

MMH earns praises for continued high quality health care coverage

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

Melissa Memorial Hospital continues to receive positive recognition within the community and on a broader scale for the high level of care they provide. During the Tuesday, Jan. 28 East Phillips County Hospital District board meeting, MMH administrator John Ayoub informed board members about some exciting news.

Ayoub noted that in 2013 MMH started using HealthStream, an outside group that performs surveys of hospital patients. Initially, surveys were slow to come in, but during the third and fourth quarters of 2013, participation dramatically improved. In that time, MMH received a 100 percent satisfaction rate. Those results feed into the Medicare website, ranking MMH in the 99th percentile for all hospitals in the country.

“I am pretty proud of our staff, and I wanted to make sure you are aware of that,” Ayoub said to the board. “That’s hard to do. We always want to make sure we provide the highest quality of care, but sometimes how you do something is as important as what you do. I’m comfortable that we provide quality care and can now say that an outside independent group has verified that our patients feel that how we do that is also of the highest caliber.”

MMH was also named the business of the year for 2013 at the annual Holyoke Chamber of Commerce Gala Monday, Feb. 3. Ayoub commented Tuesday, Jan. 28, “I am proud of the care that we provide, proud of the staff that we have and the way that we provide care for the community.”

MMH continues to field a qualified staff

Since Dr. Thomas Lininger’s retirement last year, MMH has been searching for someone to fill his shoes as oncologist. Beginning Friday, Feb. 28, Dr. Michael Stone will be stepping in as hematologist and oncologist at the specialty clinic. He will be available once a month on Fridays.

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In the past, Stone has worked with Lininger, so a level of familiarity will be an extra benefit of his addition.

“At the end of the day, we want to make sure that our community is cared for, that we provide the specialties that we need through the specialty clinic. I am happy to announce that Dr. Stone will be coming to Holyoke,” Ayoub said.

A family practice doctor will also be in town later this month as MMH continues to search to fill the last spot of the medical staff.

Challenges facing the state

With a number of legislative bills being introduced, Ayoub noted that there are a few bills the hospital is keeping an eye on. More specifically, a bill dealing with transparency and how to access charges and personal responsibility for services before receiving services.

Chargemaster, a comprehensive list of billable items to a patient or health insurance provider, is a hot topic at the moment. Ayoub was clear that Chargemaster is necessary and used at MMH. A lot of work goes into Chargemaster to ensure it is accurate.

Another hot topic deals with Medicare. As two years were added to the sequester, the hospital will continue to receive cost-minus reimbursement for Medicare patients. Every time a Medicare patient is treated, the hospital will get 99 percent of charges paid for by the government instead of all of the charges.

“I think that the major message that needs to continue to be floated to both sides of the aisle, frankly, is that Medicare isn’t a piggy bank,” Ayoub said.

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He added that spending Medicare money to fix Medicare problems is acceptable, but spending Medicare money that hospitals need for other issues is problematic.

Administrator updates

Ayoub reminded board members that the flu is getting around this time of the year.

“The flu is out there and has been particularly bad this year in Colorado, not just affecting the usual suspects,” Ayoub explained.

Young adults, who are typically healthy and bounce right back from the flu, have been hit unusually hard with this flu strain.

The annual health fair is also sneaking up again. For the second year, the fair will be at Phillips County Event Center Saturday, March 22.

Blood draws will be available at SunSet View every morning from 6-9 a.m. March 3-7 and 10-14.

Other business

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In other business Jan. 28, board members:

—held a 30-minute executive session for the purposes of sale of property and for federal and state laws required to be kept confidential.

—announced that the next board meeting will be Tuesday, Feb. 25.

—announced the Melissa Memorial Hospital Foundation Legacy event, “Run for the Roses 2014,” will be Saturday, April 5.

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