

WHA Telehealth Update

Hospitals around Wyoming participated Friday in the first-ever statewide test of their telehealth equipment and connections. The test was conducted to ensure that all hospitals which currently have videoconferencing equipment can connect to the network, participate in video conference events, and receive data, such as PowerPoint presentations and continuing medical education. As many as 17 facilities were slated to participate in the test, which represented an important early step toward a robust statewide telehealth network. Plans for the test included simultaneously connecting all participating hospitals, verifying the audio and video quality at each location, and ensuring that the system supported real-time conversations and data sharing. Ultimately, the network is expected to connect all Wyoming hospitals and serve as a tool to reduce the distances between facilities by providing a video link that can be used for meetings and consultations. Additional plans for the network include the delivery of high-quality educational and other content. An update on the results of the test will be published in next week's edition of NewsBriefs.

Hospital Grant Programs Focused on Nursing Announced

The Wyoming Department of Health is announcing that applications for two new nursing-related hospital grant programs will soon be available from its Office of Rural Health. Funding for each program was provided by the Wyoming Legislature in 2006. The "Magnet Hospital Grant Program" is designed to support efforts by Wyoming hospitals to reduce nursing shortages and improve patient safety. The "Small Hospital Grant Program" provides grants and technical assistance for promotion of nursing practices, quality nursing working environments, increased retention of nursing staff and improved patient outcomes. The Magnet Hospital Grant Program allows up to three Wyoming hospitals to receive funding of up to \$250,000 each to help them achieve magnet hospital certification. The Small Hospital Grant Program allows small hospitals, those with fewer than 100 beds, to apply to receive funding up to \$50,000 each and technical assistance to promote 1) quality nursing practices; 2) quality nursing working environments; 3) increased retention of nursing staff; and 4) demonstrated improved outcomes for patients. As funds are awarded to eligible hospitals, criteria and priorities to be considered under the program include: 1) demonstrated provision of medical care to patients qualified under Medicaid, Medicare and KidCare CHIP; 2) written indication from the hospital of its continuing commitment to address quality nursing practices, quality nursing working environments, increased retention of nursing staff and demonstrated improved outcomes for patients; 3) evidence outlined in the hospital's grant budget of how grant funds will be expended and of their ability to match 20 percent of the grant award with in-kind or cash funds; and 4) agreement to periodically report to the Wyoming Department of Health on the use of grant funds and measurable results.

Grants under these programs must be awarded by June 30, 2008. For more information or to request an application, please contact Sharla Allen, Office of Rural Health interim manager, at 307-777-7293 or sharla.allen@health.wyo.gov.

Legislative Interim Topics

At the close of the 59th Legislative Session, the Joint Labor, Health, and Social Services Committee laid out its priorities for study during the interim period between the 2008 Budget Session and the 2009 General Session. The committee plans to study three major topics: the workers' compensation system, healthcare access and affordability, and smoking in public places. Additionally, the committee will receive and review reports on Medicaid provider reimbursements, the Medical Practice Act, aging issues, and healthcare facilities capital projects. Interim study and report reviews may lead to legislation sponsored by the committee, or by individual members of the committee. More detailed study of healthcare access and affordability in Wyoming is expected to include research from the Wyoming Healthcare Commission, as well as concepts from Senate File 85, a healthcare reform pilot project bill that failed during the Legislative session. Finally, during its review of reports, the committee will hear from the Department of Health regarding potential revisions to current rules that could expedite construction plan reviews and inspections.

Senator Enzi To Make 10 Steps, 10 Stops Tour

Senator Mike Enzi will be traveling across Wyoming the week of March 17th to discuss his "10 Steps to Transform Health Care in America," which includes 10 things Congress can do right now to make health care more available and more affordable for just about everyone. From March 17 through March 20, Senator Enzi will be covering more than 1,100 miles and hosting meetings in the following Wyoming cities: Cheyenne, Rawlins, Rock Springs, Pinedale, Lander, Worland, Lovell, Casper, Lusk and Gillette. For more detailed information and to view Senator Enzi's daily blog of his journey across Wyoming, visit enzi.senate.gov.

Screening Program Helping Wyoming Residents Avoid Cancer

A Wyoming Department of Health program is encouraging needed colorectal cancer screening for Wyoming residents and providing free tests for some residents who otherwise may not be able to afford them. Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death in Wyoming and affects both men and women. For those who apply and qualify, the Wyoming Colorectal Cancer Early Detection Program (WCCEDP) is reimbursing contracted providers for colonoscopies performed on eligible Wyoming men and women. Authorized last year, the Wyoming Cancer Control Act included funding for the screening program. Since mid-November, the WCCEDP has screened more than 100 Wyoming men and women. Polyps were removed on 50 of those screened. For more information about the free colonoscopy program and eligibility, contact Alice Preheim at 307-777-2932 or alice.preheim@health.wyo.gov. Applications are available online at <http://health.wyo.gov/phsd/ccp/app.html>.

Wyoming Tuberculosis Prevention Efforts Continue

After many years of focusing on screening and preventive therapy for those considered at increased risk for tuberculosis (TB) disease or infection, Wyoming continues to see very low

numbers of active TB cases. Wyoming saw an average of only three reported cases of active tuberculosis per year between 2002 and 2006, according to the Wyoming Department of Health. Wyoming's TB program directs much of its resources and efforts on prevention and control measures. In 2007, 17,245 individuals considered at increased risk for TB were screened in Wyoming. World TB Day is celebrated each year on March 24 to mark the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of the bacteria that causes TB.