



The NOTEBOOK

www.arkhospitals.org

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE ARKANSAS HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

April 20, 2015

Volume 22, Number 13

AHA Representatives Address Health Reform Task Force

Arkansas Hospital Association president Bo Ryall made a presentation this morning to the Health Reform Legislative Task Force studying the state's overall Medicaid program and how best to proceed once the Arkansas Private Option ends on December 31, 2016. The meeting was geared to the issue of uncompensated care and several speakers addressed the matter from their individual perspectives. Other hospital speakers included Dan Rahn, M.D., Chancellor, University of Arkansas of Medical Sciences; Roxane Townsend, M.D., Vice Chancellor, Clinical Programs, CEO, UAMS Medical Center; and Paul Taylor, CEO, Ozarks Community Hospital (OCH) in Gravette.

The agenda also included Mary Leath, executive director, Community Health Centers of Arkansas, Inc.; Kathy Grisham, executive director, Community Clinic, Springdale; Tony Calandro, executive director, Healthy Connections in Mena; and Nell Smith, administrator, Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research.

Ryall's comments focused on the long tradition of the state's hospitals in providing medical care to patients regardless of their ability to pay and their history of absorbing as many costs as possible for patients who are unable to pay for the healthcare services they receive. He noted the success of the Private Option in reducing the uncompensated care burden borne by hospitals and pointed out that a combination of factors, such as the growing amount of Medicare reductions that will affect Arkansas hospitals over the next decade, inadequate Medicaid rates and the trend toward broader use of high deductible health plans, will make retention of affordable health insurance, particularly among low-income Arkansans even more critical in the future.

Taylor, whose system is a regional safety-net healthcare provider that includes two hospitals and 17 clinics operating in Northwest Arkansas and Southwest Missouri, told the task force that expanding coverage for low-income people in Arkansas has generated job growth and helped hospitals by reducing uncompensated care costs. He said things have been dramatically different in Missouri, a state which chose to pass on any form of coverage expansion for its Medicaid population. While OCH in Gravette and its clinics have added more than 60 jobs due to expansion in Arkansas, OCH facilities in Missouri have been forced to lay off employees.



AHA Annual Awards: Call for Nominations

Nominations are open for the 2015 Arkansas Hospital Association (AHA) awards program. The A. Allen Weintraub Memorial Award and Distinguished Service Award will be presented during the Arkansas Hospital Association's 85th Annual Meeting Awards Dinner Thursday night, October 8, at the Little Rock Marriott. Arkansas' C. E. Melville Young Administrator of the Year also will be recognized by the Arkansas Health Executives Forum during the dinner and the AHA Diamond Awards, cosponsored by the Arkansas Society for Healthcare Marketing and Public Relations, will be presented at the same time. In addition, the ACHE Regent's Awards will be presented at the ACHE Breakfast meeting that same morning. Criteria for each award follows:

Paul Cunningham, Editor

Robert "Bo" Ryall, President & CEO; 419 Natural Resources Drive; Little Rock, Arkansas 72205; (501) 224-7878; facsimile (501) 224-0519

The **A. Allen Weintraub Memorial Award**, named for Allen Weintraub, long-time administrator of St. Vincent Infirmiry Medical Center in Little Rock, is the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the AHA. Those nominated for this honor should be hospital chief executive officers who are contributing to their hospitals and communities in much the same manner as did Allen. Those who remember him always mention his care and concern, not only for hospital patients, but also for his employees; his passion for quality healthcare for Arkansans; his recognition of duty to the community; and his visionary influence.

The AHA's **Distinguished Service Award** is presented to individuals who, while not necessarily AHA members, have promoted a cause of the healthcare industry, thereby becoming entitled to special recognition. Examples of those eligible for this award are physicians, nurses, trustees, auxiliary members, community leaders and other deserving individuals.

(The 2015 recipients of the Weintraub and Distinguished Service Awards will be chosen by the AHA board of directors from those nominated.)

The **C. E. Melville Young Administrator of the Year Award** is named for the late C. E. Melville, administrator of Jefferson Regional Medical Center in Pine Bluff. The award recipient is selected by the Arkansas Health Executives Forum's Awards Committee. The award recipient must be age 40 or under in 2014, a resident of Arkansas for at least two years, employed by an Arkansas healthcare institution, and meet requirements for active membership in the Arkansas Health Executives Forum.

The 2015 **Diamond Awards** honoring excellence in hospital marketing and public relations will be presented in several categories, such as advertising, annual report, Internet website, publications, special video production, and writing. Diamond Awards may be presented to hospitals with 0-25 beds (CAH), 26-99 beds, 100-249 beds and 250 or more beds. Entries will be accepted through May 22 and will be judged individually by a panel of judges not affiliated with any Arkansas hospital. Emphasis will be placed on the budget for each entry within each division.

The 2015 **ACHE Regent's Awards** will honor outstanding healthcare executive leadership in two areas – early career and senior level. The two recipients, selected by the Arkansas Health Executives Forum's Awards Committee, will be presented their awards at the ACHE Breakfast during the AHA Annual Meeting and recognized at the annual Awards Dinner that same evening.

Nominations and entries (with the exception of the Diamond Awards), accompanied by appropriate documentation, must arrive at AHA headquarters no later than **July 30, 2015**.

Informational brochures providing details of all awards have been distributed to each hospital CEO and public relations/marketing officer. They also are available at <http://www.arkhospitals.org/events/annual-meeting>. Please contact Lyndsey Dumas at (501) 224-7878 with questions about the awards or award process.



Hospital Execs, Physicians Target of ID Theft

Executives and physicians at numerous hospitals across Arkansas are reporting that they have recently had their identity stolen, resulting in fraudulent filing of personal tax returns with refunds in each case being issued to the perpetrator. The discoveries have been made when the individuals attempt to file their tax returns only to learn those returns have been filed already. Hospital officials are being asked to inform the Arkansas Hospital Association if they are aware of hospital or medical staff members who have been the victim of such a theft. Contact Paul Cunningham (pcunningham@arkhospitals.org).

Senate Approves SRG Repeal Legislation

Upon returning from its Easter recess, the U.S. Senate voted 92-8 last week to give its nod to final passage of the *Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act* (H.R. 2), legislation to permanently replace the Medicare physician sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula which has governed Medicare physician fees for more than a decade. The bill now goes to the President's desk for signature. Following the Senate's action, American Hospital Association (AHA) President and CEO Rich Umbdenstock commend Congress for passing legislation that "strikes a careful balance in the way it funds the SGR repeal and embraces a number of structural reforms to the Medicare program." He also noted that the AHA will continue to seek action on issues not included in the final bill, such as broad-based Recovery Audit Contractor reform, socio-demographic adjustments to the readmissions penalty program, and corrections to regulatory issues like the critical access hospital 96-hour rule, and direct supervision for outpatient therapeutic services.



Healthcare Quality Improving

The nation has made clear progress in improving the healthcare delivery system to achieve the three aims of better care, smarter spending and healthier people, according to the *2014 National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report*, released Friday by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). But there is still work to do, specifically to address disparities in care, the report adds. Among other improvements, the report shows the rate of uninsured working-age adults decreased from 22.3% in 2010 to 20.4% in 2013 and 15.6% in the first half of 2014. It also found an increase in the percentage of people who said they have a usual place to go for medical care.

Quality improved for most National Quality Strategy priorities, including a 17% reduction in hospital-acquired conditions, as reported by AHRQ in December. In addition, certain racial and ethnic disparities were eliminated. For example, black children age 19-35 months received one or more doses of the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine and Native American children received hepatitis B vaccines at rates similar to other children, and Hispanic adults with obesity received nutrition counseling at rates similar to other adults.



Hospital Compare Adds Star Ratings

On April 16, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) added "star ratings" to its *Hospital Compare* website, www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare. Under this new ranking system, almost 3,500 U.S. hospitals receive ratings of one to five stars – with five stars being the highest score – based on data from the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) patient experience survey. This represents a change in how information is displayed, but not the addition of questions to be answered or data to be collected. At this time, no other measures on *Hospital Compare* will receive star ratings. However, CMS is in the early stages of developing a star rating approach it intends to apply to most measures on the website in the future.

Two other organizations also are expected to unveil updated hospital quality rankings this spring. By the end of April, the Leapfrog Group will update its "Hospital Safety Scores" (i.e., letter grades of A to F), which are based on several patient safety measures. And as soon as May 5, *US News and World Report* will unveil new hospital ratings, "Best Hospitals for Common Care," intended to reflect hospital performance on relatively common procedures and conditions (e.g., hip replacement, congestive heart failure). All three rankings add to the already significant number of available websites ranking and rating hospital performance.

CMS Proposal Shortens 2015 Meaningful Use Report Period

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) April 10 released a proposed rule modifying the Medicare and Medicaid Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Program for 2015 through 2017. Among other changes, the proposal would shorten the meaningful use reporting period for 2015 to a 90-day period aligned with the calendar year and to provide additional flexibilities, including reducing the share of patients that must use the patient portal from 5% to at least one patient. The rule also would remove some measures that CMS believes have become “redundant, duplicative, or topped out. CMS will accept comments on the proposed rule for 60 days after publication in the April 15 *Federal Register*. The proposed rule is available online at <http://federalregister.gov/a/2015-08514>, and on www.FDsys.gov. The American Hospital Association (AHA) will hold a member call on April 29 at 1:00 p.m. CST, where AHA staff will discuss this rule and the Stage 3 proposed rule. You can register for the call at <http://www.aha.org>.



NewsNotes About Arkansas Folks

William D. “Bill” Hedden of Magnolia died April 11. He was CEO of Magnolia Hospital (now Magnolia Regional Medical Center) from 1957-1998 and chairman of the Arkansas Hospital Association (AHA) in 1985-86. In 1977, Hedden received the A. Allen Weintraub Memorial Award, the highest honor the organization can bestow upon a hospital chief executive. He was a member of the AHA’s Southwest Hospital District, the Arkansas Hospital Administrator’s Forum, and participated in many other councils and committees. Hedden also was a board member and chairman of Arkansas Blue Cross Blue Shield and appointed by Governors Dale Bumpers and David Pryor to the Arkansas Commission on Cost Control of Hospitals. Memorials may be made to the Magnolia Hospital Foundation or the First United Methodist Church of Magnolia.



The AHA Calendar

April 2015

- 23 Addressing 2015 Key Compliance Issues – HIPAA and EMTALA, Crowne Plaza Little Rock
- 24 ASWHC Spring Conference, AHA Classroom, Little Rock
- 28 The Chargemaster and Cardiovascular Interventional Radiology: *Coding, Billing and Reimbursement* – Webinar T2961
- 29 ICD-10 Series: *Don’t Let ICD-10 Be The Atomic Bomb in Your Facility* Course I – Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, Neoplasms, Blood, Endocrine/Nutritional/Metabolic Disorders, AHA Classroom, Little Rock
- 29-30 SAHPMM Annual Meeting & Trade Show, Fairfield Bay Conference Center
- 30 ASDVS Spring Conference, AHA Classroom, Little Rock

May 2015

- 4 CMS CoP 2015 – 2 Part Series – Part 2: The 2015 CMS Hospital CoPs: A Clear-Eyed Approach to Ensure Compliance (Face-to-Face Meeting)
- 6-8 AAHE 50th Annual Meeting and Trade Show, Arlington Resort Hotel & Spa, Hot Springs
- 12-14 Basic Crisis Response Training, AHA Classroom, Little Rock
- 13 CMS Final QAPI Worksheet and Revised QAPI Hospital CoP Standards – Webinar R1505
- 19 AHEF 2015 Spring Luncheon Thinking Outside the Box: *A Radical Approach to Problem Solving*, Arkansas Children's Hospital, Little Rock

Information on all AHA educational programs and activities is available at <http://www.arkhospitals.org/events>.