

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2019 Wisconsin Rural Health Conference set for June 12-14 in Wisconsin Dells..... 1
- WHA and Members Meet with Congressional Delegation in D.C. .. 1
- DHS Announces Flexibility for Medicaid Telestroke Billing..... 2
- WI Hospitals Create and Strengthen Partnerships to Improve Health Care Quality..... 3
- WI Hospital Leaders Urge State Budget Committee to Increase Medicaid Rates..... 4
- WHA Urges Congress to Remove Medicare Telehealth Restrictions .. 5

2019 Wisconsin Rural Health Conference set for June 12-14 in Wisconsin Dells

Physician leaders in rural communities especially welcome; review the [full conference brochure](#)



Plan now to attend the 2019 Wisconsin Rural Health Conference, June 12-14, at Glacier Canyon Lodge at The Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells. This annual event is *the* statewide forum for examining the issues that most impact small and rural hospitals, networking and collaborating with colleagues, and bonding with your senior staff team and members of your hospital board of trustees.

Each year, your colleagues on WHA’s Council on Rural Health act as the planning committee for this conference, and once again in 2019, they have crafted an interesting and diverse education agenda. This year’s opening keynote speaker is Ron Galloway, a researcher, filmmaker and author, who will focus on some of the biggest health care disruptors, identify ways disrupters will leverage their data expertise and ability to launch new technologies quickly to affect health care, and discuss what these companies’ strategies mean for rural health providers.

(continued on page 5)

WHA and Members Meet with Congressional Delegation in D.C.

Key issues: site-neutral payments, GME, health care price transparency

The Wisconsin Hospital Association and leaders from hospitals and health systems from across the state traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with all 10 of Wisconsin’s Congressional Delegation on April 9. Those participating included John Russell of Columbus Community Hospital, Dan DeGroot of Stoughton Hospital Association, Michael Loy of North Central Health Care, Tony Curry of Advocate Aurora, Brad Wolters of Marshfield Clinic, Jeremy Levin of Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative, Jan Molaska, Peg Larson, and Ron Williams of Partners of WHA, as well as Eric Borgerding and Jon Hoelter of WHA. Among the main discussion topics were concerns about site-neutral payments, federal support for graduate medical education (GME), and support for health care price transparency.

WHA’s group of hospital advocates thanked the entire delegation for their unified support on two recent issues WHA has long supported related to workforce and value-based payments. The entire House delegation signed onto legislation introduced by Congressmen Kind and Gallagher, the Advancing Medical Resident Training in Communities Act, which would fix an issue that has led to artificially low GME caps for a handful of hospitals across the country, including two in Wisconsin. The group also asked the delegation to support HR 1763 & S 348, legislation that would add 15,000 new federally funded GME slots and help states like Wisconsin reduce their health care workforce shortage.

(continued on page 2)

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

June 12-14, 2019
Wisconsin Rural Health Conference
Wisconsin Dells, WI

Throughout 2019
Health Care Workforce Resilience
Free Member Webinar Series

The hospital leaders urged lawmakers to reverse the site-neutral cuts enacted by CMS in last fall's outpatient rule. Instead, they encouraged officials to focus on more value-based payment reforms and thanked the delegation for signing onto a letter encouraging CMS to reform the physician self-referral law, more commonly known as the Stark Law. Instead of piecemeal cuts, like site-neutral payments, more value-based payments would reward states like Wisconsin that rank high for quality and value.



Top row: L to R: WHA and hospital leaders meet with Rep. Sean Duffy; WHA and hospital leaders meet with Rep. Mike Gallagher. Center: WHA and hospital leaders meet with U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin. Bottom row: WHA and hospital leaders meet with Rep. Mark Pocan; WHA and hospital leaders meet with Rep. Ron Kind

Lastly, WHA's hospital leaders voiced support for Congress' recent efforts to improve health care price transparency and reduce instances of surprise billing.

"WHA has been a strong supporter of transparency, reporting meaningful price and quality data to consumers for more than 15 years through [PricePoint](#) and [CheckPoint](#). Our commitment to transparency has positioned Wisconsin as a national leader in the drive to promote high-quality, high-value health care," said Eric Borgerding, WHA President and CEO. "I want to thank everyone who joined us for this very important trip to meet with our federal officials. This was an excellent opportunity to let lawmakers know of our support for their efforts to make health care more consumer friendly, as well as other reforms they can make to help promote and incentivize more value-based care and grow our health care workforce."

DHS Announces Flexibility for Medicaid Telestroke Billing **DHS adopts WHA's recommendation that either the distant site provider or the originating site may bill for telestroke professional services**

Consistent with recommendations made by WHA to preserve alternate billing approaches for Medicaid telestroke services, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) published a [ForwardHealth Update](#) last week to clarify flexible billing options for Medicaid telestroke services.

Telestroke enables a qualified stroke specialist to use technology to treat stroke patients in another location through a consultation with the patient's local emergency providers.

In the ForwardHealth Update, DHS clarifies that Medicaid telestroke professional services may be billed either by:

(continued on page 3)

- The provider delivering the telestroke services from a distant site to a patient located at a remote health care facility (called an “originating site”); or
- The originating site on behalf of the distant site provider delivering the telestroke services, provided the originating site has established a contractual relationship with the distant site provider for telestroke services.

The [ForwardHealth Update](#) further clarifies that if the originating site bills Medicaid for the telestroke services on behalf of the distant site provider, the originating site also may bill for a telehealth facility fee (called an “originating site fee”) as is currently allowed for originating sites under Medicaid’s telehealth policy.

DHS invited input from WHA as the agency developed its clarification on Medicaid telestroke billing, and WHA encouraged DHS to adopt the flexible approach of permitting either the distant site provider or the originating site to bill for the telestroke professional services.

See a [comprehensive description of Medicaid’s telehealth policy](#). For more information, contact [Andrew Brenton](#), WHA Assistant General Counsel, at 608-274-1820, or visit WHA’s [telehealth webpage](#).

WI Hospitals Create and Strengthen Partnerships to Improve Health Care Quality AHRQ ranks Wisconsin first in the Midwest and fourth in the nation in health care quality

On April 16, the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) released its [2018 Quality Report](#), which highlights the partnerships between hospitals and patients, families, legislators and other stakeholders to continually improve health care in our state. Wisconsin hospitals and health systems share best practices as part of ongoing quality improvement initiatives. These efforts keep Wisconsin a national leader in health care quality—Wisconsin ranks [first in the Midwest](#) and fourth in the nation according to the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

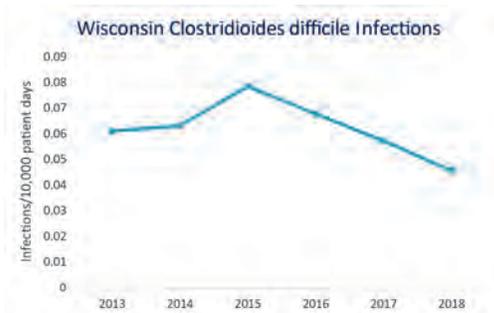
“Wisconsin is known for its high-quality health care delivery because of the unique collaborative and innovative culture among our hospitals and health systems,” said Eric Borgerding, WHA President and CEO. “Our members share data, best practices, and lessons learned which leads to better outcomes, increased patient satisfaction, operational efficiencies, and attracts a quality workforce.”



WHA Chief Quality Officer Beth Dibbert added, “Wisconsin hospitals provide person-centered care using a variety of diverse and supportive strategies to help patients along the road to wellness. Providers are reaching beyond hospital walls to help address social determinants, such as homelessness or food insecurity, to promote a successful post-hospital transition.”

Below are several examples of the partnerships and quality improvement initiatives included in the [2018 Quality Report](#):

- More than 80 Wisconsin hospitals have partnered with another 230 hospitals across Michigan and Illinois in the Great Lakes Partners for Patients Hospital Improvement Innovation Network (GLPP). Hospitals succeed in reducing adverse patient events and readmissions through an all-share, all-learn collaborative approach.
- Hospitals are actively including patients and families in developing and implementing best-practice, innovative strategies to reduce harmful infections and prevent patient falls. Learn more about these innovative strategies by reading the 17 examples in the report.
- WHA developed the Physician Quality Academy which helps physicians engage with quality improvement efforts utilizing implementation science, which improves the health of patients and patient populations by creating care processes that bring evidence-based best practices to the bedside.
- Sepsis mortality, Clostridioides difficile infection (CDI), and other infection rates have declined in Wisconsin through the application of best practice strategies and collaborative sharing between hospitals.



- WHA worked with Wisconsin lawmakers to pass, enact and implement the Health Care Data Modernization Act. Since 2016, this bipartisan legislation has enhanced the utility of Wisconsin’s hospital and ambulatory surgery center discharge data program by more efficiently deploying health care resources to address population health needs in Wisconsin communities.
- WHA’s CheckPoint website drives quality improvement through transparency. Throughout its history, CheckPoint has posted 115 different measures of clinical care and patient outcomes. The WHA Measures Team, representing more than 40 hospitals and health systems in Wisconsin, oversees more than 50 measures on the current site, ensuring the data reported is relevant, actionable, and representative of the care and services most hospitals provide. Visit www.wicheckpoint.org for more information.



WI Hospital Leaders Urge State Budget Committee to Increase Medicaid Rates Hospital leaders speak at Oak Creek and River Falls as Joint Finance Committee travels across Wisconsin

With the state’s budget-writing Joint Finance Committee (JFC) traveling across Wisconsin to hear from the public on Governor Evers’ proposed budget, hospital leaders have gone out to meet them, urging lawmakers to make Medicaid rate reimbursement increases part of the Legislature’s budget.

On April 10, Seth Teigen of Ascension St. Francis and Franklin hospitals, Steve Francaviglia of Aurora Sinai and St. Luke’s hospitals, and Juliet Kersten of Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin [addressed the finance committee](#) in Oak Creek, a city just outside Milwaukee. The group thanked Committee members for meeting with them locally and submitted a letter signed by leaders of 12 hospitals and health systems from southeast Wisconsin that urged the Committee to fund increases in Medicaid reimbursement rates that would help offset Wisconsin’s \$1.1 billion hidden health care tax.

“More resources from the state Legislature through Medicaid reimbursement means more access to primary and specialty care for our patients—allowing us to expand efforts to treat the sickest of the sick while also investing in preventive care to keep parents and children out of the hospital,” said Kersten.



River Falls Area Hospital-Allina Health Director of Operations & Finance Bruce Craven and Westfields Hospital & Clinic-HealthPartners President and CEO Steve Massey testified in front of the Joint Finance Committee in support of Medicaid hospital reimbursement increases included in the Governor’s proposed budget.



On April 15, Bruce Craven of River Falls Area Hospital and Steve Massey of Westfields Hospital & Clinic [appeared before JFC members](#) at UW-River Falls. “Wisconsin’s hospitals are committed to providing the best health care in the country and have successfully met that measure, ranking within the top four states for health care quality in 11 of the last 12 years,” said Craven. He and Massey delivered a letter signed by 31 hospital CEOs in western and northern Wisconsin that asked the Committee to find a way to include the positive health care investments from Governor Evers’ budget in the budget the Legislature will soon begin work on.



The Joint Finance Committee heard from Advocate Aurora Health – Greater Milwaukee South President Steve Francaviglia, Ascension President Seth Teigen, and Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin Vice President Juliet Kersten in support of Medicaid hospital reimbursement increases that were included in the Governor’s proposed budget.

“While there continues to be a debate in the legislature about how to fund these important priorities—we are glad that both parties have understood that Medicaid reimbursement rates are a problem that needs to be addressed,” concluded Craven.

The finance committee will wrap up its public hearings on the Governor's proposed budget next week on April 24 at UW-Green Bay, and more area hospital leaders will be there to advocate for these important health care priorities.

WHA Urges Congress to Remove Medicare Telehealth Restrictions

WHA asks Medicare to reimburse for telehealth services for patients at home or in urban areas

In a [letter](#) sent last week, WHA asked the federal Congressional Telehealth Caucus to expand access to telehealth services for Medicare patients by eliminating a federal statute that prohibits Medicare from paying for telehealth services if the patient is located in an urban area or at home.

The Congressional Telehealth Caucus is a bipartisan coalition of U.S. Representatives and Senators seeking to develop a legislative package to "expand access to vital, cost-efficient telehealth and remote monitoring services across the country."

As stated in WHA's letter, telehealth, which is the delivery of health care services remotely by means of telecommunications technology, can help to improve access to health care services by allowing patients to receive care locally in their communities by connecting to existing providers in other locations. By enabling patients to connect to providers remotely, telehealth also decreases the amount of time that patients need to travel or be away from work and family. Further, by reducing avoidable, higher-cost health care utilization (e.g., emergency room visits and hospital admissions), the delivery of care via telehealth can help to reduce or maintain overall health care costs.

In urging the elimination of the statutory prohibition on Medicare paying for at-home or urban telehealth services, WHA asked the Congressional Telehealth Caucus to build upon the incremental but important work that Congress recently has taken to permit payment for targeted Medicare telehealth services delivered to patients located in urban areas or at home.

For more information, contact [Andrew Brenton](#), WHA assistant general counsel, or [Jon Hoelter](#), WHA director of federal and state relations, at 608-274-1820.

(2019 Wisconsin Rural Health Conference set for June 12-14 in Wisconsin Dells . . . Continued from page 1)

A variety of breakout sessions will give you the opportunity to examine and discuss models changing the delivery of and access to health care, public policy issues affecting rural health care, and ways in which data and technology are improving care and access for rural populations.

The conference will include:

- The popular education track focused on governance issues;
- Sessions focused on learning the skills and tools to approach a crucial conversation;
- Review of a toolkit of the key legal and compliance issues trustees need to be familiar with; and,
- Examining best practices from some of the nation's highest-performing hospital boards.

Make attendance at this year's conference a priority by registering today. The full conference agenda and [online registration](#) are available now. The full [conference brochure](#) can be viewed as well.