

MichUHCAN

Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network

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June/July 2004

Hospital Conversion Legislation Proposed

Mary C. Tuttle, MichUHCAN member

In the mid-nineties Columbia/HCA, a large for profit health care chain tried unsuccessfully to partner with and/or purchase Michigan hospitals in attempts to break into the Michigan health care market. Ingham Medical Hospital in Lansing was one of the targets to establish a joint partnership. Intervention of the state Attorney General, subsequent Medicare and Medicaid fraud charges against Columbia/HCA, as well as the Lansing Area MichUHCAN efforts to educate the community all helped defeat this venture. At that time MichUHCAN met with representatives in the office of the state Attorney General to discuss legislation regulating the sales of hospitals from nonprofit to for profit. Such sales are termed conversion sales. When the Columbia/HCA offer in Lansing was rejected, MichUHCAN did not pursue efforts to seek introduction of legislation pertaining to hospital conversions.

Since that time Columbia/HCA has sold their home healthcare and medical supply divisions, restructured their corporation, settled the government suits over Medicare and Medicaid fraud, and changed their name to HCA. Today HCA is the largest for profit hospital chain in the country.

An article titled TRIAD'S NEW MARKET STRATEGY: A THREAT TO COMMUNITY HOSPITALS was printed in the Winter 2004 of STATES OF HEALTH, a publication of Community Catalyst. Triad is a spin-off from HCA and is playing an increasing role in the purchase and partnership of faltering nonprofit hospitals. The growth of for profit hospitals such as Triad is a serious threat to health care for those who have no insurance or are underinsured in our country. With these numbers growing, Triad's market strategy has serious consequences for the health care system in the United States.

About thirty states now have legislation regulating hospital sales. but Michigan has no laws regulating the sale of hospitals from nonprofit to for profit. Michigan may be vulnerable to takeover attempts. On April 22nd Margie Mitchell, Sally Schneider, and Mary Tuttle met with Senator Gilda Jacobs to discuss this subject with her. We were seeking her support to introduce legislation to regulate hospital conversions. Senator Jacobs was receptive to the proposal and recognized the vulnerable position of our state hospitals. Sen. Jacobs said that she would contact the Governor's office, the Attorney General's office, and explore joint sponsorship with the House of Representatives. The possibility of introduction in the fall will be our goal. MichUHCAN members will be working with Sen. Jacobs in this endeavor.

Join MichUHCAN!

Be part of the health care solution. Return this form with **\$20 dues** (\$5 low in-come). **MichUHCAN, 8846 Robindale, Detroit, MI 48239**

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YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER?

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AMSA Rally

On April 20th, 2004, the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine's (MSU-CHM) chapter of the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) held their third annual health care rally and lobby day. The theme of the rally, Eliminating Health Care Disparities: A Prescription for the 21st Century, focused on raising awareness of the problems that the uninsured face in the state of Michigan.

The day began with 20 medical students meeting with 148 state Senators and Representatives, encouraging these elected officials to sign a resolution recognizing that health care is a right for all Michigan residents, and promising that they would make access to health care a legislative priority.

Following the lobby day events, 150 medical students from Michigan State, the University of Michigan, and Wayne State University, along with community members and physicians, convened on the Capitol Building Steps in Lansing, MI. Events at the rally included an organization fair, entertainment, free health screenings, and speakers. Lauren Oshman, National AMSA President, acted as master of ceremonies, energizing the crowd with chants of "What do we want? HEALTH CARE! When do we want it? NOW!". Christine Harrison provided a patient's perspective on dealing with the burden of being uninsured, and John Ross, MD, a past president of Physicians for a National Health Program, who offered a perspective on a physician's role in helping the uninsured. Gary Benjamin, an attorney with Michigan Legal Services, closed out the event, unveiling his health care lawsuit against the state of Michigan. This suit is based on language in the Michigan Constitution that states that there should be a statewide plan that provides, "...adequate access to health care for all segments of the state's population" MCL 325.2001. Special thanks go to Veena Rao and Jessica Foley, AMSA co-presidents at MSU-CHM, for organizing this extremely successful event.

BRIDGING THE GAP EVENT KICKS OFF UNION OF UNINSURED

On Saturday, June 19th, 2004, thousands of people across the nation joined together in a day of action to raise awareness about a problem that has been plaguing our country for decades-lack of healthcare for all citizens. Bridging the Gap, an event sponsored nationally by the SEIU, Rock the Vote, and Jobs for Justice, had people rallying across major bridges in cities across the country, from the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, to the Brooklyn Bridge in New York. MichUHCAN was involved in helping to organize an event in Detroit, where over 50 people rallied together on Belle Isle, crossing the Detroit River to attempt to "bridge the gap" between the uninsured and insured. Medical student members of the American Medical Student Association (AMSA), local uninsured persons, union members, and others joined together with signs and enthusiastic chants on a busy Belle Isle Saturday. Cars crossing over the bridge from 12-1 PM honked their horns in support of our march, as they heard cries of "Give us justice, give us health" and "Everybody in, nobody out!".

After the rallying ended, words of wisdom were shared by Ken Frisof, MD, National Director of UHCAN. Dr. Frisof spoke about his days rallying as a medical student, and encouraged us to continue to fight for health care for all. Gary Benjamin, a lawyer with Michigan Legal Services, also encouraged the uninsured to come together under a new organization, the Union of Uninsured and Underinsured. Local Detroit bakeries and restaurants showed their generosity and their concern for the issue of the uninsured by providing food for a picnic lunch after the rally.

MichUHCAN WEBSITE

Nick Benjamin is redesigning the website and has it close to "launch!!" If you have any ideas about what should be on this organization's website contact Nick at 313-896-3277 or Nickbii@yahoo.com.

STATE AGREES TO STUDY SINGLE PAYER OPTION

MichUHCAN has been trying to get the State Government to do an economic study of the health care finance system since early in 2003. On May 24, 2004 Marjorie Mitchell, David Green, and Gary Benjamin met with the Department of Community Health staff and contractor writing a grant to the federal government to plan statewide coverage. The state agreed, in that meeting, to study the option of single payer for the state of Michigan.

Other states have done such studies and all found that not only is single payer feasible, it is the most practical system. MichUHCAN believes this is a big step and will help us get to the goal of universal health care. The study being done is designed to plan for universal coverage in each state and will include other options such as small business pools; 1/3d sharing agreements (employer pays 1/3, employee pays 1/3 and government picks up the remaining 1/3); and other ways to increase coverage.