

Policy and Advocacy Update #14

September 18, 2009

Baucus releases reform proposal: Yesterday, Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, released a long awaited healthcare reform proposal. The "America's Healthy Future Act of 2009" provides a framework for increased access to health insurance, improved quality of care that we receive when we seek care, and focus that care on prevention and wellness. The legislation offers opportunities for further expansion of clinical pharmacy services across the healthcare continuum with its expectations of improved care coordination, reduction of avoidable hospital readmissions, and improved management of patients with chronic illness. The bill offers opportunities for academic pharmacy in its provisions related to the development of a national quality strategy and national workforce strategy. The text of the proposal is available at:

http://finance.senate.gov/sitepages/leg/LEG%202009/091609%20Americas_Healthy_Future_Act.pdf...

HHS outlines ARRA prevention and wellness funding: On Thursday, HHS Secretary Sebelius and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Frieden announced the release of the prevention and wellness funds established in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The announcement establishes the opportunity for communities to respond to a competitive grant process that will award a total of \$650 million. The funding has two main purposes: 1. "Communities Putting Prevention to Work will change systems and environments-for example, improving access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity-and putting into place policies, such as clean-indoor-air laws, that will promote the health of populations. Funded entities will have two years to complete their work." 2. Evaluation of "the reach and impact of the community projects." This is an excellent opportunity for academic pharmacy to strengthen relationships with community partners to demonstrate the competence of pharmacy professionals in community-based prevention and wellness efforts. The opportunity provides equal opportunity for the research capacity of the academy to be partnered with public health faculty to create an expanded evidence-base for integration of pharmacy professionals into public health programs.

Additional information has been posted on the grants.gov web site that more completely describes the grant opportunities, deadlines, and other details related to the competition.

<http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=5QvRKy4Q1Q2zFSt7xnmBpvkJJ3CZL9sLVgmWnzDNTTh...>
><http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=5QvRKy4Q1Q2zFSt7xnmBpvkJJ3CZL9sLVgmWnzDNTTh...>

Medical home opportunities: Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and the White House Office of Health Reform released a notice that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will develop a demonstration project allowing Medicare and Medicaid to join with private insurers to establish primary care medical homes.

Please notice that medication management is recognized as an important element of this medical home proposal. This is a potential opportunity for academic pharmacy to ensure the integration of clinical pharmacy services into these new programs or to set the stage for future medical home development. Take a leadership role and discuss this new project with the Director of your State Medicaid program and I would also recommend that those of your working with family physician and other primary care providers to strengthen these relationships in preparation for future medical home development. In addition to the delivery of clinical services, there will certainly be an evaluation aspect to the demonstrations, providing additional opportunities for pharmacy faculty to be engaged.

The notice can be read in its entirety by following the link below:

<http://healthreform.gov/newsroom/factsheet/medicalhomes.html>

Opportunities to influence tort reform?: Today the President announced a grant funding for demonstration projects, to be administered through the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), to:

- "Put patient safety first and work to reduce preventable injuries;
- Foster better communication between doctors and their patients;
- Ensure that patients are compensated in a fair and timely manner for medical injuries, while also reducing the incidence of frivolous lawsuits; and
- Reduce liability premiums."

The memorandum indicates that HHS is to release details of the request for applications within 30 days. Information will be available through the federal grant web site www.grants.gov. This is another opportunity for academic pharmacy to take a leadership role and work with community-partners such as health systems to demonstrate the capacity of professional pharmacists to be part of the solution to improving the safety of our healthcare system. The President's memorandum can be read in its entirety by going to: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/FACT-SHEET-Patient-Safety-and-Medical-Liability-Re...

House passes bill that ends FFEL: On Thursday the United States House of Representatives passed legislation that would end the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFEL). The "Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009" (SAFRA), HR3221, eliminates the program and the subsidies that had gone to private lenders will be channeled into other federal student assistance programs- Pell Grants and Perkins Loans. Part of the savings will also go to historically black colleges and universities.

The Senate has yet to take up its version of the legislation. Private lenders are hoping to gain support for their proposal that would reduce federal subsidies but not eliminate the subsidized loan program all together.

The House passed legislation can be read in its entirety by going to: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:H.R.3221>