

Board Briefs

January 29, 2007

Athenahealth Business Development representative, Joe Donnelly, discussed the product's approach that incorporates web-based software, unparalleled industry knowledge and experienced support staff to relieve a physician's office staff of many time-consuming activities including: automatically checking patient eligibility prior to appointments; tracking practice activity in real time to ensure charges are captured and claims are generated for each patient; providing a "workflow dashboard" to see up-to-minute status on claims through internet access; and maintaining compliance with billing and claims management standards. Updated on a daily basis, Athenahealth's rule engine tracks the evolving requirements of hundreds of payers and thousands of benefit plans, which includes everything from coding advice to procedure documentation rules.

Founded in 1997, Athenahealth is the largest revenue cycle management company for office based doctors. Over 8,500 providers nationwide are using Athenahealth. They have over \$2.5 billion in physician revenue under management. They are endorsed by the CMA. He encouraged the board to attend the SBCMS/CMA Athenahealth program with complimentary dinner at The Historic Mission Inn on Wednesday, May 16 at 6 pm.

Doctor Walters presented Mrs. Lina Gobezie a CMA Memorial Resolution in honor of Doctor Gebre C. Gobezie who passed away in April 2006. Mrs. Gobezie thanked the board for the honor. She said her husband always felt the medical society board and staff were members of his family.

Medical students Thomas Soeprono and Jennifer Delcamp invited SBCMS leaders to attend their benefit dinner on Sunday, March 4th at 5 pm at Sayaka's Japanese Restaurant in Colton. Tickets are \$45 and attendees can participate in a silent auction. Donations are tax-deductible and reservations can be made by calling the SBCMS offices. Proceeds from the event will allow the medical students to continue to provide community service projects including a medical student run clinic.

Dr. Flynn reported the Nominating Committee met January 9, 2007. He presented the slate of nominations for SBCMS officers, one-year term (2007-2008); nominations for the SBCMS Board for two-year terms (2007-2009); nominations for the SBCMS Board representatives for a one-year term (2007-2008); re-appointment for CMA Delegates and Alternate Delegates; as well as CMA representatives. The board approved the report as submitted.

SBCMS Alliance President, Linda Letson, invited the board to attend a dinner and a special program hosted by the SBCMS and its Alliance at 6:00 pm on April 18, 2007 at the Arrowhead Country Club, 3343 Parkside Drive, San Bernardino. Guest speaker Richard Moersch, MD, a cardiothoracic surgeon and SBCMS member for 45+ years, has participated in a multitude of adventures while serving as a tour physician for the American and National Geographic Societies. Reservations are \$30 per person steak or \$21 per person pasta and can be made by calling the SBCMS offices by April 13, 2007.

IEHP's total membership is 300,076; Medi-Cal enrollment is 248,981 with 40,399 enrolled in the Healthy Families program. Healthy Kids enrollment for San Bernardino County is 4,956; Riverside's Healthy Kids is 4,640. IHSS enrollment is 1,100. The June auto assignment was 43 percent. IEHP conducted its 2006 Provider Satisfaction Survey. They used an outside firm, The Myers Group, to conduct the survey. Information obtained will allow IEHP to measure how well they are meeting their providers' expectations and needs. Respondents were asked to rate IEHP and all other plans in which they participate. A total of 277 surveys were completed. Doctor Gilbert reported their scores were significantly higher across the board than other health plans. Overall satisfaction with IEHP was over 90%.

Dr. GnanaDev reported the Governor announced his new health care proposal on January 8, 2007. It focuses on the themes of prevention, coverage and affordability. Specifically, the proposal includes a Medi-Cal and Healthy Family expansion, an individual mandate, employer mandate, insurance market reforms, easing of licensure requirements for physician extenders, tax system reform, and a physician/hospital tax.

The imposed "provider tax" on physicians and hospitals raised much discussion among the SBCMS Board. The tax would require physicians to pay a tax of 2% of total gross receipts, and hospitals to pay a tax of 4%. The administration believes that by increasing Medi-Cal rates and lowering the number of uninsured, physicians and hospitals can pay a new "coverage dividend." Although CMA is encouraged by the Governor's commitment to providing all Californians with access to health insurance, CMA is very concerned about this proposed tax, which is essentially a tax on sick people when they can least afford it. CMA is also concerned that allowing non-physicians to expand their practice beyond what they are trained and licensed to do will compromise quality of care and create a two-tiered system of care where only some people have access to physician services.

The proposed 2007-08 State budget was released on January 10. The proposed budget proposes total spending of \$241 billion from all funds (\$143 billion in state funds). State revenues are expected to increase by over 7 %, while overall spending is expected to increase by 1%. The Governor's proposed budget includes \$50 billion all funds (\$25 billion in state funds) for health-related programs and administration. The budget reflects the creation of a new Department of Health (DPH). The reorganization of the former Department of Health Services into the Department of Health Care Services and the DPH will enable the new DPH to better focus on the broad range of activities that contribute to the well being of Californians. The new DPH has a total budget of \$3 billion and is expected to be operational on July 1, 2007.

The budget did not contain any major new changes to funding for the Medi-Cal program, the Healthy Family program, or public health programs. The administration's proposed health care system were announced separately. Because these health system changes would not be implemented until after the 2007-08 state fiscal year, they were not included in the Governor's budget proposal. CMA is disappointed that the Governor did not include Medi-Cal rate increases in his budget. Medi-Cal reimbursement rates are some of the lowest in the nation.

Treasurer, Doctor Rick Murray, presented the 6-month financial report for period July 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006 is very favorable. Total revenue is \$324.405. Total expenses are

\$249,800. Excess revenue over expenses is \$74,605 after depreciation. The board approved the financial report as submitted.

On January 9th the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors (BOS) voted to implement SB 1773. This new law allows the BOS to levy an additional penalty in the amount of \$2 for every \$10, upon fines, penalties, and forfeitures collected for criminal offenses. It is estimated that SB 1773 will bring \$1.5 million annually to the EMS funds to help pay for uncompensated care. Dr. Borger reported that SBCMS will use the results of implementing SB 1773 in recruitment and retention efforts aimed at emergency medicine and on-call physicians.

Nominations were solicited for the 2007 Outstanding Physician Awards and the Outstanding Citizen Award that will be presented at the June 21, 2007 Installation of Officers program at the Mission Inn. The deadline to submit nominations is April 20.

Physicians who would like to participate in the April 24, 2007 CMA Legislative Leadership Conference should contact Lucy Garcia at the SBCMS to make their reservation. The fee is \$175 and late reservations will be contingent upon availability of flights. Attendees will review major legislative issues in health care and meet with legislators to discuss those issues.

CMA is soliciting nominations for one primary and one alternate CMA representative to the Medical Board Diversion Advisory Council that will advise the Medical Board Diversion Committee on quality improvement issues. The AMA's Senior Physicians Group is seeking nominations for three seats on its Governing Council. Nominees must be active members of the AMA and the Senior Physicians Group. The council is comprised of seven physicians over the age of 55 either retired or still practicing medicine. They are charged with advising the AMA Board of Trustees and staff on issues that bear directly on senior physicians. The council meets twice a year prior to the Annual and Interim AMA meetings.

The recipient of the AMA Foundation's 2007 Pride in the Profession Award is Dr. Dev GnanaDev. The award honors physicians who bring a sense of pride to the profession and whose actions promote the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health. Dr. GnanaDev will be presented the award on February 12th in Washington, D.C. The board was notified Doctor Ron Bangasser is the recipient of the MBC's Physician Humanitarian Award this year. The award will be presented to Dr. Bangasser at the November 2, 2007 MBC meeting in San Diego.