

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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Keeping Our Composure

The Board of Supervisors approved a County budget yesterday (March 31) that includes significant cuts for Health Services. Every time we have to cut our budget, we face very difficult questions about how best to use limited resources. When you've made budget cut after budget cut, as we have over the years, there is no fat to be offered up. And we know that there will be more cuts in the near future.

As the Director of a health department responsible for protecting human lives, I have said publicly that I believe budget cuts that result in rationing services is bad public policy and make little sense. Nonetheless, when I submitted my list of budget cuts to the County Administrator some weeks ago, it included a \$6 million cost-saving proposal to exclude any Contra Costans who are undocumented adults from non-emergency outpatient services at our Health Centers and a suggestion that we explore an alternative plan.

In the intervening weeks, the Board listened to me, our many community partners, and some of our own providers testify about concerns regarding this plan. I convened a meeting of stakeholders to explore other options. I am pleased that we have been able to find a possible alternative—more about that below.

Dialogue about the proposal

I talked to a number of you, including Division Directors, Medical staff, employees, community partners and others about the original proposal. I also participated in three community forums organized by the Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization and listened to residents' concerns. I can't say I was trying to "sell" the idea—it's hard to sell something you find personally objectionable. I did try to make people understand why we were submitting that proposal, as opposed to closing wards in the Medical Center, closing a Health Center or shutting down other services that would be next to impossible to restore.

I am especially dismayed by some of the reaction the proposal produced—and I don't mean our physicians holding a press conference to express their opposition or our community partners speaking at the



William B. Walker, MD
CCHS Director

DID YOU KNOW?

The Contra Costa Health Plan and Health Coverage pages on our website received 7,322 visits in February alone.

Continued next page

Board of Supervisors meeting. What has dismayed me is that some people applauded the move and wondered why we had served these patients for so long. Those people obviously don't understand the importance of protecting the health of the whole community and we have a responsibility to educate them in a respectful way.

Undocumented residents play key roles

Let me say this unequivocally: Undocumented residents are part of the Contra Costa community. They provide essential services in agriculture, construction and many other areas and raise families, often including children who are American citizens and parents who are undocumented caretakers. When I began my career with Health Services more than 35 years ago in Oakley, most of my patients were farm workers and many of them were undocumented. I was proud to serve them then and proud that our County had a commitment to continue serving them. I would not be proud of being part of a process to deny them services. I am pleased that the Board entered into a dialogue with County Counsel about the use of the word "alien" to refer to these residents and was advised that we could all stop using that term.

The national ambivalence on immigration policy means that while undocumented workers are part of our community and our economy, there is no federal or state funding to provide essential medical services to these people in our community. On the local level, we are left on our own to piece together some kind of a solution to this problem.

Another option

I am happy to report that we are going to expand our partnership with the community clinics in Contra Costa that would allow the approximately 5,500 undocumented adults who we have been serving to receive non-emergency primary care services at those locations. Many other counties have relied on community clinics for access to primary care. Emergency care services would continue to be provided at CCRMC and other local emergency rooms.

This option would provide care at a lower cost and free up capacity in County Health Centers for Medi-Cal patients and members of the Contra Costa Health Plan. I have asked the Board to provide one-time funding from the County's reserve fund for the transition to this plan. They did not make a decision about that yesterday.

We also will continue talking to a broad group of stakeholders about other options for what Supervisor Susan Bonilla called "a new model for primary care" that will meet the health needs of all Contra Costa residents.

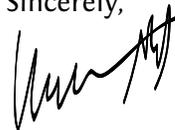
The Board also requested that we recommend strategies to achieve operational and fiscal health for CCRMC and our Health Centers.

Looking ahead

Despite my optimism about expanding our partnership with community clinics and others, looking ahead to the reality of what faces us, there will be many more tough choices in the months to come. We will be receiving some federal stimulus money but the State still has a deficit for next year's budget that will mean cuts. Also, the fact that California did not receive enough federal stimulus money to avoid state budget cuts means that we will be losing some additional funds and Medi-Cal optional benefits—especially adult dental care, optometry and audiology—will be eliminated for all Medi-Cal recipients in California. This will mean a reduction in services at our Health Centers.

Supervisor Gayle Uilkema summed it up when she pointed out that the Board might adopt a budget today but unlike previous years, there's no finality to it. "We will be called upon very shortly...to change it," she said. That's the name of the game right now. Meanwhile, I encourage all of us to air our differences in a compassionate and respectful way.

Sincerely,



William B. Walker, MD

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the May edition is April 15. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Kate Fowlie at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, or email: kfowlie@hsd.cccounty.us The Director's Report is available online at www.cchealth.org and on iSITE, our intranet, at <http://cchs>.



County Manager of the Year recipient Wanda Session with CCHS Director William Walker, MD

Session Wins County Manager of Year, Garcia Nominated as Employee of Year

Congratulations to Wanda Session for winning County Manager of the Year and to Elizabeth Garcia for being nominated as Employee of the Year. Wanda, a Health Services Administrator Level C in our Finance Division, was awarded the 2008 Gina Martin Manager of the Year award. She has worked



Elizabeth Garcia

for CCHS for nearly 26 years and has been a key player in extending health coverage to more residents of Contra Costa. Elizabeth works in our Mental Health Division as an advanced-level secretary and has made numerous contributions to the Mental Health Division during 2008. Both have shown dedication to their work and a commitment to service excellence and were honored by the Board of Supervisors on March 3.

County Receives Stimulus Money for Homeless Assistance

Contra Costa County was awarded \$1.5 million in federal stimulus money last month for homeless assistance. The money came just weeks after the Department of Housing and Urban Development unveiled its \$9 million homeless assistance award to Contra Costa. Homeless Program Director Cynthia Belon said her office is currently developing a plan on how the funds will be spent. U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness Executive Director Philip Mangano, who presented the award, said Cynthia has been a principal choreographer in reducing homelessness in Contra Costa. Despite a worsening economy, there was an 8% decrease in homelessness in Contra Costa from 2007 to 2009. During the same time, the number of homeless adults accessing alcohol and drug treatment services doubled to 189. Cynthia and CCHS Director Dr. William Walker appeared in a joint press conference on the stimulus money with Philip, Supervisors John Gioia and Susan Bonilla, Concord City Councilman Bill Shinn, Martinez City Councilwoman Janet Kennedy, Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, Richmond City Councilwoman Theresa Viramontes and Resources for Community Development Executive Director Daniel Sawislak.



Cynthia Belon speaks at a press conference on the award

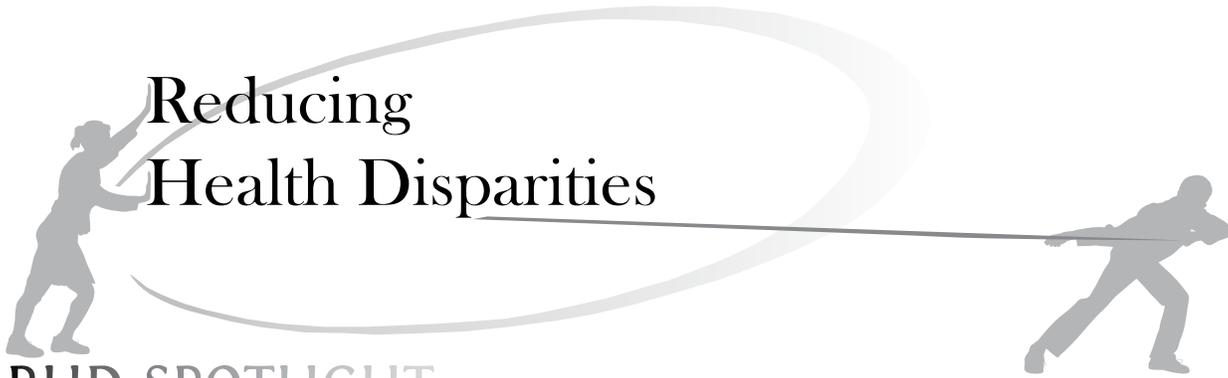
For information on the new funds, visit www.cchealth.org/groups/homeless

HazMat Staff Help to Produce New Book

Staff from our Hazardous Materials Programs recently contributed to the production of a new book titled *Inherently Safer Chemical Processes: A Life Cycle Approach*. HazMat Director Randy Sawyer said inherently safer systems reduce the risk of hazards at refineries and chemical plants by modifying processes instead of adding external layers of protection. This edition of the book includes current practices and knowledge for chemical facilities and refineries. Randy participated on the Center for Chemical Process Safety Committee that developed and oversaw writing the book. Accidental Release Prevention Programs Engineer Supervisor Cho Nai Cheung was a peer reviewer.

For more information, contact Randy Sawyer at rsawyer@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-646-2286.

Reducing Health Disparities



RHD SPOTLIGHT

One of the four goals of the Department's Reducing Health Disparities efforts is to improve consumers/clients/patients/customers' experience in utilizing our services. This month we focus on a number of ways in which CCHS collects feedback about how we're achieving that goal.



Nurses Ria Brandenburg (left) and Joelle Kennedy

Feedback Gives CCRMC High Marks

Nurses Ria Brandenburg and Joelle Kennedy are on a mission to improve quality of care for their CCRMC patients. After discovering CCRMC had a 27% return rate on patient satisfaction surveys for discharged hospital patients, Ria and Joelle and their quality improvement team decided to capture patient feedback and health needs/concerns through follow-up phone calls. Patients were asked to share concerns and praises about the quality of their hospital stay. The team piloted a "small

test of change" to 30 patients. The successful new approach uses a Hospital Auxiliary volunteer, who makes two attempts to reach the patient. Since January, the team has made 245 calls and increased the patient feedback by at least 10%. Ria said the phone calls allow staff to "see our care through the patients' eyes—their snapshot of our care." Patients rank CCRMC care at 8.41 on a scale from 1 to 10. Joelle said, "It was wonderful to find that the patients had positive experiences at the hospital." Ria and Joelle noted that obtaining patient feedback demonstrates concern for patients, might help reduce hospital readmission and help link the patient with our CCHP Advice Nurse resource system.

For more information, contact Joelle Kennedy at jkennedy@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-370-5200 ext. 4678.

Opinion-Meter Collects Information from Health Center Patients

Our Health Centers have a unique way to collect patient feedback—an electronic Opinion-meter affectionately known as Opie that replaces the traditional paper survey for most patients. Nearly 3,000 patients participate each year and their responses are used to improve patient care. Opie minimizes staff time used collecting and analyzing data and helps the Ambulatory Care Division conduct required annual patient feedback. They use the feedback to select an improvement project and use the next year's data to see if the activity improved patient responses. In 2006 the Ambulatory Care patient satisfaction leadership team, led by Sylvia Elizarraraz, included two questions on linguistic access. After noting inconsistencies in responses, the questions were reworded

to ask "Did you know an interpreter is available to you free of cost? If you used an interpreter, were you satisfied with the services?" Several Health Centers reported an improvement in the number of patients who knew an interpreter was available.



Sylvia Elizarraraz

Commenting on Opie's value, Sylvia says, "It's important to know what patients think about their experience and for staff to respond to that feedback."

For information, contact Sylvia Elizarraraz at selizarr@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-513-6805.



The DIRECTOR'S REPORT RHD PAGE showcases 2008–09 Division strategies and activities to address four CCHS Reducing Health Disparities goals. The goals are: Improving consumer/client/patient/customer experience; Engaging and Partnering with community and public entities; Improving staff respect, responsiveness and cultural sensitivity; and Creating systems that support and promote access and respectful delivery of services. The complete CCHS RHD plan is available at www.cchealth.org



Vidya Iyengar, Steve Hahn-Smith, and Debra L. Jones

Consumers Play a Key Role in Mental Health Surveys

Consumers are at the hub of an ambitious effort by our Mental Health Division to get feedback every May and November that is used for identifying program gaps and developing work plans. The Mental Health consumers are trained on how to conduct the survey and then they set up tables at the various clinic sites, talking to more than 200 people. The Coordinator of the Mental

Health Reducing Health Disparities efforts, Vidya Iyengar, says it is important that consumers receive surveys from people not directly associated with the clinics so they feel safe in providing their authentic feedback. A recent staff survey identified the need to improve interpreter services and the Division is exploring development of a curriculum for mental health staff and interpreters who are utilized in mental health settings. Recently the Public Health Linguistic Access Unit demonstrated the use of the Health Care Interpreter Network system, which impressed mental health clinicians as a strategy for improving linguistic capacity. The feedback efforts—which also include cultural competency assessment surveys of adults who utilize mental health services, and staff and community partners—are led by the Division's Reducing Health Disparities Data Collection sub-work group: Vidya, Steve Hahn-Smith, Debra L. Jones and Imo Momoh.

For more information, contact Vidya Iyengar at viyengar@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5212.

County Employee Health Plan Members Report High Satisfaction

A recent satisfaction survey conducted with county employees enrolled in our Health Plan had some heartening results: there was an 88.5% satisfaction rate with CCHP services, surpassing the goal of 80%. In all, 3,861 households representing 9,000 County employees and their dependents received the mail survey. More than 700 surveys were returned for an 18.6% return rate, well above the 10% average. The survey included 15 questions about patient experience and satisfaction with CCHP's services and service locations, race, ethnicity and language preference. Positive responses earned CCHP staff recognition in the form of a personalized thank you. Employee members who wrote of concerns or had questions and shared their contact information will receive a follow-up call.



The CCHP team responsible for the survey and follow-up calls: Bayley Raiz, Teresa O'Riva, Troy Lam (pictured back row left to right), Judi Louro and Belkys Fernandez (front row), and Donna Devine, Otilia Tiutin, and Patricia Sanchez (not pictured).

For more information, contact Teresa O'Riva at toriva@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-7221.



Honor Roll

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Castro Medical Therapy Unit

Mauzy Medical Therapy Unit

O'Hara Park Medical Therapy Unit

Shadelands Medical Therapy Unit

Turner Medical Therapy Unit

California Children's Services
Public Health Division

For providing outstanding physical and occupational therapy services to Contra Costa children and their families, while managing increased demands with decreased resources and for their commitment to ongoing learning and skill development.

◆ Nominated by Barbara Sheehy

Chandra Gottschall

Clerk—Specialist Level
Community Wellness & Prevention
Program

For working tirelessly to organize the collection of money for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties for Public Health. In an economically down year, she stimulated an almost 11% increase over the previous year.

◆ Nominated by Dave Shoemaker

Lynn King, LVN Martinez Health Center

For extra effort to ensure that our patients get the best treatment and adequate follow up and that two CCHS patients had a smooth transition to an outside provider, keeping in mind the priority was preserving the continuum of care.

◆ Nominated by Sandra Murguia

Margarita Maciel

Community Health Worker Specialist
Family, Maternal & Child Health
Program

For exceptional guidance and tireless support to pregnant women and their families.

◆ Nominated by Jana Aloo

Connie Nguy

Patient Financial Services Specialist
Finance Division

Cleo Patzer-Alvarado

Medical Records Technician
Contra Costa Health Plan

For their interdepartmental collaboration, persistent and diligent follow through with assuring County patients and CCHP members secure the most appropriate financial coverage. Their teamwork reduced County financial expenditures and captured thousands of dollars in savings.

◆ Nominated by Florence Chan

Do you know someone who's going the extra mile?

To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the commendation form by email to ServicEX@hsd.cccounty.us or fax to 925-957-5401. Forms are on our website (cchealth.org on About Us page) or iSITE, our intranet, at <http://cchs>. Nominations are subject to approval by Division Directors.

Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: C. G. Bailey, Kathryn Leppert, Norma Martinez, Bonny Figueroa, Wesley Prieto, Isaac Tiongson Jr., Peggy Hussey, Marita Sison, Mary Knodt (10 years); Charles Lowery, Nury Gaitan, Waynette Mason, Susan McClure, Barbara Griesau, Victoria Snyder, Marinella Laurel-Cereca (15 years); Elaine Swenson, Peggy Rae Bryan, Constance Ly Nguy, Elmina Green, Gwendolyn Hamilton, Valory Willoughby, Deborah Nix (20 years); Karen Norris, Mary Bautista (25 years); Charlene McHugh (30 years); and Karon Head (35 years).

CCRMC Earns Top Ranking for Timely Birth Certificates Filings

Contra Costa Regional Medical Center went from being ranked last to first among hospitals in the county for timely filing of birth certificates thanks to a new process developed by staff. Health Information Management Director Kim Neal improved the way birth certificates are filed for babies born at CCRMC with the help of Clerical Supervisor Mary Ferriera, Senior Medical Record Technician Rosa Alejandro and the birth certificate team, Lanisha Russ, Toya Ware, and Anna Williams. The new streamlined process ensures certificates are filled out and presented to the parents only one day after birth and then signed by the doctor or designee within five days. The completed birth certificates are then hand-carried on a daily basis to the County Recorder's Office in downtown Martinez. The improvement means new parents can obtain the certified copy of the birth certificate in a timely manner.



Front row, sitting, down from left to right : Anna Williams and Rosa Alejandre. Back row, standing, from left to right: Toya Ware, Mary Ferriera, Lanisha Russ and Kim Neal

New FMCH Project Attracts CDC for Site Visit

Two representatives from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently visited our Family, Maternal and Child Health (FMCH) Programs to learn about the new Building Economic Security Today (BEST) project. BEST, which is based on FMCH's innovative Life Course Perspective, aims to reduce disparities and inequities in health outcomes for low-income families in Contra Costa County by improving their financial security and stability. The CDC representatives met for two days with CCHS staff to assess intervention ideas and to help design an evaluation plan for this innovative project. FMCH Director Cheri Pies said the visit provided an opportunity to discuss how new strategies developed by a local health department can be implemented and replicated at national level. The BEST project also recently received a \$10,000 grant from the East Bay Community Foundation to help families improve their financial security and stability. Recognizing that wealth can affect a family's health, BEST will assist families to apply for public benefits, repair credit, open bank accounts, obtain their Earned Income Tax Credit, or utilize a low-cost prepaid debit card. The grant will also partly fund the program evaluation of BEST.

To find out more about BEST, contact Padmini Parthasarathy at pparthasarthy@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6178.

Occupational Therapy Uses Power of Positive Thought

Some of our Occupational Therapy (OT) staff have started a Positive Intentions Group to help Rehabilitation employees cope with anxiety about budget cuts and the ailing economy. OT Supervisors Karen Lloyd and Ron Drago came up with the idea and hope other divisions and programs will be inspired to do the same. April is Occupational Therapy Month and underscores the importance of a healthy work environment, Karen said. The group is helping support staff's health and well-being by reviewing literature and data on the effects of positive intention, and is practicing positive intention in biweekly meditation meetings during lunchtime using various techniques, including Mindful Meditation, Visualization and Guided imagery. The themes are focused on creating harmony and empowering individuals to create the environment they want to work in.

For help starting a Positive Intentions Group, contact Karen Lloyd at klloyd@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-370-5750 ext. 4779.



Pam Dodson using LUCAS device

EMS Selected to Assess Groundbreaking CPR Technology

Our Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division is one of just four EMS providers in the country selected to assess a groundbreaking device used to provide CPR. The LUCAS Chest Compression system is an FDA-approved device that provides nonstop chest compression for adults during cardiac arrest. Our EMS Prehospital Care Coordinator Pam Dodson said performing manual CPR according to the current guidelines, at 100 compressions a minute, is difficult and tiring. This machine's nonstop pumping maintains consistent blood flow, delivering oxygen to the brain and hopefully improving the likelihood of survival. EMS now has 12 LUCAS devices in operation throughout the county. The six- to eight-month assessment will collect basic user data for widespread use in America.

For info on LUCAS, contact Pam Dodson at pdodson@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-9547.

Healthy Outlook Column Covers Migraine Headaches

Do you ever wonder if your headaches could be something more than an annoying pain? One of our recent Healthy Outlook columns published by the Contra Costa Times explains the differences between normal headaches and migraines. Dr. Veda Bhatt, a family medicine practitioner at CCRMC, talked about why the term migraine is sometimes misused for any type of severe head pain. Dr. Bhatt also explained how a family history of migraines might suggest some type of genetic component. Identifying the triggers of a migraine and taking the correct medications is the best way to reduce and manage the pain.



Dr. Veda Bhatt

To read more of this and other Healthy Outlook columns, visit www.cchealth.org and click on the Healthy Outlook link in Items of Interest or on the Publications page.

Integrated Pest Management Expert Hired

CCHS has hired a nationally recognized expert to help implement the County's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy as part of ongoing efforts to reduce the use of toxic chemicals. Tanya Drlik is known for her extensive work in IPM, an environmentally friendly strategy that focuses on long-term prevention of pests and their damage. IPM uses methods such as sanitation, pest exclusion, mechanical controls (e.g. mouse traps and mowing weeds) and habitat manipulation to effectively manage pests. Our Public and Environmental Health Advisory Board (PEHAB) initiated the IPM effort in 2001 with a study presented to the Board of Supervisors on the harmful effects of pesticides. PEHAB has continually advocated for IPM, resulting in the adoption of the IPM policy by the Supervisors, the formation of the County's IPM Task Force and the creation of an IPM Coordinator position.

For IPM info, contact Tanya Drlik at tdrlik@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-646-2286, or for PEHAB, visit www.cchealth.org/groups/pehab/

Big Turnout for Mental Health Bidders' Conferences

Our Mental Health Division held two successful bidders' conferences last month. The conferences informed potential mental health providers about how Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds are being used. An extensive planning process determined that MHSA Prevention & Early Intervention funds should go toward support services for older adults, families with children in the juvenile justice system, families with people who have a mental illness, suicide prevention and more. Community members, CCHS staff and local providers were involved in the planning process.

To find out more about the Mental Health Services Act, contact Sherry Bradley at sbradley@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5150. To view a full list of the services being contracted, visit www.cchealth.org