

May 13, 2021

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## EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

- May 19**  
*Employing AI to Solve Specific Tasks & Drive RCM*  
 Webinar
- June 3**  
*Wisconsin Rural Health Conference*  
 Virtual
- September 14-15 (In person)**  
*2021 Physician Leadership Development Conference*  
 The American Club, Kohler

## Gov. Evers Commemorates National Hospital Week

*Proclamation honors Wisconsin hospitals for providing accessible, compassionate and expert health care services*

The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) coordinated with Governor Evers' office to produce an official [proclamation](#) underscoring the important role Wisconsin hospitals play in the health and economic wellbeing of the communities they serve. As part of its national hospital week coordinated messaging strategy, WHA has posted the proclamation to its website and shared it on all its social media pages.

In addition to recognizing the reliable health care services Wisconsin hospitals provide to their communities, the governor's proclamation cites the extraordinary efforts of the state's hospitals to fight COVID-19. "Wisconsin's hospitals continue to serve as both our frontline and our last line of defense against in the fight against COVID-19, consistently stepping up to respond to surges of COVID-19 patients requiring complex care, while continuing to deliver babies, attend to accident victims, and treat chronic diseases," the document reads in part.

The governor also credits hospitals and health systems for their role in vaccinating Wisconsinites against the virus in every corner of the state.

The governor's proclamation calls attention, too, to the important role hospitals and health systems play in the state's economy as well as the significant community benefits and charity care that hospitals provide to their friends and neighbors throughout the state.

WHA invites member hospitals to share Gov. Evers' hospital week proclamation with their stakeholders through appropriate channels to reinforce their commitment to their patients and communities.

## WHA Receives WHIMA Distinguished Service Award

The Wisconsin Health Information Management Association (WHIMA) has recognized the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) with a Distinguished Service Award for its collaborative efforts to support WHIMA's mission and promote education and innovation to its members.

WHIMA noted in its award presentation that WHA has been an ongoing partner to WHIMA for years, providing employee time and support to WHIMA efforts through expert state information during conference and educational workshops; state-specific statistical data through [Checkpoint](#) and [PricePoint](#); quality initiatives support, including a Quality Residency for staff and physicians; and daily operations that ultimately allow hospitals to run



Wisconsin Hospital Association Information Center Vice President Jennifer Mueller received the WHIMA Distinguished Service Award at the association's annual conference in Pewaukee.

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## (WHA Receives WHIMA Distinguished Service Award . . . continued from page 1)

more efficiently and compliantly. WHIMA also lauded WHA for providing data information center support to health information management staff.

"The Wisconsin Hospital Association has always been a true partner with WHIMA in its mission to promote innovation and education to our members," the organization wrote in its award announcement. "Their partnership with WHIMA has not faltered—and WHA leaders and staff members have continually been receptive and responsive to WHIMA and their members. This longstanding contribution and efforts through service, support and collaboration truly makes them deserving of the WHIMA Distinguished Service Award."

The award was presented at WHIMA's annual conference in May.

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## Stop the COVID Spread! Coalition Ad Receives Advocacy Award

### ***PSA encouraging safe personal behaviors features Wisconsin health care workers***

A public education radio advertisement produced by the WHA-led Stop the COVID Spread! coalition has been recognized by the American Association of Political Consultants (AAPC) with a bronze Pollie award in the category of Best Use of Radio in the Public Affairs/Issue Advocacy.

AAPC notes that this year more than 400 firms submitted a record-breaking 2,700+ entries across 10 mediums, including television, digital, direct mail/print, radio and phones, making the Stop the COVID Spread! award particularly noteworthy given the competition it was up against.

In the [30-second radio spot](#) produced by WHA's external marketing agency Platform Communications, Wisconsin health care workers appeal for safe practices to curtail virus spread in the state. "We're on the frontlines. It's our job to save lives and get people better. But fighting this pandemic puts our families at risk, too. We need your help. Mask up, wash your hands, and if you go out, stay at least six feet apart. Please, do this for your family, and ours."



*Chelsea Rangel, R.N., from UW Health in Stop the Covid Spread! coalition's "frontlines" ad, Dec. 2020.*

The real-life perspectives shared in the spot are those of Chelsea Rangel, R.N., and Hilary Faust, M.D., from UW-Health; Sumithra Tirunagaram, M.D., and respiratory therapist Karen Masanz, from Marshfield Clinic; Jessie Schaumberg, R.N., and Paul Casey, M.D., from Bellin Health.

The "frontlines" ad was the fifth produced by the coalition. It aired in late 2020 when Wisconsin was facing unrelenting COVID-19 case counts with hospitals throughout the state operating near or at full capacity.

WHA played a lead role in organizing and funding the Stop the COVID Spread! coalition, which was assembled in October 2020 and includes more than 135 of Wisconsin's leading health care, business and advocacy organizations. The coalition's multi-channel public education campaign includes seven public education announcements to date. The campaign has drawn upon wide-ranging Wisconsin perspectives, from higher education leaders to professional athletes, frontline health care workers and (bipartisan) elected officials. Ads produced and distributed by the coalition have achieved an audience reach of well over 30 million on statewide television and radio. On digital platforms, the coalition's ads have generated over 16 million impressions and reached more than six million devices across the state.

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## WHA Offers Webinar to Share Best Practices for Encouraging Vaccinations

The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) has organized an online education opportunity for hospital representatives to learn about and share experiences and success stories related to encouraging vaccinations within their ranks and in the larger community.

### **Strategies to Move the Vaccine Acceptance Needle**

May 26, 2021 | 10 - 11 a.m.

To learn more about this webinar and to register, click [here](#).

## Registration Open for 2021 Wisconsin Rural Health Conference



2021

### WISCONSIN RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

June 3 | Virtual

The Wisconsin Hospital Association's (WHA's) 2021 [Wisconsin Rural Health Conference](#) will take place virtually on June 3.

Registration is now open for this premier event designed to highlight the many nuances of rural health care. This year, the conference will focus on public policy issues affecting rural populations; coping strategies and resiliency skills of health care staff; and overcoming unconscious biases to provide better patient experiences and outcomes.

The virtual conference will leverage professional learning platform LeaderPass to maximize the attendee experience. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

## Public Policy Council Discusses Budget, Post-Acute and Insurance-Related Issues

*Rep. Sara Rodriguez brings hospital, health system administrator perspective to state Legislature*

Members of the Wisconsin Hospital Association's (WHA's) Public Policy Council (PPC) were joined by freshman Democratic lawmaker Rep. Sara Rodriguez (D-Brookfield) on May 5 to discuss the upcoming state budget, recently enacted COVID-19 legislation and challenges hospitals face in discharging patients to post-acute care facilities.

As a former health system executive in population health, Rodriguez discussed the unique perspective that she brings to the Legislature. "It's helpful to have someone in the Legislature that is not just a clinician, but also can provide an administrator's perspective," said Rodriguez.

"As someone who worked in care management, I know how difficult it was to find the right skilled nursing facility, rehab facility or rehab hospital that was appropriate for the patient. It was a constant challenge," said Rodriguez.

PPC members from Froedtert Health, Children's Wisconsin and Marshfield Clinic Health System all reiterated challenges their respective health systems face in discharging patients to appropriate settings, while thanking Rodriguez for her support of COVID-related legislation that provides payments to hospitals when they cannot find a post-acute care placement for a Medicaid patient. One member said her organization needs to utilize out-of-state post-acute care providers due to a lack of suitable facilities in state, but now even those out-of-state providers are reporting that they are full, leaving the hospital with no reasonable options for patient discharge.

As a former nurse working in Baltimore, Rodriguez discussed the challenges she experienced firsthand in finding appropriate placements for patients. "Sometimes I feel like we have the same conversations, we need to do a better job solving these things," she noted. "When I was working in a hospital emergency department in Baltimore, we continued to have this problem, and it is something that we need to address here in Wisconsin."

Rodriguez enumerated her priorities as a state legislator, which include responding to and serving her constituents; making sure that people have equitable access to health care, regardless of their zip code; and looking at ways health care intersects with green technology and healthy communities. Rodriguez supports Medicaid expansion based upon the outcomes she has seen in other states and the potential use of additional federal money to fund Wisconsin's health care priorities, including Medicaid reimbursement.

### Hospitals Engage Alongside WHA on Upcoming State Budget

WHA Senior Vice President of Government Relations Kyle O'Brien updated the council on recent advocacy work of the association regarding the state budget, including testimony provided at all four public hearings held by the Joint Finance Committee and a letter signed by 108 hospital and health system leaders asking the committee to reauthorize the Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) program and avoid a \$100 million all funds cut to hospitals in the next biennium. O'Brien said that the WHA team expects the Joint Finance Committee to act in the coming weeks on the Medicaid portion of the state budget.

### WHA's Post-Acute Care Agenda Front and Center

WHA Policy Counsel Laura Leitch provided an update on WHA's post-acute care agenda, starting with recognition of hospital participation in WHA's post-acute care workgroup. Leitch provided a summary of trends in the state's post-acute care capacity, highlighting data reflecting the long-standing challenge of delayed discharges from hospitals to post-acute care facilities.

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# WHAIC Data Show Effects of COVID-19 on State Hospitals

## Part Three: Reopening of Non-Emergent Care (July 1 – Sept. 30, 2020)

The Wisconsin Hospital Association Information Center (WHAIC) has quantified and documented the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Wisconsin's health care system in a [new report](#).

This week, *The Valued Voice* focuses on the reopening of non-emergent care following a shutdown ordered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the spring of 2020. As virus spread appeared to slow down and personal protective equipment (PPE) availability began to improve in the summer of 2020, hospitals and health systems began to welcome patients back, although some seemed wary of COVID and hesitant to seek care.

### Why Hospitals Could Reopen:

- Federal government rescinded its hospital shutdown; Wisconsin did not issue its own similar restrictions
- PPE supplies improved
- Limited virus spread

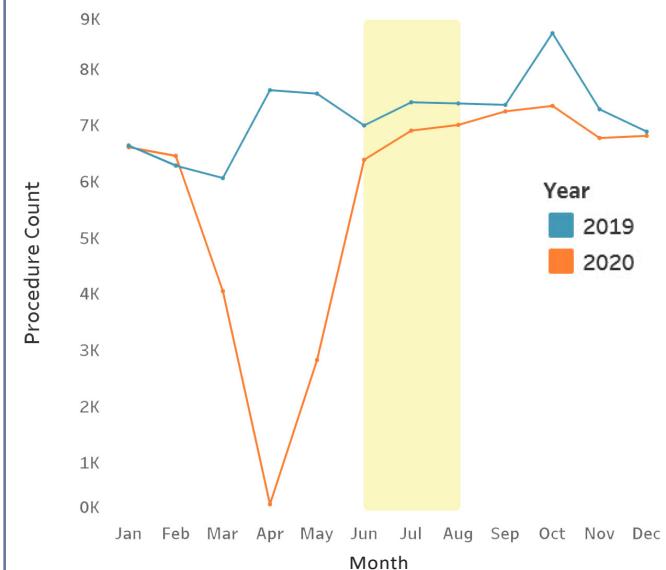
### Proceeding Cautiously:

- Total inpatient activity down 5% compared to 2019
- Outpatient surgeries and procedures down 1% compared to 2019
- Emergency department visits down 1% compared to 2019

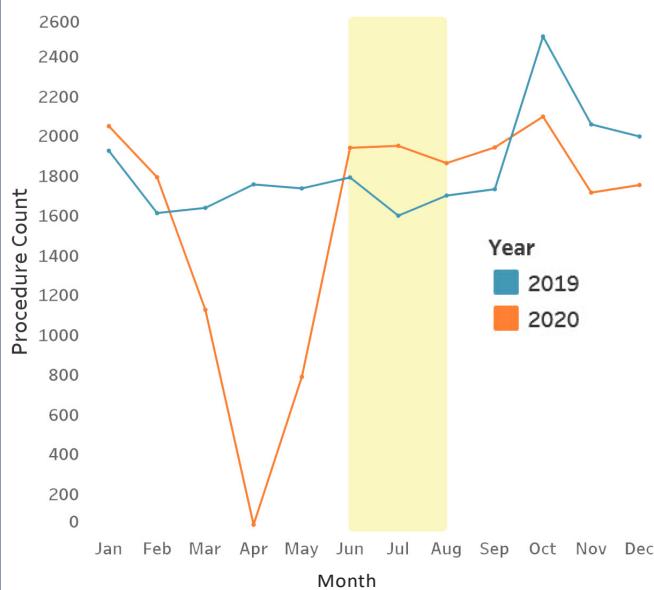
**Health Impact:** Lingering hesitancy to seek care due to COVID stigma, but things began to improve

**Hospital Impact:** Hospitals were able to provide a full range of care again and worked to encourage patients not to put off care. Hospitals recovered some lost revenue, albeit under challenging and very cautious circumstances.

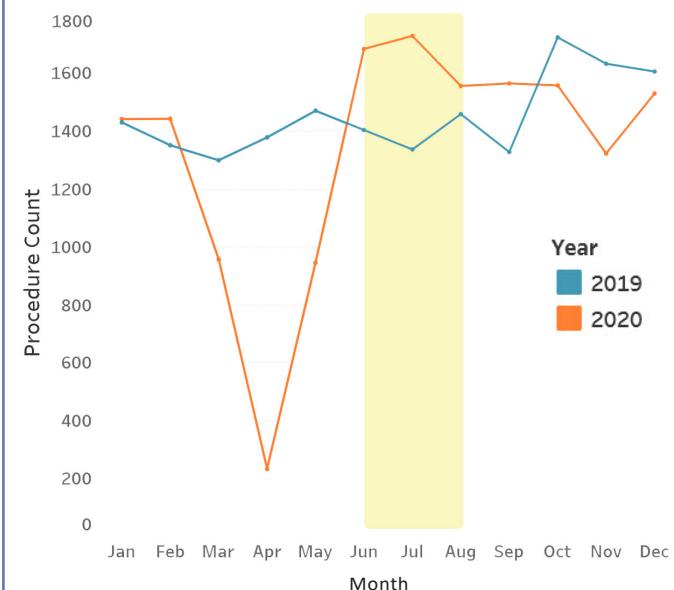
### Cataracts Procedures - Phase 2



### Knee Replacement - Phase 2



### Hip Replacement - Phase 2



## September Physician Leadership Development Conference offers In-Person Learning Opportunities

The second session of The Wisconsin Hospital Association's (WHA's) popular Physician Leadership Development Conference will take place in person at the American Club in Kohler on Sept. 14 and 15.

Registering for this event gives participants access to a recording of the first session of the conference held virtually on March 12, with the exception of one presentation from that event.

Attendance at the WHA Leadership Development Conference qualifies participants for 1.5 optional medical education credits.



For more information and to register, visit <https://www.wha.org/PLDC-2021>. Questions about the conference can be addressed to [education@wha.org](mailto:education@wha.org).

## WHA Speakers Bureau Connects Members with Health Care Industry Experts

One of the many ways Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) members can engage with the association's leadership and maximize the subject matter expertise at their disposal is by inviting association leaders to address their boards, management team, staff or other stakeholder meetings through the WHA Speakers Bureau.

Some of the topics that WHA senior staff can speak on include current legal and regulatory updates; state legislative and budget updates; COVID-19 impacts on state hospitals and health systems; and WHA initiatives focused on advancing behavioral health, dental care access and the state's health care workforce.

More information about topics and how to schedule a WHA speaker to address live or virtual gatherings is available [here](#). WHA Vice President of Education and Marketing [Leigh Ann Larson](#) is also available to answer questions.

## Andrea Palm Confirmed as HHS Deputy Secretary



On May 11, former Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) Secretary-Designee Andrea Palm was confirmed as President Biden's Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by the full U.S. Senate. Her nomination passed on a [bipartisan vote of 61-37](#). Sen. Baldwin voted "yea," and Sen. Johnson voted "no."

Palm's nomination had been advanced by the Senate Finance Committee in late April by a bipartisan vote of 20-8. In front of the [committee](#), Palm noted her past record of



Andrea Palm

seeking bipartisan common ground, specifically citing expanding access to telehealth services as one of her proudest accomplishments during her time at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

WHA worked with Palm and the Wisconsin Legislature to pass 2019 Wisconsin Act 56, which greatly expanded access to telehealth in the Medicaid program by requiring telehealth to be treated the same as in-person care.

## Nominations Invited for Partners of WHA Awards

Applications will be accepted through June 4 for the Partners of WHA Wisconsin Awards for Volunteer Excellence (WAVE) and Best of the Best Administrative Award (BOB).

The WAVE program was established by Partners of WHA, Inc., to recognize outstanding contributions of organized volunteer programs. It is patterned after the American Hospital Association Hospital Award for Volunteer Excellence (HAVE) program. The WAVE Award recognizes volunteer programs whose work directly advances the mission of the institutions they serve. One WAVE Award may be given to a program in each of the following categories:

- Community Service
- Fundraising
- In-Service
- Community Outreach and/or Collaboration
- Public Policy (new this year)

The annual BOB Award honors one top on-site administrator of a Wisconsin hospital who demonstrates a cooperative, supportive, enthusiastic and well-defined relationship with his or her volunteer organization.

For more information on the WAVE and BOB Awards and to access both applications, visit the [Partners of WHA website](#).

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### **(Public Policy Council Discusses Budget, Post-Acute and Insurance-Related Issues . . . continued from page 3)**

Priority issues for the post-acute workgroup include complex patient placement and care, post-acute care payment options and guardianship. Leitch described the "triad of complexities" for post-acute care and the workgroup's goal of addressing those issues to support providing the right care in the right place at the right time. WHA will continue to meet with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Wisconsin nursing home associations to explore additional solutions to post-acute care challenges.

WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding reflected that WHA began purposefully engaging in post-acute care discussions four years ago, and the topic has gained increasing urgency in light of COVID.

#### **Insurance Related Challenges Addressed Through Advocacy Work**

In response to concerns raised by several WHA members over the last few months, WHA Senior Vice President of Public Policy Joanne Alig reported on the partnership between WHA and the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC) to request the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI) review various practices by insurance companies that have negative impacts on patients and providers in the middle of the benefit year. These include special programs that would change the network and impose greater cost sharing on enrollees. WHA and RWHC are encouraged that OCI is reviewing these practices and working to ensure that any modifications are not only within the law and regulations, but also are communicated to both enrollees and providers in an easily understood manner.

Alig also provided an overview of the No Surprises Act, most provisions of which go into effect on Jan. 1, 2022. Among several other provisions, in cases where an out-of-network provider and plan cannot agree on reimbursement for services provided to a patient, Alig explained, resolution is handled through "baseball-style arbitration."

Council members expressed appreciation for WHA's leadership on these issues that impact hospitals and patients directly.

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## Oxygen Support Supplies for India Requested

A team of students from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health is working with leaders in India to secure donations of oxygen support supplies for hospitals there. The country's needs include oxygen concentrators, oximeters, empty oxygen cylinders and Remdesivir.

Hospitals and health systems that have oxygen supply equipment to donate or sell can contact Deepak Sahu at [dsahu@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:dsahu@hsph.harvard.edu). The T.H. Chan School of Public Health will take care of the purchasing, procuring and shipping of equipment to India.