

# Rural Health Coordinating Council (RHCC)

July 21, 2011, 8699 SW Sun Place, Wilsonville, OR

**Members in attendance:** Bruce Carlson, Daniel Cutter, Trish Elliott, Wayne Endersby, Andrea Fletcher, Ted Molinari, Kathy Moon, Judy Ortiz, Charles Wardle

**Oregon Office of Rural Health (ORH) Staff:** Robert Duehmig, Scott Ekblad, Eric Jordan, Justin Valley

**Guests:** Amy Dunkak and Beryl Fletcher

Q = Question, A = Answer, C = Comment

## **Roll call, introductions**

Mr. Molinari began the meeting shortly after 10 AM. Introductions went around the room.

## **Approval of agenda**

*Motion to accept the agenda as written was moved and approved.*

## **Approval of minutes**

*Motion to accept the April 2011 minutes with corrections noted below was moved and approved:*

- In Dr. Carlson's report, "At that clinic, they are losing one physician..." should read, "At that clinic, they are losing one physician assistant..."
- In Ms. Fletcher's report, "The local public health director is looking for state funding.." should read, "The local public health director has secured..."

## **Old Business**

### **Apple A Day Grants**

Mr. Ekblad updated the Council on the closing of the fifth round of Apple A Day Volunteer EMT and First Responder Grants, as well as the upcoming sixth round, scheduled to begin in late July.

### **Dave Jones' Departure**

Mr. Ekblad made mention of Dave Jones' departure from the RHCC, his long term on the Council, and welcomed Judy Ortiz as his replacement representative of Oregon Society of Physician Assistants.

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## Legislative Update

Mr. Ekblad delivered a recap of the 2011 Oregon Legislative season, and how rural health issues fared. Noted were:

### **SB 608: Rural Malpractice Subsidy**

This program was fully funded for the biennium (2012-2013). Administration moves from SAIF to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

**Q:** Are dentists eligible for this program?

**A:** No, just MDs and NPs at this point.

### **HB 2400: Loan Repayment**

This program was not funded.

**Q:** What sort of an obligation of resources does this create without funding?

**A:** Very little. At this point, the scope of the program is authenticating the continuing eligibility of awardees and making sure their checks are cut in a timely fashion. These awardees were already in the program before the funding was cut, so the State is continuing to honor those awards.

### **HB 3580: Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Mobile Training Unit (MTU)**

Funding for two MTUs was budgeted using increases in medical marijuana cardholder fees.

**Q:** Did we have any sense that the MTU materials we took to the Governor's Office were effective?

**A:** I honestly do not know, but feel that we were indeed effective.

### **HB 2377, SB 239, & HB 3650: Alterations to reimbursements for Type A & B hospitals**

Most of these efforts were thwarted. These reimbursements will remain the same until 2014. At that time an actuarial analysis will be conducted to reconsider these reimbursements.

### **SB 224: PA Licensing Modernization**

De-links licensure from the practice agreement, allowing PAs to become licensed, and then find employment.

### **SB 738: Dental Therapist Pilot Projects**

This bill creates dental therapist pilot projects, expands the scope for LAP hygienists, changes their title to Expanded Practice Dental Hygienists, and creates community dental health worker pilot projects.

**C:** These newly credentialed hygienists will still need to have a collaborative agreement with a dentist.

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**Q:** A big topic last year was the State's removal of payment for dental care - was anything done to augment that, or are we still operating in this same manner?

**A:** We're still operating in that same manner.

## **HB 2397: Loan Forgiveness**

This new program was funded with \$525,000 to provide loans to students who are willing to commit to providing healthcare in rural communities.

**Q:** Does this bill include DOs?

**A:** Yes, as well as NPs, PAs and MDs.

## **ORH Staff Reports**

Mr. Ekblad provided an overview of some of the ORH staff recent activities. Among those were:

Jo Johnson, Recruitment Services Coordinator

- ED postings with contracted services supplying providers for ED coverage – this is something new and essential to those facilities requiring assistance.

Linda Pepler, Department Administrator

- TRICARE continuation didn't pass the legislature so the program will end 12/31/11. (Tax year 2011 is the final year of eligibility)
- Apple A Day grant cycle 5 application reimbursements have been mailed. Cycle 6 applications will go out shortly. To date, \$29,374 has been distributed to volunteer EMTs and First Responders.
- Federal State Loan Repayment Program – 4 practitioners are currently contracted and each has received the second of four scheduled loan repayments. Total loan repayment that will be distributed to those 4 practitioners \$250,000.

Robert Duehmig, Director of Communications

- Worked with the Medical Student Bike Across Oregon Project.

## **2011 Rural Health Clinic Report**

Mr. Valley provided a detailed presentation on the recently published 2011 Rural Health Clinic Report.

**Q:** What are the criteria for the term "Isolated Rural Health Facility?"

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**A:** They are the only provider of health care in that community and they are either public or non-profit.

**Q:** Are there any federal criteria for the term “rural?”

**A:** There are multiple federal definitions of “rural.” The definition used here is that the clinic cannot be within an urbanized area.

**Q:** What’s the difference between “Independent” and “Provider-based?”

**A:** “Provider-based” means the clinic is owned and operated by an entity, hospitals in these cases. “Independent” means the clinic is physician-owned.

**Q:** Do you have numbers on the percentage of people who make up the Medicare patients?

**A:** We do not have that number. Until clinics uniformly employ better practice management software, we will not have that data. As it currently stands, some clinics are able to collect that patient data, but not all.

**Q:** Regarding payments, “Private” refers to private insurance such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield, right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** What does “Other” refer to?

**A:** Payment arrangements as reported such as barter, being covered on car insurance, Indian Health, and the like.

**Q:** Is self-pay “Other?”

**A:** No.

## RHCC Member Reports

### Ted Molinari, Consumer

Debbie Boettner, PA-C is leaving the community. Recruitment efforts are underway with postings on multiple websites, including the OPCA site. The only currently viable candidate will be visiting July 24-26. Debbie’s farewell party is July 23, 4-7PM, at the Isobel Edwards Hall in Fossil.

Senator Merkley visited the clinic in Fossil on July 16. A federal earmark of \$198,000 funded 2/3 of the cost of the new dental addition to the main clinic in Fossil. The remaining third of the cost comes from clinic reserves and operating funds.

The grand opening of the Fossil Dental Clinic will be Saturday, September 24, 4-7PM at the Isobel Edwards Hall in Fossil. ADEC, a world-wide dental equipment manufacturer based in Newburg, OR, is donating almost \$10,000 worth of equipment. A retiring dentist in Longview,

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WA sold much of his equipment to Asher Clinic for \$11,500. Normally it takes about \$200,000 or more to furnish a dental operator.

Senator Wyden will visit Fossil Wednesday, August 17 for a community meeting and barbeque and will stop by the new dental clinic. He was instrumental in securing the earmarks that made its construction possible.

## **Chuck Wardle, OD, Oregon Optometric Association**

The City Administrator in Rainier, OR was recently fired.

The county is still divided over the lack of an operational health district. There are some in the community who want an audit of the board that presided over the previous work towards a health district, but the State Attorney General cannot investigate unless there is criminal intent, of which, in this case, there is none.

There might be a non-profit health foundation board that could take over health services for the county.

The county recently was awarded \$500,000, \$180,000 of which went to the high school clinic in Rainier for expanding its facilities to better serve the uninsured.

I recently read about a Bremerton, WA lady who stopped getting Social Security payments due to an erroneous insertion on the death list at Social Security Administration.

## **Judy Ortiz, PA-C, Oregon Society of Physician Assistants**

The PA school at Pacific University will be graduating a new class in August. There is a much higher percentage average from Pacific U. who are practicing in rural than that of the national average. We're beginning discussions on a rural track for the students to undertake.

**Q:** Will there be Pacific University students heading to the DO school in Lebanon?

**A:** I would imagine so. We've heard that a PA school may be opening there.

## **Andrea Fletcher, Consumer**

The VA is piloting a primary telehealth clinic in Morrow County. This is the first VA primary telehealth clinic in the region. It will be staffed with a nurse and with a practitioner dialing in from the Walla Walla VA. They should be offering services by the end of September.

I've been hearing whisperings regarding an Accountable Care Organization for eastern Oregon.

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The Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) of Morrow County has identified a need which is; providers need to communicate better with each other and the community. The CHIP has been having discussion on how to have this happen. One project discussed was updating a community resource guide. These discussions lead to the re-discovery of the 211 line project, so our CHIP is reaching out to the United Way to assist in updating the 211 line for that area.

## **Wayne Endersby, Oregon EMS Association**

Thanks to the RHCC and the ORH for the MTU work with the legislature!

Rose Howe is teaching an online EMT-I class. While this is allowing those with access to the Internet the ability to receive this license, one thing that might be of concern is the cost of becoming an EMT. The fees per person for Rose's class come to \$1,060. This is not out of the ordinary, and as we all know, most EMTs in rural Oregon are volunteers, so that is coming out of the pockets of the people volunteering.

C: That might be a great project for the RHCC's EMS Committee to consider helping you with.

## **Kathy Moon, NP, Oregon Nurses Association**

NP reimbursement parity is a big issue for the ONA. HB 3028 was a result of Psychiatric NPs receiving notice that their reimbursement rates were being cut 40-50%. Unfortunately, that bill failed, so those cuts remain intact.

We had a very interesting discussion with GOBHI recently. It seems apparent to me that GOBHI intends to be *the* CCO provider for Oregon.

We (Dunes Family Health Care) are looking at a number of different EHR packages.

## **Daniel Cutter, Consumer**

The hospital is reporting a decline in revenue. Redundant staff positions are being cut so the ER department is seeing more patient traffic. Additionally, even though the dialysis unit at the hospital is only a year old and use has been at capacity, they had to sell it off (or it might still be for sale) because it was not meeting a profitable business model.

The county is still not hiring any new public health staff. Fortunately, however, another round of lay-offs has not been initiated.

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## **Trish Elliot, Conference of Local Health Officials**

State public health is looking at changing the home visit models. They've been really great at providing services in the home, but really poor at collecting data or looking at outcomes. So now they are looking at evidence-based home-health models and at public health's role in CCOs.

Locally we are working with a group of physicians who are working towards CCOs. One of those providers is applying for a grant to fund a patient navigator position and a researcher/analyst to look at helping the uninsured. Both of those positions would be placed in the public health office.

Most programs are flat-funded state-wide. The CDC is making massive cuts which will impact public health at the state level for programs that assist HIV patients, immunizations, TB programs, and child and family planning.

The local FQHC is looking at the Medical Home Model. They are also changing their EHR to Epic to be portable with Providence.

Hood River County is looking at an infant delivery program for undocumented workers.

## **Bruce Carlson, Oregon Medical Association**

Attended a meeting in Hood River put on by GOBHI in June. This was a primary care/mental health care follow-up meeting.

The Oregonian recently ran an editorial on insurance coverage, opining better health status outcomes for those with insurance over those without.

In Pendleton:

- We received a letter from FamilyCare stating that they are petitioning to move to a PCO model effective Oct 1.
- We are down to one orthopedic surgeon. The hospital there is actively recruiting for another one to replace the one they lost in June.

In Hermiston:

- There is an OB/GYN shortage, we're down to one.
- I recently became aware of a pain medicine doctor in Hood River who is doing telemedicine. This information comes from a patient I referred to him. This is a big plus, since we do not have anyone in our community doing pain medicine.

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In Condon:

- We signed a contract with Centricity for our EMR.
- Our two new PAs there are attending X-Ray classes.

In Christmas Valley:

- We got fiber optic installed; the clinic is now in the process of setting up telemedicine.
- We'll be part of a national telehealth demonstration project.
- Our NP is now in a rural doctoral program.

## **New Business**

Mr. Jordan will distribute a fresh roster of all of the RHCC members.

## **Adjourn**