

Reform brings opportunity



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PRESIDENT

On March 23, 2010, an act entitled “The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act” was signed into law by President Obama and became Public Law Number 111-148. The following week

the president signed “The Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010.” Together these laws offer the opportunity for the most sweeping reform in health care that has occurred in decades.

For years, we looked to the inefficiencies in the health care system with a desire to make things better. Many involved in health care’s different aspects, whether it be paying for, delivering, or consuming it, hoped for solutions which would streamline care and rein in costs. The health care reform bill now gives us that opportunity.

Rhode Islanders in health care have a long history of collaborating, whether it be on a state level using quality initiatives as the driving force, like the Rhode Island Chronic Care Collaborative and the Rhode Island Safe Transitions Program, or in initiatives launched by the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner like the Chronic Care Sustainability Initiative (also known as CSI, Rhode Island’s multi-payer Patient-Centered Medical Home project). Insurers have collaborated with the process not only by funding quality initiatives but also by working with hospitals and medical practices to develop an extension of the medical home model of care. Quality measures in a Pay for Performance Program has yielded very positive results in some initiatives.

Through the demonstration of a collaborative environment, the Rhode Island Quality Institute was awarded the federal Health Information Exchange grant, which will assist in implementing an integrated, informative exchange to improve health outcomes, reduce medical errors and make our health care delivery system more effective and efficient. Additionally, the Institute was awarded the Regional Extension Center contract to assist providers in integrating effective HIT systems and to provide technical assistance to doctors, hospitals, and other health care

providers. To complete the trifecta of awards, the RIQI was selected as a Beacon Community which will use IT resources as a foundation for bringing doctors, hospitals, community health programs, federal programs and patients together to design new ways of improving quality and efficiency to benefit patients and taxpayers.

Earlier this year, Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts invited Rhode Islanders in government, in the health care field, in business, and on behalf of patients and families to plan for the challenges and opportunities of implementing national health care reform. She formed “The Healthy Rhode Island Task Force for National Health Reform Implementation.” Stakeholders in the health care discussion have met throughout the summer to discuss important topic areas like insurance market

reforms, coverage expansion, the design and building of the health insurance exchange, long-term care, payment and delivery system reform, prevention, pilots and reform initiatives, and workforce development.

On July 14, RIMS’ leadership and staff were among some 90 Rhode Islanders who participated in a Rhode Island Health care Stakeholders Meeting in Washington DC organized by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse. To face

the new and complex challenges as the implementation phase of reform begins, this forum gave Rhode Islanders an opportunity to discuss the provisions of the reform bill with Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius; Nancy-Ann Min DeParle, Director of the White House Office of Health Reform; and senior Senate staff.

The implementation phase of health care reform offers many opportunities for Rhode Island. The Healthy Rhode Island Task Force has tried to identify pilots and initiatives that can build on the current collaborative activities in the state. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 will change the landscape of our practice environment. Physicians and other health care stakeholders have the possibility to shape reform. We must come to the table to shape our future and the care that will impact our patients. The time to get involved is now, the opportunities are many! Together we can shape Rhode Island’s health care landscape. ❖

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