

HOLIDAY ISSUE

May whatever holidays you celebrate bring you joy and peace together with family and friends and best of all wishes for a 2010 filled with exciting adventure!!

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Correction: In the October News and Musings, the newly-elected should have been identified as Kathy Austin (not Karen). Kathy is a long-term member of the Grand Rapids Region. We regret the error and any confusion it may have caused.

Leadership Conference for Nurses: Staying at the Top of Your Game

Co-Sponsored by RN-AIM and U of M

January 14, 2010, 8:00a – 5:00p

The link to this conference is on our website but for quick reference it is:

https://www2.med.umich.edu/esn/EdPrograms_public/detail.cfm?Programs_ID=1248

There are two Concurrent Sessions:

Session I:

- A. Managing Communications Across Generations
- B. Creating a Winning Team: Using the Transforming Care at the Bedside Framework for Change

Session II:

- C. Strategizing for the Next Move: Graduate Nursing Opportunities
- D. Managing Hostility to Improve Team Performance

RN-AIM members will, of course, receive a discount and 6.0 contact hours for nursing will be provided. Registration is available on-line, by fax, phone, or mail / credit card or check. The registration contact is: Laura Ramirez - 734.936.9180 - lauraram@umich.edu

Remember, space is limited. Hope to see you there!

JOB SEARCH FOR VICE PRESIDENT OF HOME CARE

Holy Redeemer Home Care & Hospice is conducting a search for vice president of home care. The direct link to information about the position is: http://www.synergyorg.com/career_opportunity_4.html

Additional information can be found at:

<http://www.holyredeemer.com/Main/Public/HomeCareandHospiceHOME1.aspx>

Please follow the information provided at the websites for more information or instructions on how to apply. The Synergy Organization is coordinating the search.

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES ACCELERATED PROGRAM

Crain's Detroit Business Reports that Detroit-based, Oakland University's School of Nursing had announced plans to collaborate with the St. John Health System to offer an accelerated nursing degree program. Visit the Crain's website www.craains.org or the Oakland University site at www.oaklanduniveristy.edu/nursing for more information. Oakland now joins several other schools and colleges of nursing providing accelerated programs.

H1N1 UPDATE

By now every healthcare worker should have received an H1N1 vaccine to protect yourself and the patients and clients you care for in the myriad of settings in which RN-AIM nurses practice. While the numbers of reported cases are diminishing, there is concern that the virus may mutate...more likely than not...and that we may begin to see additional cases that may be more difficult to treat. Some patients being cared for in Michigan hospitals have already shown resistance to the standard

treatments. Officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has selected GE Healthcare's electronic medical records network to monitor the spread of the H1N1 virus and seasonal virus. A new report released December 15, 2009, from the *Trust for America's Health* found that the H1N1 outbreak exposed serious underlying gaps in the nation's ability to respond to public health emergencies and that the economic crisis is straining an already fragile public health system.

Insuring Children: Maximizing Coverage Under Medicaid and CHIP

There are an estimated 5 million children nationwide eligible for Medicaid or CHIP programs who have either not enrolled or not been identified as eligible. The programs cover large numbers of children, and in September 2009, the number of children without health insurance declined by nearly 800,000, but many more children are eligible than are being enrolled. Some families have chosen not to enroll because they do not want to be in the Medicaid children's program.

If a child is eligible for both Medicaid and CHIP, they must enroll in Medicaid by federal policy, but many families are still unaware that their children may be eligible for health insurance coverage by Medicaid or CHIP even if the parents are not eligible. A federal study released in Early December 2009 indicates that the share of the federal budget for children's programs has continued to diminish. The study, titled *Kid's Share: An Analysis of Federal Expenditures on Children Through 2008*, was produced by the Brookings Institution and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which publishes *Kid's Count*, the yearly study of well being among children nationally and by state. Less than 1/10th of the federal budget was spent on children in 2008. Although federal spending on children is expected to increase in 2009, mainly as a result of temporarily increased spending on Medicaid, education and other programs, other stimulus spending will increase even more, resulting in a decline in spending on children's programs from 9.9% in 2008 to 8.2% in 2009.

This decline in spending, and the large numbers of children still not covered by insurance programs makes it imperative that when you encounter families that have uninsured children that nurses identify how children can become enrolled and assist families in enrolling their children or facilitating referral to agencies that can assist the families' enrollment. All Department of Human Services and Public Health Departments in Michigan will identify programs children may qualify for and assist families in the process of enrollment.

Another Message about Coverage

Massachusetts health reform has achieved what many other states have attempted but fallen short on establishing. A recent study by the SHARE Initiative (State Health Access Reform Evaluation) examines how national reforms can use similar methods to avoid pitfalls in attaining full or nearly full coverage of citizens. Based on interviews with policymakers, stakeholders advocates and others as well as review of published reports, Urban Institute authors found three key factors that allowed the state to enroll virtually all previously uninsured residents. Those factors include:

- Roughly 1 in 4 newly insured residents received subsidized coverage based on state data about household income without any need for individuals to file application forms;
- Single application forms that provided entry in multiple subsidy programs and a single system of eligibility, made enrollment simple and seamless for consumers;
- And, more than half of all successful applications for subsidized coverage were completed for consumers by community-based organizations and health care providers.

So the Massachusetts experience can guide other states in assuring that the maximum number of citizens become insured with assistance from health care providers, with nurses serving as the entry point to care for many individuals and families.

And Still More...

While it appears that a public option for health care coverage will not be part of any health care bill currently STILL under consideration, a policy brief from *Health Affairs* describes how a publicly funded option would function, who would be eligible to purchase subsidized coverage and the anticipated impact on insurance premiums. The brief explores the arguments for and against a public plan, and should be required reading for legislators at the state and federal levels, since without such a plan many individuals would remain uncovered and little progress would be made toward increasing the coverage for uninsured individuals. Read the brief and an earlier discussion about public plans published in June 2009 at: www.healthaffairs.com.

HEALTH CARE CONSUMER CONFIDENCE INDEX RISES SHARPLY

In October 2009, the Health Care Consumer Confidence Index rose to 104.4 points from 96.6 points in September. This is the largest increase since the *Future Health Cost Concerns Index Survey* began. Some of the survey findings include:

- 79.2% of Americans believe it is important that President Obama includes health reform in plans to address the economy
- 71.9% believe that if health reform is enacted, their access to care will improve or stay the same
- 23.3% were concerned about losing their health insurance, a drop from the previous month when 33.4% expressed concern about losing health insurance
- 43.4% are worried they will not be able to afford future health care needs, compared with 53.2% in September
- 20.6% reported having trouble paying their health care bills, compared to 23.1% in September
- 9.4% reported being worried that they will lose their employer-sponsored insurance coverage because their employer will stop providing the benefit, down from 15.5% in September.

So even in the face of opposition by members of both parties about portions of the health care bill, the public seems buoyed by the fact that health care is being seriously discussed and that some form of increased coverage, no loss of coverage with pre-existing conditions and potential tort reform is still possible.

SEVERAL WEBSITES TO VISIT AND LEGISLATION UNDER CONSIDERATION

The website at the Michigan Primary Care Association has several articles of interest, including a review of legislation currently under consideration by the Michigan legislature. Read more at www.mpca.org.

An excellent review of the national health care reform proposals can be found at the Michigan League for Human Services, under the heading of *The Consumer Connection* at www.mlhs.org. And for information how your federal legislators have voted on the various proposals, go to www.familiesusa.org/standupforhealthcare/how-they-voted.html#MI.

House Bill 5515, introduced by Representative Rebekah Warren, would provide support of breastfeeding. While Michigan already has a law that states that a breastfeeding woman may not be prosecuted for indecency, this proposal would provide further legal protections for breastfeeding women and their children. The contents of the Bill can be viewed at www.michigan.gov/legislature.

The NSO Outstanding Nurse Search

The Nurses Service Organization reminds nurses to nominate their favorite nurse for the Outstanding Nurse Search. Each month the NSO Advisory Board will select the month's winning entry and in March all the members of the nursing community will vote for the Outstanding Nurse from among the monthly winners. The winner will receive a grand prize of a \$2,000.00 American Express gift card, along with much-deserved recognition from colleagues. Visit the Facebook Fan Page at www.nso.com after the 15th of the each month to view the winning entries and vote for your favorite in March 2010.

Top 10 Nurse CEs of 2009

Medscape CME has announced the 10 Top Nurses CE offerings of 2009. The titles vary widely, and include topics of interest to both facility-based and community-based nurses and can be found at www.Medscape_CME-CE.com.

And the musings...

Whatever your political affiliation and whether you are conservative, liberal or independent, please become active in the discussions regarding the Health Care Bills currently being considered. They are long and complicated, but it is imperative that health care professionals and particularly nurses who provide the majority of health care in the US, become involved in the discussions and make your issues and concerns known to the individuals who will be voting on what could become the most important piece of legislation passed in lifetimes of many of our members. Those of us who witnessed the passage of Medicare and Medicaid know what an impact legislation can have, and for the 49 million Americans who are currently without health care coverage, this will be monumental. Tell Congress to pass a comprehensive bill that forbids exclusion for pre-existing conditions, begins to address the tort system to minimize the inappropriate lawsuits, protects patients and clients of care and provides health care access to the largest number of citizens possible. This responsibility rests with all of us as professional health care providers.

Health Care Finance – Addressing Rising Costs

The Healthcare Financing and Organization Initiative sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has identified a panel of experts focused on examining the underlying factors contributing to rising healthcare costs. Among others, the panel has identified five factors with significant potential to control spending. They include:

- Laws that require health care providers to seek approval before adding new facilities, technology or services.
- Policies that provide payers with increased bargaining power for technologies and services.
- Price adjustments that ensure that provider services and technology are priced so they accurately reflect the costs.
- Review of health care utilization to ensure beneficiaries receive approval for select procedures prior to the procedure being completed.
- Insurance policies designed to the beneficiaries pay lower or no cost-sharing for high value services to encourage movement from low value services.

Upcoming Events. . .

Wiring Michigan for Health Information Exchange

June 2, 2010 – Conference

June 3, 2010 – Workshops

Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort – Mt Pleasant, MI