St. Mary’s County Community Health Advisory Committee

MINUTES

May 20, 2009

Present:

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<tr>
<th>Dr. Larry Polsky</th>
<th>Patty Belanger</th>
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<td>Barbara Hak</td>
<td>Laine Doggett</td>
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<td>Capt. Ricky Burris</td>
<td>Dr. Kathleen O’Brien</td>
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<td>Jennie Page</td>
<td>Capt. Rebecca McCormick-Boyle</td>
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<td>Georgette Gaskin</td>
<td>Christine Wray</td>
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<td>Bennett Connelly</td>
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The meeting was called to order by Dr. Larry Polsky at 6:15 p.m. Handouts were distributed. After a brief review and a requested change to the minutes, a motion to accept the minutes from the February 19, 2009 meeting was accepted.

2008 CHAC Annual Report Update:

Dr. Polsky informed committee members that the 2008 CHAC Annual Report has been completed and submitted to the Board of County Commissioners. Changes to the report must be submitted prior to July.

New CHAC Representative for Patuxent River Naval Air Station:

Capt. Linda Ireland, who will be assuming command of the Naval Health Clinic at Patuxent River NAS, will be replacing Capt. Rebecca McCormick-Boyle as the new representative on the Community Health Advisory Committee. Capt. Ireland will be introduced at the CHAC meeting scheduled for August 19.

Subcommittee Reports:

Diabetes Subcommittee:
Barb Hak informed committee members that the Diabetes Subcommittee participated in a “Diabetes Alert” in March during which time information on diabetes awareness was distributed to the public via various forms of communication. She stated that one target area of the subcommittee is young African-American males as they are at high-risk for diabetes. Barb also stated that the subcommittee needs new members and anyone wishing to become a part of the subcommittee should contact her.

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Subcommittee:
Patty Belanger provided CHAC members with an update on the CVD Subcommittee activities. She stated that the subcommittee participated in health fairs at the Department on Aging, Women’s Wellness Day and the St. Mary’s County Employee Health Day, with over 300 people attending this event. She also stated that May is Stroke Awareness Month, and the County Commissioners have signed a proclamation to this effect. Reynolds Pharmacy is distributing information on stroke awareness in prescription bags. More health fairs are scheduled in the upcoming months.
Cancer Prevention Study (CPS-3) / Relay for Life:

At this time, Georgette Gaskin provided information and handouts to committee members pertaining to the upcoming American Cancer Society’s *Relay for Life* and Cancer Prevention Study (CPS-3). She reminded committee members that the *Relay for Life* is scheduled for June 6 at Leonardtown High School. She stated that, while the original goal was to register 85 teams, they currently have 86 teams registered for the relay. They currently have approximately 1,000 registered relay participants and are hoping to register another 400. They had expected to have at least 150 people attend the cancer survivors’ dinner, but currently there are less than 100 attendees and they are hoping that more participants will respond. They are currently about halfway to their financial goal; however, most money is raised during the last four weeks of the drive so it is anticipated that this will increase. Georgette stated that St. Mary’s County utilizes the resources of the American Cancer Society (ACS) more than any other county in Maryland. She explained that, through the ACS, patients are offered transportation to medical appointments and provided various programs and support groups at St. Mary’s Hospital and local churches. Georgette relayed information on the Cancer Prevention Study (CPS-3) and explained that this study, the third of its kind, will focus on factors that may cause cancer. Qualified participants in the study must be between 30 – 65 years of age and cancer-free. These participants will be tracked for the next 20 years. They are hoping to enlist a minimum of 300 participants from this area in the study.

Georgette explained that she is a volunteer for the Cancer Action Network, a sister organization to the ACS, which is a non-profit organization with lobbying powers. She distributed a petition that they want to take to the state level, urging action on healthcare reform. She stated that healthcare reform is a major focus of the Cancer Action Network. Georgette said there were 2,700 new cancer diagnoses and 10,000 deaths from cancer in Maryland last year, and that one in six non-elderly people are uninsured. She explained that investing funds for prevention and initial treatment saves money in the long-run. The goals of the Cancer Action Network are to provide access to care, affordable insurance and co-pays, and no-cap cancer treatment coverage for all Americans at the federal level. She described a program currently provided in Delaware for people who are at 133% below poverty level (this equates to a family of four with a household income of $45,000/year.) These patients are covered for first-time cancer treatment under this program. The Cancer Action Network was able to get a program initiated in committee this past year; however, they were asked to withdraw the request due to the current economic conditions. She commented that funding for breast and cervical cancer was the only cancer-related legislation that was not cut this year. Georgette emphasized that the network wants only to supplement current healthcare coverage and is not seeking a new healthcare plan. She said the network is seeking to parallel a program in Massachusetts which provides supplemental healthcare coverage at different levels of income. ACS has a coalition with pharmaceutical and insurance companies, and changing from a philosophy of treating patients to a philosophy of preventing cancer would eliminate 2/3 of the cancer diagnoses (with an emphasis on tobacco use prevention.) A short video presentation was shown pertaining to healthcare reform.
**Community Health Assessment Survey Update:**

Barb Hak provided a PowerPoint presentation and an update on the community health assessment. She explained that St. Mary’s Hospital has contracted with Holleran Associates as the research company to conduct the health assessment. The kickoff meeting was held April 14 to discuss survey question selection, pre-communication (in order to make members of the community aware of the purpose of the survey to encourage participation), and data collection. She explained that they intended to survey 1100 households in St. Mary’s County. After the data is collected, questions will be developed for five focus groups who will relay their information for a final report. Strategic planning sessions will then be scheduled to analyze the information for selecting health priorities for St. Mary’s County. Holleran Associates will then provide a public presentation for selected members. St. Mary’s Hospital will be the owners of the data when the survey is complete. The role of the CHAC would be for survey question selection, deciding sampling strategy, and assisting with communication to the community regarding the survey. Sampling strategies such as zip codes vs. census tracks were reviewed in order to determine the most diverse populations within St. Mary’s County, and it was noted that the census tracks would provide the most accurate data based on poverty levels. Barb stated that, currently, the survey phone calls must be made to a landline but she will investigate whether or not the surveys may be made to cell phones as many people no longer have landlines. If cell phones cannot be used, it may be useful to look at the age groups of the survey participants post-survey to determine if any particular age or socioeconomic group may not have been accurately represented. It was also suggested that a familiar agency such as the hospital (instead of the Community Health Advisory Committee) be mentioned in the introductory script so that citizens may be more inclined to participate in the survey. It was further suggested that a local phone number be used, if possible, as many people may be deterred from answering a phone call from an unknown long distance phone number. Pre-survey marketing ideas included press releases, Chamber of Commerce newsletters, public school newsletters, The Tester, and SMECO bill inserts. As the survey is quite lengthy, it was suggested that the success rate for a shorter survey be investigated. It was also suggested that additional questions pertaining to drug use be included as there is an increase in heroin and prescription drug abuse in St. Mary’s County. The pre-survey communication to the public will begin the first week of June.

**MedStar Overview:**

At this time, Christine Wray provided CHAC members with an overview of the MedStar Health healthcare system. MedStar Health is a non-profit, community-based healthcare organization in the Maryland and Washington, D.C. area. Currently, eight hospitals, including Georgetown University Hospital, Washington Hospital Center and National Rehabilitation Hospital are part of the MedStar organization. Ms. Wray stated that the St. Mary’s Hospital Board of Directors initiated talks with MedStar Health in order to study the feasibility of joining this healthcare system, and a letter of intent has been signed by both organizations. The current slow economy, as well as federal and state budget deficits, has impacted healthcare providers and St. Mary’s Hospital. Because of this, the hospital has been forced to slow down their renovation projects, to scrutinize contract renewals, and to evaluate other expenses, including employee benefit plans. The mission of MedStar is to serve the patients, those who care for them, and the community. Ms. Wray pointed out that the mission and values of MedStar parallel those of St. Mary’s Hospital.
Ms. Wray stated that MedStar Health can offer a wealth of expertise and resources to St. Mary’s Hospital and the community. The association with MedStar would assist with physician recruitment and retention and expansion of specialized physician services in Southern Maryland. She pointed out that this region has the most significant physician shortage in Maryland, in part, due to state-wide low reimbursement rates, high malpractice rates and a high cost of living. She remarked that St. Mary’s County is the second fastest growing county in Maryland and some benefits of joining MedStar would be for increased ability to respond to the community’s growth and for better positioning in response to health care reform. Other benefits of an alliance with MedStar include increased access to capital funding for growth, purchasing power and contract negotiations, and employee educational opportunities. Ms. Wray explained that St. Mary’s Hospital would still be in charge of developing their own budget and strategic plan, making personnel decisions, and they would be able to retain their Board of Directors. She said the organizational structure at St. Mary’s Hospital would not be affected for a minimum of two years pending the potential transaction, and that employee, physician and community feedback is vital to negotiations. St. Mary’s Hospital intends to address needs and concerns in detailed negotiations with MedStar prior to finalizing the agreement, and employees of the hospital, patients, and the community will be kept apprised of ongoing developments.

Comments and Questions:

Jennie Page announced that she will be retiring at the end of June and that her replacement as representative for the Department on Aging will attend the August CHAC meeting once that person has been selected.

With there being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m. The next Community Health Advisory Committee meeting will be held Wednesday, August 19, 2009 at 6 p.m. in the Board Room at St. Mary’s Hospital.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dr. Larry Polsky
Vice-Chairperson

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