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**Physician Engagement Strategies Shared at the 14th Annual WHA Physician Leadership Conference**

More than 200 attendees gathered at the 14th annual WHA Physician Leadership Development Conference on March 15 and 16. This year’s conference featured two educational tracks—one for emerging physician leaders seeking to develop or enhance their administrative and leadership skills, and one for senior-level physician leaders.



*Keynote Speaker Stephen Beeson, MD, presents to the large crowd at WHA’s Physician Leadership Conference March 15, 2019.*

Stephen Beeson, MD, led an interactive discussion focusing on strategies and tactics to engage physicians. Speaking to emerging and veteran physician leaders, as well as the 40 administrator hosts at the conference, Dr. Beeson led a discussion that identified

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**President’s Column: WHA’s 2018 Community Benefits Report**

**By Eric Borgerding, Wisconsin Hospital Association President and CEO**

One of Wisconsin’s most valuable assets is our top-ranked health care system: number one in the Midwest and fourth best in the nation, according to the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality last year. It is some of the highest quality of care in the country—and available to every person, every minute, every day in our state’s hospitals.

But, that’s only part of the story. In addition to providing access to great care, Wisconsin’s hospitals are often the foundation of their communities, reaching far beyond the hospital walls to help address critical, unmet local health and human service needs. When added up, Wisconsin’s hospitals provided nearly \$5 million every day in free care and community support. And that’s a conservative number: if WHA used the IRS definition of charity care and community benefits, that figure would be closer to \$11 million.

Wisconsin hospitals support neighborhood health centers, ensure citizens have access to free meals and can purchase their medication, help find transportation and housing, bring dental services into our schools, and much more. Many of these services would not be possible without the support of our hospitals and the dedicated health care professionals who give their time and compassion.

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**EDUCATIONAL EVENTS**

**Throughout 2019**  
*Health Care Workforce Resilience*  
Free Member Webinar Series

**April 17, 2019**  
*Advocacy Day*  
Madison, WI

Wisconsin's hospitals are the state's health safety net, and they cast it widely across their communities. Below are just a few examples:

- A Tomahawk man in his 80s had 100% of his hospital costs covered when faced with unexpected medical bills he could not afford to pay on his fixed income.
- Sexual assault survivors in Oshkosh received trauma-informed care and support services.
- Hospital pharmacists, lab technicians, nurses, physician assistants, and other colleagues provided free health services and medication for those living in poverty in Eau Claire.
- Single women and families in Janesville who were homeless received emergency shelter and case management services to provide stability and help them become self-sufficient.

You will find dozens more examples in WHA's [2018 Community Benefits Report](#), which highlights the financial assistance, programs, services, and activities hospitals provide for free in their communities.



Hospitals ensure everyone receives the treatment they need and deserve—even when a patient or family cannot pay for their care, or when receiving inadequate reimbursement from the state Medicaid and federal Medicare programs. In 2017, Wisconsin hospitals lost nearly \$1.1 billion caring for 295,585 patients in the Medicaid program, and another \$2.1 billion caring for Medicare patients. The Wisconsin Medicaid program reimburses hospitals just 65 cents for every dollar they spend caring for a Medicaid patient. Medicare reimbursement is only slightly better, covering about 78% of the cost of care.

Other businesses are not asked to provide products or services at 35% below their own cost, or for some, 100% below cost when they do not have the ability to pay. But, in Wisconsin hospitals, the doors are always open and the nearly 130,000 professionals they employ are proud of the care they give to all in need, and the services and support they contribute to their neighbors, families and communities.

Wisconsin's hospitals are always there.

## State Medicaid Expansion, Price Transparency Covered at WHA's Public Policy Council Meeting



WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding speaks at WHA's Public Policy Council meeting

During the March 7 meeting of the WHA Public Policy Council, WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding and Senior Vice President of Government Relations Kyle O'Brien led a state-level advocacy discussion centered around the recently proposed Governor's budget, which includes an expansion of Medicaid to all individuals living up to 133% of the federal poverty level and reimbursement increases for hospitals and health care providers. According to the Evers Administration, the Governor's

proposed budget uses an estimated \$320 million in state savings to invest in health care.

Borgerding discussed the political dynamics at play between Evers and the Republican-led Legislature and its impact on the future of Medicaid initiatives proposed as part of Governor Evers' budget.

"Whether they are using the argument to support or oppose Medicaid expansion, lawmakers of both parties are agreeing that Wisconsin's Medicaid reimbursement rates for hospitals negatively impact access for patients and drive up the cost of health care for our state's employers," said Borgerding. "As WHA has done every legislative session, we will continue to pursue an agenda with the Governor and the Legislature that finds bipartisan solutions to improve reimbursement, reduce cost-shifting, expand access and stabilize insurance markets in Wisconsin."

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So far in 2019, O'Brien reported that 10 WHA-initiated hospital roundtable meetings have taken place in state lawmakers' districts to show how reimbursement is impacting the ability to expand access and reduce costs for patients. According to O'Brien, WHA will continue this broad "bottom-up" approach to advocacy, engaging Democrats and Republicans in the Legislature to support the Association's budget agenda.

## **WHA to Restart Transparency Task Force; Price Transparency, Surprise Billing Remain Federal Policy Issues**

WHA Vice President of Public Policy Lisa Ellinger and Director of Federal and State Relations Jon Hoelter presented on WHA's internal work on price transparency and recent federal focus on "surprise billing."

Ellinger provided background on WHA's Transparency Task Force (TTF), which was created in 2015 to prepare WHA members for impending Affordable Care Act transparency requirements. The first objective of the TTF was creating tools and education on these new federal requirements, and the second was to analyze ways providers and payers could work together to improve the process for patients to understand their out-of-pocket costs for health care services. A subcommittee of the TTF, which included insurer representatives, developed a pilot project to identify challenges with creating price estimates, identify successful models, and share best practices. The TTF will again reconvene in 2019 to review the results of this pilot and prepare final recommendations.



Hoelter then provided an overview of how the concept of transparency in health care is translating to public policy debates in Congress, including last year's focus on prescription drug pricing transparency. While prescription drug pricing is expected to continue to be a hot topic in this new session, federal lawmakers are also starting to focus on surprise billing and hospital price transparency. Additionally, last year's inpatient rule requiring hospitals to post machine-readable chargemaster data online may be only the first step in a larger transparency initiative from CMS that could carry forward this year.

The Council also discussed how Wisconsin continues to lead the way in price and quality transparency, being the first state in the country to develop an online hospital price transparency tool that is now leased out to 10 states. Wisconsin's [PricePoint](#) website, operated by the Wisconsin Hospital Association Information Center, also provides patients with how-to videos and professional/ancillary fee cost estimates in addition to hospital prices.

Finally, Hoelter walked through the American Hospital Association's [guiding principles](#) on surprise billing, which were presented to a bipartisan group of Senators who had [asked for feedback](#) on how Congress might help reduce the occurrence of patients receiving "surprise bills." Hoelter and Ellinger invited the Council to pass along any ideas their hospitals and health systems may have as the Task Force reconvenes, and this topic progresses at the federal level.

If you have any questions, contact [Ellinger](#) or [Hoelter](#).

## **Wisconsin Health News' Tim Stumm Joins Public Policy Council as Guest Speaker**

Tim Stumm, founding editor of Wisconsin Health News (WHN), joined the Council as a guest speaker to provide background on WHN and offer his observations on how Governor Evers and the Republican-led Legislature may find common ground on health care issues this legislative session.

Stumm launched the nonpartisan, online news service eight years ago to delve deeper into important health care issues impacting Wisconsin. In addition to its daily electronic publication, WHN hosts regular events with health care professionals and policymakers about issues that matter to Wisconsin's health care leaders—and WHA is a proud sponsor of key panel discussions, such as the annual CEO roundtable.

Stumm expects some issues in Wisconsin's upcoming budget session will have bipartisan support, such as dental therapy, increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates, and opioid proposals. Stumm also noted the significant differences that exist between legislative leaders and Governor Evers on Medicaid expansion, which remains one of the most hotly debated items included in Governor Evers' budget proposal.



Tim Stumm

Since 2018, Stumm has also covered Illinois health care issues through a similar news service to WHN called Health News Illinois. Stumm said an important difference between the two states is that health care leaders in Wisconsin are willing to work together, which is not always the case in Illinois. The Council also discussed the differences in health care policy issues that face hospital leaders and lawmakers in Illinois versus those in Wisconsin, including the state's liability environment for physicians.

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“That trait of unity and support is evident among our members and the composition of our Board; we have small and large, rural and urban hospital leaders working together to address critical health care issues facing our state,” said Eric Borgerding, WHA President and CEO. “Another big difference is Wisconsin’s balanced medical liability system that allows us to attract physicians to our state, while also providing assurance to injured patients.”

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eight key elements that lead to physician engagement:

1. Selection/orientation
2. Post-hire development
3. Data feedback
4. Appreciated and valued
5. Listened and responded to
6. Expectations are known
7. Leaders modeling expectations
8. Time is valued

UW Health CEO Alan Kaplan, MD, shared with more than 75 senior physician leaders his insights and experiences in his journey as a physician leader, and what skills and knowledge physician leaders will need to flourish in an ever-changing health care environment.

Steve Kulick, MD, Chief Experience Officer at Marshfield Clinic Health System, and Chair of the WHA Physician Leaders Council, facilitated group discussion among the senior physician leaders cohort focused on:

- Developing physician leaders
- Communicating effectively with physicians
- Improving physician satisfaction, engagement and resiliency/addressing burnout
- Dealing with disruptive physicians and addressing conflict
- Influencing physicians and strategies to align physicians with organizational priorities

Mike Guthrie, MD, worked with the emerging physician leader cohort on tactics and strategies for effective meeting and team management and effective group decision making. Dr. Guthrie provided several tools, including a general meeting planning map, and highlighted strategies

for identifying the right size and structure of group meetings based on the goal of the meeting.

Eric Borgerding, WHA President and CEO, provided all attendees with an overview of WHA’s ongoing physician-focused priorities. Borgerding highlighted WHA’s expanding physician engagement agenda, focusing on collaboration, information sharing and communication. He also highlighted WHA’s advocacy priorities for reducing regulatory

burden impacting physician practice, including the amount of time spent working with the EHR and time taken away from patient care. Borgerding also commented on key public policy issues, including the health care workforce and the success of the WHA-crafted graduate medical education state grant program, which will create 133 additional physicians in Wisconsin-based residency programs by July 2020. Notably, four grant-funded new or expanded GME programs will be graduating 12 new psychiatrists per year in Wisconsin beginning in 2021. Borgerding concluded his remarks with a summary of the Medicaid expansion included in Governor Tony Evers’ state budget bill, including its impacts on coverage and reimbursement.

“I was so impressed with the engagement and enthusiasm of all who attended,” said Mark Kaufman, MD, WHA Chief Medical Officer. “Many physicians commented on the value of getting away, connecting with colleagues, renewing relationships and learning from one another.”

Next year’s WHA Physician Leadership Development Conference is scheduled for March 13-14, 2020, at the American Club in Kohler.



*Dr. Alan Kaplan’s presentation*



*Steve Kulick, MD*



*Dr. Guthrie works with emerging physician leaders at WHA’s Physician Leaders Conference*