

Panel Seeks Citizen Input for Health Care Reform

BY NELLIE BRISTOL
Contributing Writer

WASHINGTON — American health care could be in for the world's largest customer satisfaction survey as the U.S. Citizens' Health Care Working Group seeks comments nationwide on how to reform the system.

"In order to make health care work for all Americans, we need to hear from all Americans," said working group member

Rosario Perez, a registered nurse and vice president of Mission Integration and Outreach Services for CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Health Care in San Antonio.

"We want to hear from individuals across the country. That means your parents, your relatives, your coworkers, and people in your community," said Perez. She was speaking at a briefing sponsored by the Citizen's Health Care Working Group.

The 14-member panel, which was es-

tablished by the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act, will collect as many comments and suggestions as possible before April 15.

Submissions will serve as the basis for panel recommendations for Congress and President Bush to consider next spring. The recommendations will address costs, care affordability, and quality improvement.

"Despite increases in medical care spending that are greater than the rate of

inflation, population growth, and Gross Domestic Product growth, there has not been a commensurate improvement in our health status as a nation," according to the law that established the working group.

Among areas of interest highlighted by the working group are consumer concerns about health care delivery, benefits that should be provided, how health care should be paid for, and acceptable trade-offs to ensure broad access to services.

Comments will be collected through "town hall"-style community meetings planned for every state and on the group's Web site (www.citizenshealthcare.gov).

The effort is the bipartisan brainchild of Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.).

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The press briefing was held in the same Senate room as the 1912 hearings on the sinking of the Titanic, and Sen. Wyden said the U.S. health care system could suffer a similar dire fate "if something dramatic isn't done to save it."

Sen. Wyden suggested that citizen input may engender systemic change that has stymied Congress for the last 6 decades. A "citizens' road map" for change could help "overcome the feeding frenzy by special interests," he argued.

The panel is made up of health care professionals, economists, benefits experts, and advocates from across the country, and includes Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt.

The group is chaired by Randall L. Johnson, head of corporate benefits for Motorola Inc.; vice chair is Catherine McLaughlin, Ph.D., a health economist at the University of Michigan.

To jump start the national discussion, the group developed a 30-page "Health Report to the American People," which summarizes the current state of U.S. health care.

"Having this information prepares us as a country to ask some tough questions about whether we are getting the services we need and want, [and] whether we are getting our money's worth and choices we need and are willing to make to have health [access] for all Americans," said Dr. McLaughlin.

She said that the working group aims to develop recommendations that would address health care as a whole.

"Our health care system is a lot like our natural environment, an ecosystem in which any significant change in one area has ripple effects throughout the others," she said.

"We need to address the entire health care system, not just specific problems like cost, quality, or access—no matter how urgent they may seem from our different perspectives," Dr. McLaughlin said. ■

FEATURING:

Symposium - Malignant Melanoma

- *Seeing Things Clearly: New Optical Approaches to Melanoma Diagnosis*
- *Update on Treatment of Melanoma*
- *Surgical Management of Melanoma*
- *Sunscreen or Vitamin D - Which is Best?*

Actinic Keratosis - Current Options

Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer - Current Issues in Transplant Patients

Surgery Update - Pediatric Dermatology

State of Art Lecture: What's New in Pediatric Dermatology

Things You Might Not Know About Rosacea

Symposium - Psoriasis 2006

- *Late Breaking News*
- *Combination & Translation with Biologicals (Case Studies)*

Contact Dermatitis Workshop

Dermoscopy Workshop

Live Clinical Case Presentations with Phoenix Dermatologic Society

- *Dermatopathology*

Special Lecture: Dermatology in East Africa

Symposium - Cosmetic Dermatology

- *Ethnic Hair and Hair Cosmetics*
- *What's New & Politically Correct in Treatment of the Aging Face*
- *Techniques in Soft Tissue Augmentation - TIPS*

State of the Art Lecture: Fillers - Current & Future

Live & Video Demonstrations

Some will be live patient demonstrations with questions to the demonstrator. Others will be video highlights from previous Hawaii Derm and Cosmetic Derm meetings including:

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- *Human-based Collagen*
- *Poly-L-Lactic Acid*
- *Combination Botulinum Toxin Type A & Hyaluronic Acid*
- *Radiofrequency Tissue Tightening*
- *Botulinum Toxin Type A*
- *Non-Invasive Laser Treatments*
- *Fractional Resurfacing*
- *Plasmakinetic Resurfacing*
- *The "S" Lift*

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