

NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

Volume 40, Number 25

June 25, 2010

WHA Calendar:

WCAHN REC Meeting Casper	6/30
WHA Region 2 Meeting Lander	7/8
WHA Board Meeting Lander	7/9
WHA PAC Golf Tournament Cheyenne	9/28
WHA Annual Meeting and Convention Cheyenne	9/29-9/30

Other Events

National Flex Conference Minneapolis, MN	7/12-7/14
---------------------------------------------	------------------

Hospitals Continue to Feel Lingering Effects of Recession

Although the national economy is beginning to show signs of recovery, hospitals continue to be negatively impacted by the lingering effects of the recession, according to data from the AHA.

As a result, the AHA is urging Congress to extend Medicaid funding to ensure that the nation's most vulnerable patients continue to receive the healthcare that they need.

In addition to its impact on hospitals, the recession also continues to impact patients' healthcare decisions. According to the AHA survey, patients continue to delay or forego care as family budgets remain tight. Some 70 percent of hospitals reported fewer patient visits and elective procedures.

More patients are enrolling in programs for low-income populations, such as Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program. That national finding is echoed in Wyoming, where Medicaid enrollment has escalated with the downturn in the economy.

Because these programs

typically do not cover the costs of hospital care, increasing enrollment puts additional strain on hospitals.

Making matters even more difficult, nearly nine in

states may cut Medicaid funding that millions of our most vulnerable patients — children, the disabled and the poor elderly — depend upon.

The AHA survey also found that:

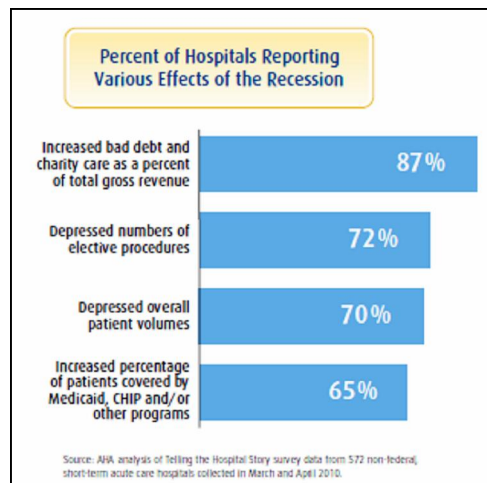
- Nearly three-quarters of hospitals reported reduced operating margins
- 44% of hospitals reported reduced access to capital
- Nearly 25% of hospitals reported that their ability to access capital is worsening
- 67% of hospitals have not started or have put capital projects on hold since the recession began

Hospitals faced with such financial realities are making major changes in an effort to weather the economic storm.

Common options for hospitals have included cutting administrative costs, reducing staff, and curtailing services.

In fact, 89 percent of hospitals indicated that they have not added back staff or increased staff hours, and 98 percent have not restored services or programs previously cut due to the downturn.

The report is based on analysis of AHA survey data from 572 non-federal, short-term acute care hospitals that was collected in March and April 2010.



10 hospitals reported an increase in care for which the hospital received no payment at all.

Last year's economic stimulus bill provided a temporary increase in Medicaid matching funds, known as the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP), but this additional funding is set to run out at the end of the year.

"Today's data demonstrates why it is essential Congress act now to extend FMAP," said Rick Pollack, executive vice president of the AHA. "Without an immediate extension of FMAP,



Don't forget to send us a story about your hospital so we can feature you in our Member Spotlight section!

NBHH Earns Award for Investing in Older Workers

North Big Horn Hospital (NBHH) was recognized earlier this month at the Governor's 2010 Summit on Workforce Solutions for its commitment and contributions to Wyoming's workforce.

NBHH was selected for Outstanding Investment in Older Workers for being committed to hiring, training, and retaining older workers.

The hospital currently employs 220 people, 20 percent of whom are over age 55. Nine of them are over 65. Additionally, 13 percent of NBHH employees have worked at the hospital for more than 20 years.

In its nomination form, NBHH highlighted its commitment to older workers and the win-win nature of that commitment.

"We benefit from their experience and their desire to continue to contribute, and they benefit physically, financially, and emotionally," according to the nomination.

Some NBHH employees who are beyond the traditional retirement age choose to work reduced hours, or they rearrange their schedules to accommodate lifestyle changes. Others choose seasonal employment,

such as snow removal or lawn maintenance.

Retired nurses, office workers, housekeepers, and dietary staff also return to NBHH to earn some extra money, and to fill in during employee vacations and sick days.

Barb Shumway, HR director at NBHH, said the hospital "values older employees who share their valuable work experience with fellow staff members, as well as with our customers who seek healthcare here."



Federal Healthcare Website to Launch on July 1

A federal government website that launches July 1 will give consumers a list of all private and government healthcare plans for individuals and small businesses in their areas.

The site is required by the recently passed healthcare reform law.

Initially, the site will provide just basic facts, such

as the names of companies, health plans and web links. By October, however, it will list detailed cost and benefits information.

The goal of the site is to help consumers navigate the insurance market. The main part of the health reform law takes effect in 2014, with a major expansion of insurance coverage and the crea-

tion of new state-based health insurance exchanges.

The exchanges are marketplaces that are intended to make it easier for individuals and small businesses to buy insurance. Each exchange will have its own web site.

The federal government site will be www.healthcare.gov.

CMS Launches Website for EHR Incentive Programs

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has launched the official website for the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs.

The website provides the most up-to-date, detailed information about the EHR incentive programs.

The programs provide incentive payments to eligible professionals and hospitals as they adopt, implement, upgrade, or demonstrate meaningful use of certified EHR technology.

The CMS site is located

at www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms.

Visit the site to learn about program eligibility, meaningful use, and upcoming training events, among other topics.

Wyoming Hospital Association

*2005 Warren Ave.
Cheyenne, WY
82001*

www.wyohospitals.com

307.632.9344

