Former Gov. Tommy Thompson Joins WHA in Latest Public Education Effort

Former Wisconsin Governor and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson has joined WHA in its campaign reminding the public that Wisconsin’s hospitals and clinics remain safe, clean and ready to help people get the important regular care and services they need. He is also encouraging the public to continue taking proper precautions to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

“I am proud of how the people of Wisconsin have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic,” Gov. Thompson says in the 30-second public service announcement (PSA), which will be aired by television stations around the state. “Now we need to keep up the good work! Social distancing is still important; wash your hands – and don’t put off getting necessary medical care,” Gov. Thompson says.

The PSA was produced by WHA and can be viewed here.

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Temporary Waivers for Expedited CNA Employment and Training Options Available

CMS blanket 1135 waivers and Governor Tony Evers’ Emergency Order 21 provided state and federal regulations allowing the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) Division of Quality Assurance to develop several training options to respond to the unprecedented need for additional certified nurse aides (CNAs) to join the workforce during the COVID-19 crisis.

As of May 11, the public health emergency order expired and Emergency Order 21 is no longer in effect. The unprecedented need for caregivers did not end on May 11, however, and DHS is actively working through the emergency rulemaking process to extend expedited training and employment options. Pending the publication of the Emergency Rule, DHS has established a waiver request process to allow entities and facilities to continue to hire and train caregivers through the Emergency Nurse Aide Training Program. Until the emergency rule is promulgated, both approved and temporary Emergency Nurse Aide Training Programs may request a waiver to allow for the continuation of training and hiring nurse aides to work in facilities. DHS continues to accept applications for new Emergency Nurse Aide Training Programs; new

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programs also have to apply for a waiver.

To request a waiver:
- Email the Nurse Aide Training and Testing Program
- Include the name of the facility and a request for a waiver of “all applicable regulations to allow for the continuation of the Emergency Nurse Aide Training Program.” It is not necessary to include specific regulatory references in your request.

DHS can accept students via the online survey who were hired and started training while the emergency order was in effect. Therefore, currently approved Emergency Nurse Aide Training Programs may continue to train students who began their training on or before May 18, 2020, without a waiver; current programs will have to apply for a waiver to train students new to the program after May 18, 2020. Temporary nurse aides who have completed an Emergency Nurse Aide Training Program may also continue to work at this time.

WHA will monitor for publication of the Emergency Rule and provide notice when the rule is in effect and individual waiver requests are no longer necessary.

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**The Joint Commission to Resume Surveys and Reviews in June**

The Joint Commission recently announced that the organization will resume survey activities in June. In their announcement released May 27, The Joint Commission outlines how they will prioritize hospitals and their expectations for staffing, technology and PPE supplies for survey activities.

While Wisconsin’s Division of Quality Assurance has maintained their complaint investigations, a plan to resume federal and state surveys has not been announced. For more information about The Joint Commission survey plan, visit their website.

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**Register Now for Quality Residency Program**

WHA and the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC) are excited to offer guest registration for the Wisconsin Quality Residency Program. The modules, focused on quality improvement concepts and essentials, are designed for new or novice quality leaders as well as experienced leaders looking for a “refresher” in a specific topic area. Each module requires completion of pre-work related to the module topic, which is announced well ahead of time. Active participation is also highly encouraged, and you can now register for individual modules on topics of special interest to you.

You can review the module schedule and register for one or multiple modules using the link provided in the document. Space is limited and registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information, contact WHA Clinical Quality Improvement Advisor Jill Lindwall.

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**Member Quality Spotlight: Stroke Quality Improvement**

Special Note: Many WHA members proud of their quality improvement efforts had prepared special poster presentations that were to be displayed in the Capitol Rotunda during WHA’s Advocacy Day 2020, which was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. WHA is pleased to highlight these efforts in today’s and future editions of The Valued Voice.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has funded stroke quality improvement (QI) initiatives since 2001, providing competitive grants to state health departments to support the development of stroke systems of care. This funding is called the Paul Coverdell National Acute Stroke Prevention Program, named after Georgia Senator Paul Coverdell, who suffered and died of a stroke while serving in Congress.

In 2012, Wisconsin was selected to receive funding for three years, and selected again in 2015 for an additional six years. The focus is to demonstrate improvement across stroke systems of care – from emergency medical services (EMS) response to inpatient care, secondary prevention, and post-stroke rehabilitation. The program works with EMS, hospitals and health systems to link and monitor patient-level data across the continuum of care.

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“WHA has been a founding partner of the Wisconsin Stroke Coalition, whose goal is to improve stroke care and recovery for every citizen of Wisconsin,” WHA Chief Quality Officer Beth Dibbert said. “The CDC’s Coverdell Program funding has allowed stakeholders from clinical, regulatory, advocacy and patient groups to share and promote best-practice care in communities, hospitals and post-acute settings. WHA thanks the Wisconsin Department of Health Services for dedicating resources to this poster presentation that shows results we can all be proud of.”

The Wisconsin Coverdell Stroke Program (WI Coverdell) facilitates the Coverdell Learning Collaborative (CLC) which meets quarterly and is comprised of stroke coordinators from participating WI Coverdell hospitals. The meeting provides WI Coverdell hospitals the opportunity to network with fellow stroke coordinators, ask questions and share best practices. The meeting consists of updating members on stroke systems of care development, recruitment, outreach and QI initiatives.

The CLC began reviewing blinded data from the Get With The Guidelines® stroke registry in Q4 2015 to identify areas where stroke care could be improved. It noted a decrease in the EMS pre-notification measure in Q3 2016. CLC began in-depth discussions and review of the possible issues causing this decrease such as: what are the barriers in successfully capturing the EMS pre-arrival report in the emergency department as well as ease of finding and abstracting the needed information from the electronic health record.

Further data analysis found that implemented actions were successful. Not only did EMS pre-notification raise, but the median “door-to-needle” time for those arriving by EMS decreased and stroke treatment with thrombolytics and/or thrombectomy increased.

WHA’s Borgerding Named to Historical Society Board of Curators

WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding has been named to the Wisconsin Historical Society’s Board of Curators for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2020. The current Board unanimously approved his appointment earlier this month.

“Eric’s passion for history and the Wisconsin Historical Society along with his proven leadership will be a great addition to our board,” said Christian Overland, the Ruth and Hartley Barker Director and CEO for the Society. “He will bring years of experience in key areas such as working with large and complex organizations, government relations, advocacy and strategic planning.”

The Society was established in 1846 and serves as the State of Wisconsin’s archives. It features a world-class library, 12 museums and historic sites and 13 area research centers around the state. The Board of Curators includes eight statutory appointments and up to 30 curators who are selected according to the Society’s constitution and bylaws.

“It’s a personal and professional honor to be appointed to this Board, especially as WHA celebrates its 100th anniversary,” Borgerding said. “Health care is a strong part of the fabric and history of our great state, and helping the Society with their work preserving and sharing Wisconsin’s history is fitting for WHA. This is also a tremendous personal honor for me, being a life-long and very proud resident of Wisconsin and lover of its rich history. I look forward to supporting the Society and the important work they do.”
Who was Warren R. Von Ehren?

(Borrowed from an interview for the WHA newsletter when Warren R. Von Ehren retired in 1986)

Mix youthful enthusiasm with passion, perspective and the presence to accept advice, and you have Warren's philosophy on life. How did he acquire it?

His career in hospital administration began in the United States Army, whose ranks he joined shortly after earning a Bachelor of Science degree at Northwestern University in 1942.

“I had been a graduate student at the University of Illinois-Urbana, planning on earning my doctorate in biology and going into teaching and research,” he explained. With experience in biology, joining the 13th General Hospital and doing lab work seemed a natural thing.

After that, he was selected to attend Officer Candidate School at Camp Barkley, Texas. He graduated from OCS in June 1943, was commissioned second lieutenant and was assigned to the 98th General Hospital in Fort Jackson, SC. Thereafter, he spent 22 months in England, France and Germany.

“The Army introduced me to the whole idea of hospitals and health care,” he commented. “It changed my whole direction.”

While in the Army he met Mary, an Army nurse, who would become his wife of 60 years. They had two children together, Penny and Daniel.

Upon returning to the states, Von Ehren acquired an appointment to teach freshman biology at Northwestern University in September 1946. That summer, he began his first job with the Veterans Administration Hospital in Hines, IL. And there he met his first mentor, Dr. Edward Leveroos, a flight surgeon from Superior, and the hospital's medical director.

“We became very good friends,” said Von Ehren. “He’s the first person who really asked me, ‘What are you going to do with your life?’ I told him I wanted to earn my doctorate and then teach. He advised me, instead, to stay in the hospital field, since it was the up-and-coming thing. But I had to make my own decision.”

As a result, Von Ehren left the VA hospital, taught biology for the semester, and quickly decided that teaching wasn’t his calling. Hospital administration held a greater interest, so he enrolled full-time at Northwestern in the master’s program.

While at Northwestern, he also worked for the American Hospital Association in Chicago. After graduation, he served as assistant administrator at Bronson Methodist in Kalamazoo, MI, from 1949 to 1951. His boss, William Perdew, was a Methodist minister, who served as the hospital’s administrator.

“Perdew had no business background, but he was superb. He knew how to handle people, to get them to work together, to realize their full potential as human beings. He was my first true example of what a hospital administrator should be.”

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Von Ehren had great admiration for Perdew, who, though a perfectionist, wasn’t the kind of person to look over one’s shoulder.

“He made suggestions but left it up to the individual to work it out. He always followed up and pointed out what you had done wrong, but never vindictively. He was critical but in a constructive way.”

In 1951, Von Ehren became administrative assistant for the AMA’s Council on Medical Education and Hospitals. He worked there until 1953 when he moved to Green Bay, where he was Bellin Memorial Hospital’s administrator for seven years.

“It was the first time I was really on my own. Now that I think about it, it was presumptuous to think I could run a hospital at age 32.”

When he arrived at Bellin, the budget was $500,000 to $600,000 annually; when he left in 1960, it was in the millions.

“At Bellin, I learned that the ‘Buck Stops Here.’ The real art of administration, I found, is getting people to work together. You must select the right people and allow them to work on their own – within the parameters you set. You must give them the freedom to make their own mistakes, but to learn from them as well.”

During his tenure at Bellin, a building program added 75 beds and provided new ancillary services. In 1955, under his leadership, a three-year diploma school of nursing was established.

“I was too young to really stop and reflect on the responsibility,” recalled Von Ehren. “If I had, I might have gotten cold feet. I had that youthful enthusiasm – which is great, and there ought to be more of it; I really plunged ahead.”

In 1960 Von Ehren took over leadership at WHA as Executive Director where he remained for the next 26 years.

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“It’s so important that people don’t delay necessary care, and appreciate former Governor Thompson sharing that message” WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding said. “His love for Wisconsin and extensive knowledge of health care makes him a trusted spokesperson to help spread the message about Wisconsin’s safe, clean and available hospitals and clinics. These are messages WHA will continue to share as we move into the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The television-oriented PSA featuring Gov. Thompson’s part in the public awareness campaign builds upon previous WHA efforts, including partnering with the Wisconsin Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians (WACEP) on two radio-focused PSAs, also distributed statewide. WHA has also regularly used various social media platforms to support the message of patient health and hospital availability.

Contact WHA Vice President of Communications Mark Grapentine for more information.

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