

RI Senate commission on hospital costs releases report

At the end of March after four months of study, a state Senate commission including RIMS President Gary Bubby, MD, and sixteen other citizens released findings and recommendations regarding hospital costs.

The Special Senate Commission to Study Cost Containment, Efficiency and Transparency in the Delivery of Quality Patient Care and Access by Hospitals, chaired by Senator Joshua Miller (D-Cranston), made the following recommendations, some of which are already reflected in new legislation that is currently before the General Assembly:

- Supporting the “affordability standards” that the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner has outlined for health insurers, including OHIC’s requirement that payers direct more resources to primary care.
- Establishing a provider payment reform task force.
- Implementing alternative payment models, including greater use of global or bundled payments for hospitals and doctors, with the possibility of requiring a complete transition by 2014.
- Enhancing transparency in the hospital rate-setting and negotiation process.
- Requiring all patients to designate a primary care provider.
- Reducing readmission rates (currently over 20% for adults in Rhode Island within thirty days of discharge); “safe transitions” programs are seen as a key to such reductions.
- Creating an all-payer claims database within the RI Department of Health. (Lack of funding for such a project is a major obstacle to realizing this idea. RIMS has reservations about the usefulness of any system that gathers only claims data.)
- Recommitting to comprehensive, statewide health system planning, as is required by the RI Coordinated Health Planning Act of 2006 but has lacked funding.
- Expanding options for hospital emergency departments to perform behavioral health evaluations and enable less costly, more effective behavioral interventions.
- Exploring possibilities for interstate coordination of certificate of need processes and moving toward a regional approach to health system needs.

The complete Senate Commission report is available online at www.rilin.state.ri.us/SpecialReports ❖

Information for consumers on health system reform

The “Health Care and You Coalition” has launched a website <http://www.healthcareandyou.org> designed to give consumers state-by-state information about how the national health care reform act affects them. Members of the Coalition are the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Physicians, the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association, the National Community Pharmacists Association, the AARP, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, and the Catholic Health Association. ❖

“The Point” is a central resource for RI seniors, disabled

The Rhode Island Department of Elderly Affairs offers a central, one-stop resource that can connect seniors, adults with disabilities and their caregivers with a variety of social services for families caring for loved ones at home. “The Point” (401-462-4444, www.ThePointRI.org) has multilingual benefit specialists who are trained in the needs of the elderly and adults with disabilities. The Point can provide information, referrals, and access to short-term case management and long-term care services. The Point is funded by a grant from the federal Administration on Aging. More information is available from Deborah Correia Morales at Quality Partners of RI: 401-528-3249 or DMorales@riqio.sdps.org. ❖

Patient Centered Medical Home Accreditation Guidelines from AAFP, AAP, ACP, & AOA

On March 8, the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American College of Physicians (ACP), and the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) released joint Guidelines for Patient-Centered Medical Home Recognition & Accreditation Programs building upon Joint Principles of the Patient-Centered Medical Home issued by the four groups in February 2007. More information is available at <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/pcmh3811.pdf>. ❖