



November 19, 2020

IN THIS ISSUE

WHA to State Leaders: “Your joint leadership is critical to improve this situation.” 1

Op-Ed by State Physicians on COVID-19 Safety Precautions Published Statewide 1

An open letter to the American people 3

DHS Offers Online COVID-19 Vaccine Information and Resources 4

WHA 100th Anniversary Values Award Presented to Aurora Sinai 4

Lietz Joins WHA as Vice President, Communications..... 5

HSHS Sacred Heart & HSHS St. Joseph’s Trustee Honored with WHA Award .. 5

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS: Thoughts from Steve Brenton, WHA President 2002-2014 6

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

Starting December 7, 2020
 Chargemaster Coding Updates and Implementation for 2021
 Self-study modules

December 15, 2020
 The Pursuit of Happiness:
 Methods vs. Mythology
 Webinar

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 for more educational
 opportunities

WHA to State Leaders: “Your joint leadership is critical to improve this situation.”

Evers, Vos discuss plans to address COVID-19, signal potential legislative action in weeks ahead

In a [letter sent to the Governor and legislative leaders](#) on November 19, WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding called for specific actions from our state-elected officials to support hospitals and our state’s health care workforce as rampant community spread has unfortunately cast Wisconsin into the national spotlight with new cases overwhelming hospital capacity and straining our health care workforce.

“We know that all elected officials want to make Wisconsin a better place, “ Borgerding said in the letter. “While our policymakers may disagree on how to accomplish this, we believe you all share the same motivation and intention to preserve and improve the quality of life we enjoy in Wisconsin.”

Providing Wisconsin’s latest COVID-19 statistics showing exponential growth in cases, hospitalizations and deaths throughout the state, Borgerding wrote, “With few tools available right now to curb spread other than increasingly urgent public appeals, our COVID numbers are growing rapidly and predict, quite accurately so far, a health care crisis in Wisconsin that without significant, swift, and unified action will become a catastrophe,” wrote Borgerding. “This is hard to fathom for many across the state, but for those fighting this ever-growing battle in our hospitals, the data simply illustrate the human tragedy playing out in front of them every day.”

(continued on page 7)

Op-Ed by State Physicians on COVID-19 Safety Precautions Published Statewide

The following op-ed coordinated by WHA and signed by dozens of state physician leaders is now live on the digital sites of the Gannet’s Wisconsin newspapers. It will appear in print editions of the newspaper group’s papers on Sunday.

You can access an electronic version of this letter [here](#).

Thank you to everyone who helped formulate and distribute this important message. We encourage you to share this with your staff and stakeholders.

Wisconsin Hospital and Health System Physician Leaders Issue Joint COVID-19 Safety Message

The following important COVID-19 safety message is made on behalf of Chief Medical Officers of Wisconsin Health Systems and Hospitals.

Wisconsin patients and families trust their physicians to diagnose and treat illnesses. Now, as COVID-19 spreads uncontrollably throughout Wisconsin, we are asking you to heed our advice again by taking this disease very seriously and adopting simple precautions to stop its spread in your community.

(continued on page 2)

(Op-Ed by State Physicians on COVID-19 Safety Precautions Published Statewide . . . continued from page 1)

As COVID-19 infections rise at alarming rates in Wisconsin, so too are its damaging effects on our local businesses, our healthcare systems and thousands of our friends, neighbors and loved ones. COVID-19 is an insidious disease that can easily sicken friends and family by a single carrier showing no symptoms. It is now rapidly spreading throughout all Wisconsin communities, urban and rural.

While COVID leaves many unscathed, it has also left thousands of others isolated and seriously ill. It has now taken the lives of more than 2,700 people in Wisconsin – grandparents, parents, sons, daughters, and many others. While most read about COVID-19 in the newspaper or see it on TV, more are coming to know its pain and devastation first-hand. As Wisconsin physician leaders, we see the growing toll this disease is taking on our health care system, straining hospital capacity and stressing our nurses, doctors and others – those “health care heroes” we are all grateful for, but who now need your help to stem the surge of COVID-19 patients in our hospitals and clinics.

For a disease with such serious and harmful consequences, there are simple things we can all do to turn this around.

- Keep a distance of six feet or greater from people outside your household.
- Wear a mask when outside your home and around other people.
- Avoid gatherings, especially where physical distancing and masking are not strictly practiced.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Get your seasonal flu shot as soon as possible.

At Wisconsin’s hospitals and health systems, we are doing all we can to treat those who do get sick. However, we can’t prevent you, your family and friends from getting sick and needing medical care. That’s up to each of us individually and all of us collectively. Together, with simple, temporary steps, we can get this dangerous virus under control and get back to normal.

Mark Kaufman, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Wisconsin Hospital Association

Esteban Miller, MD
Hospitalist/Chief Medical Officer
Black River Memorial Hospital, Inc.

William Melms, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Marshfield Clinic Health System

Gary Stuck, DO, FAAFP
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Ryan Andrews, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Aspirus Wausau Hospital

Robyn Borge, MD
Chief of Medical/Clinical Staff
Gundersen Health System

Robert Gouthro, MD
Chief Medical Officer
North Central Health Care

Brian Johnson, MD, FACP
Chief Medical Officer
Aurora BayCare Medical Center

Andrew Dorwart, MD
Senior Medical Director
HealthPartners St. Croix Valley Hospitals

Rene B. Milner, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Osceola Medical Center

Cynthia Lasecki, MD, FAAFP
Chief Medical Officer
Bellin Health System

Edgar (Ted) K. Collison, MD
Chief Physician Executive
Hospital Sisters Health System -
Wisconsin Division

Elizabeth Baker, DPM
Chief Medical Officer
Reedsburg Area Medical Center

Roger Kapoor, MD
Senior Vice President and CMO
Beloit Health System

(continued on page 3)

Christine Richards, MD
Chief of Staff
Richland Hospital

Aaron Schwaab, MD, FACS
General Surgeon and Chief Medical
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Stoughton Health

Aimee Becker, MD, MBA
Chief Medical Officer
UW Health

Jerry Halverson, MD, FACPpsych, DFAPA
Chief Medical Officer
Rogers Behavioral Health

Jennifer Frank, MD, FAAFP
VP and CMO, Clinical Integrated Network
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Jeffrey Lawrence, MD
Orthopaedic Surgeon/Chief of Staff
Vernon Memorial Healthcare

Mark Van Etten, MD
Medical Director
Spooner Health

Pam Wetzel, MD, MBA
Chief Medical Officer
UnityPoint Health Meriter

Mark Thompson, MD
President - SSM Health Wisconsin
Medical Groups
SSM Health

Charles Pearce, MD
Vice President of Medical Affairs
Upland Hills Health, Inc.



November 19, 2020

An open letter to the American people:

With Thanksgiving and the holiday season fast approaching and a deadly COVID-19 pandemic surging, we – the physicians, nurses, hospital and health system leaders and public health professionals on the front lines of this pandemic – strongly urge everyone throughout our country to celebrate responsibly, in a scaled-back fashion that limits the virus's spread, to help reduce the risk of infecting friends, family and others you love.

Throughout the pandemic, COVID-19 spread has followed a similar pattern around holidays and mass gatherings. Positive cases spiked after Memorial Day, after the Fourth of July, after Labor Day, and now – two weeks after Halloween. The record-shattering surge underway is resulting in uncontrolled community spread and infection that has already overburdened health systems in some areas and will ultimately consume capacity of our health care system and may reduce the availability of care in many places in our country.

In the strongest possible terms, we urge you to celebrate responsibly. We are all weary and empathize with the desire to celebrate the holidays with family and friends, but given the serious risks, we underscore how important it is to wear masks, maintain physical distancing and wash your hands. Following these science-based, commonsense measures is the best way to prevent our health care systems and dedicated health care professionals from being overwhelmed by critically ill patients. We must protect the doctors, nurses and other caregivers who have tirelessly battled this virus for months. You can do your part to ensure they can continue to care for you and your loved ones.

We will get through this pandemic, but the only way out is to follow the science and adhere to the public health steps we know work.

In health,

American Hospital Association
American Medical Association
American Nurses Association

DHS Offers Online COVID-19 Vaccine Information and Resources

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) COVID-19 immunization leaders have created resources for providers and consumers with information on the state's expected shipment of COVID-19 vaccines from the federal government. This week, DHS officials reminded hospitals and health systems that plan to vaccinate health care workers in Phase 1a of the program to enroll through the [DHS vaccinator website](#). **The deadline to enroll is Nov. 25.**

In addition to critical information about the vaccine campaign, the site includes a link to weekly update webinars each Tuesday from 9 - 9:30 a.m. The webinars are hosted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and DHS officials to provide up-to-date information about vaccine storage and administration plans, and answer questions from providers. Additionally, DHS has set up a [vaccination information website](#) specifically directed to consumers.

WHA attends each weekly call and is ready to assist members with any questions or concerns. For more information, contact WHA Chief Quality Officer [Beth Dibbert](#).

WHA 100th Anniversary Values Award Presented to Aurora Sinai

The WHA 100th Anniversary Values Award was presented to Aurora Sinai Medical Center Nov. 18. Accepting the award from Advocate Aurora Health were:

- Jim Skogsbergh, President and CEO, Advocate Aurora Health
- Bill Santulli, Chief Operating Officer, Advocate Aurora Health
- Dennis Potts, Executive Vice President Operations, Wisconsin Region, Advocate Aurora Health
- Jeff Bahr, MD, Chief Aurora Medical Group Officer, Advocate Aurora Health
- Dan Meyer, President, Aurora BayCare Medical Center
- Carrie Killoran, President, Greater Milwaukee Patient Service Area and Aurora Sinai Medical Center



WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding highlighted Aurora Sinai's NAVIGATE program during the presentation. Borgerding said, "I've worked closely with Aurora Sinai for nearly 20 years now, it is truly one of the Milwaukee's true gems and greatest community assets. Your NAVIGATE program allows the hospital to develop staff from within and provides paths and ladders for team members to improve and succeed."

Borgerding went on to say, "NAVIGATE is a program I have pointed to many times, and it is a great example of how hospitals and health systems in Wisconsin maintain and expand those broad commitments to their teams and communities, and just one of the reasons I am so pleased to be with you today to present Aurora Sinai with this so well-deserved WHA 100th Anniversary Values Award."

Optimize Your WHA Website Viewing

With the Internet Explorer (IE) browser no longer supported on Windows 7 operating systems, WHA's websites work best with Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge browsers. Using IE may result in errors on some parts of the website.

Lietz Joins WHA as Vice President, Communications



The Wisconsin Hospital Association is pleased to welcome Kelly Lietz as vice president of communications.

Prior to joining WHA, Lietz served for nearly nine years as vice president of marketing and brand strategy for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), where he promoted Wisconsin's business, career and lifestyle attributes to in-state, national and global audiences. His most recent work at WEDC involved connecting businesses, communities and people throughout Wisconsin with financial and informational resources aimed at responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lietz holds bachelor's and master's degrees in English and linguistics from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a master's degree in mass communications from Oklahoma City University.

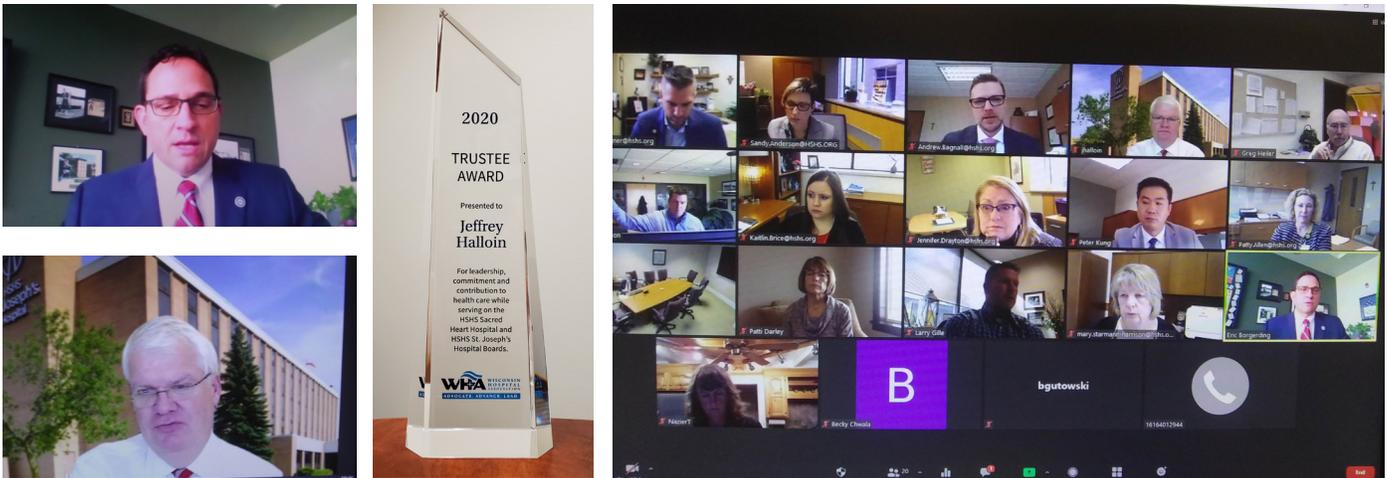
"Kelly brings proven communications expertise and strong statewide connections to WHA that will help amplify the important role our members play in fostering and maintaining Wisconsin's health and economic strength," said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. "WHA is fortunate to add Kelly to our team, and he has already hit the ground running, and fast."

HSHS Sacred Heart & HSHS St. Joseph's Trustee Honored with WHA Award

WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding recently presented Jeffrey Halloin of HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire, and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls, with the 2020 Trustee Award. For more than 60 years, WHA has presented a Trustee Award to an individual who has made an exemplary commitment to his or her hospital and community.

Halloin has served as a board member for HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital for 12 years. He currently serves as chair of the board for both Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's hospitals and has helped align the two boards into one unit. He is a member of the HSHS Audit and Integrity Committee and leads the board's Executive Committee and Governance Committee.

Halloin has served on numerous community boards. He serves as the secretary of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Eau Claire and recently became a member of the Steering Committee of the Greater Chippewa Valley COVID Task Force.



Pictured, from top left: WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding; WHA Trustee Award winner Jeffrey Halloin; the Award; representatives from HSHS.

Halloin was nominated by Andrew Bagnall, president and CEO of HSHS Wisconsin and Mary Starmann-Harrison, president and CEO of Hospital Sisters Health System. Starmann-Harrison wrote, "This year has been extremely challenging in health care, but Jeff has not been deterred. He has helped us make some major decisions to overcome many unforeseen challenges. Jeff is a true leader who is passionate about improving health care and helping our communities."

Borgerding is proud to present this award to such a deserving candidate. As part of this recognition, WHA will also donate \$250 to the charity of Halloin's choice.

Thoughts from Steve Brenton, WHA President 2002-2014



Steve Brenton

Stephen F. Brenton became president and CEO of the Wisconsin Hospital Association on January 2, 2002, bringing with him an appreciation for community hospitals and an ability to guide an association to achieve positive change.

“Wisconsin was fortunate to have such a strong leader during a transformative time in health care that saw Wisconsin hospitals become national leaders in quality, price transparency, and efficient health care delivery,” said Eric Borgerding, current WHA President and CEO. “One of the best phone calls I have ever

received was the one I got from Steve, late in 2001, to discuss joining the new team he was building at WHA. For the next 14 years it was an honor and true privilege to work with and learn from him, to fight in the advocacy trenches with someone who always had your back, and to this day call him one of my good friends.”

WHA asked Brenton to recall the highlights of his tenure as WHA’s leader:

The early 2000s saw WHA rapidly evolve into an association of local and regional health systems with community hospitals at their core. That dynamic meant that issues related to provider-owned health plans, physician workforce challenges and promoting health care value were added to the roster of WHA advocacy and programming priorities.

Important advocacy “wins” during the era included:

- The quashing of a state budget amendment in 2002 to “ban hospital construction” projects. Importantly, this win brought an end to two decades of on-again, off-again legislative efforts to severely regulate hospital finances and local capital investments.
- Privatization of health care data occurred in 2003, as did the birth of the WHA Information Center, which has become a credible source for health care data solutions.
- Reporting of hospital safety and quality measures emerged in 2004 with Wisconsin being recognized as the first state in the nation to voluntarily report this information.
- Restoring the medical malpractice noneconomic damages cap in 2006 was a landmark, bi-partisan reversal of an ill-advised 2004 Wisconsin Supreme Court decision.
- Constructing an assessment on hospitals in 2007 has provided billions of dollars that have been used to fill, in part, chronic Medicaid payment shortfalls.
- The emergence of sustainable funding streams have financed new residency programs and helped lead to the formation of two new satellite medical schools that are bringing physicians to traditionally medically underserved areas.
- The creation of the Wisconsin Council on Medical Education and Workforce (WCMEW), which has become a “go to” source of important policy work that addresses current and future primary care access issues.

Significantly, these sustainable achievements have evolved and improved over the past decade. Most were achieved through collaboration with partners within Wisconsin’s health care ecosystem. And in each case, they resulted from the work of an extraordinary staff, a forward-looking Board of Directors and an engaged membership.

Steve Brenton

(continued on page 7)



From left to right: former WHA Board Chair Edward Harding; former WHA President Steve Brenton; and WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding at WHA’s 2014 Board Retreat.

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS . . . continued from page 6)



Nick Turkal, MD

It was a great honor to serve as WHA chair in 2011. I had the pleasure of working with Steve Brenton during the time that the Medicaid assessment was being discussed with Governor Jim Doyle. We were successful in our efforts.

While the success was important to all Wisconsin hospitals, perhaps more important was the unity that was created among hospitals across the state, as we worked together on an important issue.

Congratulations to WHA on its 100th Anniversary. And many thanks for all of the excellent work on behalf of its members for the past century.

Nick Turkal
Former President and CEO, Aurora Health Care

(WHA to State Leaders: “Your joint leadership is critical to improve this situation.” . . . continued from page 1)

Borgerding then called on Democratic and Republican state leaders to cooperate on quick, decisive actions aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19; addressing the state’s urgent health care workforce shortage, providing critically needed financial and human resources to our state’s hospitals, creating additional alternate care facility capacity for post-acute care, and streamlining Medicaid regulations that can pose a barrier to care.

Earlier in the week, Governor Tony Evers and the top-ranking leader in the State Assembly, Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester), separately discussed plans to propose legislation addressing Wisconsin’s continued needs in its fight against COVID-19.

Gov. Evers’ team released draft legislation to the media, which provides a more detailed description of the Governor’s proposal—including over \$400 million for the state Department of Administration to continue its COVID-related operations into the first quarter of 2021. While this funding covers several areas of the state’s response, it is primarily to support COVID-19 testing, contact tracing and hospital system surge capacity support, including funding the operations of the state’s Alternate Care Facility in West Allis.

Speaker Vos held a media availability in the Assembly Chambers on Nov. 17 to generally describe proposals he would discuss with the Governor. According to a media release by Vos, the ideas include “building a robust testing system, doubling the number of contact tracers, assisting the healthcare industry, ensuring an efficient distribution of a COVID vaccine, requiring Unemployment Insurance reform and helping small businesses.”

Wisconsin has received \$2 billion from the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund, which has been the primary funding source for most of the state’s COVID response operations, but this federal funding expires as of December 31, 2020.

With federal action becoming increasingly uncertain before the end of 2020, Evers’ and Vos’ respective announcements signal a willingness for the Governor and Republican leaders to meet in the coming days and weeks—possibly entertaining the idea of passing legislation in December to address urgent and critical government operations that need to continue through at least the first quarter of 2021.

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