
HCFAC/CMS

ALUMNI NEWS

FALL 2009 (Vol. 15 No. 4)

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The summer has flown by and here come the Holidays! Speaking of Holidays, enclosed with this newsletter is a flier for the Alumni Holiday Luncheon at the Turf Valley Country Club on Wednesday, December 9. Cut off the sign up sheet and send it in to register to attend. A great time is always had by all and we look forward to seeing many of you there.

I am pleased that the association continues to attract new members. On page 2 you will see a list of 6 new members, bringing the current membership to 552. **Membership renewal forms for 2010, only for the 255 of you who need them, are enclosed with this newsletter.** If your mailing label shows an expiration date of 12/31/09, you need to renew. If it shows 12/31/10 or later your dues for 2010 are paid up and you do not need to renew at this time. Dues remain at just \$5.00 per year and we hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to renew at this time, while it is fresh in your mind. And you can now renew for any number of years.

In this issue you will find items about the COLA Count, the Summer Cookout, Combined Federal Campaign Cookbook Sale, Federal Employee Health Benefits Open Season and 2010 Premium information, Medicare Part B Premium information, Health Care Reform Myths, and the latest in CMS senior staff and organizational news. We again serve up some whimsical pieces in the Komedie Korner. There are lots of items that hopefully will be of interest to you.

I want to wish you all a Wonderful Fall season and continued happiness, good health and prosperity in retirement.


William L Engelhardt

HCFA/CMS ALUMNI NEWS

Published four times a year for the members of the Health Care Financing Administration /Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (HCFA/CMS) Alumni Association

PRESIDENT

William L. Engelhardt

VICE PRESIDENT

William H. Hogsten

SECRETARY

Lillian H. Lehnert

TREASURER

William A. Grant

OTHER DIRECTORS

Richard C. Faulstich
Herbert B. Shankroff
Edward Steinhouse

OFFICE ASSISTANTS

Darlene Summerfield

DUE DATES FOR FUTURE ISSUES

Winter Issue – December 31, 2009

Spring Issue – March 31, 2010

Send material to:

HCFA/CMS Alumni News
P.O. Box 47564
Baltimore, MD 21244-7564

TELEPHONE: 410-786-3918

FAX: 410-786-3898

E-MAIL:

HCFAALUM@cms.hhs.gov

INTERNET:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/CMSAlumni>

NEW MEMBERS

The Association extends a hearty "Welcome Aboard" to the following new members:

Phillip Brown
John F. Crooks
Ann Marie Chesney
Brenda D. Rigby
Richard Sansbury
Stephen Sroka

We now have 553 active members.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL AND PAYMENT OF YEAR 2010 DUES

It is again time to begin the collection of the annual dues, this time for the year 2010, covering the period of January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2010. Enclosed with this issue of the Alumni News is the re-enrollment form (**but only for those 255 members who need it**). Dues remain at just \$5.00 per year. When using the form to mail in your dues, please note any changes in information so we may update our records (i.e. address, e-mail, phone number, etc.)

For your convenience, we have included a pre-addressed envelope to send in your 2010 dues. **If you have already paid your 2010 dues you should NOT find an enrollment form included with this issue.**

Also responding to popular request, we continue to accept membership enrollment (or re-enrollment) for multiple years. Dues are \$5.00 per year and members can sign up for any number of years. Because the dues are nominal, there are no discounts for multiple year enrollments and there is no "lifetime" membership. Multiple year enrollments are available as a convenience to members. To facilitate keeping track of individual enrollment periods, the mailing labels used to send the HCFA/CMS Alumni News contain the member's I.D. Number and the date of expiration of enrollment, i.e., 12/31/09. **Those with a date later than 12/31/09 do NOT need to renew at this time.**

NEW MEMBER DIRECTORY UPDATE

At the back of this newsletter you will find a 1 page Member Directory Update. It includes all additions (i.e., new members) and reported changes since the Summer 2009 Edition of the Member Directory was issued. We will continue to include updates from July 2009 on in each issue of The HCFA/CMS Alumni News. The update in this issue is a complete one and can replace all prior updates. **Since this is an update, you will NOT find yourself listed in it**

unless there has been a change in your membership information or you became a new member since the full Member Directory was issued in July 2009.

MEMBERSHIP SEARCH

As always, we acknowledge that there are many HCFA/CMS retirees that we have not been able to reach to tell them about the Alumni Association and invite them to join. We continue to ask for your assistance in spreading the message about us to them. If you know of any retiree that is not a member, please let them know about us and tell them how to contact us by telephone, snail mail or e-mail (all of that information can be found on page 2 of this issue). We will be very happy to send, either electronically or via snail mail, anyone the enrollment form and further information about membership. And Bill Engelhardt says you can always e-mail him personally at wengelhardt@comcast.net for faster response (as the office e-mail is only accessed weekly).

SOCIAL SECURITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

We'd like to again remind members that we also have a link to our sister alumni, the Social Security Alumni Association, web site on our web site. The actual URL for it is "<http://www.ssaanational.org>" but you can just click on the link on our page. Many HCFA and/or CMS retirees also worked for the Social Security Administration somewhere along the line, and are eligible for membership in both alumni associations. HCFA/CMS Alumni President Bill Engelhardt is one if those people and belongs to both.

SSAEAA

We'd again like to remind members that we do have a link to the Social Security Administration Employee Activities Association (SSAEAA) on our web site. The actual URL for it is "<http://ssaeea.org>" but you can just click on the link on our page. HCFA/CMS retirees are automatically members of the SSAEAA and are eligible to participate in discount purchases.

COLA COUNT – NO 2010 COLA

Through eleven months of the counting period toward the January 2010 federal retiree cost of living adjustment, the inflation index used to set that adjustment stands at minus 2.2 percentage points, following previously reported drops in October, November and December and increases in January, February, March, April and May, an increase of 1.1% in June, a decrease of 0.2% in July, and an increase of 0.3% in August. The annual COLA count measures the change in the index's average from one-third calendar quarter to the next. There is one month left in the counting period, but it very much appears that there will be NO COLA for 2010. There is no provision for reducing pensions when the COLA count ends up in negative territory so there will

not be any reduction, there just won't be any increase.

MEDICARE PART B PREMIUM

Current law protects those who draw Social Security from Medicare Part B Premium rate increases in a year when there is no COLA in the Social Security program--which is expected to be the case in 2010. Therefore Social Security recipients should expect to continue with the 2009 premium (\$96.40 unless subject to higher premiums based on income). The law would otherwise require a substantial increase in premiums to cover the rising cost of the program. Under current law the entire increase needed could be passed on to the Medicare beneficiaries who do not receive a Social Security benefit and therefore are not exempt from a premium increase. For example, the monthly Part B premium applying to those enrollees could rise from the current \$96.40 to \$110-\$120 for them, according to congressional estimates.

The House has passed a bill (HR-3631) to shield individuals who are not eligible for Social Security benefits—in the federal population, meaning CSRS-covered retirees—from increases in Medicare rates that otherwise would be effective in January. Hopefully, the Senate will follow suit, and may have already done so after our press deadline.

FEHB OPEN SEASON

The Federal Employee Health Benefit (FEHB) program open season will be from November 9 to December 14, 2009. During this time employees and retirees may elect to change their health insurance coverage. Premiums will be increasing significantly for many of the plans and decreasing for a few. The average FEHB plan increase will be 8.8 percent, but there will be substantial variation between plans. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Basic Self Plan is increasing by \$8.32 to a monthly cost of \$100.76, and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Basic Family Plan is increasing by \$19.50 to a monthly cost of \$235.98. The share paid by the government for us will be \$302.78 and \$707.95 respectively for the two plans. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Standard Self Plan is increasing by \$23.02 to a monthly cost of \$175.08, and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Standard Family Plan is increasing by \$44.38 to a monthly cost of \$400.97. The share paid by the government for us will be \$363.16 and \$814.75 respectively for the two plans.

The new premium rates for 2010 for all health plans can be accessed at the OPM web site (<https://www.opm.gov>). Just click on Health Insurance under Featured Sites on the right side of the page and proceed from there. The rates will come up in Adobe Acrobat Reader format.

Information about Dental, Vision and Long Term Care coverages and premiums is also available at the OPM web site. The average increase for vision coverage under the FEDVIP program will be 4.2 percent and for dental coverage, 2.4 percent. The open season also applies to the Dental

and Vision programs, as well as to the flexible spending account program; those who wish to have FSA plans in 2010 must make a new election, while coverage under FEHB and FEDVIP continue unchanged unless the enrollee makes a new choice.

OPM has said that the upcoming period in which current enrollees in the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) may change coverage is not a formal open season, even though the ending date of the election period, December 14, is the same as that for the upcoming open season in the FEHB, FEDVIP and FSA programs. OPM is calling it a "special decision period." Mailings to enrollees under the future purchase option for inflation protection started going out October 12 and mailings to those with automatic inflation protection will begin October 26. Enrollees will have the options of leaving their current coverage alone, subject to potential premium increases January 1 under the latter option, decreasing certain coverage in order to keep premiums the same if facing an increase, or electing new coverage under the revised FLTCIP terms that became effective October 1. However, the opportunity is not a true open season in the sense of the original election period in 2002, in which active employees could join with only the limited questions about their health that otherwise apply only to newly-hired workers. OPM said it expects to conduct a true open season late next year.

SUMMER COOKOUT

Some 31 Alumni members and friends came to the summer cookout at the home of past president Walter B. Schauer mann and his wife Eileen on August 13 and everyone had a wonderful time. As always, the Schauer mann's were most gracious hosts and we can never thank them enough for their hospitality each year. Maude Byrd brought a fantastic lemon pound cake, Bernie Crawley brought some very good Cole Slaw, Bill Engelhardt supplied the great peaches that Darlene Summerfield cut up and Ellen Engelhardt sent along a "to die for" marble pound cake, Sheila Frank brought a wonderful cucumber salad and great eggplant spread, Camille Grant brought a fantastic pasta, meat ball and sausage hot dish, Don & Bernadette Joy brought a very tasty apple pie, Herb & Susan Shankroff brought Herb's famous calico beans, and Darlene Summerfield brought homemade macaroni salad, deviled eggs, potato salad, a vegetable tray and the fresh cut up peaches. Food was plentiful and fantastic. Bill Grant, with some help from Walt Schauer mann, cooked up the meat in fine fashion and the liquid refreshment was in good supply. The weather was great and the picnic was held outdoors and indoors in beautiful and spacious surroundings. A lot of reminiscing, story telling and just great conversation filled the air. We hope to repeat the wonderful experience with another great picnic next year. The picnic next year will be hosted by Alumni Board member and Secretary Lillian Lehnert at her residence in Fulton, Maryland. We hope to see even more of you next year. Anticipating that it will be an equally successful event, future picnics may alternate between Walt & Eileen and Lillian as gracious hosts.

HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

As mentioned in the President's Message and the enclosed flier, the Holiday Luncheon will be

on December 9, 2009 at the Alexandra's Restaurant in the Turf Valley Country Club. The Restaurant itself will be the location and we will have the entire restaurant if needed. Last year some 101 alumni members and friends came to the Holiday Luncheon and everyone had a wonderful time. Everyone enjoyed the event and the place was abuzz with happy people renewing old acquaintances. And at \$20 per person the price is right! We hope to have a similarly great experience and see even more of you at this year's Holiday Luncheon.

As it was last year, the luncheon will be a buffet. The menu follows.

Starters: Salad Maison, Classic Caesar Salad or Seasonal Crab Soup.

Entrées: (One fish, one beef, one poultry – exact preparation subject to change)

Desserts: 3 or 4 different Chef's Choice of Desserts Displayed.

The buffet provides a wide choice of selections so there is something for every taste and it is not possible to entertain special requests.

CFC COOKBOOK SALE

CMS will not be producing a Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Cookbook for 2009 but there are cookbooks available from 2005, 2006 and 2007 and those are being offered for sale for the benefit of the 2009 Combined Federal Campaign. This is a very worthy cause and the cookbooks are very good so donations and the cookbooks are winning combinations all the way around.

Alumni members are invited (and encouraged) to purchase cookbooks from any or all of the three years, for just a \$5.00 donation per cookbook. Payment can be made to "Combined Federal Campaign" and sent to:

Deborah W. Kidd
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Mail Stop C3-24-07
7500 Security Blvd
Baltimore, MD 21244-1850

Please contact Deborah Kidd by telephone at 410-786-7204 or e-mail at Deborah.Kidd@cms.hhs.gov if you have any questions.

RE-EMPLOYED ANNUITANT AND FERS SICK LEAVE

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) President Margaret L.

Baptiste praised Senators Carl Levin, D-MI, and John McCain, R-AZ, and Reps. Ike Skelton, D-MO, and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon, R-CA, (the chairs and ranking members of their respective chambers' Armed Services Committees) and other members of the Fiscal Year 2010 Defense Authorization conference committee for including several civil service improvements in the final legislation.

The final agreement would allow federal agencies to re-employ federal retirees on a limited, part-time basis without offset of annuity; permit Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) workers to initially credit half, and later all, of their unused sick leave toward retirement; and provide for retirement equity for Federal employees in Hawaii, Alaska and the U.S. Territories. The Conference Agreement is expected to pass the House and Senate.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dianne E. Heffron has been selected as the SES Director, Financial Management Group (FMG), within the Center for Medicaid & State Operations. Dianne had been serving as the Acting Director of the Family and Children’s Health Programs Group (FCHPG) since August 2008. Prior to that assignment, Dianne was the Director of the Division of Reimbursement and State Finance. As Director of FMG, Dianne is responsible for the overall financial management of the over \$300 billion federal Medicaid program. Dianne has been with the Agency since 2002 in various Medicaid policy roles. Before coming to FMG, Dianne worked in FCHPG focusing on Medicaid demonstration program policy and finance as well as managed care policy and rate analysis and development. Prior to joining CMS, she held strategic planning and business development positions with the National Association of Community Health Centers and Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Dianne has a Bachelors degree in economics from the University of Maryland, and a M.B.A. from George Washington University.

Renard L. Murray has been selected as the SES Atlanta Regional Administrator, within the Consortium for Quality Improvement and Survey and Certification Operations. He has been serving as the Acting Regional Administrator in Atlanta since February 2008. He also served as the Acting Regional Administrator for Boston/New York for several months in 2007. Additionally, he served as national Regional Administrator lead for the 2008 Medicare Part C/D Open Enrollment Campaign and directed the Electronic Health Records outreach and education efforts for the Atlanta and Dallas Regional Offices. He joined the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in 1999 as a Health Insurance Specialist. He was later promoted to Branch Manger and Associate Regional Administrator in the Atlanta Regional Office. Dr. Murray has also served as Special Assistant to the CMS Chief Operating Officer.

John T. Hammarlund, the Regional Administrator for the Seattle and Chicago offices, joined the Office of External Affairs (OEA) on a 90-day detail on October 5, 2009 to serve in a leadership capacity to the Director. He has served in a number of capacities both in the regions and Central Office.

Thomas M. Kickham, Director for the Strategic Research and Campaign Management Group, OEA, began a detail on October 12, 2009 to Seattle to serve as the Acting Regional Administrator for the Seattle and Chicago offices. He has held senior leadership positions in CMS and served on a detail in the mid-nineties as the Acting Regional Administrator for the New York office.

2009 PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARDS

Each year, the President recognizes and celebrates an elite group of career SES members with the Presidential Rank Award. Recipients of this prestigious award are strong leaders who achieve results and consistently demonstrate strength, integrity, and a relentless commitment to excellence in public service.

There are two categories of rank awards: Distinguished and Meritorious. The *Distinguished Executive* rank is awarded to leaders who achieve extraordinary results. This is an extremely prestigious award as only 1% of the career SES may earn this award. The *Meritorious Executive* rank is awarded to leaders for sustained accomplishments. This is also a very prestigious award as only 5 percent of career SES members may receive this award.

Award winners are chosen through a vigorous selection process. A small number of career SES members are nominated by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, and then evaluated by boards comprised of private citizens, along with the nominations from across the Federal Government, and selectees are ultimately approved by the President. The evaluation criteria focus on leadership and results.

Three CMS career SES members have been bestowed the honor of a Presidential Rank Award for 2009 by President Obama.

Michelle Snyder has been awarded the *Distinguished Executive* rank designation.

Julie C. Boughn has been awarded the *Meritorious Executive* rank designation.

Laurence D. Wilson has been awarded the *Meritorious Executive* rank designation.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER'S ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

July 20, 2009

Poonam Chona, of the Office of Strategic Operations and Regulatory Affairs in Baltimore, MD, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Poonam is being recognized for this honor for her outstanding staff/technical work in relation to the ongoing FOIA litigation Jennifer D. Alley and Real Time Medial Data, L.L.C. v. United States

Department of Health and Human Services.

Karen L. Prisby, of the Dallas Regional Office, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Karen is being recognized for this honor for her outstanding customer service to HHS and OMB staff during a recent visit to Texas by coordinating and facilitating meetings with the State Medicaid staff.

August 3, 2009

Nine He, of the Office of the Actuary in Baltimore, MD, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Nina is being recognized for this honor for her outstanding efforts in compiling Prescription Drug Event data for use in the President's Fiscal Year 2010 Budget projections.

Melissa M. Bystrom, of the Kansas City Regional Office, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Melissa is being recognized for this honor for her outstanding efforts to educate and assist multiple Regional Office Divisions on the process and cost changes made to the GovTrip system.

August 17, 2009

Karen K. Cox, of the Office of Operations Management in Baltimore, MD, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Karen is being recognized for this honor for her outstanding efforts to advance the CMS COOP program through the development of five business continuity plans to carry out the CMS mission essential function.

Mary E. Munoz, of the Denver Regional Office, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Mary is being recognized for this honor for assisting with the coordination of three important IHS training sessions to Tribal members from seven mid-western and western states, while maintaining her regular workload.

August 31, 2009

Deborah S. Lester, of the Office of Acquisition and Grants Management in Baltimore, MD, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Debbie is being recognized for this honor for her exceptional performance as a Contract Specialist expertly managing the procurement process for the award of three large, complex task orders totaling over \$1 billion. She is an outstanding example to her co-workers and an invaluable asset to OAGM and the program offices that she supports.

Chris Havnar, of the San Francisco Regional Office, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Chris is being recognized for this honor for ably seeing to the needs of employees and managers not just in Region IX but also in every consortium across the country. Her hard work makes it possible for CMS to successfully complete its work in the field.

September 15, 2009

Shannon Flood, of the Office of Research, Development and Information in Baltimore, MD, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Shannon is being recognized for this honor for her outstanding efforts in directing and coordinating the Post-Acute Care-Payment Reform Demonstration.

Lydia Skeen, of the Seattle Regional Office, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Lydia is being recognized for this honor for her outstanding performance serving as the lead for a CMS review team that uncovered significant systemic deficiencies in Alaska's four Medicaid home and community-based services waivers.

September 28, 2009

Jacqueline Abt, of the Office of Clinical Standards and Quality in Baltimore, MD, has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Jacqueline is being recognized for this honor for her contributions to the ESRD program and advancing use of electronic health information for Medicare beneficiaries who have been impacted by End Stage Renal disease.

Lisa J. Wilson, of the Office of External Affairs in Washington, D.C., has been selected for the Chief Operating Officer's Achievement Award. Lisa is being recognized for this honor for consistently and exceptionally supporting communications and coordination with CMS and the States on CHIPR, ARRA and LIS implementation.

In recognition of their accomplishments, these employees have their pictures posted on the CMSNet.

HEALTH CARE REFORM MYTHS

The HCFA/CMS Alumni Association takes no position for or against health care reform. However, the distortions and falsehoods floating around about health care reform are virtually endless, and facts seldom get in their way. We present just a top 10 list for which facts are clearly in evidence.

1. Using reconciliation to pass major legislation is the "nuclear option" and is unprecedented. In fact, the Reconciliation process would not change Senate rules -- it is currently part of the congressional budget process. And it has been used in the past for major issues, including tax cuts under the Bush Administration and for health care measures several times. A Republican-led Congress used reconciliation to pass Medicare Advantage as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. In 1986, Congress used reconciliation to pass COBRA, which gave "workers and their families who lose their health benefits the right to choose to continue group health benefits provided by their group health plan for limited periods of time under certain circumstances." In the Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990, Congress used reconciliation

to pass the Patient Self-Determination Act, which requires hospitals, nursing homes, HMOs, and other organizations that participate in Medicare or Medicaid to provide information about advance directives and patients' decision-making rights.

2. There is no health care crisis, the current health care system currently works fine and only a purportedly small number of uninsured people would benefit from reform. In fact, in addition to the uninsured, roughly 25 million Americans were underinsured in 2007. The uninsured and the underinsured do not receive adequate care and face financial hardship. The underinsured also face the prospect of having their policies rescinded just when most needed and of having coverage denied based on preexisting conditions. Rapidly rising premiums are putting ever higher numbers of Americans at risk for not being able to keep affordable health insurance coverage.

3. Health care reform will impose rationing. In fact, insurance companies already ration care by restricting coverage of procedures and tests like MRIs and CAT scans and by denying coverage for pre-existing medical conditions. No provisions in the health care proposals suggest or require rationing of services. Health care reform would lessen rather than increase rationing by preventing the insurance industry from imposing its brand of rationing.

4. Health care reform provides for euthanasia or “death panels.” In fact, the provisions in the proposals that bring forth this myth involve insurance coverage for advance planning medical consultations, and advance care planning is not mandatory in the proposals. The proposals only would ensure that advance care planning would be covered if a patient requests it from a qualified provider. The allegation that “death panels” would be created to determine the worthiness of individuals to receive care is not supported by any provisions in any of the proposals.

5. Health care reform legislation will cover undocumented immigrants. The House bill stipulates that those “not lawfully present” may not receive subsidies to purchase insurance. It also stipulates that nothing in the subtitle shall allow Federal payments for affordability credits on behalf of individuals who are not lawfully present in the United States.

6. Health care reform will raise your taxes. In fact, the surtax in the House bill applies only to income exceeding \$350,000 per year for joint filers. The House health care legislation would establish a 1 percent tax on joint income exceeding \$350,000 but not greater than \$500,000 per year; a 1.5 percent tax on joint income exceeding \$500,000 but not greater than \$1 million per year; and a 5.4 percent tax on joint income exceeding \$1 million per year. Single filers would be subject to the surtax starting at income exceeding \$280,000 per year. It is estimated that only the highest earning 1.2 percent of American households will pay a surcharge.

7. House bill would ban private individual insurance. The bill does not “outlaw” private individual insurance. The provision to which the allegation referred establishes the conditions under which existing private plans would be exempted from the requirement that they participate in the Health Insurance Exchange. Individual private health insurance plans that do not meet the “grandfather” conditions would still be available for purchase, but only through the exchange and

subject to those regulations. The assertion that individuals would no longer be able to keep their personal coverage is not in any version of the proposals.

8. The Government can't run a health care program. In fact, the highly popular Medicare program and the very successful Veterans Health Administration program are both government run. Medicare costs have actually risen more slowly than private insurance costs (8.8% per year compared to 9.9%). The rise in Medicare costs is just part of the overall rise in health care spending. And in fact Medicare spending has lagged private spending: if insurance premiums had risen 'only' as much as Medicare spending, they'd be 1/3 lower than they are. Elderly Medicare beneficiaries report greater overall satisfaction with their health coverage, better access to care, and fewer problems paying medical bills than people covered by employer-sponsored plans. Outside experts agree that the VHA has become an industry leader in its safety and quality measures. The VHA's 'integrated health information system, including its framework for using performance measures to improve quality, is considered one of the best in the nation.

9. VHA "death book" pushes vets to prematurely end their lives. The **End-of-life educational booklet "Your Life, Your Choices" is not a "death book."** The booklet actually emphasizes that "your wishes will direct future health care decisions" and presents preserving one's life "using any means possible" as an option to consider.

10. Health care reform would raise income taxes on all small businesses. In fact the Ways and Means committee stated that according to JCT, only 4.1 percent of small-business owners would be affected by a surtax. The legislation would establish a 1 percent tax on joint income exceeding \$350,000 but not greater than \$500,000 per year; a 1.5 percent tax on joint income exceeding \$500,000 but not greater than \$1 million per year; and a 5.4 percent tax on joint income exceeding \$1 million per year. Single filers would be subject to the surtax starting at income exceeding \$280,000 per year.

COMEDY KORNER

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE DEBATE

Submitted by Ed Steinhouse

Apparently the American Medical Association has weighed in on the Universal Health Care Debate:

- * The Allergists voted to scratch it, but the Dermatologists advised not to make any rash moves.
- * The Gastroenterologists had sort of a gut feeling about it but the Neurologists thought the Administration had a lot of nerve.
- * The Obstetricians felt they were all laboring under a misconception.

- * Ophthalmologists considered the idea shortsighted.
- * Pathologists yelled, "Over my dead body!" while the Pediatricians said, 'Oh, Grow up!'
- * The Psychiatrists thought the whole idea was madness, while the Radiologists could see right through it.
- * Surgeons decided to wash their hands of the whole thing.
- * The Internists thought it was a bitter pill to swallow, and the Plastic Surgeons said, "This puts a whole new face on the matter."
- * The Podiatrists thought it was a step forward, but the Urologists were pissed off at the whole idea.
- * The Anesthesiologists thought the whole idea was a gas and the Cardiologists didn't have the heart to say no.
- * In the end, the Proctologists won out, leaving the entire decision up to the a**holes in Washington.

DON'T TOUCH ME!

An older couple was lying in bed one morning, having just awakened from a good night's sleep. He took her hand and she responded, "Don't touch me."

"Why not?" he asked.

She answered back, "Because I'm dead."

The husband said, "What are you talking about? We're both lying here in bed together and talking to one another."

She said, "No, I'm definitely dead."

He insisted, "You're not dead. What in the world makes you think you're dead?"

"Because I woke up this morning and nothing hurts."

FORGOTTEN SON!

A pious man, who had reached the age of 105, suddenly stopped going to synagogue. Alarmed by the old fellow's absence after so many years of faithful attendance, the Rabbi went to see him. He found him in excellent health, so the Rabbi asked; "How come after all these years we don't see you at services anymore?"

The old man lowered his voice. "I'll tell you, Rabbi," he whispered. "When I got to be 90, I expected God to take me any day. But then I got to be 95, then 100, then 105. So, I figured that God is very busy and must have forgotten about me, and I don't want to remind Him!"

FROG NOISE, PLEASE!

A sister and brother were talking to each other when the little boy got up and walked over to his Grandpa and said, "Grandpa, please make a frog noise."

The Grandpa said, "No."

The little boy went on, "Please...please make a frog noise."

The Grandpa said, "No, now go play."

The little boy then said to his sister, "Go tell Grandpa to make a frog noise."

So the little girl went to her Grandpa and said, "Please make a frog noise."

The Grandpa said, "I just told your brother 'no' and I'm telling you 'no'."

The little girl said, "Please...please Grandpa make a frog noise."

The Grandpa said, "Why do you want me to make a frog noise?"

The little girl replied, "Because mommy said when you croak we can go to Disney World!"

MANAGERIUM

The heaviest element known to science is Managerium.

This element has no protons or electrons, but has a nucleus made up of 1 neutron, 2 vice-neutrons, 5 junior vice-neutrons, 25 assistant vice-neutrons, and 125 junior assistant vice-neutrons all going round in circles.

Managerium has a half-life of three years, at which time it does not decay but institutes a series of reviews leading to reorganization.

Its molecules are held together by means of the exchange of tiny particles known as morons.

HUMAN YEARS!

God created the mule, and told him, "You are mule. You will work constantly from dusk to dawn, carrying heavy loads on your back. You will eat grass and lack intelligence. You will live for 35 years."

The mule answered, "To live like this for 35 years is too much. Please, give me no more than 20."

And it was so.

Then God created the dog, and told him, "You are dog. You will hold vigilance over the dwellings of Man, to whom you will be his greatest companion. You will eat his table scraps and live for 30 years."

The dog responded, "Lord, to live 30 years as a dog like that is too much. Please, no more than 10 years."

And it was so.

God then created the monkey, and told him, "You are monkey. You shall swing from tree to tree, acting like an idiot. You will be funny, and you shall live for 20 years."

The monkey responded, "Lord, to live 20 years as the clown of the world is too much. Please, Lord, give me no more than 10 years."

And it was so.

Finally, God created Man and told him, "You are Man, the only rational Being that walks the earth. You will use your intelligence to have mastery over the creatures of the world. You will dominate the earth and live for 20 years."

The man responded, "Lord, to be Man for only 20 years is too little. Please, Lord; give me the 15 years the mule refused, the 20 years the dog refused, and the 10 years the monkey rejected."

And so God made Man to live 20 years as a man, then marry and live 15 years like a mule working and carrying heavy loads on his back. Then, he is to have children and live 20 years as

a dog, guarding his house and eating the leftovers after they empty the pantry; then, in his old age, to live 10 years as a monkey, acting like an idiot to amuse his grandchildren.

And it is so!

NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

'Twas the night before Christmas at Rock-Away Rest,
And all of us seniors were looking our best.
Our glasses, how sparkly, our wrinkles, how merry;
Our punch bowl held prune juice plus three drops of sherry.
A bedsock was taped to each walker in hope,
That Santa would bring us soft candy and soap.
We surely were lucky to be there with friends,
Secure in this residence and in our Depends.
Our grandkids had sent us some Christmassy crafts,
Like angels in snowsuits and penguins on rafts.
The dental assistant had borrowed our teeth,
And from them she'd crafted a holiday wreath.
The bed pans, so shiny, all stood in a row,
Reflecting our candle's magnificent glow.
Our supper, so festive (the joy wouldn't stop),
Was creamy warm oatmeal with sprinkles on top.
Our salad was Jell-O, so jiggly and great;
Then puree of fruitcake was spooned on each plate.
The social director then had us play games,
Like "Where Are You Living?" and "What Are Your Names?"
Old Grandfather Looper was feeling his oats,
Proclaiming that reindeer were nothing but goats.
Our resident wanderer was tied to her chair,
In hopes that at bedtime she still would be there.
Security lights on the new fallen snow
Made outdoors seem noon to the old folks below.
Then out on the porch there arose quite a clatter
(But we are so deaf that it just didn't matter).
A strange little fellow flew in through the door,
Then tripped on the sill and fell flat on the floor.
'Twas just our director, all toggled out in red.
He jiggled and chuckled and patted each head.
We knew from the way that he strutted and jived
Our Social Security checks had arrived.
We sang -- how we sang -- in our monotone croak,
Till the clock tinkled out its soft eight-p.m. stroke.

And soon we were snuggling deep in our beds.
While nurses distributed nocturnal meds.
And so ends our Christmas at Rock-Away Rest.
'fore long you'll be with us. We wish you the best.

OBITUARIES

EILEEN MCGUIRE

By Albert Leone & Frances Blue

It is with great sadness and a heavy heart that we have to tell you of the passing of Eileen McGuire on July 8th, 2009. For those of you who knew Eileen, you know she was a very private person and she never wanted to burden anyone with her health issues. It came as a great shock to her friends that she was ill and passed away. For those of you who really did not know her, you missed a lot. Eileen was a psychiatric nurse for many years before her arrival at the then HCFA. If you ever had a chance to see her résumé you would have been astounded at just how many advanced degrees one person could have. She was so bright but never made you feel that you knew less than she. More than education and credentials, the Eileen we knew was witty, diligent almost to a fault for most people, had a great sense of humor that was very much on the wry side and above all, she had big heart, great warmth and did acts of extreme kindness and thoughtfulness that made a difference in people's lives. We were the recipients of her loyalty and friendship and she impacted our lives in untold ways.

During her all too short retirement, Eileen took up cooking and if you knew Eileen you would know that she brought gusto to it that few of us could conjure up. She did the same thing with decorating her apartment. During our days at HCFA, Eileen was a researcher and computer guru and she excelled at that. Eileen could find her way around all the new technologies like no one we have ever known.

Eileen's life was celebrated on August 8th at a blessing service in New Windsor, NY. She will be sorely missed by those who were fortunate enough to have known her.

IN MEMORIAM

The Alumni Association respectfully acknowledges

the passing of the following

Alumni/Employees/Spouses and expresses its

sympathy to family members:

DOLORES CASHMAN (7/27/09)*

SYLVIA C. GILDEN (9/15/09)**

JANET MOYLE HARRYMAN (5/28/09)**

CHRISTINE S. HELM (7/9/09)***

EILEEN MCGUIRE 7/8/09****

RON PRIHODA (7/16/09)**

SAMUEL STERN (7/4/09)*

RAYMOND J. WOERNER (3/3/09)**

* HCFA Retiree

** HCFA/CMS Alumni Association Member, retired from Central Office

***HCFA/CMS Alumni Association Member, retired from the San Francisco Regional Office

**** CMS Employee from the New York Regional Office

If you are aware of any other deaths of Alumni please notify the editorial staff

October 2009