

# WHAT'S HAPPENING

A newsletter for the Maine Medical Center family

## Medicaid Expansion Right for Maine and MMC



Dear Colleagues,

It's impossible to pick up a newspaper or turn on the news these days without hearing something about health care. Most of it boils down to people arguing via partisan talking points, making it next to impossible for the average consumer to determine what's really happening and where they might actually need to focus their attention.

In Maine, the fight over whether to expand the Medicaid program is a prime example of this phenomenon. Unable to separate fact from rhetoric, many people are left to simply come down as "for" or "against" expansion, depending on their political leanings. In my book — both as the President and CEO of Maine Medical Center and as a health care

consumer — that is a dangerous approach.

Through my work here and with the Maine Hospital Association (MHA), I've had a better opportunity than most to dig in to the debate and determine that the future of health care in Maine — a future that we're proudly at the center of — would be brighter with the expansion of the state's Medicaid program. Steve Michaud, president of the MHA, laid out some great points in support of expansion in a *Portland Press Herald* guest column on January 13. Today I want to express why I believe expansion is good for the state and for MMC.

The greatest result of expansion would be increased access to necessary health care services. As Steve mentioned, the 70,000 people who would gain access to care are already in Maine and needing services — they're not being transplanted in to place additional burden on our health system. As Maine's leading health care institution, we have a responsibility to care for everyone. However, in spite of our policies to support access, we find that

uninsured patients do not obtain recommended preventive care and they delay accessing necessary diagnostic treatment services more often than those who have third-party coverage. When people delay or avoid these types of services, it most often results in higher levels of complexity and more costly treatment for conditions. A key tenet of our mission is "caring for our community." Expansion will help us achieve

this aim.

In addition to the access component, expansion is advantageous — some would say necessary — to the long-term financial viability of Maine's hospitals. Before moving on, here's a quick primer on the financial implications of Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act: The ACA is intended to make

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*“Medicaid Expansion”  
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health insurance available to the greatest number of Americans. One of the forms of insurance the ACA is reliant upon is each state’s Medicaid program — currently 60 percent funded by the federal government and 40 percent by the Maine legislature. The ACA advocates for expansion (something 25 states and Washington, D.C., have already done) and incentives states by agreeing to cover 100 percent of additional costs through 2016, and covering the difference at 90 percent thereafter. The biggest means of paying for this extended coverage? Reduced Medicare payments to hospitals and other health providers.

To this end, MaineHealth’s member and affiliate hospitals — MMC being the largest of all — will have contributed \$323 million in reduced Medicare payments to support the ACA by 2019.

The state has an opportunity to offset these reductions by expanding access to affordable coverage, thus reducing our bad debt and charity care. Continuing to provide care to individuals with no expectation of payment can only have two results: the reduction of hospital services or higher prices charged to patients with private health insurance. Neither of these alternatives is in MMC’s or the public’s best interests.

Medicaid expansion is the

right public policy decision, and I believe it is important to share with you the implications of expansion of the state’s Medicaid program through the lens of someone who cares deeply about the long-term health of the state and of this great institution. We will continue to talk with our legislators and the governor and share our belief that expansion is critical to our vision of helping Maine become the healthiest state in the nation.

Respectfully,  
Rich



Richard W. Petersen  
President and CEO

# COMING UP AT MMC

**Uniform Sale  
To Benefit BBCH  
Bramhall Campus**  
Tuesday, January 21 —  
Thursday, January 23  
Dana Center  
Scarborough Campus  
Friday, January 24  
9 a.m. — 3 p.m.

**Swish Out Childhood  
Cancer Challenge**  
Sunday, January 26  
USM Gorham Campus

**Affordable Health  
Insurance Information  
Session**  
Monday, January 27  
1 — 5 p.m.  
Dana Center

**Geriatrics Grand Rounds**  
Tuesday, January 28  
7 — 8 a.m.  
Dana 4

**Women’s and Children’s  
Grand Rounds**  
Thursday, January 30  
9 — 11 a.m.  
Dana Auditorium

*For details on all  
upcoming events, check  
out the Calendar on  
the MMC Intranet.*

## WOW! Rewards and Healthy Payback Reminders

- The WOW! Rewards re-screening process starts Saturday, February 1. If you participated in WOW! Rewards in 2013 and did not meet one or more health screening targets, you can test again in February.
- Employees who are charged the tobacco fee in January will have only one re-screening opportunity in February. If you do not test negative for tobacco at that time, you will be charged the fee in 2014.
- The current WOW! Healthy Payback period ends March 31. Employees who participate in wellness classes or activities are eligible to receive up to a \$50 payback per period.

See the WOW! homepage on the MMC Intranet for details and instructions for these and other WOW! programs.



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MaineHealth

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