

CRAIN'S Health Pulse



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Today's News Friday, July 11, 2014

More LICH Protests

A group of five elected officials sent letters to the offices of the state comptroller and attorney general, protesting SUNY's deal with the Fortis Property Group to redevelop Long Island College Hospital. The two letters of protest, dated July 10, are from City Council members Stephen Levin, Carlos Menchaca and Brad Lander; State Sen. Daniel Squadron and Assemblywoman Joan Millman. In a letter to state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, the politicians ask him to reject the sales contract for LICH. They also ask the comptroller to "conduct a thorough review of the selection process, with an eye toward impartiality and transparency, as well as the shared goal of protecting critical health care services." The letter to Attorney General Eric Schneiderman asks the office's charities bureau to investigate what the group's political backers say is the mismanagement of a \$135 million endowment left to LICH by Donald and Mildred Othmer. Mr. Schneiderman's office, according to the letter, should "conduct a full review of the use and disposition of the Othmer Fund, both retrospectively and in the context of this agreement, before any court approval on the sale is granted."

Horizon BCBS Settlement OK'd

A settlement between Horizon BCBS of New Jersey and a class of policyholders and providers was approved on Wednesday. The group contends that the insurer under-reimbursed non-network claims. The settlement relates to a 2009 case that is one of several lawsuits against insurers that calculated "usual, customary and reasonable" rates using the allegedly flawed database of Ingenix, then a unit of UnitedHealthcare. Other cases, including a suit against Aetna, are ongoing, said Bruce Nagel of Nagel Rice, legal counsel to the plaintiffs. Under the agreement, Horizon must discontinue the use of the database in most cases, revise its disclosure and marketing materials to clearly communicate its reimbursement methodology, and pay \$2.5 million in legal fees to Nagel Rice. The settlement received preliminary approval from the court in December, but some of the more than 2.8 million class members were given until late last month to object to the settlement or opt out before the final hearing.

Diabetes Management Deal

A Manhattan company that manages diabetes signed a contract with Healthfirst to create an evidence-based diabetes program this fall for the insurer's Spanish-speaking members in New York City. Fit4D's Web-based technology, according to the company, relies on claim- and pharmacy-data capture, device integration and reporting to get diabetics to adhere to treatment. Assistance includes coaching by diabetes experts, targeted content (written, video, email, text messaging, social media) and virtual events (webinars, support groups, open forums). Nearly 28% of Spanish-speaking New Yorkers have diabetes. The Fit4D program with Healthfirst is funded by a grant from the New York City Economic Development Corp.

Layoffs at Meadowlands

For-profit Meadowlands Hospital in Secaucus is cutting more than 100 jobs in part because of a falling patient census that averaged in the mid-30s in late June and July. The hospital has 230 licensed beds. Tom Considine, former commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance who went on to become MagnaCare's chief operating officer in March 2012, became president of Meadowlands in May.

Doctors Council's new activist agenda

New leadership at the Doctors Council SEIU is taking a larger role in addressing community health issues and changes at the city's Health and Hospitals Corp. The public health system employs 2,400 of the Doctors Council's 3,000 members in New York state.

President Frank Poscia, who took office with Executive Director Matthews Hurley in January, said that the union is embracing a renewed mission to engage its members with some of the city's pressing health care issues, including reimbursement and measuring patient outcomes.

"Health care is changing right before our eyes," said Dr. Poscia. "We need to evolve as these changes occur so we can take control of them and make sure they actually improve patient care."

Dr. Poscia and Dr. Hurley were elected after Dr. Barry Liebowitz stepped down last year after 33 years as president of the country's largest doctors' union.

The union hopes to capture members' interest with improved communications, including a more active social media presence and a new website that went live on July 1. Some of the branding efforts include the tagline "A united voice for doctors, our patients, and the communities we serve."

In May, the Doctors Council presented a white paper to Deputy Mayor Lilliam Barrios-Paoli and HHC, calling for "formal joint decision-making bodies" to ensure that HHC's clinicians and staff have a say in initiatives aimed at improving quality and addressing the system's many challenges. The Doctors Council has been critical of HHC's recent top-down attempts to improve patient outcomes, including a pay-for-performance program that the union said was introduced without input from its members.

"Far too many management decisions have resulted in time and resources wasted due to failure to engage the frontline doctor in decision-making and strategy, goal-setting, measurement and execution," said the report.

Dr. Poscia wants doctors and the patients themselves, not just administrators, engaged in decision-making. The mayor's office has indicated that it is open to a collaborative approach, he said. The union plans to weigh in on discussions on such topics as hospital closings, paid sick time, and prekindergarten.

"Gone are the days that doctors can just treat their patients," said Dr. Poscia. "Now we need to be an advocate for patients in all things health care."

At A Glance

JOB: DOH's Office of Health Insurance Programs has what it calls a "once in a lifetime opportunity" to be project director of DSRIP. [Click here for the job description.](#)

FOR-PROFIT: Tenet Healthcare plans to acquire the assets of St. Mary's Hospital in Waterbury, Conn., potentially giving the investor-owned hospital chain ownership of five hospitals in the state, reports Modern Healthcare.