

NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

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WHA Calendar:

Healthcare Effective Communication Webinar **1/8/14**

Other Events:

Wyoming Legislative Session Convenes **2/10**



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Sen. Charles Scott Wants new Health Insurance Option Casper Star Tribune

A senior Wyoming state lawmaker announced Monday he will push to change state law to allow people who are losing health care coverage that doesn't meet the standards of the federal Affordable Care Act to get state coverage.

Wyoming Insurance Commissioner Tom Hirsig said last month that private insurers have given notice they intend to cancel more than 3,000 policies in the state that don't meet the requirements of the federal law.

Representatives of the two insurance companies that are offering federally approved health insurance coverage said last week that they're seeing sharp increases in the number of people registering with them in recent weeks.

Sen. Charles Scott, R-Casper, is chairman of the Senate Labor, Health and Social Services Committee.

He announced Monday he plans to introduce a bill in the legislative session that starts in February to allow people who are losing their policies to sign up for coverage under the Wyoming Health Insurance Pool.

Since 1990, the pool has provided coverage to state residents who can't get other insurance.

"That pool is exempt from Obamacare," Scott said, us-

ing a term for the Affordable Care Act. He said he intends to sponsor a bill that would allow people who lose their insurance to get health coverage temporarily, until problems with the federal system are resolved.

"They'll be able to come to the state uninsurable pool, and buy a product that is really just intended to be a stopgap until Washington can get its act together and fix the problems it's caused," Scott said. "And I think they will do that, because I don't think they can live with what they've done. But being Washington, I bet it will take them a while."

Scott said he expects the state could offer up to 1,000 new policies through the pool coverage. He said he hasn't worked out exactly what the coverage would cost, but he expects it could call for low-income people to pay a small percentage of their incomes.

"I suspect we'll put in a couple of million on the low-income subsidies," Scott said, adding that he believes the state can afford it.

Republican Gov. Matt Mead, in his budget recommendations released this month, suggested state lawmakers not vote to accept federal funds to expand the Medicaid system to cover more than 17,000 low-

income adults who don't have any health insurance.

Scott said he sees basic problems with the Medicaid system and agrees the state shouldn't accept the optional federal expansion.

"I don't want any part in expanding the traditional Medicaid system," Scott said. "I think it's bad for the people involved. Whether it's the federal or state government, we're all taxpayers, and I think it costs a lot more than it should."

The Wyoming Department of Health has concluded that Medicaid expansion would save the state money — provided the federal government follows through on promised funding — by relieving pressure on other programs.

Rep. Mary Throne, D-Cheyenne, serves on the House Labor, Health and Social Services Committee. She said Monday that she needs to review Scott's proposal to expand the insurance pool before developing an opinion.

Throne said she is committed to expanding the Medicaid system and intends to push it in the coming legislative session if the health committee itself won't sponsor the effort.



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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St. John's Hospital Announces Collaboration

St. John's Medical Center (SJMC) has announced a new partnership with Salt Lake City-based University of Utah Health Care (UUHC).

"This affiliation enhances patient care by improving access to UUHC's clinical experts and resources while maintaining St. John's independence as a local community hospital," said St. John's CEO Lou Hochheiser, MD.

St. John's Medical Center patients have long benefited from services provided by UUHC's University Hospital & Clinics – services like cancer care by Huntsman Cancer Institute specialists, neurology, cognitive

health, and prenatal care for high risk pregnancies.

"A primary benefit of this relationship is access to services the community would be unable to provide with local resources alone, due our size and location," explained Hochheiser.

The affiliation will:

- Improve the coordination of medical care for patients who require the services of both health systems, including ease of scheduling and transmission of information
- Provide educational opportunities for SJMC physicians and staff
- Facilitate joint efforts in quality improvement,

development of services, purchasing agreements, information technology, and marketing

- Open the door for improved access to clinical trials; and
- Maintain physician and patient provider preference

Spurred on by growing economic, regulatory, and operational challenges, many stand-alone hospitals are pursuing affiliations with larger health systems in order to survive and thrive in the new healthcare environment.

Wig Room Offers Comfort for Cancer Patients

Every month, Wyoming Medical Center Foundation's Angels Cancer Care Program receives multiple requests from cancer patients needing a wig.

With the help of local cosmetologists, the Angels have created a room to make the entire experience more comfortable and intimate for cancer patients.

The Angels have partnered with Kirby Morris – co-owner Rocky Mountain Academy of Hair, Skin and Nails (RMA) – to create a

wig room in the cosmetology school. Morris completely refurbished a room in his school with a washing and styling station, welcoming décor and a variety of wigs lining the walls.

In the wig room, cancer patients can have their head shaved, pick out a wig and have it styled either by RMA students or their own cosmetologist.

It presents another facet of cosmetology that is not typically covered in the academy curriculum and

offers an opportunity for students to learn how to handle sensitive situations with cancer patients, Morris said.

Angels Cancer Care Coordinator Jillian Riddle said the Angels are looking forward to serving hundreds of cancer patients in the new room. "Our goal is to not only give patients privacy during this difficult time, but make them feel special when choosing their new wig. We are thrilled the wig room has come to life."

Happy Holidays from WHA

The staff of the Wyoming Hospital Association would like to take this time to thank you all for your support and encouragement this past year.

WHA had a great 2013 due to the leadership and partnership with our members.

The WHA offices will be closed December 25-27 for the Christmas holidays.

The WHA office will also be closed Wednesday, January 1, 2014 for New Years.

Thank you all and have a Happy Holiday Season.