Quality Improvement Act Approved

**Bill awaits Governor Walker's signature after swift action by Legislature**

In the short span of just over two weeks, the Quality Improvement Act (QIA), introduced as part of Governor Walker’s tort reform package—the first legislative proposal to come from the new administration—quickly received legislative approval and now awaits the Governor’s signature.

WHA first championed the QIA, which will update Wisconsin’s antiquated peer review statutes, in the 2005-06 legislative session. That bill passed both houses of the Legislature with strong bipartisan support but was vetoed by then-Governor Doyle. Introduced again in the 2007-2008 legislative session, the QIA again passed the Assembly with a strong bipartisan vote. Since then, the broad coalition of health care providers, patient safety advocates, and purchasers supporting the proposal has grown.

After hearing that the bill had passed, WHA and Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality Chief Quality Officer Kelly Court said, “Our hospitals and health systems lead the country in their quality improvement efforts, but they have been asking for more tools. The QIA will encourage a greater level of collaborative learning and sharing among providers. I am confident that that collaboration will drive health care improvement.”

Approved last week by the Senate Judiciary, Utilities, Commerce, and Government Operations Committee, Special Session Senate Bill 1 (SS SB 1) passed the Assembly Judiciary and Ethics Committee on January 18.

Representatives voting in favor of the bill in committee were Committee Chair Jim Ott (R-Mequon), Samantha Kerkman (R-Powers Lake), Steve Kestell (R-Elkhart Lake), Tom Larson (R-Colfax) and Andre Jacque (R-Bellevue). Voting no were Tony Staskunas (D-West Allis) and David Cullen (D-Milwaukee). SS SB 1 was taken up later in the day on Tuesday by the Senate where it passed on a party-line 19-14 vote. A roll call of the Senate vote can be found at [http://legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/data/votes/sv0022.pdf](http://legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/data/votes/sv0022.pdf).

The QIA cleared its final legislative hurdle January 20 when SS SB 1 was concurred in by the Assembly on a party line 57-36 vote. A roll call of the Assembly vote can be found at: [http://legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/data/votes/av0038.pdf](http://legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/data/votes/av0038.pdf). (continued on page 4)

CDC Requires New NHSN Consent Form

PPS hospitals are required to report central line-associated bloodstream infections to CDC beginning January 1, 2011 to be in compliance with the CMS Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting Program. Hospitals enrolled in and previously submitting information to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Health Safety Network (NHSN) must sign a new consent form by February 28. The new form gives the CDC permission to share the hospital’s data on central line-associated bloodstream infections with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for the Medicare pay-for-reporting program. NHSN users with administrative rights will receive an alert containing a link to the revised consent form when they log into the network. The form should be signed by the appropriate hospital official and primary contacts for each of the facility’s active NHSN components. Each hospital should fax one signed consent form to the NHSN administrator at 404-929-0131. Hospitals that have enrolled in NHSN since December do not need to submit the revised consent form. Questions or concerns may be e-mailed to nhsn@cdc.gov.
Rep. Vos, Sen. Wanggaard Jointly Shadow Wheaton All Saints’ CEO Ken Buser

When Ken Buser, President/CEO at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-All Saints, saw that the November elections would result in Racine County having a new State Senator in Van Wanggaard and an area Representative, Robin Vos, serving as the Co-Chair of the State Legislature’s powerful budget-writing committee, he immediately decided to invite both to his hospital for a “shadow day” opportunity.

The event took place on January 10 and is one in a series of similar legislator-hospital CEO shadow days being held across the state. The shadow day initiative was launched by WHA in 2010.

“Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-All Saints was pleased to host Rep. Robin Vos and Sen. Van Wanggaard for a conversation to learn more about the services and programs of All Saints and some of the issues facing our patients, families and providers,” said Buser. “We appreciated their interest in local health care and funding and look forward to continued discussion and support.”

During the time they spent at All Saints, Buser was able to show both legislators the complexity of running a hospital as well as provide them with a hands-on look at several hospital service areas, including women & childrens, emergency care, mental health and family medicine. Even after hours at the hospital, the shadow day could only provide a snapshot of what happens in the hospital’s 24-hour world of care delivery.

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<th>All Saints Shadow Day Schedule: Sen. Wanggaard, Rep. Vos</th>
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The Wisconsin Hospital Association thanked Governor Scott Walker and praised the Wisconsin Legislature for supporting and passing a bill that will ultimately improve the quality and value of health care in the Badger State.

The Health Care Quality Improvement Act (QIA), which was one of the provisions in the Governor’s special session tort reform package, will enable Wisconsin hospitals and health systems to be at the forefront of the patient safety and quality improvement movement, leading to better outcomes for patients and better health care value for employers and employees.

Wisconsin is nationally-recognized for the high quality and value of its health care. But, even as one of the top-ranked states in the country, we continue to vigorously engage care providers at all levels in patient safety and quality improvement activities. The passage of this important piece of legislation will provide our health care providers the opportunity to advance and expand their improvement efforts well beyond what is now considered best practice.

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**Participate in the 2011 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program**

*Don’t miss an opportunity to recognize your health care workforce*

Since 2002, the Wisconsin Hospital Association has sponsored the Health Care Employee Pride Program to recognize the dedication of Wisconsin’s health care workforce. The program encourages WHA member hospitals to invite their employees to express themselves in an essay and tell others why they chose a health occupation. The Pride Program gives employees the opportunity to share why they love their career of service to others, while giving the Association an opportunity to honor their contributions to their hospital, community and profession.

A designated leader from administration, human resources, public relations or patient care from WHA member hospitals is asked to coordinate the program. Employees are encouraged to submit to the hospital a one-page essay, poem or story that explains why they chose to work in health care. From those essays, a committee at the hospital will pick one employee to represent their hospital and forward that person’s essay to WHA. WHA will send the hospital representative a certificate and pin to present to their honoree in May, and will also post the essays on the WHA Web site at that time. Like last year, WHA will not be hosting a banquet for all honorees.

Pride Program materials are available on WHA’s Web site at [www.wha.org/workforce/pride_2011.aspx](http://www.wha.org/workforce/pride_2011.aspx). Don’t miss this opportunity to participate in the 2011 Pride Program. For more information contact Shannon Nelson at snelson@wha.org or Mary Kay Grasmick at mgrasmick@wha.org, or call 608-274-1820.

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**Memorial Service Set for Warren Von Ehren**

A memorial service celebrating Warren’s life will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, February 21, 2011, in Resurrection Chapel at Oakwood Village West, 6205 Mineral Point Road, Madison. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial contributions may be made to the Warren R. and Mary L. Von Ehren Memorial Scholarship, c/o Bellin College of Nursing, 3201 Eaton Road, Green Bay, WI 54311 or Cress Funeral and Cremation Service, 3610 Speedway Road, Madison, WI 53705.
Rep. Marklein Takes Oath of Office at Sauk Prairie

Rep. Howard Marklein took his oath of office on January 14, during an evening ceremony at Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital & Clinics in Prairie du Sac.

Joining Rep. Marklein at the hospital for the ceremony were 100 individuals from the community.

Member News: Taylor Named President/CEO of Columbia St. Mary’s; Brideau Assumes New Role at Ascension

Ascension Health and Columbia St. Mary’s Health System announced January 17 that Mark Taylor, FACHE, has been named president and CEO of Columbia St. Mary’s Health System in Milwaukee. Taylor assumes the role currently held by Leo P. Brideau, FACHE, who has accepted a senior executive position with Ascension Health. Taylor will assume his new responsibilities on February 15, 2011.

Taylor comes to Columbia St. Mary’s Health System from Genesys Health System in Grand Blanc, Michigan, where he served as president and CEO since March of 2007. Genesys Health System is also a member of Ascension Health. In addition to his service at Genesys Health System, Taylor brings more than 35 years of health care leadership experience to Columbia St. Mary’s Health System, including serving as president and CEO at St. John Hospital and Medical Center in Detroit, a hospital in the St. John Providence Health System, which is also a member of Ascension Health.

Brideau has accepted a newly-created senior executive position with Ascension Health. More details about his new position will be announced in the near future. Brideau has served as president and CEO of Columbia St. Mary’s Health System since August of 2001. He has served as Ascension Health’s Wisconsin/Missouri Ministry Market Leader since October 2007. During his tenure as President and CEO of Columbia St. Mary’s Health System, Brideau stabilized the system’s finances and successfully brought together two hospital campuses into one new, state-of-the-art facility.

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Several amendments were introduced in both the Senate and Assembly that would have weakened the proposal, but all were defeated.

Special recognition goes to Senators Rich Zipperer (R-Pewaukee) and Pam Galloway (R-Wausau) and Representatives Ott, Kerkman, and Erik Severson (R-Star Prairie) for their leadership on this important legislation.

Governor Walker is expected to sign SS SB 1 soon.
“Getting back on his feet”
At age 58, John Baumann was in dire straits. His job had been eliminated and his salary cut in half. Faced with the possibility of losing his home because of his reduced income, he also found himself staring at nearly $40,000 in medical bills after having the hip replacement surgery that would allow him to continue working.

“I was in a very dim financial situation,” John said. “I had no idea how I was going to pay the hospital bills.”

With the help of financial counselors at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – Elmbrook Memorial, John applied for Community Care and had 100 percent of his care covered. The Community Care program, which provides free or discounted care to those in need, is a lifesaver for many. It helped John get back on his feet.

“I can’t tell you what the Community Care means to me,” he said. “It came along at the right time in my life.”

In 2009, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare in Southeast Wisconsin provided approximately $21.6 million in free or discounted health services to those who cannot afford to pay and who meet all criteria for financial assistance. Charity care is based on actual costs, not charges, and does not include bad debt.

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – Elmbrook Memorial Hospital, Brookfield

Sacred Heart Hospital provides quality care and compassion for all those in need:
Shannon’s Story
Sacred Heart Hospital provides millions of dollars of support to those in need throughout western Wisconsin. As a result of this commitment, thousands of individuals benefit from the community services offered by the hospital. Last year, Sacred Heart Hospital provided $10.4 million of non-billed Community Care services to aid uninsured and underinsured patients facing financial strain. Sacred Heart’s Community Care Program directly reflects upon our Mission to provide health care to all people, regardless of their ability to pay. Through this program, patients may be eligible to have their hospital bills partially or completely forgiven.

“We are pleased to notify you that you qualify for our Community Care Program and a 100 percent reduction of your account balance.” To Shannon Paulson, these were the words of hope at a time of despair. Once an employee of Sacred Heart Hospital, she knew of the care and compassion the hospital provides to all its patients. In Shannon’s case, financial help was a blessing in more ways than one, as her mother and father were also once recipients of the Community Care Program after her father suffered a massive heart attack several years ago. In recollection of that trying time, she knew her prayers of support had once again been answered these many years later.

In addition to Shannon’s illness, which made it difficult for her to work outside her home, her father had gone blind and underwent brain aneurism surgery; so she moved back with her parents so they could care for one another. Many times Shannon had sought help from the state, and became frustrated with the same unmet needs.
Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

answers and wondered if there was any way she was going to get help. She said, “If Sacred Heart Hospital and Community Care were not an option, I really don’t know what I would have done.”

With receiving Community Care for both her mother and recently deceased father, Shannon appreciates the support and has not taken it for granted. She wrote a letter to Sacred Heart Hospital thanking the entire hospital staff for the care and financial help that had been allocated to her and her family. “Community Care helped me financially and allowed me the opportunity to be here to help my parents - that I appreciate more than words,” she added.

Father Lawrence Dunklee, Director of Sacred Heart Hospital’s Center for Spiritual Care, says, “The Sisters who founded our hospital did so not for economic opportunity, but to address the community’s health needs. People have a fundamental human right to health care. Nobody who comes to our door is ever going to be turned away or denied necessary health care services and medical treatment.” As these words illustrate, Shannon and her family came to realize that the Core Values Sacred Heart was founded upon still exist today in the hospital’s whole person healing tradition.

Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire

Community Care relieves stress and worries
Last September, Michael found himself in a situation he could never imagine happening. As an auctioneer retiring at 62, Michael thought he was healthy enough to go a few years without having health insurance, but that all changed the Wednesday that Michael woke up with severe chest pains. After seeking immediate help, it was determined that Michael suffered a heart attack and needed more extensive care. He was immediately transferred to Meriter Hospital in Madison where he received three stents. After three days, Michael was discharged to return home.

“I can’t say enough about Meriter and the care I received,” he states. “The nurses were excellent; they were always watching and checking up on me. I couldn’t suggest anything better; I would choose to go back to Meriter Hospital again.”

Although Michael had a great experience at Meriter Hospital, there was only one thing that he couldn’t get off of his mind: the medical bills. Michael worried for days and put him under considerable stress, which his heart did not need.

Then his worries came to an end when he received assistance from the Community Care Program. “We thought something bad was going to happen. We thought that we would lose our house, cars, and everything we had. So receiving help from the Community Care Program was a major relief.”

Without the Community Care Program, Michael believes he would not have been able to recover from his procedure as quickly.

“The Community Care Program not only helped financially, it also helped medically. I was able to recover faster and healthier without the stress of the medical debt. I am feeling a lot better and I am very happy this program was there for me,” Michael said.

Meriter Hospital, Madison

Submit community benefit stories to Mary Kay Grasmick, editor, at mgrasmick@wha.org.

Read more about hospitals connecting with their communities at www.WiServePoint.org.