



Hawaii Academy of Family Physicians

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President's Message

CMS to Review PECOS Enrollment Process

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is working with providers to address concerns about enrollment in the Provider Enrollment, Chain and Ownership System (PECOS) to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries continue to receive the health care services and items they need. PECOS is the electronic system used to enroll physicians and eligible professionals into the Medicare program.

As part of those efforts, CMS will, for the time being, not implement changes that would automatically reject claims based on orders, certifications, and referrals made by providers that have not yet had their applications approved by July 6, 2010. While more than 800,000 physicians and other health professionals have enrolled and have approved applications in the PECOS system, some providers have encountered problems. CMS is continuing to update and streamline the process, and more providers have been enrolled in the past few days.

CMS issued an interim final regulation on May 5, 2010 implementing provisions of the Affordable Care Act that permit only a Medicare enrolled physician or eligible professional to certify or order home health services, durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies (DMEPOS), and certain items and services under Medicare Part B. The new law applies to orders, referrals

and certifications made on or after July 1. The comment period for the regulation closes on July 6, after which the comments will be reviewed and considered before a final regulation is issued.

The Affordable Care Act provisions and the regulation were designed as steps to prevent fraud in Medicare by ensuring that only eligible and identifiable providers and suppliers can order and refer covered items and services to Medicare beneficiaries.

Many physicians and other providers and suppliers have continued to make good faith efforts to comply with the requirements of the law and regulation. These efforts will be a significant factor in determining the procedures and processes that will be incorporated in the final rule.

While the regulation will be effective July 6, 2010, CMS will not implement automatic rejections of claims submitted by providers that have attempted to enroll in PECOS. However, until the automatic rejections are operational, providers should not see any change in the processing of submitted claims, they will continue to be reviewed and paid as they have historically been reviewed and paid.

Additionally, though CMS is taking a more deliberative approach to using the PECOS enrollment system, the agency will employ a contingency plan to meet the ACA requirement that written orders and certifications are only issued by eligible professionals effective July 1.

CMS will continue to send informational notices to providers reminding them of the need to submit or update their

enrollment and will work with the provider community to provide guidance on enrollment and will process all applications expeditiously.

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Help Wanted

Navy Health Clinic Hawaii
is recruiting

2 Board Certified/Board Eligible
Family Physicians
for full time/part time opportunities.
Please contact
**Dr. Phyllis Barr at 741-1315 or Ms.
Trina Bowman at 561-0990**
for information
and tours of our clinics.

Also

Board Certified/Board Eligible Family
Medicine Physician wanted for Busy
Primary Care Group Private Practice in
Hilo.

Contact Michelle Mitchell, MD (808)
933-2399 or Timothy Duerler, MD
(808) 933-2399

mmitchell@hawaiifamilyhealth.com
www.hawaiifamilyhealth.com



Wahiawa General Hospital awarded reaccreditation: HMA's Continuing Medical Education Facilities Accreditation Committee (CME-FAC) has resurveyed Wahiawa General Hospital and awarded the institution four years as a provider of Category 1 CME for physicians. HMA is recognized by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) to accredit intrastate CME providers. HMA currently accredits 14 hospitals and 2 other organizations in Hawaii and the Pacific Rim.

New Members

HAFP extends a warm welcome to our newest members, joined since July 2010:

- Rosario Cruz Guzman
- Fay Bagarinao
- Paul L. Blaskowski
- Misuzu Yuasa
- Kristi Salinas
- Mia Carson
- Errol Buntuyan
- Robert Carlisle

“You Can Be a Family Doctor” Posters and Talking Points

Members of the Group on Family Medicine Pipeline worked with the National AHEC Organization to create these posters for display in family medicine practices and residency clinics.

Download these posters and a practical step-by-guide to begin conversations with your young patients and their families about a career in family medicine. <http://www.stfm.org/initiatives/pipeline.cfm>



New Health Care Law

The new law, Act 146, now protects physicians, physician's assistants, nurses, nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, respiratory therapists, laboratory technicians, radiology technicians, and social workers providing services in the emergency room of a hospital from violent acts so they can continue to focus on the care of our family and friends.

Advocating for New Health Care Laws in Hawaii

Encouraging Colorectal Cancer Screening (Act 157). Protects our loved ones by Mandating health insurance coverage for colorectal cancer screening. Requires health insurance providers in Hawaii to provide information about the risks of undiagnosed colorectal cancer and to encourage consultations with their physician about screening options.

Licensing Respiratory Therapists (Act 178). Protects the health and safety by establishing a licensure program and standards for respiratory therapists will ensure the safety and quality of care for people suffering from lung and breathing ailments.

Funding Hospitals (Act 203). Appropriates \$12.3 Million in state funds in order to receive \$15 Million in federal funds and helps fund all of our hospitals and community health clinics statewide

Protecting Social Services through the Rainy Day Fund (Act 191). Appropriates \$23 Million from the Emergency and Budget Reserve Fund, known as the Rainy Day Fund, to maintain critical educational, seniors, mental health, and sexual abuse treatment programs.

The Country Doctor



Photo by Michael Tsai

Marc Shlachter has been everywhere from Cleveland to Timbuktu, but his heart belongs to the North Shore of O'ahu.

Ask 95-year-old Margaret Naai -- loudly, please -- if she remembers the first time she visited Dr. Marc Shlachter and prepare to bite your cheek.

Ten years ago, Naai was driving down Kamehameha Highway on the north shore of O'ahu when the Scotch tape she uses to keep her sagging eyelids out of her eyes suddenly lost its grip. Blinded momentarily, Naai drove her car off the narrow road and into the ocean. With her car partially submerged, the tiny Naai struggled free, climbed the four-foot embankment and assessed her wounds. Time had come, she decided, to pay a visit to that nice haole doctor with the ugly aloha shirts.

It's been more than 25 years since Shlachter first set up practice on the north shore of O'ahu. Attracted first by the prospect of short days and great surf, the Ohio transplant has since become a trusted friend to many long-time residents. He looks smaller than he is, sharp-eyed with an even-burn vitality that suits the pace of this definitively rural community.

Wherever he goes, he is greeted with smiles and handshakes. He is sometimes ignored, but never unnoticed. Shlachter grew up in suburban Cleveland. As a child, he dreamed of safari expeditions in remote corners of the world. At a high school graduation party, *Gidget Goes to Hawaii* brought his attention westward. "I told all my friends that I was going to go to Pineapple U.," he says.

Shlachter attended the University of Hawai'i for a year before completing his undergraduate degree at Ohio State. He then graduated from the University of Cincinnati's medical school and promptly headed back to the Islands to serve an internship.

In 1971, Shlachter opened his own practice in Hau'ula, a small town on the beach, posting an ad for a receptionist who could answer phones, schedule appointments and retrieve fishing nets. He arrived with mutton-chop sideburns and little knowledge of the unspoken protocols that distinguish what is said and what simply is. And while people welcomed the doctor, they felt nothing for the man.

Shlachter, who now practices in La'ie, which is a little bigger than Hau'ula, has worked hard to forge bonds within his community. He's an honorary Samoan chief and the team doctor for the Kahuku High football team, titles which go a long way. "Out here, I sometimes have to do a little more to get in touch with people," he explains. "If someone doesn't have a phone and I can't get a hold of them, I can turn to the bishop, the kahuna, the coach or someone else who can relay the message."

Often, Shlachter uses his own time to make sure patients schedule follow-up exams, fill prescriptions and do all the things they promise to do as they're walking out the door. Here is Shlachter, then, standing in the unfurnished living room of a young mother with AIDS. The children -- whom Shlachter took fishing the previous weekend -- are staying with relatives for the day. The young woman, sick with the flu, promises to bring the kids for their shots as soon as her sister can give her a ride. She is cheered by the small talk, comforted by a hug. Shlachter's eyes linger on the rumpled blanket and the overflowing ashtray lying in the middle of the bare floor.

In the era of managed care, Shlachter is the original personal care physician. To many, the distinction between doctor and neighbor doesn't exist. "When I first came, I didn't go to the luaus and graduations," he says. "I felt there should be some separation. But after 25 years, I'm much more involved. Some of my patients are my best friends."

It's common for patients to come directly to Shlachter's house with questions. "Once, someone drove up late at night and sat there with his lights off because he didn't want to wake me," Shlachter says. "Of course the dogs started barking so I got up to see what was going on. I go outside and he says, 'Hi, doc. Since you're up, can you take a look at this?'" Shlachter isn't hard to find. Once, while jogging his usual route, Shlachter noticed a car slowing down next to him. He looked

over to see a baby's bottom facing out the window. Turns out a concerned parent had a question about diaper rash. Another time, a female patient who was worried about a lump in her breast caught up with Shlachter at a supermarket. "She took it out right there," he says. "I had to tell her to come down to the office."

Shlachter's office is the unofficial museum of the North Shore. Tiling virtually every inch of his waiting room are black-and-white photos of Hau'ula, La'ie and Kahuku residents, some dating back to the 1800s. There is a 1958 photo of Irene Pascual, the "Squid Lady," several pictures of the Kamakeeina clan of Hau'ula and a grainy shot of the 1945 Kahuku varsity football team featuring Albert Lolotai, believed to be the first non-white athlete to play professional football. There's also a photo of a Samoan wedding ceremony joining Shlachter and his wife, Donna.

The walls of Shlachter's waiting room present a jarring contrast. There hangs an extraordinary collection of photos taken by Shlachter on expeditions to Ecuador, New Guinea, Timbuktu, North Africa and Mongolia. Living his childhood dream, Shlachter each year heads to a different corner of the world to share his medical expertise and re-learn a valuable lesson: that all perceptions are relative.

"Traveling makes you appreciate how lucky you are to have the facilities and medications we have," he says. "You try not to abuse it. You think about whether all those lab tests and high-tech

challenging exchange of perspectives for the host.

"We've covered just about everything you can think of," Shlachter says. "Once the phone lines are open, anything can happen."

Yet, for Shlachter no job is as endlessly engaging as caring for a community whose pulse runs syncopated to the rest of the island. He shares his anecdotes of rural life, conscious of how absurd they might sound to those accustomed to the a+b=c of urban Honolulu. And while he maintains a healthy sense of humor about the peculiarities of North Shore living, he understands well how virtue and ugliness sit side-by-side in small towns. He's shared in the family lu'au, delivered children in his garage and helped the ambitious find their way to college. He's also cared for women savagely beaten by their spouses, delivered children of children, and watched people die after years of alcohol or drug abuse. "Caring has a double edge," he says.

"To be a country doctor, you have to care," Shlachter says. "You have to be committed to the long term."

For Shlachter, that means waiting for people outside of church to deliver prescriptions that would otherwise remain unfilled. It means accepting the occasional bag of yams as copayment for an office visit.

"There's more to it than that," Shlachter says. "Sometimes I'll come to my office and there will be breakfast waiting for me. Sometimes, people will come to the house and leave baked taro and coconut milk in my living room. These are things you don't see in other places."

And so, Margaret Naai is never surprised to see the country doctor stroll up to her house in his black and purple aloha shirt. His aloha speaks loudly.

Save the Date **Annual HAFP Meeting**

**"Family Medicine for Everyone –
Everywhere"**

February 25-27, 2011

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procedures are necessary all the time." For eight years, Shlachter shared his experience and his expertise on his award-winning radio show, "The Country Doctor" on KGU. When the station was sold, he moved his show to KHVH. The show offers clear-eyed discussion of a broad range of health topics for listeners, and a

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