Hospitals and Partners Begin Initiative to Improve Asthma Care and Access

On March 3, CHA launched a statewide asthma initiative to improve patient care and access and to design new models of care that will transform community partner and hospital relationships. Nearly 100 people from hospitals and community partners attended, along with other experts. The initiative is being led by Anne Diamond, CEO, UConn Health's John Dempsey Hospital, and Stuart Marcus, MD, CEO, St. Vincent’s Medical Center.

“This is important work on which we’re about to embark,” said Ms. Diamond. “We have a vision for the future of how asthma is managed in our state, and we are confident as a group that we can move forward the care of asthma for patients in Connecticut.”

“Hospitals are always seeking to better serve patients and communities. Coordinating care is key and hospitals can support the continuum,” added Dr. Marcus. “Asthma is an issue on which we can make headway and solve.”

The asthma initiative was developed by the CHA Committee on Population Health, which determined that asthma remains a problem in Connecticut, affecting the quality of life of children and adults in the state. The kickoff program provided national, statewide, and hospital perspectives, and discussed strategies for addressing the problem collaboratively.

Michelle Cloutier, MD, Professor of Pediatrics & Medicine at UConn Health Center and Director of the Asthma Center at The Children’s Center for Community Research at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, provided a national perspective of the asthma problem, saying that race, ethnicity, and poverty are key factors in morbidity. “Until we address issues of poverty, we cannot change prevalence in a meaningful way,” she said. Dr. Cloutier designed the nationally recognized Easy Breathing program.

Mehul Dalal, MD, Chronic Disease Director at the Connecticut Department of Public Health, talked about the state’s vision for improving the future for people with asthma as being aligned with Healthy Connecticut 2020. He said that the state is focusing on helping people make healthy choices, providing community resources, and supporting proactive healthcare. Marie-Christine Bourami, RN, PhD, Program Director, Connecticut Department of Health, discussed the state’s asthma program, describing how asthma has far-reaching effects, from school and work absences, to work and academic performance issues.

Peter Hayward, PhD, Director, Data Analysis, CHA, provided the Connecticut hospital perspective, showing data illustrating asthma as the eighth leading diagnosis for Medicaid hospital utilization in Connecticut. Mary Reich Cooper, MD, JD, Chief Quality Officer and Vice President for Safety and Quality, CHA, described how the initiative will mobilize hospitals in collaboration with community partners to identify barriers and challenges in the continuum for adults and children with asthma; develop population-specific models of intervention; identify, share, and implement best practices; and identify and foster implementation of strategies for sustainability.
On February 27, CHA and Connecticut hospitals provided impassioned testimony before the Appropriations Committee on the Governor's 2016-2017 biennium budget proposal, asking for strong policy that supports a sustainable healthcare environment, not more cuts and taxes.

"Connecticut hospitals have been struggling for years because of cuts to reimbursement and taxes. Now, with the Governor's proposed budget, reimbursement would drop further, the tax on patient care would rise, and hospitals would face new regulatory burdens," said Stephen Frayne, Senior Vice President, Health Policy, CHA. "The hits started coming in 2012 and are getting bigger all the time – what started as a hit in 2012 of $33 million balloons in this budget to $400 million per year. We need strong public policy to achieve a sustainable healthcare environment in our state, not more slashing of hospitals."

Representatives from CHA and hospitals across the state testified that hospitals have been cut and taxed so significantly already that it is hurting patient care, access, jobs, and the economy, and that the proposed budget would add even more financial pressure at a time when hospitals need adequate funding to provide the best care. The funds hospitals are taxed would have been invested in patient care and staffing and used to improve hospital infrastructure and technology.

"We believe a high-quality healthcare system is as critical to the well-being and prosperity of a community as clean air, pure water, and excellent educational opportunities," said David Bittner, Senior Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. He noted that the hospital "simply cannot absorb such reductions without grave reductions in service delivery, employment, and future economic investment."

"Hospitals have stepped forward to build capabilities and manage populations so we can reduce costs and increase quality, and that’s the real solution, not indiscriminate cuts," said Patrick Charmel, CEO, Griffin Hospital.

"What I care about is taking care of patients. I want to focus my efforts on providing great care," stated Bristol Hospital CEO Kurt Barwis.

Throughout the early evening and into the night, hospitals urged legislators to reject the budget proposals to increase the hospital tax and cut rates and other funding sources for hospitals. Hospitals provided information on what the cuts and expanded tax would mean for access to patient services and programs. Hospitals also highlighted their continued focus on safety and quality, notwithstanding the continued reduction in state support.

"Rather than imposing random cuts with the misguided hope that quality care may miraculously result, we should instead be focused on a thoughtful strategy that embraces innovation to advance the triple aim: improve the health of Connecticut’s population and improve the manner in which Connecticut residents experience care, while reducing the per capita cost of healthcare," said Stuart Marcus, MD, CEO, St. Vincent’s Medical Center. "I can’t begin to detail adequately how much more devastating these additional cuts would be – to St. Vincent’s, the residents who rely on us, our associates, and to our economy."

Catherine Rees, MPH, Director of Community Benefit at Middlesex Hospital, said the proposed budget “will have profoundly adverse consequences for Connecticut hospitals and the communities they serve, namely as it comes on the heels of a series of previously imposed cuts and tax expansions… Our vulnerable citizens will bear the brunt and will suffer. To offset the proposed taxation and cuts,
hospitals will be forced to make hard decisions regarding continuing support for certain community benefit programs."

“I can’t stress enough how hard it is for community hospitals such as Johnson Memorial to survive,” said Ian Tucker, MD, family physician and Vice President of Medical Affairs at Johnson Memorial Hospital. "I’ve seen what hospitals and administrators go through – how hard they fight to keep the hospital viable, and to develop and expand services to meet the needs of the people they serve."

Testimony from Day Kimball Healthcare echoed concerns that hospitals are “under significant financial stress… this budget would add even more financial pressure at a time when we need relief.”

Additionally, the Bridgeport Regional Business Council submitted testimony urging the committee to reject the “significant expansion of the so-called hospital tax as well as cuts to hospital-related revenue sources.”

CHA thanks the hospitals and health systems that provided testimony, which has been posted on the Appropriations Committee website: Bristol Hospital, Day Kimball Hospital, Eastern Connecticut Health Network, Griffin Hospital, The Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, Hartford HealthCare, Johnson Memorial Hospital, Lawrence + Memorial Hospital, Middletown Hospital, St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center, Saint Mary’s Hospital, St. Vincent’s Medical Center, Stamford Hospital, Waterbury Hospital, Western Connecticut Health Network, Yale-New Haven Children’s Hospital, and Yale New Haven Health System.

Connecticut Hospitals to Testify on Mental Health Cuts in Budget

Tomorrow, CHA and hospitals from across the state will provide testimony before the Appropriations Committee on the Governor’s 2016-2017 biennium budget proposal related to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). CHA will be testifying in opposition to the proposed state budget as it relates to the cuts/changes proposed to the DMHAS budget. Specifically, the Governor’s proposed budget will reduce Medicaid coverage for some adults and cut close to $25 million in grants to fund mental health treatment. These reductions will tax the state’s mental health system severely, and intensify the burden placed on hospital Emergency Departments and outpatient clinics as key providers of mental health safety net services.

At the close of the March 6 public hearing, the Appropriations Committee will have completed its series of public hearing on the Governor’s 2016-2017 biennium budget. The various subcommittees of the Committee as a whole will begin to dig deeper into the budget in a series of public meetings and forums. It is expected that the Appropriations Committee will take action on the budget on or before the reporting deadline of Thursday, April 30, 2015.

Join CHA’s Campaign to Help Protect Hospitals from Cuts and Taxes

The Governor’s proposed budget would cut funding and expand taxes for hospitals, which will cause immediate and lasting damage to our healthcare infrastructure.

We need your help.

Hospitals have already been cut and taxed so significantly that it is hurting patient care, access, jobs, and our economy. We are asking legislators to oppose cuts and taxes aimed at hospitals and, instead, develop strong public policy to achieve a sustainable environment for healthcare in Connecticut.

- Join our letter writing campaign by clicking here.
- Follow the campaign on Facebook and Twitter.

CHA Provides Testimony on Proposed Bills

On Wednesday, March 4, CHA provided testimony before the Public Health Committee:

- **HB 5444, An Act Concerning The Treatment Of Persons With Psychiatric Disabilities**, a bill that seeks to ensure that providers have the critically important patient information necessary to treat patients with psychiatric conditions and the resources to create meaningful discharge plans by amending Connecticut General Statutes. Read the testimony here.
- **HB 5446, An Act Requiring Health Care Providers To Be Vaccinated Against Influenza**, a bill that would require health care providers to be vaccinated against influenza. Read the testimony here.
- **HB 6265, An Act Concerning Prescription Drug Monitoring**, a bill that would increase monitoring of prescription drugs to prevent persons from obtaining multiple prescriptions for the same drug from different health care providers. Read the testimony here.
- **HB 6279, An Act Concerning Prescription Drug Monitoring, Continuing Education And The Return Of Unused Prescription**
**Drugs**, a bill that would require health care providers who prescribe controlled substances to complete continuing education courses in prescription drugs and pain management, register for access to the prescription drug monitoring program before being permitted to renew their licenses, and utilize the prescription drug monitoring program or risk revocation of their licenses. Lastly the bill would require pharmacies to allow the return of unused prescription drugs. Read the testimony here.

- **HB 6291, An Act Concerning Organ And Tissue Donation Awareness**, a bill that would allow for the establishment of an organ and tissue awareness donation fund that would be used by various organizations to promote organ and tissue donation awareness. Read the testimony here.

Also this week, CHA provided testimony before the Aging Committee on **HB 6892, An Act Concerning Hospital Training And Procedures For Patients With Suspected Dementia**, a bill that would require hospitals to provide training to staff members who provide direct care to patients in the signs and symptoms of dementia. Read the testimony here.

CHA provided testimony before the Labor and Public Employees Committee on **HB 6933, An Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling For Employees**, a bill that would require employers to provide a work schedule 2T days in advance of the first day of such work schedule, require employers to obtain written consent from employees should a change to the posted schedule be made, require employers to pay “predictability” pay should changes in the schedule be made, and prohibit employers from requiring employees to find their own replacements. Read the testimony here.

Lastly, CHA will provide testimony before the Judiciary Committee in opposition to **SB 1028, An Act Concerning The Tolling Of The Statute Of Limitations For A Negligence Action Brought By A Minor**, a bill that would extend the statute of limitations for an injured minor to bring a negligence action to one year after the minor attains the age of majority.

**Education Updates**

**HRO Creating Sustainability for High Reliability Organizations**  
Monday, March 16, 2015  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Event Registration

This session is for leaders in the organizations that have trained staff in high reliability behaviors and practices and are looking for techniques to improve the likelihood that high reliability does not become a flavor of the month.

**HRO Fair and Just Accountability**  
Monday, March 16, 2015  
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Event Registration

Fair and Just Accountability is for anyone who manages people and the course trains staff how to use the Performance Management algorithm and why Fair and Just Accountability is important to creation of a safety culture.

**HRO Rounding to Influence**  
Monday, March 23, 2015  
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Event Registration

Rounding to Influence is for leaders who want to learn how to be more effective up on the units, when they are coaching staff and reinforcing behaviors.

**HRO Safety Coach Training**  
Monday, March 23, 2015  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Event Registration

Wednesday, April 1, 2015  
1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Event Registration

Safety Coaches are peer mentors who help remind employees about the safety practices and behaviors that your organization has adopted.

**HRO Leadership Method Training for Hospitals**  
Tuesday, March 24, 2015  
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Event Registration

This Leadership session is for new Level 3 hospitals and any new hires in previously trained Level 3 hospitals. Leadership sessions teach the science of safety and behaviors and practices of High Reliability organizations.

**Basics of Budgeting for Healthcare Managers**  
Tuesday, March 31, 2015  
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
View Brochure | Event Registration

Many healthcare department managers have traditionally risen from the professional ranks as successful clinicians or technicians but with little or no formal business financial training. As a result, many are thrust into a chaotic environment without the necessary tools in financial management. Skills in planning and budgeting are essential if they are to achieve the institution’s mission and contribute to "bottom line" results. In a very real sense, these represent survival skills for both managers and institutions.
This member-requested management development program provides managers with the skills and tools they need to prepare better budgets, identify problems and solutions, achieve the mission, and succeed in today's chaotic healthcare environment. Participants will gain a working knowledge of operating and capital budgets, as part of developing performance planning skills.

**Sterile Compounding: A Blueprint for Best Practices (for Hospital Engineers)**

Tuesday, March 31, 2015
8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

This training—which is designed for hospital engineers—will include an explanation of current facility, environmental, and personnel metrics requirements for compounding sterile preparations in compliance with USP and the CETA Guidelines. A description of how primary and secondary engineering controls contribute to airflow velocity, direction, and ultimately ISO classification will also be provided.

Registration for this session includes access to CriticalPoint’s eLearning course Engineering Controls for Sterile Compounding. These two lessons and post tests must be completed by all participants prior to the scheduled training. *Login information will be e-mailed to all registrants.

This live-training session will be submitted for continuing education credits.

**Sterile Compounding: A Blueprint for Best Practices (two-day training for Hospital Pharmacists)**

Tuesday, March 31, 2015
Wednesday, April 1, 2015
8:00 a.m. - 5:15 p.m.

This two-day, interactive training is designed for hospital pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, and will provide best practice education and the skills necessary to perform USP Chapter <797> compliant sterile compounding. Specific areas that will be addressed are: the rationale for sterile compounding quality management systems (historical perspective), an overview of USP <797> as well as best practice standards.

Registration for this session includes access to CriticalPoint’s eLearning courses Fundamentals of Sterile Compounding and Engineering Controls for Sterile Compounding, comprising 12 lessons and post tests (14 hours of ACPE-approved CE). The 12 lessons and post tests must be completed by all participants prior to the scheduled training. *Login information will be e-mailed to all registrants.

This live-training session will be submitted for continuing education credits.

**HRO Using High Reliability to Improve the Patients' Experience**

Tuesday, April 7, 2015
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Lynn Pierce of HPI, an alumna of Baptist Hospital in Pensacola FL (home of the 2003 Malcolm Baldridge Quality Award), will be our instructor.

**HRO Using High Reliability to Improve the Patients' Experience**

Tuesday, April 7, 2015
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Lynn Pierce of HPI, an alumna of Baptist Hospital in Pensacola FL (home of the 2003 Malcolm Baldridge Quality Award), will be our instructor.

**Overview of USP Chapter <797> Sterile Compounding (for Quality Professionals and Infection Preventionists)**

Friday, April 10, 2015
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

This half-day program will provide the history and an overview of the <797> standards. This session is intended for the accreditation, regulatory, and quality/infection prevention experts in your organization who oversee survey preparedness for your hospital, as well as anyone else who wants an introduction to the standards.

This training will be provided by Attorney Jennifer Osowiecki of Cox & Osowiecki, LLC, a Hartford law firm representing all levels of healthcare institutions and providers in regulatory, litigation, licensing, and business matters.

This session will be submitted to the National Association for Healthcare Quality for continuing education credits.