



NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

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July 31, 2009

WHA Calendar:

WCAHN Quality Training Day
Riverton 8/14

WHA PAC Golf Tournament
Sheridan 9/29

WHA Annual Meeting & Convention
Sheridan 9/30-10/1

Other Events:

HIDI Partner Meeting
Kansas City, MO 9/2

Joint Labor Health & Social Services Committee
Sheridan 9/10

HFMA Fall Meeting
Cheyenne 10/22-10/23

Rural Healthcare Group Express Concerns with House Bill

Despite the efforts of a few conservative Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives, the effort to produce national healthcare reform presses on in Washington, DC.

The so-called Blue Dog Democrats were able to slow the pace a bit, delaying debate on one of the bills in the House Commerce and Energy Committee over concerns about the scope and cost of the House proposal.

But debate resumed in the committee on Thursday. Democrat leaders in the House have suggested they may have a bill ready for debate in the full House before the August recess, but as part of a compromise, there will be no vote before September.

In addition to the AHA's continuing and aggressive work toward a workable reform package, other Wyoming Hospital Association partners are energetically engaged in the process.

The National Rural Health Association, for example, has launched an effort to ensure that emerging healthcare reform measures address the needs of rural hospitals.

In weekly strategy sessions the WHA participates in, the NRHA has outlined a list of concerns about the House bill and its impact on

rural healthcare. Among those concerns are a number of rural Medicare reimbursement inequities, which would be investigated through IOM study included in the bill.

However, the NRHA and the WHA contend that additional provisions must be included as well, such as:



- **The Critical Access Hospital Flexibility Act** – A measure that would allow CAHs flexibility in their bed count without jeopardizing their critical access status
- **Ensuring Rural Representation on MedPAC** – About 26% of Medicare beneficiaries live in rural areas, but rural representation on MedPAC is not reflected proportionally; only 2 of 17 current commissioners have significant rural expertise
- **Reauthorizing the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program** – Unlike the Senate, the House does not reauthorize the AHEC program, which funds rural health-

care workforce development programs; the WHA Nurse Leadership Training Program is funded, in part, through an AHEC grant. Like the AHA, the NRHA also opposes the establishment of an Independent Medicare Advisory Commission (IMAC). President Obama recommended IMAC as a mechanism for controlling Medicare costs.

In addition to dramatically shifting rate-setting power to the Executive Branch, the NRHA argues, IMAC would also create a small, powerful commission that could quickly remove special protections currently afforded to rural healthcare facilities.

As an independent advisory body, MedPAC has frequently failed to take rural considerations into account and we have no reason to believe that a smaller, more powerful Commission would be any different, the NRHA wrote in a letter to Sen. Max Baucus, D-Montana, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, the ranking Republican on the committee.





MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



ERH Tiny Toes Program Offers Tools to New Moms

Pregnancy can be an overwhelming time in a woman's life, and sometimes it's just good to know that there are people out there who care.

And that's the key concept behind Evanston Regional Hospital's (ERH) Tiny Toes program.

The program, which began in July, offers information, baby clothes and other items for expectant mothers, as well as services for mothers after their babies are born.

Julie Burleigh, Tiny Toes Coordinator, told the Uinta County Herald that the program is free to all pregnant women.

"Women will be able to access information on the computer so they will be able to get updates on where they should be each month during their pregnancy," Burleigh said.

Additionally, the program provides parenting tips, easy sign-up for ERH's prenatal classes, and a free diaper bag filled with gifts, including a "onesie" baby

blankets, and a copy of the book "What to Expect When You're Expecting."

After delivery, the program provides information about immunizations and post-natal visits.

Burleigh said the aim of the program is to bring the entire community together to support new moms and their babies.

"We want people to have that good feeling that they can come to ERH and know that we really do care about them," she said.

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

WHA Convention Session to Highlight RAC Strategies

Most hospitals are underutilizing a number of key tactics that can alleviate much of the burden associated with Medicare's Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) program and safeguard their reimbursements.

So says The Advisory Board Company, which will present during the Wyoming Hospital Association Annual Meeting and Convention the lessons it has learned from studying hospital responses

to the RAC program.

The October 1 session will highlight case studies of hospitals that have established clear processes for managing and mitigating their RAC risk. For example, the session will address:

- How top-performing organizations use internal information to better prepare for RAC audit
- How those organizations manage the RAC response process to im-

prove compliance and reduce automatic take-backs

- How such organizations leverage the information from other RAC targets to ensure effective preparation for future claim requests

Andrew Zech, associate director with Revenue Integrity Compass, a division of The Advisory Board Company, will present the session.

Wyoming Hospital Association

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IPPS Reclassification Applications Now Available Online

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has announced that IPPS hospitals may apply to be reclassified in order to use another geographic area's wage index value.

Under the Medicare Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS), Medicare acute care hospitals can apply to the Medicare Geo-

graphic Classification Review Board for reclassification. To do so, IPPS hospitals must complete the individual, group, or statewide applications required by the Board.

The 2009 applications are now available online at <http://cms.hhs.gov/MGCRB/>

[02 instructions and applications.asp](#). The 2009 applications, which are effective for federal fiscal years 2011 through 2013, must be filed by September 1. Hard copies of the applications and instructions may be obtained directly from the Board by calling (410) 786-1174.

 Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services