

Medicare provider fee approved

Written by Chris Lee

Something that has been on the mind of hospital administrators and staff throughout the state of Colorado hit home at the Feb. 25 East Phillips County Hospital District board meeting.

HB 1293, which is the Colorado Healthcare Affordability Act of 2009 or Medicaid provider fee, was discussed and explained by Melissa Memorial Hospital (MMH) Administrator John Ayoub.

The act would create more funding for Medicaid Colorado Health Program Plus and expand coverage to the uninsured. It would also increase payments to hospitals in Colorado. The fee would grant access to federal funds and use revenue from fees to get more matching funds.

About \$341 million is expected to be raised from the fee. The federal government will then match most of that amount. Colorado hospitals will benefit \$86.5 million in 2010, according to Ayoub.

The fee of \$171,000 will be levied against MMH. Supplemental Medicaid payments of \$303,000 will be received as well as Colorado Indigent Care Program (CICP) payments of \$93,000. Total payments will be \$356,000. MMH will come out with \$185,000 of which not all of that money will be "pocketed."

After the money is distributed to all Colorado hospitals, the Colorado Hospital Association will then redistribute that money more equitably.

Ayoub said the model still needs to be approved by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. While he expects them to approve it, he said there is the possibility they won't. Board members approved the fee, so if the model isn't approved, nothing will be done.

Another item on the agenda included a capital purchase change. MMH budgeted for a hi/low table to be purchased in 2010 and an ultrasound machine to be purchased in 2011. The table would be purchased for the sole purpose of patient comfort. Ayoub said they have someone who will begin providing ultrasound at MMH and it would make more sense to purchase the machine instead of the table.

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The price difference for each is minimal so the switch wouldn't affect the budget.

Committee reports given

Sheryl Farnsworth reported the community linkages committee met and things are moving in a good direction. She said those participating are picking up tasks and working together. A May 8 date was set for the Hispanic Health Fair to be held at the high school.

During his financial report, CFO Greg Was reported January was an overall good month and MMH did very well compared to the budget.

Activity within the clinic saw an increase in the number of patients throughout the month. Both Ayoub and Was reported compliance.

Director of Nursing Claudia Powell explained pressure ulcers and the importance of keeping track of them. Pressure ulcers are an indicator on the balanced scorecard for MMH and an issue the quality committee has been looking at.

Documenting each case is something the hospital is working hard at. Ayoub gave praise to those who have been working hard to make sure MMH is on top of each case. "This isn't new, we've always done this work and we have always given good care," he added. Getting the process and documentation caught up is the reason behind mentioning ulcers.

Erica Brady presented members with the balanced score card and reported things look very good. Overall patient satisfaction was at 99 percent and Brady said it is amazing they can keep those numbers. "It really says a lot about our staff and facility," she added.

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Administrator reports activity

Ayoub reported a good plan is in place with First Party Receivables. MMH sent out statements March 1 and First Party Receivables will resume with statements on March 25.

Ayoub participated in a CEO summit in Haxtun in January. Participants came from northeast Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas. He reported the hospital in Grant, Neb. has purchased the necessary equipment for digital mammography. Ayoub said MMH hasn't given up on the idea of offering the same service locally.

The administrator also said he attended the Colorado Rural Health Center Critical Access Hospital Advisory Council meeting, where information technology (IT) was talked about.

Ayoub reported IT is something MMH and surrounding hospitals are dealing with. He said he is proud of the work the lab and Deb Tatum at MMH have done. Integrating a new lab system with the NexGen system is something MMH is working with and Ayoub said they are looking for assistance. TSI out of Georgia is one possible candidate for IT assistance, according to Ayoub.

Once the NexGen system is in place and everything seems to be working, training will continue with a wider range of employees, Ayoub said.

Jessica Cumming was hired as an accountant, and Ayoub said she will be a good addition to CFO Was' finance team.

MMH participated in Highline Electric's health fair, and Ayoub said they had a nice turnout. He also mentioned the health fair for MMH will be held March 20.

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The day for the coumadin clinic presented by Judy Sudmeier, will be changed to Wednesdays, according to Ayoub.

Credentialing approvals were accepted for Cecilia Hirsch, MD (cardiology) a two-year appointment following her six-month provisional appointment; and two-year reappointments for Darrel Fenton, DO (orthopedics); James Hubbard, MD (radiology); Michael Kellam, MD (radiology); David McNaul, MD (radiology); James Beckmann, MD (cardiology); Cynthia Gryboski, MD (cardiology); Robert Kahn, MD (radiology); Thomas Lininger, MD (oncology); Gary Kliewer, CRNA (allied staff).

Thursday's meeting was the last for board member Ray Malleck who announced his resignation at the January meeting. The application deadline was Friday, Feb. 26 so board members decided to discuss election issues at the March meeting.

Ayoub also informed board members a 50th anniversary celebration is in the works for sometime in July. The district was formed July 1, 1960.

Other business

In other business Feb. 25, the hospital board:

—accepted administrator Ayoub's plan to pursue the hire of a lab manager.

—selected Gary Rahe as chair for the audit committee.

—noted the next board meeting will be Tuesday, March 23 at 5:30 p.m.

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