



Optimal Health for All Iowans



Swatches

Connecting Rural Iowa

August 2015

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**2015 IRHA Fall
Conference
REGISTER
TODAY!**

President's Message

Keith J. Mueller, Ph.D.

The upcoming annual conference of the Iowa Rural Health Association is a great illustration of the principle of "all hands on deck" on behalf of the health of our state's rural residents. By that I mean all public agencies whose mission includes bettering the life condition of rural people, all organizations focused on local development and health, and all those delivering health and human services in rural communities. In my last column I wrote about the need to focus on the health populations and opportunities to do that through policy developments in Iowa, including changes to the state Medicaid program. The IRHA Conference offers opportunities to get more specific about three critical elements.

First, our keynote speaker, Lisa Mensah, Under Secretary for Rural Development (invited) brings the perspective of a federal agency that is a long-standing home for rural development, the US Department of Agriculture. Its interest in community investments includes extending access to broadband in rural facilities, including hospitals. Further, USDA is a partner in implementing health information technology that improves communication of critical information about rural patients to improve the timeliness and quality of care. Another partner in community health is the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Dr. Xi Zhu will share about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's investments in the culture of health, which should translate into healthier rural communities.

Second, we will hear about the roles of different health care professionals in coordinating care for rural residents. Pharmacists play an important role in that activity, as do the health coaches

IRHA will hosts our annual conference on **Thursday, September 10 at the Animal Rescue League's Conference Center in Des Moines.**

[Click here](#) to download a complete [conference brochure](#). Ready to register for the conference? [Click here](#) to be redirected to the [online registration form](#).

Save a few dollars and register by **September 2** to receive the early bird registration rates.

Share this information with a colleague and invite them to also attend. We look forward to seeing you in September.



Have you renewed your IRHA Membership?

The IRHA membership year runs with the

and others working in accountable care organizations; we will hear from both. We will also hear about improving access to, and use of, behavioral health services. And we will hear of other innovative practices that improve the timeliness and coordination of care, including telehealth.

Finally, we will continue to learn about efforts by agencies and programs to keep rural people healthy through foci on environmental health, agricultural health, and oral health. Those conversations bring us full circle back to the keynote from USDA and the importance of thinking about the growth and development of rural communities as high quality places to live, and the role of health services in making that a reality. I look forward to our learning a great deal in the September Annual Conference, and to our discussion of improved rural futures.

Rural Health Conversations - What's Next?

"Rural Health Conversations" was launched in May. It is a convenient way to stay informed on hot topics and rural health issues. The conference call features a short presentation from experts and includes open discussion between participants and speakers.

The May Rural Health Conversation was "Rural Kids Still at Risk" with Shari Burgus from Farm Safety for Just Kids. In June, IRHA Board Members Kate Walton and Eric Tempelis provided a recap of state health legislation. On the August 13 call "Drinking Water in Iowa: Public Water Supply and Private Well Program" speakers Diane Moles and Russ Tell from Iowa Department of Natural Resources, gave water quality information and data.

Fall-Winter Rural Health Conversations will continue after the [IRHA Fall Conference](#) on September 10. Some potential topics include: Telehealth Iowa Update, school nurses and student health in schools, and pharmacist role in rural Iowa. If you have a topic and speaker suggestion, contact Melissa Primus mprimus@iaruralhealth.org.

Rural Health Conversations are free and open to members and non-members. They are announced on the IRHA member list serve, and on the [Educational Events page](#) of the IRHA website. Stay informed by joining us on future conversations.

IRHA Seeks Candidates for Board of Directors

calendar year. If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2015, please do so today to avoid missing out on your membership benefits.

Renewal is easy and can now be completed online.

To renew online, [click here](#) to be redirected to the online membership form. If you prefer to renew by mail, [click here](#) to download a copy of the membership form.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRHA Office.

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

IRHA will hold board elections in November with the terms beginning January 2016. We are currently seeking candidates for board positions.

IRHA is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. The Board meets six times a year to conduct the business of the association and discuss current issues and concerns facing rural Iowa. Networking opportunities and idea sharing are also a part of the board meetings. Meetings are typically held in person in West Des Moines with the option of joining remotely always being offered. Board members are also asked to serve on a committee. Committee work is completed outside of the board meeting times. Board members are elected to a three year term. Candidates must be current members of IRHA.

If you are interested in serving or interested in learning more about the board positions, please contact the IRHA office at 515-282-8192.

Iowa Legislative Update

This year there continues to be a great deal of policymaking activity impacting rural health. The Iowa Legislature concluded its floor period this Spring by passing the state budget and opting not to provide rebasing funding, which would have adjusted Medicaid rates for utilization and cost inflation changes. On Monday, August 17, the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) announced the winning bidders for the Iowa Medicaid Modernization initiative. The four managed care organizations selected to manage the state's Medicaid program are:

- Amerigroup Iowa, Inc.
- AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa, Inc.
- UnitedHealthcare Plan of the River Valley, Inc.
- WellCare of Iowa, Inc.

[Read DHS' official announcement](#)(PDF)

The Legislature also passed the interstate medical licensure compact, which was signed into law by Governor Terry Branstad on July 2, 2015. Iowa held a lead role in development of the compact as Executive Director Mark Bowden of the Iowa Board of Medicine served on the Federation of State Medical Board's compact drafting team. Iowa joins Wyoming, South Dakota, Utah, Idaho, West Virginia, Montana, Alabama, Minnesota, Nevada and Illinois as founding compact members. Iowa's neighboring states of Wisconsin and Nebraska are expected to consider joining over the next year. The compact commission will

4. Input opportunities for State and Federal Policy issues

5. Discounted rates for Annual Conference

6. Opportunities for leadership development

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be seated in the Fall of 2015 and the interstate licensure process could be implemented within 12-18 months thereafter. Under the compact, an eligible physician could apply for a medical license in their home state and once approved, pursue an expedited license in other compact member states in a matter of days through a certification process. The hope is interstate licensure will improve access to care particularly in rural and underserved areas including through expansions in tele-health.

At the federal level, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will begin implementing alternative payment models in coming years to gradually replace the current fee-for-service system and sustainable growth rate. In addition, CMS will be requiring healthcare providers to transition to ICD-10 coding beginning in October 2015.

NRHA's State Leadership Conference

President-elect Eric Tempelis of the Iowa Rural Health Association attended the National Rural Health Association's (NRHA) State Rural Health Association Leadership Conference on July 14-15 in Minneapolis thanks to a stipend from NRHA. The annual conference brings together leaders from state rural health associations across the country to discuss rural health policy, association management, finance and best practices. Eric had the opportunity to meet with other medium-sized rural health associations nationally to share IRHA's story and learn from other associations with a similar composition and mission. IRHA traditionally sends a representative to the conference on an annual basis thanks to the financial support of NRHA and regularly integrates lessons learned into strategic planning for the association.



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