

WHA Calendar:

- RAC Presentation 5/18
Teleconference
- Governor's Sum- 5/28
mit on Workforce
Solutions
Jackson
- Hospital Advisory 6/17
Group Meeting
Cheyenne

Other Events:

- Western Regional 6/10
Flex Conference
Lake Tahoe, NV
- Wyoming Medical 6/11
Society Meeting,
Sheridan
- AHA Regional 6/25
Policy Board
Meeting
Idaho

WHA Joins in Effort to Prevent Cuts in Medicaid Funding

The Wyoming Hospital Association joined 18 other healthcare organizations from across the state last week in urging the Governor not to cut Medicaid funding.

In a letter to Gov. Dave Freudenthal, the loosely-knit coalition acknowledged the difficult budget choices the Governor must make in addressing a projected shortfall in state revenue, as well as the moves he has already made to limit state agency hiring and non-essential spending.

Nevertheless, the letter asserted that reductions in already limited Medicaid funding could have dire consequences for individuals and

families, and could ultimately limit access to care. Though cuts may offer immediate savings, the group suggested that Medicaid cuts would result in increased costs over the long term.

Additionally, the letter asked the Governor to use a 6.2% FMAP increase for Medicaid, rather than using those funds to backfill other areas of the state budget.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provides the FMAP increase to each state. For Wyoming, the increase could mean as much as \$59 million that would temporarily provide additional federal matching funds to help sus-

tain the Medicaid program in the face of recession-driven revenue declines and caseload increases.

Gov. Freudenthal has asked every state agency to submit a budget that assumes a 10% cut. Early budget discussions with the Department of Health suggest that Medicaid cuts are likely as part of the effort to reach that target.

The WHA joined the Wyoming Medical Society, the American Cancer Society Action Network, the American Heart Association, the Quality Health Care Foundation of Wyoming, and Wyoming AARP, among others, in submitting the letter.

Finance Committee Hosts Discussion on Coverage Options

In the second of three planned meetings to discuss healthcare reform proposals, the Senate Finance Committee heard last week from supporters and critics of a public health plan.

The first of the committee's roundtables focused on healthcare delivery. Last week's session centered on coverage, and the final session scheduled for later in May will address financing.

Last Tuesday, committee members heard debate about the impact a public plan op-

tion could have on access to care. Representatives from insurance organizations were concerned that a public option could crowd out private insurers and lead to the demise of the employer-based system of coverage.

Consumer advocates, on the other hand, argued that government intervention in

the health insurance market could promote competition and individual choice.

The American Hospital Association has expressed its concern to the committee that a new public plan could result in further under-payment to healthcare providers, thus reducing access to care.

The committee will hold its final roundtable on May 14 to discuss health reform financing. Wyoming Sen. Mike Enzi is a member of the Senate Finance Committee.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



MHSC Upgrades OB and Same-Day Surgery Units

Two units at Sweetwater County Memorial Hospital (SCMH) were recently renovated to improve efficiency and patient privacy, and both began seeing patients in April.

Community members toured the remodeled OB and Same-Day Surgery units in mid-April to get a first look at the upgraded facilities.

The Same-Day Surgery unit has 16 rooms with four nursing stations and private work areas for the attending doctors. Each room has a

private bathroom, flat-screen television, and motion sensors that activate the lighting.

Additionally, SCMH upgraded the patient calling system, and an enhanced nursing identification system makes it possible to locate any nurse in any room at any time.

The Same-Day Surgery unit began accepting patients on April 20.

The new OB unit has four triage rooms for patients who present non-labor issues, as well as three labor,

delivery and recovery rooms and nine post-partum rooms. The unit also includes a well baby unit with an improved viewing area for family and friends.

Each patient room in the OB unit includes a flat-screen television, a couch that converts into a bed, and a refrigerator. Each labor, delivery and recovery room has a jet tub.

Ultimately, the OB unit will include an individual operating room for cesarean deliveries, but that room is not yet complete.



RP-7 Robot

Robot Demo Introduces 'Doctor of the Future'

Members of Wyoming's Telehealth Steering Committee reviewed last week what may be the next big thing when it comes to solving rural hospitals' recruitment and retention problems.

During its monthly meeting at the Wyoming Hospital Association offices, the committee watched a demonstration of InTouch Health's RP-7 robot, billed by some media outlets as the doctor of the future.

The wireless, Remote Presence robot enables physicians to work in two or more places at once. Seated at a control station, a physician can move the robot around a distant hospital, visiting patients remotely and providing expert consultations in hospitals that may have difficulty recruiting and retaining specialists.

During the demonstration, InTouch Health representatives connected with

the CEO of a critical access hospital in Oregon to discuss the benefit to his facility of using the remote presence technology.

And later, the robot rolled into the Board Room, controlled by a physician in California who spoke to the committee about his ability to use the robot to staff multiple hospitals at one time.

For more information about the robot, visit www.intouchhealth.com.

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Geriatric Care Workshop Deadline Approaching

The registration deadline is approaching for a series of geriatric care workshops being held in Laramie on June 4.

Interested hospitals must register by May 28. Registration forms are available from the University of Wyoming.

The day-long event kicks off with a pre-conference workshop hosted by Dr. Donald Murphy, a Casper native and a geriatrician with Senior Care of Colorado, P.C. The workshop, "Success with Medicare Seniors: Key insights for Primary Care Physicians,"

begins at 7:30 a.m.

The remainder of the Transitions Conference includes consumer feedback and a case study, a Wyoming healthcare provider panel, and a discussion of best practices.