Northwest Outlook

hfma washington / alaska chapter
healthcare financial management association

January - March 2009

Editorial Policy

Opinions expressed in articles or features are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Washington/Alaska Chapter, the Healthcare Financial Management Association, or the Editor. The Editor reserves the right to edit material and accept or reject contributions whether solicited or not. All correspondence is assumed to be a release for publication unless otherwise indicated.

Publication Objective

The NW Outlook is the official publication of the Washington/Alaska Chapter Healthcare Financial Management Association. Our objective is to provide members with information regarding Chapter and national activities, with current and useful news of both national and local significance to healthcare finance professionals and to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information.

President's Message

by Greg Moga, President

This is my last President's Message as I end my two years as your Chapter President. I will now become what I call one of the 'Ghosts of President's Past,' joining the distinguished group who proceeded me in this role. It has been a privilege to serve the Washington/Alaska Chapter!

How can I ever thank you all enough? This Message is my equivalent of two minutes at the microphone on Oscar night, and I want to breathlessly race through the list of special folks who helped me these past two years. First, our leadership team: Grant Baumgartner, your incoming President (he will do a terrific job); Jim Heilsberg (with the special 'Heilsberg group hug'); Brad Becker (indispensible, steady and always there to remind me of what I forgot); Doug Bishop (volunteering even in retirement); and Eric Teshima (the greatest officer of them all!).

My Board deserves special thanks- Harold Brockman, Jarod Crooks, Cathy LeMay (a special person who has done so much for the Alaska members!), Lori Nomura (with the cutest kids and nicest Mom), Peggi Ann Rufener (a great person and friend to all); Kathryn Stevens, Catherine Wakefield (who deserves a special 'Yerger' for her diligence and patience); and Greg West (I never met a Greg I didn't like!).

My list of thanks is not complete without mentioning two special people who are the backbone of the Chapter: Maryann Yates and Norma Pearce. I can't say enough good things about Maryann and Norma and what they mean to the Chapter- I'm getting a bit choked up here just thinking about all they have meant to me, and to all of you. Chapter leaders get most of the credit but it is members like these two who do the hard and steady work to make sure that the hotel is ready for us, the meals appear when scheduled, and that registration goes smoothly. Thank you Maryann and Norma!

We have a terrific program coming up on May

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Contributing Writers

Grant Baumgartner
Day Egusquiza
Jim Heilsberg
Walton Luke
Greg Moga
David Morgan

THANK YOU!!!

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21st at Cedarbrook. I hope that many of you will attend and will join me to celebrate as your new Chapter officers are sworn in on that day. HFMA's Annual National Institute follows shortly (June 14-17), and we will be welcoming our friends and colleagues from all over the US as they journey here to Seattle. It's going to be a terrific ANI- I hope to see a huge turnout from our Chapter.

Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart, and God Bless! ■

CERTIFICATION: *You Can Do It!*

by Grant Baumgartner | CHFP, FHFMA
Washington - Alaska Chapter President-Elect

Have you ever been shopping in a jewelry store and noticed the watches that say, "Swiss Made" on them? Virtually all the best (and most expensive) watches carry this label. "Swiss Made" embodies a concept of quality that has been forged over the years. It includes the technical quality of watches, as well as their aesthetic quality. It covers both traditional manufacturing and new technologies. A law sets out the minimum conditions that have to be fulfilled before the watch merits the "Swiss Made" label. This label is recognized around the world - it is a badge of quality and honor!

You can obtain a similar badge – your professional quality just needs to be certified. You are very knowledgeable in your particular area of healthcare financial management. You have unique skills and experience that most other people in the world do not have. It is time to put that stamp of authenticity on you that proves once and for all, that you are an expert in healthcare financial management. HFMA certification is your stamp!

As a professional, you have a deep-down desire to challenge yourself and learn more and as much as you can about your field of work. A true professional never stops learning and never thinks that they know "enough." You are dedicated to constantly improving your game. HFMA certification raises your game!

In my opinion, besides serving in the Church or missionary "profession," there is no profession one should be more proud of serving in than the healthcare profession. When you interact with members of your community, you should be proud of the fact that you serve in the healthcare industry. Despite all the negative business press these days, you work in the noblest industry, in the best country in the world. There is no other place people would rather need healthcare services than the United States of America. As an American healthcare financial professional, your HFMA certification is a badge of quality and honor!

Healthcare Financial Management Association offers several types of professional certifications.

There are now three certifications awarded by HFMA. There is a brand new certification called the Credentialed Revenue Cycle Representative (CRCR). It is designed to help healthcare organizations advance the proficiency of their revenue cycle staff. Organizations must purchase this study program and provide it for their employees. The program is a comprehensive, interactive self-study guide encompassing twelve to fifteen hours of content with a three hour credentialing exam. The program covers compliance, patient access, claims processing, account resolution, cash, financial management and support departments.

To pursue the other two certifications awarded by HFMA, the first level of certification is the Certified Healthcare Financial Professional or CHFP. This certification can be obtained after two years of membership in HFMA, two years of professional experience in the industry, sixty

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semester hours of college coursework at an accredited institution or sixty professional development contact hours, successful completion of the HFMA Core certification exam, successful completion of one of the HFMA specialty certification exams, references from a current HFMA Chapter elected officer and your CEO or immediate supervisor and then submitting a conforming application to HFMA National.

Your options for the specialty exam are in the following areas:

- Accounting and Finance
- Patient Financial Services
- Physician Practice Management
- Managed Care

To maintain your CHFP certification status, you must retain your HFMA membership and earn ninety professional development contact hours every three years.

The next level of certification is the Fellow of Healthcare Financial Management Association or FHFMA. This certification can be obtained after five years of membership in HFMA, a Bachelor degree or one hundred twenty semester hours from an accredited college or university, and a reference from a FHFMA or current HFMA Chapter elected officer. You also have to, within the three previous years prior to submitting your FHFMA application, have volunteer activity including one of the following; earn the Fulmer Bronze Award, earn two Founders points for two consecutive years, or volunteer service for two years in a healthcare industry organization. You also must submit a conforming application.

To maintain your FHFMA certification status, you must retain your HFMA membership and earn ninety professional development contact hours every three years.

What is the benefit to getting certified?

According to HFMA (National), "Survey results have shown a strong relationship between certification and career advancement. Certified members of HFMA tend to earn a higher annual salary and are more likely to be hired for upper-level positions in healthcare finance. They are respected members of the leadership team."

The certification program is designed to prepare members for increasingly responsible positions in the healthcare finance industry. Being HFMA certified indicates that certified members have a demonstrated comprehensive understanding and proficiency of HFMA's defined body of knowledge in healthcare financial management overall and in the specialty areas.

The process of getting certified helps you obtain a comprehensive understanding of healthcare financial management, it demonstrates that you are committed to your career and it shows that you have the HFMA stamp of quality and authenticity. In the future when your resume is being evaluated, having your certification will be just one more positive addition to your personal value statement.

Why did I get Certified and what was my approach?

As I began in the healthcare field some twenty-plus years ago, I noticed that a significant number of the professionals that I respected carried the FHFMA badge. I knew that I wanted to challenge myself and demonstrate that I had a comprehensive knowledge of the healthcare financial management also some day. As time went by and I gained experience, I realized that I could do it – with a little bit of study. I wanted to take the certification exams, but I kept putting it off. Finally, about a year ago, I decided that I needed to, "just do it."

I realized the trick for me to, "just do it" was to schedule the exam with a proctor first, then that would set the clock ticking and force me to do it instead of continuing to put it off. Thank you Dennis Stillman for agreeing to proctor my exam. I set my Core Exam date about two months out and then obtained the Chapter's study guide.

Figuring out a study routine was the next step. Like all of us, my life is very busy. I work fifty to

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sixty hours a week, travel frequently and have to manage the home life with a wife and two kids that both have multiple activities going on at all times. I looked at the Core Exam Study Guide and it had twenty-one chapters, but the chapters really aren't that long. I decided I would review one chapter per night roughly from 9:00-10:00. This worked very well, each review was really brief and it was not very heard to get in a routine because each study session wasn't very long. I went through each Study Guide chapter only once, took the exam and actually passed!

I used the same approach for the Specialty Exam and it worked just as well. There were only eight chapters in the Accounting and Finance Specialty Exam Study Guide, so that didn't take as long. After going through this process, I do have a recommendation for shorter study time, which I give in the following section.

The process.

- Schedule the exam with a proctor (I recommend doing this first to put a timeline of your goal)
- Submit your exam application and fees
- Study (I suggest one chapter per night)
- Pass the exam
- Complete other prerequisites described above
- Submit exam application and fees

The exams may be retaken until passed. You have one year after application approval to pass the exam. After you have passed your first exam, you have two years to pass your second exam. Also, you may take the Core and Specialty exams in any order and you may take the exams before your other prerequisites have been completed.

After going this process recently, I recommend taking both exams on the same day. I believe that the knowledge you have to pass the Core Exam includes a high enough percentage of the knowledge needed to pass the Specialty Exam, that it is most efficient to take both exams at the same time. In my case, after taking the Specialty Exam (Accounting and Finance) approximately six months after my Core Exam, I think I could have passed the Specialty at the same time I took the Core Exam with less total study time.

How your Chapter can help you become certified.

The Washington – Alaska Chapter purchases HFMA Certification Exam Study Guides every two years when new guides are published. The Chapter will loan the study guides to you for study. This is a significant savings opportunity to you as the study guides cost $325 apiece.

Your Chapter also provides you with Proctors to administer the exam for you. We currently have seven approved Proctors in our Chapter. I have just submitted my affidavit to be added to our list of Proctors. Any certified member can become a Proctor. All you have to do is print out and sign the affidavit from the Proctors Handbook and fax it to National. I encourage all certified Chapter members to submit their Proctor affidavit and become an approved Proctor for the benefit of our Chapter members.

The Chapter will also be considering additional ways we can support our members in pursuit of their certification. In the near future, the Chapter Board of Directors will be considering paying for members to take their certification exams as well as providing examination rooms and Proctors at every Chapter meeting – stay tuned!

Now that you are almost ready to commit to becoming certified, let's address the two objections your brain will immediately give you.

Yes You Do Have Enough Time!

The first thought that goes through ones mind when considering taking the certification examinations is, "I don't have enough time." There is certainly some measure of truth to this, but I am here to tell you that that is not true! We all are extremely challenged for time in our lives between work, family and personal time.

Earlier in this article, I gave you my tips to

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finding the time to study. Just a very little study time per night, only five nights per week and you will be ready in a month. One of the encouraging things is – it really doesn't take all that long to study and prepare for the exams.

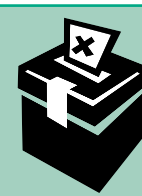
Don't Worry About Failure!

One of the reasons we may not take on a new challenge is fear of failure. What if someone found out I took the exam, but didn't pass it? What would they think of me? I'm here to tell you that doesn't matter. Don't worry about it. I'm almost positive you will pass the exams the first time. Even if you don't, it is okay. As the next Chapter President, I would rather have our members take the exam and fail it, then to never take the exams at all. But I know you will pass, you are a professional with much expert knowledge!

Now is the time for your certification. You are an accomplished professional. You can pass the exam with not a lot of sacrificial study time and your Chapter is helping you with cost and access. You deserve your badge of quality and honor. As Nike says, "Just do it!" ■

Election Results

2009-2010 Officers & Board Members Elected



from Eric Teshima, Overlake Hospital Medical Center

Healthcare is a challenging industry and we it's great that we have chapter leaders that are willing to devote time and energy to bring members valuable education and other services to you. I'm sure it will be a great year for the chapter. Thanks to everyone who voted in the recent chapter elections.

HFMA Officers and Board

June 2009 – May 2010

President – Grant Baumgartner

President Elect – Jim Heilsberg

Secretary – Brad Becker

Treasurer – Annette Edwards

Program Chair – Doug Bishop

Immediate Past President – Greg Moga

Directors

(Term through May 2011)

Michael DeLuca

Patty Jorgensen

Susan Ruchin

Peggi Ann Rufener

Brandon Tokar

Directors

(Term through May 2011)

Harold Brockman

Jarod Crooks

Cathy LeMay

Kathryn Stevens

Catherine Wakefield

Alaska

Healthcare Watch

This column is intended to share and inform the Chapter Members about Alaska healthcare financial news

by David Morgan,
Director of Reimbursement
Southcentral Foundation

Global financial institutions and national enterprises are failing, but the health care industry is ready for expansion. The Economic Stimulus and Omnibus spending package has expansion money for Medicaid, Children's' health Insurance Program and more.

Preliminary estimates for federal economic stimulus funds to Alaska state agencies are approximately $930.7 million. Of that total, the state requested allocations for transportation and aviation projects in February estimated at $262.6 million. With the additional $251.5 million in economic stimulus funds requested today (March 19, 2009), the proposed total capital spending is $514.1 million, or 55 percent of the Stat's estimated allocation. Funds that are available competitively or that go directly to communities or other organizations are not included in the estimates. Governor Palin said, "Legitimately, I can only certify capital projects that are job-ready. Alaska has seen unprecedented increases in the level of state funding for education because that is our priority. I don't want to automatically increase federal funding for education program growth, at a time when Alaska can't afford to sustain that increase." The Governor has request federal stimulus funds for capital projects that will create new jobs and expands the economy, but will not except funds with federal strings in exchange for dollars, nor will "Alaska will dig a deeper hole in two years when these federal funds are gone, for instance, in order to accept energy funds, local communities would be requiring adopt uniform building codes. These types of funds are not

sensible for Alaska."

More information on the federal economic stimulus package omnibus spending package is available on the Office of Management & Budget website at alaska.gov/recovery.

Alaska Health Care Commission:

The Alaska Health Care Commission met for the first time on February 27 and 28 in Juneau. The

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purpose of the commission is to "provide recommendation for the development of a statewide plan to improve quality, accessibility and availability of health care for Alaskans." The commission plan is to report of its activities and recommendations to the Legislature and Governor by January 15, 2010.

The Commission recognized that the state lacks a cohesive statewide health plan. A major problem that was identity by the Commission was the lack of comparative data for cost and quality. Underlying all the discussion was the need to bring down cost and to address the issue of access to healthcare. Other important topics they believed that will be address included:

- coordinating services and standardizing practices
- regulation
- access
- reform
- listening and responding to the needs of individual Alaskans

Cost, access to care and the other areas proposed as requiring strategies for health care improvement listed in the governor's order in mind, the commission will narrow its priorities on three key ideas in the near future: capitalizing on federal dollars, the present storage of health care providers, and consumer responsibility.

Other Updates:

Health care employment likely to be modest in 2009: Health care growth likely to be modest in 2008, employment in Anchorage's health care industry grew by 100 to 200 jobs, or 1 percent – a far cry from the years when it was the city's No.1 job machine. ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS for January 2009 forecasts that the industry's employment is forecasted to grow again in 2009, but at the same pace as 2008. Anchorage's second and third largest health care providers, the Alaska Native Health Consortium and Southcentral Foundation, grew little in 2008 and that trend won't change in 2009.

Providence Health & Services, Anchorage's largest private-sector employer, also plans to expand modestly in 2009.

Modest gains will also come from medical clinics of all kinds, doctors' and other health practitioners' offices, medical laboratories and other outpatient care providers.

Current OIG Compliance Guidance: The federal government has provided publications advising health care providers of current OIG Compliance Program Guidance at http://www.oig.hhs.gov/fraud/complianceguidance.asp.

OIG "what's New" web page has up to date information on compliance issues at the following web site; http://www.oig.hhs.gov/w-new.asp.

To view text of bills, go to http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/start.asp and type in "HB" or "SB" and the health-related legislative bill number, and then click on "Display Bill Root" and then "Full Text." Choose the most recent version to view.

To watch or listen only, go to Gavel to Gavel on the internet at http://www.ktoo.org/gavel/steam.cfm .

The Value of a Nail

by Jim Heilsberg | INHS

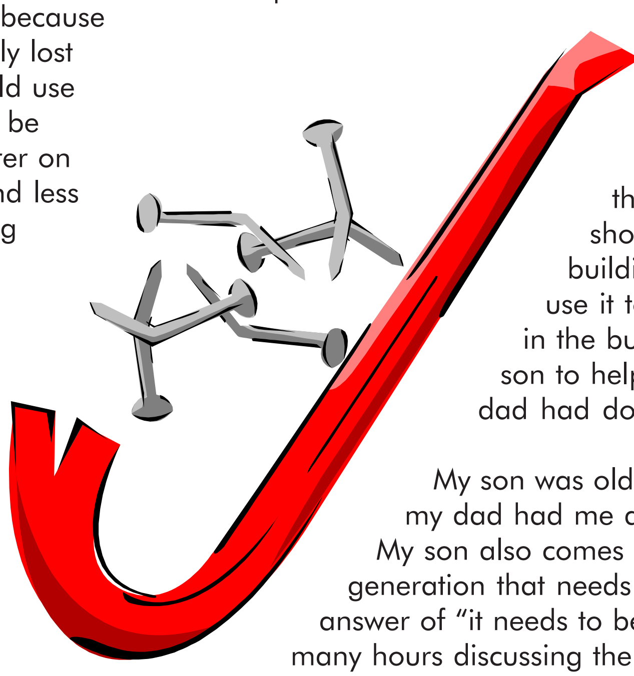
When I was young my father tore down an old school house on our property to make a shop on the foundation. He assigned me one simple job, take nails out of the boards from the school house and straighten the nails. He paid me for this arduous task, because he knew if he did not, I would have quickly lost interest. He did not explain what he would use the wood for but simply that it needed to be done. I am sure that my memory is clearer on the fact that I participated in this effort and less clear on what my attitude was while doing it. I do remember complaining periodically after the allure of wealth from the pennies per nail, he gave me wore off.

Dad was great at giving us simple tasks on the farm where he would pay us a few pennies for small things. Another example was we got a nickel for every weed we hoed in what was called summer fallow. In essence farmers leave their ground unused for a summer ever few years and till up the weeds so it looks like one vast dirt wasteland. We had about 200 acres of summer fallow and my sisters and I had the great opportunity to walk around the 200 acres during late summer in the early morning hours and till under the weeds with a hoe. For those that don't know what a hoe is, it is a piece of flat metal on a five foot pole.

Again simple tasks that looked like a bunch of money, worked out to just be lots of work. I did not ask why we did this either because it had to be done. It was something to do and I got money for it. I did complain periodically but not much because I did not want to be the one that got Dad mad.

Dad was crafty. He got us to do tasks that saved the family money and paid us very little for it. It kept us out of trouble and made us real tired; these are both good things for young kids.

When I had kids of my own, I tried to use the same method to help my children learn the same lessons I had and used the same process but did not realize the complete value of what my Dad had taught me. I ran into an opportunity to obtain some slabs of wood from wood elevators that were being torn down. The slabs were 2 x 6 pieces of wood nailed together on top of each other to make a solid structure for storing grain. To reuse the wood, you had to pry the wood apart and then stack it. You had to drive the nails out of the wood and pull them out with a crow bar. I knew I would use most of the wood in a pole/shop building I was building. My plan was to use it to build interior walls in the building. I enlisted my son to help, similar to what my dad had done.



My son was older than I was when my dad had me do the same work. My son also comes from the new generation that needs more than an answer of "it needs to be done". We spent many hours discussing the value of the work and many hours debating the need.

My initial understanding of the value of the work from my dad was that I learned to do hard work. I learned to start and finish each board. I learned to be consistent, even when I did not want to. I learned how to use a hammer both for pounding out a nail and for straightening a nail for reuse. I learned how to apply leverage and use a crow bar. I learned to enjoy doing menial tasks and whistle why I worked. I learned how to day dream outside while doing work. I learned how to focus. I learned how to stack wood. I learned how to enjoy something I did not like to do. The list goes on.

My experience with my son was initially a little less enjoyable. His generation needs more explanation. He grew up with other activities then I. His life is filled with video games, computers, cell phones etc. Separating boards, driving out nails and stacking wood, did not fit

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into his world. He complained more than once about why are you doing this and more to the point, why do I have to do this? Hour after hour, day after day, he did the work and after what seemed like years to him and me, we finished the project.

It was not until the end that I saw him begin to see some of the same lessons that I had learn, take hold. As we neared the end of the project I learned some of his struggles as well. One struggle was that he used the claw hammer to take out every nail and never used the crow bar. I had given him instructions on how to use the crow bar but he hadn't listened. He figured the claw hammer was easier since it was in his hand. Initially that was true because you don't have to change devices if you only use the claw hammer and he was a strong young man. He learned however that it became harder and harder to get the nails out. As the hard times continued his attitude went down hill. It did not dawn on him that he needed to ask about options to eliminate his pain.

Much of the time, I had left him alone; much like my dad had left me alone. The task was simple and the goal is to figure it out on your own and you learn how to be resourceful as well. When I showed my son about the crow bar, towards the end of the project, he looked at me with very large eyes like, why did I not use that instead of the hammer. It would have been so much easier.

In looking at the younger generation, they need purpose to do their work. I have noticed they challenge the status quo and want to know why we do work, so that they can feel it is worthwhile work and that we are doing it efficiently. Both very important goals. I wonder however if we have not lost something. I did work because it had to be done according to my dad. Dad could have bought new wood but I would not have learned the lessons I did. We could also not have afforded the new wood. I wonder if we can not learn that sometimes it is good to do things just because. We as a country are asking more why questions, which are good, however there is value in doing menial, seemingly unnecessary and inefficient tasks. At least kids should be doing these types of tasks in my opinion, in order to learn lessons often obtained in our youth.

The value of a pulling a nail from a board is well beyond what we believe.

I have continued to reflect and learn about my dad and my son. My son reflected as I worked along side him to help him pull nails or when we took a break from the tasks at hand. We had several days where we looked at the sunset and realized how great it was to work together as father and son. We realized as we completed the project that we may not have another time we could work so closely together. My dad was not as reflective as I am or did not tell me so in words. However, I realize he saw the relationship value as he grew older.

My son has realized (begrudgingly) that there is value in the wood we separated. He still believes it would have been easier to buy and less painful. In some ways yes but my hope and prayer is that he learns the value of the nail over time.

Point of this article is don't overlook the small tasks that we do in life and that need to be done. There is value in doing them and getting them done with limited griping. In fact as we approach them, if we can have a positive attitude, we may find values we never thought about. We can encourage others to find the value of a nail in their work as well. I will now try to remember this myself as I approach any task, that there is value in any task and it is in doing the task with a positive and learning attitude that we learn the value that only life can provide.

Re-discover the value of the nails in your life.

■

New Members

The Washington/Alaska Chapter is pleased to announce the following new members:

Mary Actor
Berntson Porter & Company, Pllc

Jeffrey Allen
Emdeon

Amy Banovich
Kpmg

Sara Bergen
Providence Health And Services Alaska

Marie Bingham
Providence Health & Services AK

Jennifer Brantley
Southcentral Foundation

Sara Deason
Central Washington Hospital

Barbara Derebery
Providence Health & Services,
Physician Division Wa/mt

James Devitt
Transworld Systems Inc.

Elizabeth Donovan

Lynda Evans
Providence Heath & Services

Matthew Falkner
Michael R Bell & Company

Fariba Fuller
Virginia Mason Medical Center

Jodie Gage
Southcentral Foundation

Kris Haight
King County Public Hospital District #4

George Harper
First Choice Health Network

Thomas Haywood
Peacehealth

Robert Huckvale
Southwest Medical Group

Jesus LaCosta
Providence Health Care

Joseph Lapping
Emdeon

Marnie Larson
Stargarden Corporation

Joel Levi
U.s. Bank Healthcare Payment Solutions

Lana Makhanik
Vuemed

Buddy Marceaux
Multicare Health System

Allan Meyers
Moss Adams Llp

Miranda Mooneyham
ECG Management Consultants

Keith Officer
Red Cedar Partners, Llc

John Painter
Merchants Credit Association

Thelma Pepion
Southcentral Foundation

Tara-Lyn Poole
DaVita, Inc.

Bill Poppy
Virginia Mason Medical Center

Marian Rawls
Merchants Credit Association

Troy Rector
Clark Nuber

Edward Rinn
Providence Health System Alaska

Karl Sackinger
Fairbanks Memorial Hospital

Barbara Schmidt

Vincent Stevens
Clark Nuber

Holly T
Coulee Community Hospital

Karen Taug
Se Alaska Regional Health Consortium

Brian Volkert
Health Resource Services, Llc

Carla Warren
Southcentral Foundation

Alissa Woodworth
Ecg

James Yerges
KPMG LLP

Get Connected!

Make a Difference!

Help Planning Region 11 Symposium 2010

The Region 11 planning committee needs a couple of volunteers from WA/AK to assist with the preparation of the upcoming Region 11 Symposium.

This is your opportunity to contribute to an excellent educational program for next year.

If you are interested, please email Fredrik Andreasson, fandreasson@outreachservices.com

Mark Your Calendar

May 21, 2009
HFMA
Quarterly Meeting

Cedarbrook Conference Center
SeaTac, Washington

SEE YOU THERE!

CORPORATE SPONSORS

The Chapter would like to thank the following companies for 2008 - 2009 sponsorships:

PLATINUM LEVEL

Audit and Adjustment Company
Bennett, Bigelow & Leedom, P.S.
Coopersmith
Dingus, Zarecor and Assoc.
Foster Pepper PLLC
Healthcare Resource Group
Merchants Credit Association
Moss Adams LLP
Outreach Services
Triage Consulting Group

GOLD

Case Mix Analysis
The Data Systems Group
Derry, Nolan & Associates, LLC
Emdeon Business Services
Garvey Shubert Barer
Healthfirst Financial, LLC
KPMG LLP
Michael R Bell & Company PLLC
Newman Dierst Hales, PLLC
PNC Healthcare
Professional Credit Services
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SILVER

Clark Nuber PS
FinCor Solutions
J&L Teamworks
NCO Financial Systems Inc
Ogden Murphy Wallace, PLLC
Passport Health Communications
Perot Systems
Piper Jaffray & Co.
Red Cedar Partners, LLC
The SSI Group, Inc.
West Asset Management, Inc.

BRONZE LEVEL

AR Systems, Inc.
Cymetrix
Legend id
Mark Hugh & Associates PLLC
Parker Smith Feek

HFMA Region 11 Chapters Deal with the Changing Faces of Providing Educational Programs to Their Membership

by Walton Luke | FHFMA, MBA

Thank You for Attending The 11th Annual HFMA Region 11 Healthcare Symposium

First of all, the 7 HFMA Region 11 Chapters of Nevada (Host Chapter), San Diego & Imperial County, Washington~ Alaska, Hawaii, Oregon, Southern California and Northern California thank all of the Sponsors and Conference Registrants for attending this year's Symposium in Las Vegas, Nevada. As usual, the "Special" Southern California Committee and other Chapter Member Volunteer Leaders led by Chairman Susan Labow put together an excellent educational program as well as an outstanding Sponsorship Trade Faire. Everyone I spoke to in attendance thought highly of this conference.

In 2010, the Region 11 Symposium Planning Committee with San Diego & Imperial County as Host Chapter, have more involvement by every chapter in the region and will be led by Vicki Morgan, Past Region 11 Executive. The Core Committee, with key, experienced Chapter Voluntary Leaders, some from last year's group, will play a vital role in keeping to the high standards set by past Region 11 Symposiums.

Providing "The Best of The Best" Healthcare Symposium and Provider Added Incentives

Several months before the conference, economic conditions warranted Healthcare Providers to review their education budgets and either froze, cut or held-the-line-but… We all held our collective breaths as to attendance and were rewarded that the symposium attracted well over 300+ attendees plus all the Sponsors expected at the Trade Faire. But as we all know, there will continue to be a lot to plan for 2010 and holding another "Best of The Best" Region 11 Symposiums.

For 2009, many of the Region 11 Chapters provided to their membership either a registration per member discount of $300, a rebate ranging from $100 to $300, or even a raffle for 5 free registrations. This was in addition to the early registration rebate of $100 per registrant.

When this was discussed at the Regional Presidents' Meeting on Sunday at Caesars Palace before the CFO/PFS Forum at 3:00PM, those Healthcare Provider VPs of Finance/CFOs who were part of the meeting, all agreed that we had to develop a plan of action to assist Providers or Providers' Management Staff in getting to the 2010 Region 11 Symposium. There was currently nothing planned to add to the Providers' education budgets.

As part of our planning process for next years' symposium, the Region 11 Chapter Presidents' Meeting will have on their agenda, recommendations on incentivizing Providers to continue attending the Healthcare Symposium. One of the discussions tabled for future discussion is "Provider Scholarships" as well as the continued discounts, rebates or raffles.

But we still need to remember that providing "The Best of The Best" Region 11 Symposium speakers and getting back to what Providers want in terms of education programs is still the main objective.

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Looking at 24/7 Educational Programming/Video Webinar Housed on A Chapter Website

In August 2008 at the Region 11 Fall Presidents' Meeting, Mickey Duke, Region 11 Executive-Elect, voiced his concern for having 24/7 educational programming as another venue for continued education meeting the members' needs. The initial condition was for the "insomniac" member who sometime after midnight, wanted to view an education program available on the Chapter's website for a nominal fee. This was to be in preparation for the 2009 Fall Presidents' Meeting on the Big Island of Hawaii for the Hawaii Chapter membership, using the expertise of the Chapter Presidents or President-Elects as Presenters, and "video mainstreamed" to other interested Chapter members in the region.

In order to begin this process, the Northern California and Nevada Chapters have volunteered to "Beta Site" the video mainstreaming process in Reno, Nevada for 1-day seminar on March 27, 2009. The Northern California chapter elected to utilize the PFS Road Show Series, a continued Yerger Award winning Education Program. This program is further enhanced due to the generous donation of space and time by St Marys Regional Medical Center and a special thanks to Sam King, CFO. The Nevada chapter co chair is David Samuels, President-Elect, with additional assistance from Mickey Duke, Region 11 Executive-Elect. The Northern California Chapter is represented by the PFS Co Chair, Lynn Kelly with assistance from Steve Thompson, PFS Past-Chairman and Walton Luke, Region 11 Executive.

We are all excited by the prospect of presenting future, web based Programs in this new format and look forward to uncovering the hidden Educational opportunities for our Chapter Members.

Walton Luke, FHFMA MBA Region 11 Executive-Northern California Chapter. L.H. & Associates

RAC & ROLL: How Are You Doing on Your Preparedness?

by Day Egusquiza | AR Systems, Inc.

As we all wait for the lifting of the postponement –which should occur in Feb – there is considerable of defense work that should be occurring. Some facilities have 'bad habits' that should be rooted out, resolved with aggressive corrective action to prevent future problems. Let's look back and see the focus of RAC –and don't forget the Medicaid Integrity Program (MIP) that is with us due to the Deficient Reduction Act of 2005.

Recovery Audit Contractors

The CMS Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) program was developed to bring accuracy and fairness to the Medicare Fee for Service program, not Part C or D. Based on the results of the 3-year RAC demonstration project, CMS has made updates to the program policies and procedures to minimize the provider compliance burden while ensuring greater accuracy and maximum transparency. Changes include:

- Reduction of the claim look back period to a maximum of 3 years, beginning with PAID claims of 10-1-07.
- Establishing RAC medical record request limits based on provider type (PIN) for each 45 day period.
- If more than 45 days are required to reply to a request, an extension may be requested in writing to the RAC.
- Requirement for RAC to have appropriate licensed professions, including a medical director, certified coders, and other specialist.
- Provision of passwork-protected Web sites for providers to more easily track claim status by Jan 2010.
- Requirement for RAC to seek approval from CMS to review new claim areas.
- Evaluation of the accuracy and performance of each RAC by an outside contractor with an

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accuracy score released annually.
- To discourage erroneously denials just to boost the RAC's revenue –as they are only paid a contingency percentage of recouped funds – a loss at any level of appeal will result in the RACs forfeiting their contingency fees.

True success – Proactive Improve-ment to Reduce Vulnerabilities

While the changes outlined above will ease the provider's burden, true success will come when providers create systems and processes that find and eliminate improper payment before the arrival of an audit letter. One CFO told me after I had conducted a training: "So what we know was not working that we should have fixed and didn't fix, better get fixed?" Short version – yes!

One way to proactively prevent improper payments is to determine the cause of those that are occurring and make rapid, changes with ongoing, internal auditing to ensure compliance. Based on the demonstration state findings, below are some pro-active defense auditing that should occur – both inpt and outpt.

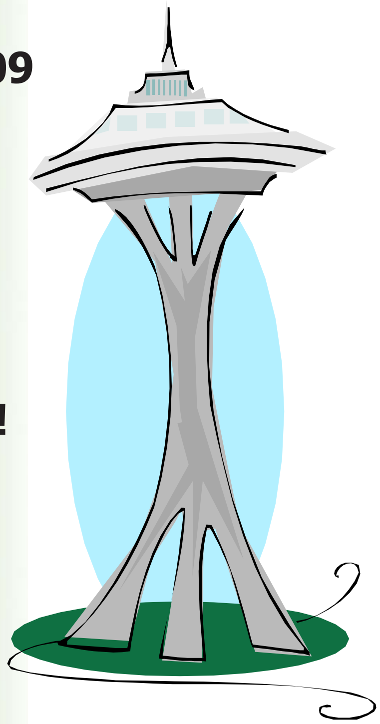
- 1 day stay. Separate the audit into 'severity of illness' and 'intensity of illness'.
- Observation. Separate into 3 categories: ER to OBS, OR/surgery to Recovery to OBS, Direct admit to OBS.
- 3 day qualifying stay. Separately address severity of illness to get into a bed/day 1 and then look at each additional days for the clinical reason to be in a bed. Documentation tends to focus on the need to have 3 days prior to transfer to a SNF rather than the clinical reasons the pt is still in the facility. The SNF will be adversely impacted if the 3 day is denied/recouped.
- ER bell curve. Closely audit for intensity of service to support the leveling system.
- Hospital based clinic use of E&M leveling – with or without a procedure.
- 59 modifier. Who is apply ?
- J code units. Audit to ensure the multiplier is working correctly.
- DRG high vulnerability + volume of higher MS-DRGs
- Drug administration. Audit for start and stop times in all outpt treatment areas.
- Hospital owned physician directed clinics. Audit to ensure physician documentation supports levels being billed. Hospital is at risk for all this activity.

RISK: Ensure there is always a validation review done PRIOR to submission of records. Fragmented medical records exist in many facilities due to the hybrid record – partial electronic, partial online documentation, partial paper. Major risk for incomplete records to be submitted. This also provides an opportunity to identify potential at risk activity.

Finally, don't audit for the sake of auditing. Ensure there is an aggressive action plan attached to all findings that includes training on reimbursement rules, documentation enhancements, accountability of all clinical areas in standards of documentation with ongoing auditing and feedback. The adventure continues.

Day Egusquiza is President of AR Systems, Inc.
"Finding HealthCare Solutions...Together"

Don't miss HFMA's 2009 Annual National Institute (ANI) in Seattle, June 14-17!



You'll participate in classroom sessions addressing the latest issues concerning financial management, patient financial services/revenue cycle, payment/reimbursement/managed care and compliance/legislative. You'll also have ample networking time with your peers and get access to leading healthcare vendors and suppliers in the Idea Exchange Exhibit. Walk away from ANI with the ideas and tools you need to achieve results in your career and organization. For more information, visit *www.hfma.org/ani* or call (800) 252-4362, extension 2.

ANI Week in Seattle

June 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
14	15	16	17

Special Event for Region 11 Members

ANI: The Healthcare Finance Conference
June 14-17
Washington, Seattle

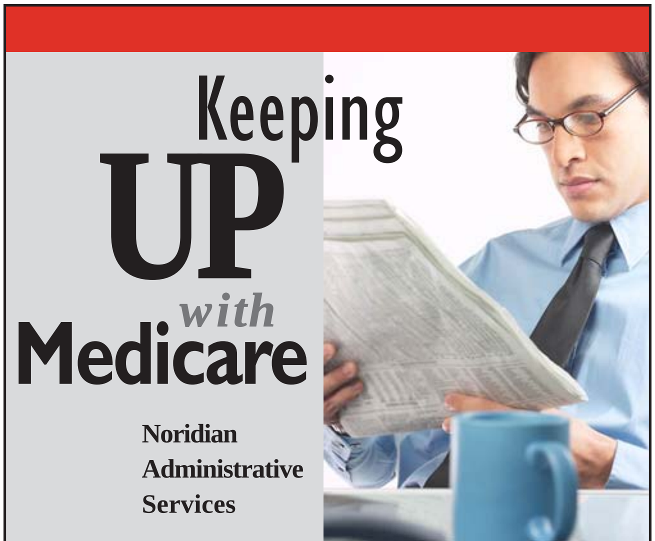
Because of your dedication and commitment to HFMA, you're invited to join your peers in Region 11 and the HFMA National Board for a special event held this year at ANI. On **Monday, June 15, 2009, from 10:15 - 11:30 am** take part in a rare one-on-one opportunity to discuss leadership issues with Patrick Lencioni, who was named as one of Fortune magazine's ten new gurus you should know. You'll also receive 1.5 CPEs for attending.

Patrick Lencioni

In order to attend, you need to register for at least one day of ANI: The Healthcare Finance Conference. You can register for the conference at hfma.org/ani or by calling (800) 252-4362, extension 2.

To save your spot at the Region 11 members-only event, please send an e-mail to ani2009@hfma.org that includes your name, title, organization name and member ID.

We Look Forward to Seeing You in Seattle!

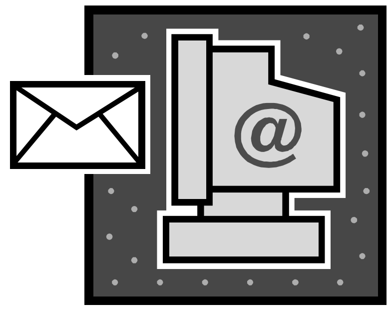


Medicare Contractor Provider Satisfaction Survey (MCPSS) comments indicate that many providers' staff members are unaware of timely Medicare information such as workshops, seminars, coverage updates and more. Noridian Administrative Services, LLC (NAS) wants to correct this problem. NAS offers a free, no-hassle method of providing Medicare communications in the form of an email subscription service commonly referred to as a listserv.

Upon enrollment, NAS will send email notifications twice a week to inform subscribers of training opportunities, claims procedure and policy updates, new CMS information, open door calls with the NAS contractor medical director and staff, and any other issues requiring provider attention. NAS encourages you to sign up for this service and to distribute this information to staff members who have a need for the most current Medicare information on a timely basis.

The email subscriptions can be individually customized to highlight the subscriber's personal area of interest. Attached is a brochure that explains the subscription process. There is no limit to the number of subscriptions per provider.

How Do I Change My HFMA Information?



All of our chapter directory information including e-mail and addresses for the newsletter are received from the National HFMA database.

The easiest way to make changes is via the internet. Simply follow these steps to change any of your personal information.

1. Log on to http://www.hfma.org

2. Go to the membership section

3. Log in using the username and password prompts

4. Follow instructions to access your Profile

5. Edit information.

What To Do with a Blessing

by Jim Heilsberg | INHS

Warning, contains some religious perspective. Read at own risk.

Wow, I won…Not only 1 time but three. At the recent HFMA vendor drawing I won three drawings on Friday. I was happy about the first prize because it is always fun to win a drawing. The second time became an embarrassment and as I walked up front, I felt about 2 feet tall. At 6'5" tall, that is pretty short. When I won the third time, I did not want to go up and claim my prize. I went up and crawled back as people good naturedly gave me an appropriate hard time. Fortunately I acted on a friend's suggestion of throwing the third prize back like throwing a home run from visiting team back in a baseball game.

Once I threw the prize back and was still in an embarrassed mode, I began a process that made me wonder why I am so lucky. I seem to win drawings regularly (many people have pointed this out to me anyway). What is funny is the times I try to win, by maybe bending my card on the corner (I know you have done same thing or thought about it), I don't win but when I just put them in drawing, I win. Why do some people never win or very rarely and others seem to win regularly.

Another friend made a profound statement that I should have gotten prior but did not for some reason. To my question of why do I win so much, she simply said she looks at it as me just receiving many blessings. It stopped me dead in my tracks. It was not luck. It was a blessing.

OK, so what do you do with a blessing? The answer did not come right away. I thought at first that I could keep a blessing and while that is true in some cases, blessings are not best kept but best shared. So the second thought was, blessings are God's way of answering our prayers or the prayers of others. I started to ponder what I had been praying for. I had been praying for a way to help finance my Son's honeymoon. He needed an additional amount to finish out his funding. I thought of my daughter and her desire to have something to work out with that had music. I thought of a friend that needed to go out to lunch. I thought of my wife and how while I was away, she was at home taking care of my grandson. Pretty quickly, I had uses for every amount that had come into my possession via the blessings over the past period of time. I thought of others that also had requested needs and realized that I needed to ponder them as well, prior to giving away the blessings.

The drawings were not at random. They were blessings. What a concept. We often see things in life as random. We see relationships we get involved in as a random happening and that we can get rid of them as we choose. They are not random, they are blessings. How many times have you had someone come into your life, that you did not anticipate that made an impact in your life? A speaker at the right time you needed to hear, a kind word from someone. We receive blessings every day of our life. Sometimes money, sometimes in words and sometimes in experiences we did not ask for and in fact would not wish on someone but once we are through the experience, we would not give it back for all the money in the world. Blessings appeared everywhere as I thought of the possibilities. We must find ways to keep perspective at times.

I then thought of HFMA and how much of a blessing I have received over the years in kind words of encouragement, shared stories about how someone handled a situation, prizes in drawings, relationships built, opportunities to grow and learn. I and you are some of the most blessed individuals when you think about it. The question is what do I/you do with those blessings. Recently I had been asked if it was a bother to ask someone in HFMA for information or for mentoring. I said, "no, not at all." We all had to have a leg up at some point in our career and most are willing to do the same. Now I realize that in reality, we have all received so many blessings of information, all we have to do is realize these blessings were made to be

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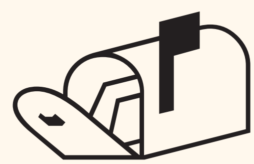
shared and when someone asks for information, you are just sharing something you received or paying in advance for something you will receive in the future.

While I am still embarrassed by winning prizes at the last HFMA meeting, the lesson learned from it will serve me well into the future. I want to thank those that gave out blessings to others this last meeting, the vendors that gave prizes that are truly blessings to each one who received them, the kind words given out by each of you to colleagues, the shared stories, the laughs at good times and the tears at sad times. All have a tremendous impact in those that receive them. This HFMA chapter has much going for it but mostly it is the blessings we all give and receive each time we get together.

One last note – thanks to the board and officers for their time and commitment. I am in awe of those that I serve with. Each has a unique talent. The officers I serve with each have tremendous skills. From Greg's willingness to push the norm and lead like few if any have before, to Grant's smooth and professional manner to help us move forward, to Brad's detailed perspective on everything and now to Annette that will bring her own gentle influence into the treasurer's role. Each is a blessing in their own way. Thanks for being who you are.

You could win $100 by writing an article for N.W. Outlook! Share your knowledge & experiences with other HFMA Members. You can help make a difference!



Please send information & articles for upcoming newsletters to:

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hfma washington / alaska chapter
healthcare financial management association

Job Opportunities

TITLE	ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	CONTACT
Accounting Professional	Samaritan Healthcare	Moses Lake, WA	hkenner@samaritanhealthcare.com
Admitting Supervisor	Coulee Medical Center	Grand Coulee, WA	peterslk@couleecommhosp.org
Patient Financial Services Manager	Tri-State Memorial Hospital	Clarkston, WA	cfo@tristatehospital.org
Payroll Manager	Southcentral Foundation	Alaska & WA	scfhr@southcentralfoundation.com
Reimbursement Support Supervisor	Regence	Seattle, Tacoma & Burlington, WA	

For more information on these listings or to include a listing, please contact Kimie Delos Reyes at (503) 567-3594 or mailto:kimie@hawesfinancial.com

See also National HFMA's website (www.hfma.org) for additional job listings.
[Last Update: Feb 12, 2009]

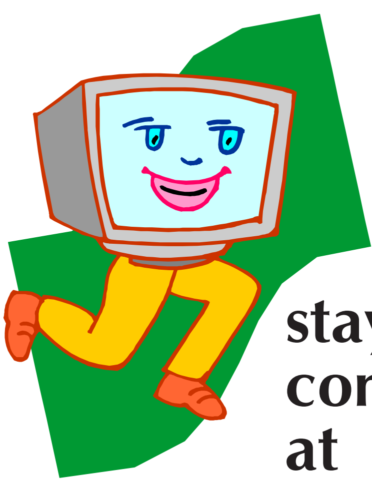
Would you like to check your progress toward a Founders Merit Award?

Individual scoring records for the Founders Merit Award program are maintained for chapter members by LCC Council III.

To receive a copy of your record, please contact

Tom Muller

Telephone: (360) 459-8994 • Email: tjwashington@reachone.com



on the run?

stay connected at

www.waakhfma.org

Plan Now for the Quarterly Meeting with the Oregon Chapter

Sept. 16-18, 2009

Benson Hotel • Portland, OR

Upcoming Chapter Meetings

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
May 21, 2009	Quarterly Meeting	Cedarbrook Conference Center, SeaTac, WA
June 14-17, 2009	Annual National Institute (ANI)	Seattle Trade & Convention Center
September 16-18, 2009	Quarterly Meeting with Oregon Chapter	Benson Hotel, Portland, OR

www.waakhfma.org

NW Outlook

January - March 2009

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