



# NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

Volume 45, Number 28

July 18, 2014

## WHA Calendar:

WHA PAC Golf 9/23  
Tournament

WHA Annual 9/24-  
Meeting & 9/25  
Convention  
Cheyenne

## Other Events:

WyAMSS 8/21 -  
Education 8/22  
Conference  
Jackson



Follow us on Twitter  
and Facebook

## Rural Hospitals Struggle to Withstand Cuts, Failure to Expand Medicaid

Across the country, many rural hospitals are closing down, according to the National Rural Health Association.

In 2013 alone, 14 rural hospitals shut down nationwide, leaving whole communities without quick access to emergency care.

That's not just a healthcare problem; it is an economic issue too. In addition to healthcare services, research shows rural hospitals contribute significantly to local economies.

They bring outside dollars into rural communities and stimulate local purchasing power while they help attract industry and, in some locales, a steady flow of retirees.

While there seems to be consensus that the increasing rate of hospital closures in rural America is alarming, there isn't much agreement on the causes.

Some health experts say it's the fallout of health care's transition from a cost-based model to pay-for-performance, which aims to improve the quality and outcomes while lowering costs.

But many others put the blame on shifting demographics, sharp cuts to federal reimbursements, dwindling numbers of insured patients and congress-

sional gridlock in Washington, D.C.

Many rural hospitals across the country have long relied on subsidies to facilities serving areas with high numbers of Medicaid patients and uninsured people to make up for the dwindling number of patients staying overnight and for the rising cost of providing services to indigent patients.

However, now that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has gone into effect, those funds will be significantly reduced. At the time of the bill's passage, health officials assumed that millions of uninsured Americans would gain coverage through the new law or through expanded state Medicaid programs.

But 21 states, including Wyoming, have so far opted not to expand Medicaid, thereby turning down millions of dollars annually in federal funds.

States that don't expand Medicaid will miss out on a total of \$88 billion through 2016, according to a July 2 report from the White House Council of Economic Advisers.

The ACA allows states to expand their Medicaid programs to anyone whose income is below 138 percent of the federal poverty level,

which is currently just over \$15,000 for a single person.

Despite the federal government offering to cover the cost of newly eligible enrollees through 2016 (and 90 percent of their costs thereafter), many Republican governors argue that expansion would be too costly for their states in the long run.

States' decisions to opt out of the expansion have put tremendous pressure on rural hospitals. In Tennessee, for example, 28 rural hospitals face major budget cuts or closure. Many have already cut down on services and significantly reduced staff.

Across the country, hospitals withstood a 2 percent Medicare cut as a result of the Congressional sequestration. In Wyoming, according to the American Hospital Association, that cut resulted in additional critical access hospitals struggling with negative operating margins.

In all, according to the AHA, 12 of Wyoming's 16 critical access hospitals now run with negative operating margins, and many work to make up the difference through non-operating revenues, including district mill levies, foundation support, and other means.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



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



**Jay Stallings**

**Wyoming Hospital Association**

2005 Warren Ave.  
Cheyenne, WY  
82001

[www.wyohospitals.com](http://www.wyohospitals.com)

307.632.9344

## HSCMH Launches Online Patient Portal

Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital (HSCMH) has gone live with an online patient portal available through a link on the hospital's website.

CEO Robin Roling says that patients should be able to view portions of the electronic medical records, including lab results, discharge summaries, discharge education and medication

lists.

Patients will be able to add proxies to their accounts and be able to see who's visited their portal.

Information patients enter into their portal will be accessible by their doctors and other select hospital staff and would remain in their electronic medical record even if they stop using the hospital's patient portal.

The portal uses three means to collect information: Web server logs, cookies and Web analytic tools along with patient supplied information.

The portal will also allow hospital staff to communicate with users about hospital services.

The portal is being maintained solely by HSCMH staff.

## Stallings Accepts CEO Role at Washakie Medical Center

Washakie Medical Center interim CEO Jay Stallings is staying put as the hospital's top leader.

Stallings announced that he will retain the role and remain in Worland.

Stallings came to Worland on April 28 from Mesa, AZ, where he served as associate administrator at Banner Desert Medical Center/Cardon Children's Medical Center since 2003.

He also has experience as an adjunct faculty member and executive in residence with the University of Arizona, Eller College of Management, the Rural/Metro/Southwest Ambulance, Ari-

zona Region and Tucson Medical Center/Health Partners of Southern Arizona.

"The people in our medical center have a lot of energy and we're moving in an exciting direction," Stallings said. "With the county's desire to renew the lease agreement with Banner, we are on track to provide excellent patient care for the citizens and families in our community, while also enhancing and expanding our patient care areas through new construction and remodel."

"I have enjoyed connecting with this close-knit

group of employees, physicians and the community here," Stallings said. "This is a special place and I'm pleased to become a part of it."

Jay is a graduate of Brigham Young University with a degree in German and Political science. He also received a master's degree in business/leadership from Grand Canyon University. He is a native of southeast Idaho.

Washakie Medical Center is a county-owned hospital in Worland, operated by Banner Health.

## HRET HEN Saves \$1.3 Billion

More than 1,500 hospitals participating in the AHA/Health Research & Educational Trust Hospital Engagement Network improved care for more than 143,000 patients since January 2012, resulting in an estimated cost savings of more than \$1.3 billion.

Among other improve-

ments, participating hospitals prevented more than 110,000 readmissions; nearly 19,000 early elective deliveries (which can increase complications); and more than 8,500 infections.

The project is part of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Partnership for Patients initiative.

The results will be shared at the 2nd Annual Quality & Safety Roadmap, July 19-20 in San Diego.

For more on the HEN project, visit [www.hret-hen.org](http://www.hret-hen.org) or [www.hret.org](http://www.hret.org).