

# NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

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## WHA Calendar:

WMS/WHA Patient Safety Conference  
Casper 11/2

## Other Events:

STEMI/SCA System Meeting  
Casper 10/29

Joint Labor Health and Social Services 11/12-11/13

## Healthcare No. 2 Among Voters' Election Priorities

Healthcare ranks second in importance among likely voters in the upcoming presidential election, according to an analysis of 37 polls conducted by 17 organizations.

The ranking is the highest for healthcare as a presidential election issue since 1992.

When likely voters were asked to choose from a list of issues, similar to the approach used in election-day exit polls, 20% named "healthcare and Medicare" as the most important issue in their 2012 voting choice, far behind "the economy and jobs" (51%).

"The economy dominates most voters' thinking in terms of their priorities for choosing a candidate," Robert J. Blendon, ScD, professor of health policy and political analysis at Harvard School of Public Health and co-author of the analysis, which appeared Oct. 10 on the New England Journal of Medicine's website, said in a news release.

"But in a close election, the two candidates' stands on healthcare issues could help swing the balance among voters."

### Affordable Care

**Act:** Likely voters who said "healthcare and Medicare" would be the most important issue in deciding their presidential vote were much more

supportive of the Affordable Care Act than is the public in general. Although several elements of the law are popular, an average of current polls shows that 44% approve of the ACA and 45% disapprove.

Among likely voters who said "healthcare/Medicare" was the most important issue in their voting choice, 41% said they were much less likely to vote for a candidate who supported repealing all or part of the ACA; 14% said they were much more likely to vote for such a candidate.



**Medicare:** The analysts also examined the issue of changing Medicare in the future to a system in which the government provides seniors with a fixed sum of money to purchase either private health insurance or Medicare coverage. An average of current polls of the general public shows that 27% favor such a proposed change, while 66% are opposed.

Among likely voters who said "healthcare/Medicare"

was the most important issue in their voting choice, 39% said they were much less likely to vote for a candidate who supported such a change in Medicare; 11% said they were much more likely to vote for such a candidate.

These results suggest that "healthcare/Medicare voters" are siding with President Barack Obama over former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney on the ACA and Medicare issues in the election, the analysts said.

**Other considerations:** The analysts noted that many likely voters who are opposed to the ACA or favor major changes in Medicare may not rank "healthcare and Medicare" as the top issue in their voting choice. They may see "the economy and jobs" or "the federal deficit and taxes" as most important.

President Obama's approval rating on handling healthcare is 41%, with 52% disapproving. In terms of perceptions of progress, a majority (65%) of Americans believe the problem of healthcare costs in the United States has worsened during the past five years. Only 27% see quality of care as having improved, although about equally few (25%) think it has worsened.



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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



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## SVMC Medical Practice Achieves Meaningful Use

Star Valley Medical Center (SVMC) announced recently that its Star Valley Family Physicians medical practice successfully attained stage one meaningful use of their electronic health records (EHRs).

SVMC Family Physicians is one of the first hospital-based physician practices in Wyoming to attest to meaningful use.

"The integration of health information technology, such as EHRs, is a national priority in order to improve individual and population health and reduce healthcare

costs," said Charlie Button, President and CEO of Star Valley Medical Center. "We share the same goal with our providers—to ensure the highest quality of care for our patients."

EHRs offer healthcare providers access to vital information about a patient's medical history in order to diagnose health problems early and provide proactive treatments, thereby improving patient outcomes.

This technology can help lower healthcare costs by eliminating unnecessary or

duplicative tests, reducing errors and improving clinical decision making.

"We are very proud of our providers for taking on the challenge of moving their practice from traditional records and charting to an electronic version of the patient chart," said Don Herbert, Vice President of Physician Services at Star Valley Medical Center. "All of our providers are to be commended for their commitment to quality and enhanced patient care using an electronic patient record."

## QIO Selects New CEO From Within

After casting a wide net in its search for a new chief executive officer, Mountain-Pacific Quality Health recently announced its decision to stay local and promote from within the foundation.

Mountain-Pacific's Board of Directors' President David Baines, MD, and his colleagues have appointed Sara Medley, Mountain-Pacific's current director of quality improvement organization shared services, to the CEO

position.

Medley succeeds long-term CEO Janice Connors, who retired in June after 38 years of service to the organization.

"We considered several candidates, but Sara was the unanimous choice for CEO," Baines said. "She's an extraordinary leader with the skills, experience, talent and vision to lead the organization in our ever-changing and challenging environment."

Medley has been in-

involved in quality improvement and health care management her entire career. She has been with Mountain-Pacific for 30 plus years, 24 of which were spent managing Mountain-Pacific's quality improvement operations.

"Sara's contribution to the organization has been paramount to its success," said Baines. "During her tenure, her oversight and direction have led to the uninterrupted renewal of four-affiliated quality improvement organization contracts.

## Hospitals Urged to Verify Leapfrog Safety Data

The Leapfrog Group has mailed CEOs at roughly 2,600 general acute-care hospitals instructions for reviewing the accuracy of their Leapfrog Hospital Safety Scores before they are publicly reported in mid-to late November.

AHA alerted Leapfrog to concerns with the initial

scorecard's methodology and data accuracy in June. In response, Leapfrog is making the data available for confidential review by hospitals.

Hospitals are encouraged to preview and verify the data online before the October 24 deadline. The data can be viewed by visiting

this link: <http://www.leapfroggroup.org/data-validation/validation-login>.

Critical access hospitals, specialty hospitals, federal hospitals, mental health facilities, and those with fewer than nine process measure scores or three outcome scores are excluded from the scorecard.