



HOSPITAL AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

Hotline

• VERMONT ASSOCIATION OF HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS • 148 MAIN STREET • MONTPELIER, VERMONT 05602 • 802-223-3461 •

January 2003 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



In his inaugural address last week, Governor James Douglas sounded an important call. He said, "My message to the people of Vermont is change begins today – not change for the sake of change, but change for the sake of progress." The Governor was not talking specifically about health care, but I

couldn't help thinking how well his words applied to the struggle we face to shore up the health care system in Vermont. As we head into a new year and a new legislative session, there are important health care issues confronting our state that require serious deliberation. As we think together how to make health care better in Vermont, it matters profoundly that any changes we make be for the sake of progress and not merely for the sake of change.

What would progress look like in our health care system? First, it's important to state clearly that Vermonters are well served by our state's hospitals. National studies have shown that Vermont hospitals provide high quality care in well-maintained facilities at relatively low cost. That said, there is a lot of room for progress. As we move into a new year and a new legislative session, here are some ideas worth considering:

- Even with aggressive cost cutting steps, we know that health care is expensive. One way to feel better about that fact is to be sure our delivery system is as cost effective and efficient as possible. We have to be smart about how we use the resources we have. Twenty percent of our population uses 80% of the money we spend on health care. We need to focus

on chronic diseases, such as diabetes, to be sure that the most efficient treatments are available and best practices are in place throughout Vermont.

- It is a cliché, but it really is true: an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We must launch an aggressive campaign to encourage Vermonters to make better, healthier lifestyle choices. Obesity, smoking, drinking, and inadequate exercise are avoidable health risks that place a huge drain on health care resources. In the same way that massive public education campaigns were successful in getting people to stop polluting our highways and start wearing seatbelts, now we must begin a relentless effort to build healthier communities through public awareness and encouragement of healthy living.
- We must continue to seek measurable outcomes in order to provide better, more helpful information to people who are making decisions about their care. In virtually every other "market," the consumer has power. This should be true in the health care market as well. Increasingly, health care consumers are demanding access to information, and they should get it. The challenge for health care providers is to make sure that people get the right information, and not to allow informa-

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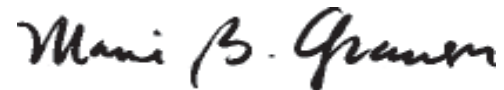
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tion to be taken out of context or conveyed sloppily. As we announced last month, VAHHS and its member hospitals will participate in a national initiative that will provide Vermont consumers with a common framework for the public disclosure of quality measures of hospital care. This is a good start toward responsible release of information. We must keep working to identify ways to empower our consumers by providing information that informs rather than clouds responsible decision making.

- Hospital governance and oversight will be the subject of much discussion this year. In the wake of the ongoing situation at Fletcher Allen, this is an area in which the state may be particularly tempted to make change simply for the sake of change. Vermont should proceed very carefully in this area. A hospital board of trustees is made up of local volunteers whose first objective is to improve the health status of their communities. Ultimately, it is the community to whom the hospital board and management must be held primarily accountable. It is imperative that the state enhance rather than undermine local leadership of and investment in our state's hospitals.

VAHHS will be an active partner as Governor Douglas and the 2003 General Assembly work to keep health care affordable and accessible. Our hospitals have a lot of experience and hard-earned wisdom about what will work and what won't. We look forward to discerning with our state government how best to make change for the sake of progress.



HOSPITALS INVITED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CMS OPEN DOOR CONFERENCE CALLS

As part of the "open door" policy of Health and Human Services Secretary Thompson, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has scheduled a series of open door conference calls on various health topics.

Schedules can be found at the CMS web site:
<http://www.cms.gov/opendoor/schedule.asp>

Newsletters from past events can be found at:
<http://www.cms.gov/opendoor/newsletter/>

Open Door Fora & Committee Chairs

Beneficiaries - Disabilities	Rob Sweezy
Beneficiaries - Diversity	Ruben King-Shaw
ESRD & Clinical Laboratories	Tim Trysla
Health Plans	Gail McGrath
Home Health, Hospice, and Durable Medical Equipment	Rob Sweezy
Hospitals	Tom Grissom
Low-Income Health Access	Tom Scully and Elizabeth Duke (HRSA)
Nurses & Allied Health Professionals	Tim Trysla
Nursing Homes/ Long-term Care	Tom Scully with Co-Chair Ray Scheppach, Executive Director, National Governors Association
Pharmaceutical, Pharmacy, and Device Manufacturers	Leslie Norwalk
Physicians	Ruben King-Shaw
Rural Health	Tom Scully and Tim Trysla

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DEE ROLLINS, VP
MARYANNE CERASOLI, ASSOCIATE

NEW LEGISLATIVE SESSION GETS UNDERWAY

Ceremonial activities dominated the first week of January as newly elected members of the House and Senate returned to Montpelier to kick off a new biennium. Governor Douglas, the state's Constitutional officers, and the members of the General Assembly were sworn into office.

As expected, Rep. Walter Freed, R-Dorset, comfortably won a second term as House Speaker. Senator Peter Welch, D-Windsor, unanimously won the post of Senate Pro Tem. Committee assignments in both the House and the Senate were released Friday. Of particular significance to hospitals are the House and Senate Health and Welfare Committees. The members of those committees are listed below. Sen. Jim Leddy, retired executive director of the Howard Center for Human Services, will chair the Senate committee, while Rep. Tom Koch, a lawyer, will return as chair of the House committee.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & WELFARE

Sen. James Leddy, D-Chittenden, *Chair*
Sen. Janet Munt, D-Chittenden County, *Vice-Chair*
Sen. William Doyle, R-Washington County
Sen. Ginny Lyons, D-Chittenden County
Sen. Jeanette White, D-Windham County

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & WELFARE

Rep. Tom Koch, R-Barre Town, *Chair*
Rep. Kinny Connell, D-Warren, *Vice-Chair*
Rep. Tom DePoy, R-Rutland City
Rep. Anne Donahue, R-Northfield
Rep. John Hall, R-Newport City
Rep. Connie Houston, R-Ferrisburgh
Rep. Bill Keogh, D-Burlington
Rep. Linda Kirker, R-Essex
Rep. Steven Maier, D-Middlebury
Rep. Clint Martin, D-Springfield
Rep. Val Vincent, D-Waterbury



VERMONT RECRUITMENT CENTER NEWS

The Vermont Recruitment Center celebrates its 9th year on Feb. 21. To date the VRC has placed 211 medical providers: 152 physicians, 48 NP/PA/CNM, 11 allied health professionals. Since its inception in 1995, the VRC has witnessed many changes in the recruitment field. One is the number of hours it takes to recruit a physician. In 1995-1998 it took 135 hours per physician; today it takes 235 hours. One reason for the increase is that most physicians have a significant other and it takes longer to agree with family wants and needs. Physicians also ask for details regarding a site and its community. This makes VRC, as a statewide non-profit service, preferable to a commercial recruiter. We educate candidates about all opportunities in Vermont, and physicians feel that we value both their interests and the sites' interests equally. Physicians still prefer telephone communication, looking to the internet and web sites second. (*NEJM Sept./Oct. 2002*)

The Freeman Scholar Program is always exciting for all of us in Vermont and the first class will be ready in 2004. The VRC will be notifying all sites of the scholars and their specialties. Site profiles will be registered on the VRC web site's Freeman Scholar page.

For more information on all recruitment and retention issues call us at 802-229-1167.



VERMONT EXPLOR: HIPAA EDUCATION

The Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (VAHHS) and the Vermont Medical Society (VMS) are pleased to announce a cooperative educational effort to assist hospital staff, physicians and physician offices to learn the nuts and bolts of implementing the provisions of HIPAA in their facilities and practices.

Gregory Farnum (VAHHS) and Madeleine Mongan (VMS) are prepared to give your staff and physicians a 1 to 2 hour practical introduction on what they need to know and do to comply with the new federal privacy regulations. The goal of the education sessions is to ensure practicality, with a "how to comply" focus. While we will not be able to provide specific legal advice or act as consultants, Madeleine and Greg will bring a binder with template forms and policies that can be tailored to meet the needs of facilities and practices.

We prefer to visit your site during the day but are available to present during the evening hours as well. We are hoping to complete the seminars by the end of February as the HIPAA privacy regulations go into effect in April.

Please contact Greg Farnum at 802-223-3461 Ext. 16 for more information.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Links provide further information & registration forms

- Wednesday, January 29 Problematic and Challenging JCAHO Standards for 2002:
Preparing for 2003
Killington, VT 8:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Information/Register: <http://www.vahhs.org/Forms/Brochure1.29.03.pdf>
- Thursday, January 30 Assuring Institutional Integrity:
The Board's Covenant with its Community Benefits Staff
Hotel Coolidge, White River Junction, VT 4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Register: <http://www.vahhs.org/Forms/Registrationform1.30.03.pdf>
- Thursday, January 30 –
Friday, January 31 The 6th Annual Nurses Improving Care for Health
System Elders (NICHE) Leadership Conference
New York, NY
Information: www.hartfordign.org/programs/niche/conference-purpose.html
- Wednesday, February 12 Nursing Symposium
Three Stallion Inn, Randolph, VT 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Registration Closed
- Thursday, February 20 Vermont Safety & Health Conference
Clarion Hotel, Burlington, VT 9:00 a.m. - 3:40 p.m.
Information/Register: <http://www.vtsbdc.org/enviroregs.htm>