



New England Rural Health RoundTable Newsletter

July 1, 2009

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Round Table Members:

Register Online at our Web Site for Upcoming Fall Conferences!

Friday, September 11 - The 4th Rural Oral Health Conference will take place at the Portsmouth Harborside Hotel, Portsmouth, NH. Invited guest Dr. Edwin Smith, featured in a recent documentary on Appalachia, will be on hand to tell of his experiences in traveling with his mobile dental van through the countryside to provide dental treatment to residents who lack access to care. Tricia Brooks, senior fellow at the Center for Children and Families (CCF) and an assistant research professor at the Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, will give the keynote speech.

Friday, October 30 – the RoundTable’s 12th Annual Symposium will convene at the Portland Marriott at Sable Oaks, Portland, ME. This year’s theme is Workforce. Tom Morris, Associate Administrator for Rural Health Policy, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Dr. Cathy Morrow, co-director of the Dartmouth Rural Scholars Program, are heading the program.

Thursday, October 29 – One day prior to the Annual Symposium, the Boston HRSA field office is partnering with the RoundTable to hold a NE Rural Strategic Partnership session at the Portland Marriott at Sable Oaks, to which all HRSA grantees (and other interested groups) will be invited.

Nominations Now Open for RoundTable Awards

Do you know of someone in rural health who should be honored with a RoundTable award at the Annual Symposium? Nominations are due by July 31 for awards in these categories: Volunteer Award; President’s Award; Rural Health Clinician’s Award and Leadership Award. You can find nomination forms on our web site.

RoundTable Goes to Washington

On June 15, RoundTable spokespersons made a trip to Capitol Hill to talk with Congressional staffers about rural health care issues of special interest to New England. Representatives from nine New England Senate and House offices attended the luncheon meeting. [Read the full story.](#)

Update on Telehealth:

Readers may have been wondering about the status of the New England Telehealth Consortium (NETC), which in 2007 won a \$24.7 million award from the FCC to build a broadband network. Brian Thibeau, president of NETC, told us recently that progress has been slow but he feels that things are moving ahead now. In the June 09 NETC newsletter, which you can read online, Thibeau reported that the process of dealing with the USAC and the FCC has been challenging and frustrating. And NETC isn’t the only consortia experiencing delays; of 66 projects nationwide, only six have been funded. To read the full story, [click here.](#)



NH Public Radio reviewed the delays in getting the broadband network off the ground in a story on March 13. Read it [here](#).

On an encouraging note, on June 11 Maine Gov. John Baldacci signed telemedicine insurance legislation requiring health insurance providers to cover services provided through interactive audio, video or other electronic media, just as they would cover services provided by in-person consultation. Read the [press release](#).

Free White Paper – National Telemedicine Initiatives: Essential to Healthcare Reform

The authors say the electronic health record represents only a partial solution to the current (healthcare) problems. A broader focus on telemedicine that incorporates EHRs is a more prudent and effective approach. [Read the full article](#).

Statistical Gold Mine from the Office on Women's Health

Cecily Naron has sent us a link to a free health statistics database provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health. The resource offers reputable county, state, and national data on 11 main categories, including access to care, reproductive and maternal health, chronic and infectious diseases, mortality, prevention, mental health, and more. You can "drill down" by state on various categories, such as alcohol use in youth, for example, then generate a map or table, to display the results. [Try it!](#)

And while you're on the web site, check out the 2009 Edition of the [Women's Health and Mortality Chartbook](#). The Chartbook presents 27 health indicators, which highlight some of the key issues related to women's health that are being measured regularly at the state level.

Berkshire Agencies Create Youth Suicide Prevention Project

In recognition of the high suicide rate among youth in Berkshire county, two agencies - Berkshire Community Health Network (CHNA 1) and Berkshire AHEC - have created the Berkshire Youth Suicide Prevention Project. With funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the aim of the project is to improve the community's ability to identify at-risk youth and intervene quickly. [Read more](#).

Honor for Ammonoosuc Community Health Service, Inc.

Edward Shanshala II, Executive Director & CEO, Ammonoosuc Community Health Services, Inc., Littleton, NH, tells us that ACHS has been chosen as a Health Disparities Collaborative (HDC) high performer (top 26 out of over 1,000 FQHCs in the country). This has been done by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) through a joint initiative to study lessons from high performing organizations that participated in the Health Disparities Collaboratives. For more detail on the Ammonoosuc effort, contact: Ed.Shanshala@ACHS-Inc.Org.

To read more about the Health Disparities Collaboratives, [click here](#).

Chelsea Health Center Breaks Ground for New Facility



In May the Chelsea (VT) Health Center celebrated the construction start of the new Health Center building with a groundbreaking ceremony. In 2008, the Center received an \$825,000 USDA Rural Development Community Facility Loan, allowing them to move forward with plans for a new larger, modern facility. The Chelsea Health Center, owned by the Chelsea Health Center Board of Trustees, provides family care through the Gifford Medical Center and mental health services through the Clara Martin Center. The newly constructed facility, once completed, will remain home to the two. [Read more](#) about the center's history in the *Valley News*:

Use of Emergency Departments for Conditions Related to Poor Oral Healthcare: Implications for Rural and Low-Resource Urban Areas for Three States

Article published in the May/June issue of the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* by Emily Shortridge, MPH, MPP and Jonathan Moore, BA, finds that shortages of oral healthcare providers in rural areas, combined with limited acceptance of Medicaid and SCHIP, have left many patients without adequate access to dental care, resulting in visits to emergency departments for problems that might have been prevented. **Vermont** is one of the states in the study. [Read the abstract](#) – the full article must be purchased.

Impact of Recession on Rural America: Rising Unemployment Leading to More Uninsured in 2009

A new brief from RUPRI finds that in rural areas the unemployment rate in Feb 2009 (9.8%) was higher than in urban areas (8.7%) The RUPRI Center estimates that the uninsurance rate has increased in rural areas in every state, but the highest rates are in the South, Southwest and Pacific West. In the New England states, the uninsured rate is less than 13%. The report says the percentage of rural uninsured in February 2009 varies dramatically state, from less than 5% in Massachusetts (which has enacted sweeping health reform) to 26.7% in New Mexico. [Read more](#).

Thanks,

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To subscribe to the e-mail version of our online newsletter, please send e-mail to willis@tss-cpa.com and request that your name be added to the New England Rural Health RoundTable mailing list.

The RoundTable's online newsletter is published approximately once a month. Current issues are available in HTML format, with links to additional information. Previous issues are available in printer-friendly Adobe Acrobat format.