



Swatches

Connecting Rural Iowa

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In This Issue:

[President's Message](#)

[Iowa Mission of Mercy](#)

[Prescription Assistance for State Incarcerates](#)

[E-Prescribing of Controlled Medications](#)

[State Legislative News](#)

[Commonwealth Fund Project](#)

[National Ground Water Awareness Week](#)

[IRHA Membership](#)

President's Message

by Tori Squires, IRHA President

As I begin my term as IRHA President, I am reminded of the challenges we all face with providing health care to rural Iowans.

While the challenges are many, there is no better time to rethink how health care is provided in Iowa and work collaboratively to ensure all rural Iowans have access to the full continuum of care. The IRHA provides a forum for sharing best practices and networking opportunities that result in a better understanding of available resources and in cultivating collaborations among all stakeholders.

Focused on our mission to strengthen health systems for rural residents and communities, the IRHA Board of Directors continually looks for new opportunities to provide education and networking opportunities for IRHA members. Our Education Committee is hard at work developing a series of informative webinars for the year, the first of which - "Community Development and Recruiting Health Care Providers to Rural Iowa: Iowa's FIND Program (Fulfilling Iowa's Need for Dentists)" - will be held February 9 from Noon-1:00 p.m. For more information about this webinar, [click here](#). All previous webinars are also archived on this page. I hope you will participate in this and other IRHA webinars, and we welcome your thoughts on topics for future webinars. Please send your ideas to Gloria Vermie, Chair of the Education Committee, at Gloria.Vermie@idph.iowa.gov.



Thank you for your IRHA Membership!

Benefits of being an IRHA member:

1. Health advocacy with a rural perspective
2. Access to resources through the IRHA and NRHA websites and email distribution lists
3. Networking opportunities with professionals from diverse disciplines
4. Input opportunities for State and Federal Policy issues
5. Discounted rates for Annual Conference
6. Opportunities for leadership development

New IRHA Member Benefit!

IRHA is excited to announce a new benefit for our members - an Online

We also want to hear from you about topics of interest you would like us to cover in greater depth through our quarterly newsletter. We also invite you to submit articles for inclusion in the newsletter. Your thoughts on newsletter articles can be forwarded to Barb Blough, Chair of the Communications Committee, at barb.blough@iowadental.org.

To continue with these and other IRHA activities, we need your support. We are currently renewing memberships for 2012. If you have not yet done so, you can renew your membership, by completing and returning the membership renewal form you recently received by email or you can download a membership form from the IRHA website - click the "Join Now" option on the main menu at www.iaruralhealth.org. Questions on membership can be directed to Melissa Primus at mprimus@iaruralhealth.org or 515-282-8192.

I look forward to the coming year and facing these challenges together. Please feel free to contact me or any of the IRHA Board members with thoughts on how we can better serve you in reaching our shared vision of optimal health for all Iowans.

2011 Iowa Mission of Mercy Brings Smiles to the Siouxland Community!

On a blustery November day, Iowa Dental Association staff and a phalanx of volunteers descended upon the Sioux City area for the 4th annual Iowa Mission of Mercy. Many preparations had to be completed before the two-day clinic opened for patients at 6 a.m. on Friday, November 18. The Tyson Events Center, accustomed to hosting rock concerts and sporting events, was converted into a field dental clinic with 100 dental chairs, sterilization, x-rays, laboratory and all the supporting dental and administrative volunteer areas needed to execute a successful event.

Over 1,300 volunteers, including dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, and many general volunteers registered to participate in the two-day, free dental clinic. Although the role of the dental professionals is obvious to the success of Iowa MOM, general volunteers are also essential partners. Individuals are needed for registering volunteers and patients, escorting patients throughout the clinic during treatment, and providing day care. In addition, many volunteers work to distribute food and drink throughout the

Career Center.

IRHA members looking to fill open positions are now able to post employment opportunities to the IRHA website at no cost. Also, IRHA members looking for positions are able to post their qualifications and type of employment they are seeking at no cost.

This service is also available to non-IRHA members for a nominal fee.

To take advantage of this new member benefit, visit www.iaruralhealth.org and click the "Career Center" link on the main menu.

many volunteers work to distribute food and drink throughout the day to both patients and their fellow volunteers.

The Iowa Mission of Mercy depends on strong community support and the generosity of many individuals and businesses to execute an event of this magnitude. The Sioux City community, in spite of the hardship placed on them from last summer's flooding, stepped up to the task with a myriad of in-kind donations to offset the many costs for the Iowa MOM.

The Iowa Mission of Mercy is designed to treat immediate, acute dental needs for patients. Patients began arriving the day before the clinic opened to ensure they would be seen during the clinic. After spending the night in the Longlines Recreation Center (adjacent to the Tyson Center), patients lined up for the clinic opening at 6 a.m. on Friday. Many people came in severe pain from infected teeth and/or gums; some needed cavities filled; others needed teeth extracted. Some just needed a good cleaning! Whatever the issue, patients left Iowa MOM with better smiles and education on the importance of good oral health. In the end, over 1,300 patients were provided over \$1.1 million in free oral health care, including over 1,800 oral exams, almost 2,100 fillings, over 2,000 teeth extractions, and almost 600 x-rays taken! That's some mission!

Since 2008, over 5,600 patients have received treatment at four Iowa Missions of Mercy totaling over \$3.5 million in free care. In 2012, the Iowa MOM will be held October 5 & 6 in Davenport, Iowa.

For more information about the Iowa Mission of Mercy and how you can help, contact Kathy Salisbury at the Iowa Dental Foundation (800-828-2181, ext. 107). To view photos and videos of past MOM events, visit the Iowa MOM website at www.iowamom.org.

Prescription Assistance on the Way for State Incarcerates with Mental Health Disorders

Many Iowans are familiar with the Iowa Medication Voucher Program. This initiative, administered by the Iowa Prescription Drug Corporation, enables Iowans in need of assistance to receive a 90-day prescription from a limited formulary for \$3 or free if the co-pay is waived by the pharmacist. (Participant eligibility requirements, a list of participating pharmacies, and the limited 90-day prescription formulary can be found at www.iowapdc.org.)

Click "Medication Voucher Program.")

The Iowa Prescription Drug Corporation is working with the Iowa Department of Corrections to expand this program to serve incarcerates with mental disorders transitioning out of the State Corrections system. Currently, state offenders with chronic illnesses who leave the prison system are given a 30-day supply of medications. Thirty days is often not an adequate length of time for an offender to establish a source of continuous medication therapy. Discontinuing many types of psychiatric medications can lead to the underlying illness or illnesses no longer being under control, an outcome of which could lead to the individual reoffending. The expansion of the Iowa Medication Voucher Program will provide an additional 60 days of mental health prescription drug coverage for transitioning incarcerates. The additional time is essential to allow a released offender to locate a medical provider, be evaluated, and receive financial assistance - all of which is necessary to create a stable environment outside of the prison system.

The Iowa Prescription Drug Corporation has facilitated a series of work sessions with the Iowa Department of Corrections Pharmacy, the Iowa Pharmacy Association, the University of Iowa - College of Pharmacy, Hy-Vee, Dahl's and independent community pharmacies to develop a framework for the program. Program structure will include the following:

- **Eligibility:** Any incarcerate released with a diagnosed mental health disorder that is a resident of Iowa, has an individual/household income 200% of the federal poverty level or below, and does not have existing prescription coverage or health insurance that would cover the prescribed medication(s) will be eligible.
- **Release:** Individuals will be given a 30-day supply of all current medications from the Iowa DOC Pharmacy. Eligible prescriptions will be transferred to a participating local pharmacy (30-day prescription with one 30-day refill.)
- **Prescriptions:** Prescriptions will be filled at any of the 329 pharmacies across the state currently participating in the Medication Voucher program.
- **Reimbursement:** Pharmacies will be reimbursed for filling the 30-day prescription or 30-day refill at the current Medicaid reimbursement rate (State Maximum Allowable Cost).
- **Electronic Voucher Submittal:** An online portal is being developed that will allow pharmacies to electronically submit

voucher claims for both the Iowa Department of Corrections and the 90-day limited formulary voucher program.

The goal of the initiative is to positively impact the rate of recidivism among state offenders with severe mental disorders by providing critical prescription drugs to a high risk population. Reducing the rate of recidivism among state offenders with mental health disorders could result in very significant cost savings to the State of Iowa. The results of the initiative will be documented in a study analyzing the rate of recidivism among program participants. The initiative to serve transitioning state incarcerates will be launched in the spring of 2012. Please stay tuned for more program details including the expanded mental health formulary and effective program dates.

Rule Changes Will Allow Electronic Prescribing of Controlled Medications

The Iowa Board of Pharmacy enacted an administrative rule that will allow the electronic prescribing of controlled medications. Although enacted January 18, there are still some hurdles to get over before providers may begin e-prescribing Schedule II through Schedule V medications. According to the Iowa e-Health Connection, a publication from the Iowa Department of Health, there are four existing barriers to implementing e-prescribing these medications.

1. Prescribers must use an e-prescribing application (software) that is certified compliant with requirements of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).
2. Prescribers must complete a compliant identity-proofing process.
3. Prescribers must use a secure, two-factor authentication process to sign prescriptions for controlled substances.
4. Retail pharmacies must go through a certification process to receive e-prescriptions for controlled substances.

Last year electronic prescriptions were sent by over 60 percent of Iowa Physicians. And, nearly one-third of the prescriptions filled in Iowa last year reached the pharmacy in electronic form. The newly approved medications for e-prescribing account nationally for as much as 20 percent of all medications pharmacies dispensed. So, this change should add to the rapidly growing number of e-prescriptions submitted and filled in Iowa.

For more information on this topic, you can visit the Iowa e-Health website at <http://www.IowaeHealth.org>. You may also want to check out that website for a Q&A document about prescribing controlled substances in Iowa, produced in cooperation with the Iowa Pharmacy Association and the Iowa Board of Pharmacy.

Useful links:

[Board of Pharmacy rule \(657 - 21.8\)](#)

[DEA - overview of requirements for EPCS](#) (Electronic Prescribing of Controlled Substances)

[DEA - instructions for 3rd party review of EPCS software](#)

[Surescripts - Press release on EPCS](#)

State Legislative News

The Iowa Legislature is considering passage of legislation that would establish a standardized physician order for scope of treatment (POST) statewide. Proposals include [House Study Bill 511](#) and [Senate Study Bill 3043](#). Studies suggest passage of POST legislation in states across the country would ensure patient wishes for medical treatment toward the end of life are better documented and more consistently honored wherever one seeks care. Providers who lack access to a patient's POST form tend to lack sufficient information about a patient's true wishes at the end of life resulting in wide variations in care. A new study about a similar POST program in La Crosse, Wisconsin, just released by the Journal of Palliative Medicine, strongly supports these findings.

Gundersen Lutheran Health System, which operates in northeast Iowa, pioneered the advance care planning program Respecting Choices starting in the late 1980s, coupling it with the Midwest's first POST type program in 1997. The program has since been implemented in metropolitan areas such as Linn County, IA and Minneapolis/Saint Paul, MN, and internationally in localities as diverse as Singapore, Australia, Germany and Canada. The concept received significant attention during the federal healthcare reform debates from major news outlets including ABC, NBC, the New York Times and the BBC. It will soon be the subject of a book entitled "Having Your Own Say: Getting the Right Care When It Matters Most" to be published in the first quarter of 2012.

Public Policy Center

The University of Iowa Public Policy Center (PPC) received a grant from The Commonwealth Fund to determine how Iowa's health care safety net for underserved patients will be impacted by health care reform and they partnered with the Iowa Collaborative Safety Net Provider Network (Safety Net Network) to implement the project. The Commonwealth Fund awarded four grants focusing on health care reform and safety nets. Grants to Harvard University, RAND Corporation and the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) will evaluate the impact of health care reform on providers on the national level, while the grant to the PPC will use Iowa to model the impact on state and local levels. The grant to the PCC will fund an 18-month project to examine the impact of the health care reform on the safety net of medical, dental, mental health, and pharmacy providers in Iowa, as well as other related services and providers that deliver health care to uninsured, Medicaid, and other vulnerable patients.

The Safety Net Network's Leadership and Advisory Groups have been working to determine the current funding, expenditures, and infrastructure of Iowa's safety net, and will then develop strategies for improving it. A national advisory committee has also been formed with representatives from RAND, NASHP, National Association of Community, and several other organizations. The Public Policy Center and College of Public Health faculty and staff will do an economic analysis of the implications of health care reform, and UI College of Law faculty will give a legal analysis.

Three different subcommittees are being formed to look further into certain areas potentially affected by the ACA. The proposed subcommittees include: Oral Health, Federally Qualified Health Centers/Rural Health Clinics, and Medicaid. Due to the extensive redesign efforts at the state level, behavioral health was not included. A grant from Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield was provided to the PPC to help support the work of the subcommittees.

At the conclusion of the project, the PPC will provide reports on how the act will impact safety net providers and how it will affect their finances. The reports will also give recommendations for improvements in the funding and delivery of health care services by these providers.

National Ground Water Awareness Week

Twelve years ago, the National Ground Water Association (NGWA) started National Ground Water Awareness Week. Its purpose: To educate the public about the importance of groundwater and water well stewardship. One very important reason for such stewardship is the protection of public health.

NGWA is committed to protecting groundwater quality through public awareness to reduce risks to potable groundwater supplies.

This year, National Ground Water Awareness Week is March 11 - 17, 2012. Organizations are encouraged to use the occasion of Ground Water Awareness Week to educate the public about groundwater and water well stewardship. For more information, visit the Ground Water Awareness Week Webpage at www.wellowner.org.