



Health Care Is A Right!

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Forum in Oshkosh is still on the drawing board

Planning continues for the Coalition's major forum in Oshkosh as part of national "Cover The Uninsured Week," which is May 1 through 7.

To help out or for more information, contact the Coalition office at 608-663-8322 or wischealth@aol.com.

The Fastest Growing Medical Organization in the U.S.

That's how one doctor at a major conference in November characterized Physicians for a National Health Program, the parent organization of the Coalition for Wisconsin Health. This PNHP conference in Philadelphia drew more than 200 people from across the United States as well as some from Canada. Despite the current political climate, the energy level and optimism were high.

The six people representing Wisconsin at the conference were Bruce Rhoades, MD; of Chipewewa Falls, Mike Wolkomir, MD, and Maryann Wolkomir, RN, of Barneveld; UW medical students Joseph Eichenhofer and Ryan

Sydnor; and Coalition representative Rich Bogovich.

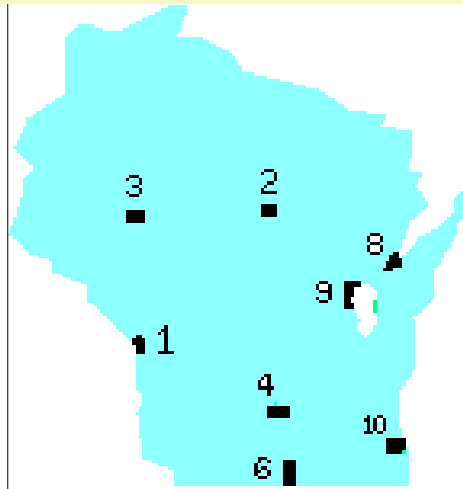
Toward the beginning of the conference the attendees learned about new Power-

Point slides that PNHP is making available to advocates via our Coalition and other affiliates. One slide, for example, presented the

research finding that copays discourage needed care. In contrast to other health system reform proposals in Wisconsin, the Coalition's Wisconsin Health Security Act would not institute copays or deductibles.

A PNHP slide featuring a map identified which areas in a given state have had a population density sufficient for meaningful competition among for-profit health care companies. Competition in Wisconsin has only been feasible over an extended

These Areas in Wisconsin Have America's Highest Doctor Bills



Slides like this one are available via the Coalition for Wisconsin Health and PNHP. Source: US Gov't Accountability Office, September 2005.

Continued on page 2

Nursingmatters Promotes Our Petition, Coalition

Much thanks go out to a regular at CWH meetings, Kaye Lillesand, editor of *Nursingmatters*, which has 60,000 readers. The February issue featured two articles about our Coalition's legislation and related petition drive. One article was

"The Wisconsin Health Security Act: A necessity for people, business, and the economy" by Drs. Linda and Eugene Farley, which was first printed in the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* in late 2005. The other article was "Health Care System

Failing Many" by Coalition spokesperson Rich Bogovich. They are available at www.nursingmattersonline.com/newsdetail.asp?newsid=1330 and www.nursingmattersonline.com/newsdetail.asp?newsid=1335, respectively.

Fastest Growing (continued from page 1)

period of time in the Milwaukee and Madison regions and the area in western Wisconsin just over the border from the Twin Cities.

Conversely, a map on a different slide showed that Medicare spending in all but southeast Wisconsin is at the level of Canada's spending in its universal, single-payer system. As many Coalition members know, Canada provides health coverage to every person yet does so at a per-person cost that is far less than in the United States.

Several inspiring speakers followed, including **Dr. Adewale Troutman**, health dept. director for Louisville, KY. He insisted that a basic right to health care is strongly implied in the Declaration of Independence and cited the preamble to the constitution of the World Health Organization. Moving from philosophy to harsh reality, he noted that the lack of universal coverage in the U.S. has resulted in 3.3 million premature deaths over forty years.

Dr. John Geyman, PNHP President, discussed what history teaches about pragmatism in the health care arena. He said the history of Medicare should have taught reformers to be very cautious about so-called "minor political com-

promises." The passage of time has presented examples of such compromises growing into significant problems.

One of the most energetic presentations was by **Dr. Rocky White**, a PNHP leader in Colorado. He noted that he is a "pro life" Republican but for him that means not only opposing abortion but also warfare and capital punishment. He has made it his cause to reach out to business leaders. Dr. White described a presentation he made on a Canadian-style system to the South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce, which was scheduled for less than 30 minutes but ended up lasting over two hours and ended with one leader saying the Chamber needed to rethink its position on health care.

Dr. Deb Richter, a former PNHP President, said she expects that a few state legislatures will enact universal health care laws and force Congress to vote on such a system. That possibility was just one reason **Dr. Quentin Young**, PNHP National Coordinator, said he sensed new optimism among PNHP members and even "imminent victory." It was **Dr. Garrett Adams**, a new PNHP leader in Kentucky, who added the reason

for optimism used as this article's headline, that PNHP is the fastest growing medical organization in the country.

The final presentation was on an impressive campaign by the California Nurses Association, as reported by the group's Executive Director, **Rose Ann DeMoro**. Ignoring advice from such public service allies as the teachers' and firefighters' unions, in 2005 the CNA aggressively opposed a referendum to weaken mandated nurse-to-patient ratios. The change was proposed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who had very high voter approval when he began pushing his plan a year ago. Though the CNA was easily outspent by the Governor's backers, the nurses won in November thanks to various creative publicity tactics plus a series of old-fashioned rallies, which started small but culminated in one that drew 35,000 people!

Their next cause? Any day now they are expected to join the AFL-CIO, but as a condition of agreeing to join the CNA is insisting that the AFL-CIO explicitly and forcefully advocate national legislation similar to the Wisconsin Health Security Act.

"The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being..." - Preamble to the WHO Constitution

Much Thanks to an Anonymous Benefactor

2005 began and ended with a bang for the Coalition for Wisconsin Health. As reported in a past newsletter, in the first few months of 2005 the Coalition raised \$4,000 from new and renewing members in

order to receive a matching or "challenge grant" of up to \$4,000. Checks came in at a healthy level the rest of the year, but the peak was in December when an individual who is not a CWH member—and who wishes

to remain anonymous—donated \$5,000! 2005 was already the Coalition's best in many years, but this person's astounding generosity ensured that the Coalition's momentum continues entering 2006.

Coalition Unites Leaders Across Wisconsin

An exciting new program is being created by the Medical College of Wisconsin and the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, called the Healthy Wisconsin Leadership Institute. The Institute's overarching goal is "to build public and community health skills and leadership capacity throughout Wisconsin." The program is a twelve month "shared learning experience" for teams of five to eight individuals. In addition to health care professionals, other eligible team members include policy-makers and journalists.

The Coalition for Wisconsin Health assem-

bled a diverse and impressive 8-person team from among its members and allies. In alphabetical order, they are:

Ivory Green, a community organizer in Milwaukee. He has received training from the Wisconsin Apprentice Organizers Project.

Brenna Jones, a journalist in Spring Green who handled media outreach for the Coalition's "Cover The Uninsured Week" forum in Beloit during May 2005.

Dr. Jonas Lee, Medical Director of the Beloit Area Community Health Center and 2004 winner of that city's Partner in Public Health Award.

Jack Lohman, retired CEO and owner of the Cardiac Evaluation Center in Milwaukee. He is now Director of the Wisconsin Clean Elections Coalition, a member organization of our Coalition.

Carol Roth, a consultant who presented a "Strategies for Health Care" session at the "Heart of the Farm—A Women in Agriculture Conference" in Loyal, Wisconsin in 2005.

Dr. Peter Sigmann is Medical Director of the Community Clinic of Door County, a member organization in our Coalition. He is

Continued on page 4

The Coalition for Wisconsin Health's newsletter will continue to feature personal stories from time to time, as was the case last issue.

Michael Moore Wants YOU

That is, if you have a horror story to share about a lack of health insurance or underinsurance. In early February the Coalition received word via the Universal Health Care Action Network that the famous documentary producer Michael Moore will be featuring such personal accounts in his next project.

"Send me a short, factual account of what has happened to you -- and what IS happening to you right now if you have been unable to get the health care you need," he wrote. "Send it to michael@michaelmoore.com. I will read every single one of them (even if I can't respond to or help everyone, I will be able to bring to light a few of your stories)."

In addition to stories from patients—and people who aren't even able to be-

come patients—he would also like to hear from employees of HMOs, for-profit hospitals, or pharmaceutical companies who have seen too much abuse of their fellow human beings. They should also contact him at the e-mail address above.

"I will protect your privacy and I will tell the world what you are unable to tell," he stated. "I am looking for a few heroes with a conscience. I know you are out there."

The only favor he asks is that readers don't tell the HMOs about the nature of his project, because "they think I'm making a romantic comedy."

By coincidence, in our autumn issue the Coalition announced that it planned to



gather such stories. Volunteer Jim Kellerman is still doing so, but his telephone number has changed to 608-354-7385. His e-mail address is still jimkellerman@charter.net. If you would like to share your story in print via our Coalition but don't think you're ready for the silver screen, contact Jim at your convenience. We'll feature at least one story in our next issue.

Advocacy In Person

The Coalition has again had some valuable opportunities to make presentations on our Wisconsin Health Security Act. Here are examples spanning less than a month in early 2006.

Our legislation's primary author, Sen. Mark Miller, took part in a discussion at a conference of the Wisconsin Association of Health Underwriters.

Drs. Linda and Gene Farley led a workshop at the Wisconsin Farmers Union's 75th annual state convention.

Estelle Katz, the Coalition's immediate past chair, served on a panel with State Rep. Jon Richards and Joanne Ricca of the AFL-CIO to compare different health care reform proposals. The event was at Plymouth United Church of Christ in Milwaukee.

Rich Bogovich

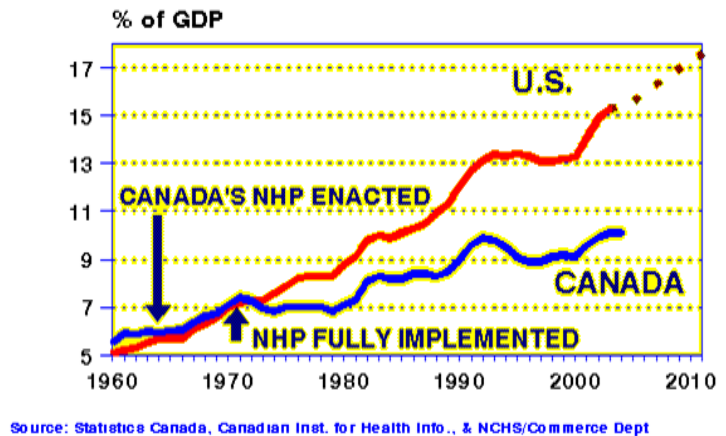
was the Coalition's spokesperson on a similar panel at Bethel Lutheran Church in downtown Madison. The event took shape thanks to efforts by Roger Chapman of the Coalition's executive board, and the moderator was Rev. Sue Moline Larson, Director of the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin and a

longtime leader in our Coalition. The three of them are hoping to replicate the forum at other congregations across the state.

As always, the Coalition would be happy to add to its list of spokespeople, and no experience is necessary. We'll provide training, information, and presentation materials.

Coalition spokespeople addressed farmers, health underwriters, and church members at recent forums.

HEALTH COSTS AS % OF GDP: U.S. & CANADA, 1960-2010



This is one of the PowerPoint slides available to members of the Coalition's speakers bureau (courtesy of PNHP).

Uniting Leaders (continued from page 3)

also a member of the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* editorial board.

Art Taggart, Executive Director of the Epilepsy Foundation South Central Wisconsin and Chair of our Coalition's executive board.

Jerry Waukau, Health Director of the Menominee Tribal Clinic and President of the Wisconsin Tribal Health Directors Association.

Shortly after you receive this issue the Coalition will

learn whether its team is among the five chosen for the Institute's first year. Many applications were expected, so the competition may be formidable.

The person who deserves praise for doing most of the team recruitment for the Coalition is Dr. Gene Farley. Jim Kellerman, Peter McKeever and Rich Bogovich helped prepare the lengthy application.

Coalition for Wisconsin Health

Mission: People first in health care

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Advocacy In Print

The second story on page 1 already reported on our most significant media coverage of the new year, two articles in *Nursing-matters*. As the Coalition for Wisconsin Health continues to challenge our society's for-profit health care system, it will remain crucial to get our message out via news articles, columns and letters to the editor as often and as widely as possible. Here are some other recent successes on this front.

Paul Kusuda, a member of the Coalition's executive board and one of two recipients of the 2006 Dane County Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Recognition Award, had



lengthy columns on our Wisconsin Health Security Act in the December, January, and February issues of *Asian Wisconzine*. They are available on the internet at www.asianwisconzine.com.

In our last issue we noted that Jack Lohman, one of the Coalition's Healthy Wisconsin Leadership Institute team members mentioned on page 3 of this issue, had guest columns from July 30 through September 16 in both Madison dailies, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, and Milwaukee's *Daily Reporter, Business Journal*, and *Small Business Times* (one of which he submitted with Dr. Gene Farley).

On Dec. 9, Jack promoted the Wisconsin Health Security Act in the *Racine Journal Times*, and in a letter in *USA Today* in late January he wrote:

"In 2004, Ontario, not Michigan, was North America's leading car producer. GM's health care costs, for example, are about \$6,500 per employee in the USA compared with only \$800 in Canada. That's because Canada has a universal health care system, while we have a for-profit, free-market system that is perpetuated by tens of millions of dollars per year in campaign contributions. So jobs are heading north and to other countries whose companies do not have to add health care to their bottom line.

"Why is the business world not demanding a similar universal health care system in the USA? Right now, businesses are adding their health care costs to the price of their products and the public reimburses them at the cash register."

"Why is the business world not demanding a similar universal health care system in the USA?", Jack Lohman asked in *USA Today*.

Volunteer Opportunity: Newspaper Website Monitor

Though our newsletters routinely report on all of the media coverage members have obtained for our Wisconsin Health Security Act, the Coalition for Wisconsin Health would like to be more systematic in its media outreach.

That includes replying in a timely manner to various newspaper stories, editorials, and letters to the editor on health care. However, Wisconsin has three dozen daily papers and many more

weekly papers, so we don't always learn of such opportunities as readily as we would like.

Therefore, the Coalition is seeking a volunteer, or a small team of volunteers, to glance at selected newspaper websites and send our Executive Board the text of anything on health care that may warrant a response.

Anyone who can commit to checking the websites of, say, five or six newspapers a few times a week should

contact the Coalition at wishealth@aol.com.

Of course, many people don't have regular access to the internet, if any access at all, so we would also be happy to receive relevant clippings from newspapers, including weeklies.

If you read a good column, editorial or article on health care reform in your local paper, please mail it to the Coalition office (see the address box on page 4) in case we haven't seen it.



Action Across the Nation

At the PNHP Annual Meeting in December a number of state and metro chapters provided updates on their recent activities. Here are excerpts from some of their reports:

Illinois – Dr. Quentin Young, National Coordinator for PNHP, serves on a health reform commission created by that state’s Health Care Justice Act. Activists are now working to get an advisory referendum on a Canadian-style system onto the November ballot (the state doesn’t have binding referenda).

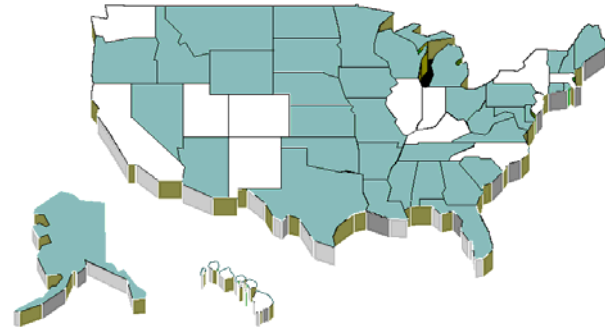
Indiana – Dr. Robert Stone appeared on a public TV forum with some politicians, and Dr. Aaron Carroll created a slide presentation that is being shared nationally via PNHP.

Kentucky – The chapter celebrated its first birthday at the Annual Meeting. Dr. Garrett Adams has appeared on TV for the chapter and also addressed a national committee of the Presbyterian Church. Nurses’ union leader Kay Tillow has persuaded the state AFL-CIO, the United Auto Workers, and many other unions to endorse a Canadian-style system. Dr. Ewell Scott’s resolution supporting such a system was approved by the Morehead city council.

North Carolina – The chapter is promoting legislation, HB 1358, to make health care “a fundamental right” in the state.

Colorado – See the report on Dr. Rocky White’s work on page 2.

Utah – Dr. Joe Jarvis is dialoguing with the state’s Chamber of Commerce and large provider groups.



New Mexico – PNHP members have stepped up their outreach to the media and state legislators there. A recent poll in the state indicated that more than 70% of residents favor a “single payer” system.

California – Dr. Jeannie Brewer appeared on a PBS television special entitled “Working Uninsured.” Drs. Paul Heineken and David Siegel testified before the state legislature.

Hawaii – Dr. Leslie Gise chaired a symposium on a Canadian-style system at the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association. More than 100 psychiatrists stayed for the entire three-hour session.

Washington State – A new Seattle chapter had an op-ed published in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* in November. 70% of Seattle voters affirmed the right to health care when approving a ballot measure urging the City to take action on the issue.

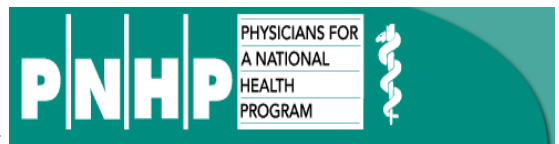
New York State – The NY Metro chapter has hosted several speakers’ trainings, including one just for medical students. Dr. Olveen Carrasquillo has made presentations to the Congressional Black Cau-

cus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and worked with Dr. Jaime Torres to start Latinos for National Health Insurance. Dr. Oliver Fein has debated American Medical Association spokespeople at numerous venues.

New Jersey – Dr. Charles Granatir made a presentation to delegates of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons in Washington, DC.

Massachusetts – The chapter recruited 300 physicians to sign a joint letter urging a “single payer” system for the state instead of Governor Mitt Romney’s proposal to require all residents to buy a health insurance policy (just as most states require drivers to buy auto insurance). The letter received coverage on National Public Radio. An article by Drs. David Himmelstein and Steffie Woolhandler on the extent to which medical bills contribute to personal bankruptcies was the one most frequently downloaded at the *Health Affairs* journal’s website in 2005, having been viewed nearly 70,000 times.

In a New Mexico poll, 70% of residents favored a single payer system. 70% of voters in Seattle affirmed health care as a right.



Maryland's Major New Health Care Law

When Maryland's legislature overrode Gov. Robert Ehrlich's veto of the Fair Share Health Care bill in January, it became the first state to require employers with 10,000 workers to spend 8% of their payroll on health care for those workers. At present, this law only applies to Wal-Mart.

Wisconsin's "pay or play" proposal, Assembly Bill 860/Senate Bill 440, differs by requiring employers with 10,000 employees to pay 80% of family health insurance coverage or cover the cost to state taxpayers of their workers who must enroll in such programs as Medicaid and BadgerCare. Besides Wal-Mart, the Wisconsin version is aimed at opportunistic employers such as Aurora Health Care, Walgreens and McDonald's.

Some legislators are sponsoring the Fair Share

plan and our Coalition's Wisc. Health Security Act (AB 807/SB 388), including our primary author, Sen. Mark Miller, and a primary author of the Fair Share plan, Rep. Terese Berceau.

Maryland's legislators deserve praise for not resorting to hollow "reforms" like Health Savings Accounts. However, as Fair Share momentum grows, keep in mind comments in early January by Dr. Don McCanne, senior health policy fellow for our Coalition's parent organization, Physicians for a National Health Program:

"Even if Fair Share legislation passed in every state, the net impact on covering the 46 million uninsured would be almost negligible.

"Without a lid on actual costs, premiums can be controlled only by reducing coverage, increasing cost

sharing through patient access fees, and using devious methods to exclude from coverage those with greater health care needs.

"While waiting for comprehensive reform to become politically feasible, we generally have supported incremental measures that do expand affordable access and coverage. Although a few more may be covered, the increasing momentum of cost shifting to those with needs will further diminish affordable access for average-income Americans. The Fair Share campaign will merely stoke the fires, driving us to the cliff. Once we're over the cliff, the feasibility of comprehensive reform will be obvious, but do so many really have to suffer for us to finally act?"

For the full analysis, see www.pnhp.org/news/2006/january.php.

"Do so many really have to suffer for us to finally act?"—Dr.

Don McCanne of PNHP, January 6, 2006.

Feds Think U.S. Already Has Universal Health Care

Materials produced by the Coalition for Wisconsin Health often point out the United States is the only industrialized nation that fails to provide health care coverage to all of its residents. What we will be drawing more attention to is the fact that two years ago the U.S. government *did* commit to spending almost a billion dollars for universal health care—in Iraq!

In March 2004 it was reported by the *Seattle Times* that the Bush administration would spend \$950 million to help establish a universal health care system

in Iraq.

Former Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, then the Secretary of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, defended the administration from charges of hypocrisy.

"Even if you don't have health insurance, you are still taken care of in America," he said. "That certainly could be defined as universal coverage. Every American's health care is far superior to what the health care is in Iraq."

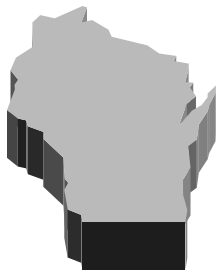


The 46 million uninsured people in the United States couldn't be reached for comment, but it is assumed they disagreed with Mr. Thompson's rosy assessment.

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