities**

It will also be increasingly important for us to form even closer ties with our very diverse communities as we become ever more patient-centered. The new legislation offers many opportunities for demonstration projects and pilot programs, which would be well suited to our system. Dianne Dunn-Bowie, as the Executive Director of Health Services Integration and Governmental Relations, will work to strengthen key political relationships, build new community partnerships and develop new models of service integration. It will be important for local governments and residents to work with us as we move forward.

Equally important is the need for us to have a common mission and vision that we all share about how our new coordinated health system will work to produce better outcomes. I will be asking Senior Staff to take a close look at our mission statement to see if it reflects our commitment to the new order. I would appreciate hearing any thoughts you have about the challenges we face.

Sincerely,

William B. Walker, MD

The Director’s Report is published monthly. Deadline for the October edition is September 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 kate.fowlie@hsd.cccounty.us The Director’s Report is available online at cchealth.org and on iSite.
Free Immunization Clinics Protect Thousands from Whooping Cough

In the past few months we’ve held several free immunization clinics in response to a surge of whooping cough in our county and across the state. Our Public Health Division partnered with the City of Concord and our Regional Medical Center to host free clinics at a farmers market and at the hospital. So far this year, more than 100 people have fallen ill with whooping cough in Contra Costa. In 2009, there were 18 cases. Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a severe respiratory illness that can be fatal for infants. Symptoms include low fever, runny nose, sneezing and a persistent cough. Immunization Coordinator Erika Jenssen said people over 7 years old should receive a dose of Tdap vaccine, which protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis.

For information about pertussis, visit www.cchealth.org/topics/pertussis/ or call 925-313-6767.

Heart Readings Now Sent Wirelessly from the Field to Receiving Hospital

Emergency medical responders in Contra Costa now have the ability to shave lifesaving minutes off treatment times during heart emergencies. Our Emergency Medical Services Division teamed up with John Muir Medical Center Concord Campus to install devices that securely and wirelessly transmit a patient’s electrocardiogram (ECG) from the field to the receiving hospital. This allows cardiologists to verify the patient’s condition while assuring that preparations are made at the catheterization lab. This is part of a pilot project using Medtronic’s Lifenet Communication System and will soon be rolled out to Doctor’s Medical Center San Pablo. EMS Prehospital Care Coordinator Mark Buell said the saved minutes allow for speedier treatment and improved outcomes. Using the system, data could even be sent to a cardiologist’s email or smart phone, he said.

To find out more about this pilot project, contact Mark Buell at mark.buell@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-9559.
Jana Aloo  
Supervisor  
Prenatal Care Guidance Program

For implementing the PCG electronic medical records and data system, Growing Great Kids curriculum, financial assessment and resources, strength-based principles, and a car seat education and distribution program during the last year.

♦ Nominated by Itika Greene

Jose Avila  
Environmental Health Technician

For a magnificent job arranging for to co-host a code enforcement training with the City of Pleasant Hill for more than 80 people.

♦ Nominated by Joe Doser

Cheryl Goodwin  
Medical Staff Coordinator  
Pittsburg Health Center

For excelling with event planning and organizing important meetings, for becoming a genius at credentialing and motivating the medical staff at e-Learning.

♦ Nominated by Keith White

Jocelyn Habal  
Supervising Environmental Health Specialist  
Prenatal Care Guidance Program

For her leadership and dedication promoting safe pools, training staff, developing website information, putting together packets for all pool facilities and gathering data on non-compliant pools.

♦ Nominated by Diana Kato

Joshua Slattengren  
Environmental Health Specialist  
Pittsburg Health Center

For doing a great job putting together a presentation for a code enforcement training and for developing educational outreach for food vendors selling without permits.

♦ Nominated by Diana Kato

Kristian Lucas  
Environmental Health Specialist  
Pittsburg Health Center

For making his first official presentation for Environmental Health an effortless, smooth outreach presentation about food vendors selling without permits.

♦ Nominated by Diana Kato

Tatiana Marek  
Clerk – Senior Level  
Pittsburg Health Center

For making a big difference with her wise, great experience as a Service Excellence Representative willing to help other staff and new programs

♦ Nominated by Angélica Matamoros

Maria Perez-Garcia, LVN  
Pittsburg Health Center

For providing excellent professional service and compassionate care when helping patients and co-workers, for always being prepared and for never being too busy to go out of her way to help someone in order to give the best care to all.

♦ Nominated by Lisa Day

Sylvia Rodriguez  
Acting Claims Supervisor  
Contra Costa Health Plan

For a job well done supervising the claims unit and for making positive changes and quality upgrades to assist all of our customers.

♦ Nominated by Cindy Shelby
Kathy Ferris Wins Award
CCRMC Infection Control Nurse Kathy Ferris is the 2010 winner of the Ruth Pease award. Each year the award, named after a former employee, is given to a member of the medical staff for a record of outstanding achievements and dedication to patient-centered care. Kathy has devoted more than 20 years to Health Services, offering a unique insight and vast knowledge of infection control.

Dr. Brunner Reappointed
Public Health Director Dr. Wendel Brunner was reappointed in August to the state Tobacco Education and Research Oversight Committee. He has served as a member on the committee since 2007. The committee is charged with overseeing the use of Proposition 99 tobacco tax revenues for tobacco control and prevention education and for tobacco-related research.

Pat Sussman
Acting Planning Director, CCHP
For tremendous and efficient completion in a very short time frame of an important grant that would aid analysis of our behavioral health integration into primary care of the HCCI population.

Jackie Peterson
Secretary
Office of the Director
For working with CCHP to prepare a grant proposal and for being smart, sweet, and never getting flustered. The grant would not have happened without her.

Do you know someone who’s going the extra mile?

Outstanding Achievement
CCRMC Psychology Fellow Lisa Sebasco earned the distinction of Master Psychopharmacologist. Psychopharmacology is the study of the effect of drugs on the mind and behavior. Lisa is one of the first psychologists to take home this distinction.

September Milestones
Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Robin M. Melendez, Patsy D. Mendes, Catherine L. Pedersen, Joanne M. Salazar, Timothy R. Taylor, Molly M. Porter, Patricia A. DeRose, Brenda J. Fields, Dionicia Cuevas, Troy T. Kaji, David B. Reedy, Jovanka D. Beckles, Agustin G. Martinez, Ma Alicia O. Pormento, Lee Y. Woo, Robin W. Bevard (10 years); Charlotte Standefir, Tina Greco, Lawrence C. Smith, Zenaida Hernandez, Kathleen M. Lawrence (15 years); Jessie E. Laborete (20 years); Sharon Riccobono (25 years); Beverly A. Belser, Delia M. Alanis, Thelma Stone and Molly M. Weinstein (30 years).
National Commission Lauds Health Plan’s Case Management Unit

Our Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP) was recently recognized in Washington, D.C., for its unique and innovative approach to case management. The Managed Care Case In Point Platinum Award was presented by Dorland Health in collaboration with the Commission on Case Management Certification. CCHP’s Case Management Unit is a multidisciplinary team that provides services to all Health Plan members and uninsured people in our county. Case Management Unit Manager Laurie Crider said her unit ensures cost-effectiveness and quality of care for its clients at all life stages. Laurie said the success of these programs is due to the incredibly caring and talented Case Management team. The unit helps patients make and keep appointments, provides an initial health screening and much more. The County Board of Supervisors also recognized the unit in July.

For more information, contact Laurie Crider at laurie.crider@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-7421.

Ambulatory Care Policy Helps Improve Productivity at Patient Group Visits

Productivity in Ambulatory Care patient group visits has increased due to the involvement of the Health Conductors and Promotoras. Ambulatory Care recently unveiled a new policy to promote this positive trend. The policy defines the scope of work, training requirements and qualifications of Promotoras and Health Conductors in the Ambulatory Care setting. Patient group visits are a new model of care in which a physician meets with a group of patients who share a common health issue, such as diabetes, obesity or pregnancy. Ambulatory Care Nursing Director Jeanette Landucci said Promotoras and Health Conductors serve as “cultural brokers who enhance communication between patients and their health care providers as patient advocates.” Promotoras and Health Conductors recruit patients, ensure cultural sensitivity and review materials with patients, among other things. Their presence at group visits increases productivity by 50%. Plans are underway to institutionalize these efforts through Integrative Health and launch additional patient group visits with the Promotoras and Health Conductors at our Richmond, Concord and Pittsburg Health Centers.

To find about these programs, contact Dr. Karen Burt at kbburt@gmail.com or our Reducing Health Disparities unit at 925-957-5422.
Calling All Artists and Performers
The fifth annual Healthcare Workers as Creators event will be held 4 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, September 29 on the lawn at Contra Costa Regional Medical Center. The program will feature visual art and musical performances by county health care workers. There will be hands-on creativity workshops. It will also feature a silent art auction to benefit ArtsChange, a West County nonprofit that works to empower youths and reach the community through art. Food and drinks will be served. Performers will include ccrmc’s Larry Carlson and The Rhythm Method, an R&B/Motown band performing with Tommy Nunnely, a substance abuse specialist with our Healthcare for the Homeless Program. Tommy was 2009 Bay Area Blues Society Blues Artist of the Year.

Video Conferencing Technology Aids in Breastfeeding Consultation
New mothers who need breastfeeding tips no longer have to wait for a follow-up consultation. Our Health Centers in Antioch, Brentwood and Martinez are taking part in a pilot project that connects a mother and a counselor using video conferencing technology through the existing Health Care Interpreter Network. Previously, the Health Care Interpreter Network was only used to communicate with patients who didn’t speak English. The idea came from Kaiser pediatrician Dr. Diana Mahar, who previously worked with Contra Costa Health Services. Our Public Health Division’s Women, Infants and Children program train the peer counselors, who will provide support, information and resources during a regular appointment.

Hundreds Register as Donors During Bone Marrow Drive
Our Contra Costa Regional Medical Center teamed up with the Martinez Police Department recently to host a bone marrow drive for a police sergeant who is battling cancer. Of the 1,000 people who attended the event at Martinez City Hall, about 500 were registered as marrow donors. Though a matching donor was not found from those attending the event, one was found within a month of the drive. Donors are kept in the registry as possible matches for others. Trina Brajkovich from the National Marrow Donor Program said 70 percent of people needing transplants won’t find a match within their family, so it’s important for people to register as donors. ccrmc staff was involved in helping to arrange the event and Oncology Nurse Marianne Bunce-Houston helped staff the drive.

New Chief Nursing Officer for CCRMC, Health Centers
Jaspreet Benepal has been named the new Chief Nursing Officer of our Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers. She has worked as a Health Services nurse for 12 years. Jaspreet brings a breadth of knowledge of nursing as well as a wealth of leadership experience. She previously served as Director of Inpatient Nursing Operations at ccrmc. Jaspreet will report directly to ccrmc and Health Centers CEO Anna Roth.
Environmental Health Reaches Out for Help Enforcing Food Code

One of the many tasks of our Environmental Health Division is to reduce food-borne illness by enforcing laws that require food vendors to safely prepare and handle food. In July, the division kicked off a campaign with a presentation at Pleasant Hill City Hall to educate various law enforcement agencies about food laws and how they can help enforce those laws. Last year there were more than 120 complaints of food vendors without a permit. Assistant Director Diana Kato said her goal is to reduce the number of complaints and violations by reaching out to the community and local law enforcement. The Environmental Health Retail Food Program regulates all food sold or given away to the public, ranging from restaurants and grocery stores to pushcarts and catering trucks.

To find out more about the Retail Food Program, visit contact Jocelyn Habal at 925-692-2540.

Homeless Program Seeks Volunteers, Jackets for Project Homeless Connect

Our sixth Project Homeless Connect will take place September 16 at the County Fairgrounds in Antioch. The annual event is a one-day, one-stop shop that helps homeless people find vital services. Project Homeless Connect is coordinated by our Public Health Division’s Homeless Program and relies heavily on volunteers. This year is no different. Volunteers are urgently needed to perform a variety of tasks, including greeting and directing people, distributing goods and food, and providing general assistance. Volunteers are needed on September 15 from 2 to 6 p.m. and September 16 from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Donations of warm jackets are also needed. Jackets can be dropped off at 2047 Arnold Industrial Way, Concord.

To sign up as a volunteer, visit www.cchealth.org/services/homeless/ or call 925-313-6124.

A Walk Toward Recovery from Alcohol, Drugs

This month is National Recovery Month and hundreds of people are expected to converge at the Martinez Waterfront Park on Sept. 18 for the sixth annual Recovery Walk and Celebration. The aim is to celebrate efforts that prevent alcohol and drug abuse. The annual event is free to the public and features music, guest speakers, a free lunch and activities for children. Registration opens at 9 a.m. and the event runs from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

To find out more about the event, contact AODS Program Manager Fatima Matal Sol at fatima.matalsol@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6311. You can also download a flyer for the event at www.cchealth.org/groups/alcohol_and_drugs/