

SCMA News Briefs

The monthly newsletter of the
Sonoma County Medical Association
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July 2009

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TOP NEWS

Contact Thompson and Woolsey NOW re pending health care legislation

Sonoma County physicians are urged to contact Reps. Mike Thompson and Lynn Woolsey during the Fourth of July recess (July 6-10) to deliver key messages regarding health care reform proposals pending before Congress. Details of the proposals, authored by House Democratic leaders, are on the [CMA website](#). Senate leaders are expected to unveil similar proposals soon.

Both House and Senate leaders plan to move health care legislation through committees during July, with floor votes scheduled before the August recess. Given the tight schedule, NOW is the time to contact legislators. Key messages for Reps. Thompson and Woolsey include:

- * The proposed fix to the Medicare GPCI formula is critical for Sonoma County.

- * The proposed elimination of the Medicare SGR is a step in the right direction.

- * All Medi-Cal rates should be increased to the Medicare fee schedule.

Messages can be delivered by phone, fax or e-mail, as follows:

Rep. Mike Thompson
226-9898 Fax 251-9800
www.mikethompson.house.gov

Rep. Lynn Woolsey
542-7182 Fax 542-2745
lynn.woolsey@mail.house.gov

SCMA NEWS

Dr. Richard Powers begins term as SCMA president

Richard Powers, MD, a family physician, begins his one-year term as SCMA president on July 1. Joining him on the SCMA board are president-elect Dr. Catherine Gutfreund, past president Dr. Kirk Pappas, and 14 local physicians, including several newly elected district representatives (see story below).

In an interview in the current issue of [Sonoma Medicine](#), Powers noted that he hopes to begin healing the rift between primary care physicians and specialists. "I want to bring doctors back together again," he said, "and realize we're all doctors, all trying to take care of our patients. The economic issues really shouldn't divide us the way they have."

Powers, a graduate of Stanford University and the Santa Rosa Family Medicine Residency, has been in private group practice in Sebastopol since 1975.

FREE employment issues seminar

Members and office staff are urged to attend the free July 23 SCMA Lunchtime Legal Seminar, which will cover at-will employment, termination, and disability and leave laws. The speaker is SCMA attorney Larry McLaughlin, who has decades of experience with employment issues.

The seminar runs from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., and participants need to bring their own lunch. Only SCMA members and their staff are eligible to attend.

To RSVP and receive the location, contact Rachel Pandolfi at rpandolfi@scma.org or 525-4375.

Return staff wage survey by July 30

To help members manage their practices, SCMA and several other Bay Area medical societies are conducting a fax-back survey

of medical office staff wages and benefits. Members can complete the one-page survey by [printing the PDF](#) on the SCMA website, filling in the requested information, signing the form, and faxing it back to SCMA at 525-4328.

The survey data will be aggregated and analyzed on a county-by-county basis, and final results will be sent confidentially to survey respondents. **The survey is for SCMA members only.**

For further details, contact Cynthia Melody at cmelody@scma.org or 525-4359.

Six local physicians elected to SCMA leadership posts

SCMA members have elected six of their colleagues to serve in the following leadership posts for the next three years:

- * Dr. Catherine Gutfreund has been named president-elect. She will become president in July 2010.
- * Dr. Brad Drexler will represent Healdsburg on the SCMA board of directors.
- * Drs. Leonard Klay and Phyllis Senter will represent Santa Rosa.
- * Dr. Jose Morales will represent The Permanente Medical Group.
- * Drs. Lela Emad, Catherine Gutfreund, Leonard Klay and Phyllis Senter will serve on the CMA Delegation.

Members interested in serving on the board in future years should contact Cynthia Melody at cmelody@scma.org or 525-4359.

District 10 Caucus approves two resolutions for CMA House

The CMA District 10 Caucus—which includes representatives from medical societies in Sonoma, Marin, Napa, Solano, Mendocino, Lake, Humboldt and del Norte counties—has approved two resolutions for submittal to the CMA House of Delegates in October.

The first resolution, written by former SCMA president Dr. Leonard Klay, asks CMA to support legislation that would impose a tax on each pack of filter cigarettes. The revenue would help pay for cleanup and recycling of cigarette butts and filters, the largest source of non-biodegradable litter in California.

The second resolution, by Eureka pediatrician Dr. Emily Dalton, would recommend that sports physicals required by school athletic programs be performed by the athlete's primary care provider.

Each year the House of Delegates considers resolutions from physicians throughout California. If approved by the House, many resolutions are subsequently introduced to the state Legislature and enacted into law.

LOCAL MEDICAL NEWS *****

Volunteers still needed for Neighbors in Health on August 2

Physicians, nurses and office staff are urged to volunteer for Neighbors in Health, a day-long event on August 2 that provides medical care, immunizations, well checks and dental exams to uninsured and underinsured children. Last year, more than 500 youngsters participated, and even more are anticipated this year.

To volunteer your services for the event, which is cosponsored by Kaiser Permanente and the United Way, visit www.unitedwaywinecountry.org/nih.

Residency funding hits snag

Funding for the Santa Rosa Family Medicine Residency has been tripped up by a Medicare rule regarding medical education. The rule requires that hospitals with residency programs must incur at least 90% of the cost of residents' salaries and teaching supervision in order to qualify for Medicare payments related to medical education.

Because of the rule, funding for salaries and supervision at the residency will have to come from Sutter Santa Rosa rather than the newly formed Residency Consortium, which includes not only Sutter but also Kaiser Santa Rosa, the Southwest Community Health Center, UCSF, the Sonoma County Dept. of Health Services and Memorial Hospital.

"Planning for the implementation of the Consortium business model was underway until we discovered funding obstacles," said Sutter Santa Rosa CEO Mike Cohill. Under the Consortium plan, Sutter would have contributed \$4 million annually to the program, primarily from Medicare funds, and Kaiser, the other major funder, would have supplied \$2.7 million.

Given the Medicare rule, primary funding for the residency will remain with Sutter, as it has since 1996. Dr. Walter Mills, a Kaiser family physician and Consortium board member, said the group is continuing to explore options for supporting the residency. "The beauty of the Consortium is that everyone's talking to each other," he said. "The residency's future is secure in that Sutter has fully committed itself to supporting the program as required by the County Health Access Agreement."

Mills noted that the Consortium would probably announce its revised plans by late summer.

H1N1 virus continues to spread in Sonoma County

The H1N1 virus, once an exotic import, is now well entrenched in Sonoma County. According to a June 26 Health Alert from Public Health, the county now has 38 confirmed and probable cases, nearly all of which have been reported since June 10. One death has occurred so far.

Current recommendations from the state limit testing for H1N1 to people with influenza-like illness who:

- * require hospitalization **or**
- * are pregnant **or**

- * are direct health care providers **or**
- * have died from influenza-like illness

Public Health reminds physicians that simple prevention measures can help stem the spread of H1N1. The most important is to wear personal protective equipment when examining patients with influenza-like illness. Other measures include:

- * Covering coughs and washing hands frequently.
- * Providing hand gel and surgical masks in patient areas.
- * Displaying posters about protective measures. Posters can be downloaded from www.sonoma-county.org/h1n1.
- * Advising patients with influenza-like illness to stay home or be isolated for seven days **or** until 24 hours after their symptoms subside, **whichever is longer**.

PFMC puts most grant requests on hold until fall

The Pacific Foundation for Medical Care, which normally awards tens of thousands of dollars to local health projects, has put most grant requests on hold until the fall, when it hopes to have more money. Only \$10,000 was awarded during the spring cycle, with half of the money going to the RotaCare Free Clinic in San Rafael and the other half to Operation Access, East Bay.

The next deadline for PFMC grant proposals is Oct. 1. For details, visit www.pfmc.org.

Petaluma Valley Hospital receives national award for patient care

Petaluma Valley Hospital has received a national award for exceeding patient expectations, based on a recent survey of discharged patients. The hospital was judged to be one of the best among the 300 hospitals nationwide who participated in the survey.

The award comes on top of several other measures placing the hospital among the top 10% in the nation for treating heart

attacks, congestive heart failure, and hip or knee replacement. "In south Sonoma County," noted chief of staff Dr. James Leoni, "we are extremely fortunate to have this caliber of care close to home."

Kaiser offers medical record summaries on flash drives

Patients at Kaiser facilities in Sonoma and Marin counties can now get a summary of their medical records on a thumb-sized flash drive for just \$5. "It's not intended to be a complete medical record, but rather a summary that they can use for specific purposes," noted Dr. Mike Matsumoto, technology chief at Kaiser San Rafael.

Matsumoto said the most likely purposes for the flash drive are travel and home record-keeping. Patients who need medical care while on vacation, for example, can give doctors the flash drive, which lists active medical problems, allergies, immunizations, lab results, prescriptions, diagnoses and procedures, among other records. The password-protected drive can also contain recent EKGs and chest X-rays, along with standard demographic information.

The drive is not intended to replace the complete medical records stored at Kaiser, which are electronically modified during each visit. Patients who want to keep their flash drives current can get free updates.

STATE AND NATIONAL NEWS

Fake Medicare faxes target physicians

Medicare recently notified CMA that scam artists are sending faxes to physician offices posing as their Medicare carrier or Medicare administrative contractor. The faxes, which may include an official-looking Medicare logo, instruct physician staff to update their account information within 48 hours in order to prevent a gap in Medicare payments.

While physicians may receive legitimate requests for information from Palmetto (California's Medicare contractor), they should always be extremely careful when providing anyone with sensitive account information. **Physicians who receive requests in the manner described above should check with Palmetto before submitting any information.** Medicare providers should only send information to Palmetto using the contact details found on the official [Palmetto website](#).

PEOPLE

Dr. Robert Johnson dies

Dr. Robert Johnson, a past president of the Illinois State Medical Society and a U.S. Navy veteran, has passed away. He began as an ob-gyn in Ohio and then taught at the Southern Illinois School of Medicine. After retiring to Santa Rosa, he chaired the SCMA Senior Physicians Committee for several years.

CLASSIFIEDS

Medical Director/Family Physician

Wanted for Sonoma County Indian Health Project, located among the beautiful vineyards in Sonoma County. Great recreation opportunities including hiking, biking, boating and camping. Great year-round weather.

Experienced medical director to perform 50/50 administration and family practice. Administrator for 20-room outpatient clinic. Great working environment, congenial staff, well-established nonprofit agency. Group's physicians share on-call duties.

Candidates must have an MD or DO degree, valid California license, and be board certified. SCIHP offers an outstanding work environment, competitive compensation plan/benefits package including paid time off, CME

allowance with paid time off, holidays and paid malpractice insurance.

In accordance with PL 93-638, American Indian Preference shall be given.

For consideration, please forward CV to:
Sonoma County Indian Health Project
144 Stony Point Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95401
Fax: 707-526-1016
E-mail: bob.orr@crihb.net

Medical office space

Small suite available for reasonable rent. Three exam rooms, southeast Santa Rosa. Call Connie, 707-525-0211.

How to submit a classified ad

To submit a classified ad for News Briefs or Sonoma Medicine, contact Nan Perrott at nperrott@rhscommunications.com or 707-525-4226. The cost is one dollar per word.

ABOUT SCMA

The Sonoma County Medical Association, a 501(c)(6) nonprofit association, supports local physicians and their efforts to enhance the health of the community. Founded in 1858, SCMA is affiliated with the California Medical Association and the American Medical Association.

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