

## **Medical Directors Newsletter October 2021**

**“Ancient medicine had once had a name for this something present in the living body but missing from the corpse. *Spiritus* was the breath, the regular, rhythmic breathing of the live body that is so shockingly absent from the dead.”**

**–Dr. Victoria Sweet, Author and Medical Historian**

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### **Many Ways of Promoting Lung Health**

October is National Lung Health Month, sponsored by the American Lung Association. Why October? Possibly to coincide with the prime season for influenza vaccination.

Here are few ways (besides flu vaccination) primary care clinicians can support our patient’s lungs.

1. Asthma Treatment: Use combination formoterol-corticosteroid inhalers (such as Symbicort or Dulera) instead of albuterol or levalbuterol for short-acting relief of mild to moderate asthma. International and national guidelines and a strong evidence base support this approach.
2. Asthma Misdiagnosis: Be on the lookout for the 10% of patients with a diagnosis of asthma who have other conditions. Order spirometry or pulmonary function tests if the diagnosis is unclear, especially if not responding as expected to usual asthma treatment.
3. Covid: About 20% of patients hospitalized with Covid develop long-term lung damage, causing dyspnea and decreased exercise tolerance. Prevent permanent lung damage caused by Covid by encouraging all eligible patients to be vaccinated, especially pregnant women and teens. Consider use of monoclonal antibodies to treat early Covid infection to prevent it from becoming severe.
4. COPD: Ensure that patients discharged from emergency departments and hospitals for COPD exacerbations receive prescriptions for tapering oral corticosteroids and combination bronchodilators (long acting beta agonists and long acting muscarinic agonists).
5. Action Plans: Ensure that patients with COPD and Asthma have action plans to allow them to self-manage exacerbations.
6. Pneumococcal Vaccination: When giving annual influenza vaccine, co-administer pneumococcal vaccine for those who have not been previously vaccinated. Who are eligible? Adults over age 65, those with immuno-compromising conditions, chronic CSF leak, and those with cochlear implants.

7. Smoking cessation: ask about smoking status, provide counselling to those using tobacco products, and prescribe smoking cessation medications when appropriate.

Although these are core primary care activities, we sometimes are distracted by other clinical issues that come up in our visits. Please pass this along to your clinicians to remind them to think about more than just flu vaccine, this month.

## Breaking News

### Safer Lock Medication Lock Boxes for PHC Members

Medication Lock Boxes have been added to PHC's Medical Equipment Distribution program.

Safer Lock Medication Lock Boxes are used to secure medications and avoid misuse. Like all equipment distributed in the PHC Medical Equipment Distribution, there is no charge to PHC members.

All contracted eligible providers and clinicians can now request Safer Lock Boxes (and other medical equipment) by:

- 1) [Completing the request form](#)
- 2) Emailing the completed form to [request@partnershiphp.org](mailto:request@partnershiphp.org) or faxing the completed form to (707) 420-7855.

[Request guidelines](#)

[More information](#)

### Increasing Covid Vaccination Rates among the Hispanic/Latinx Communities

[Flyers](#)

The National Hispanic Pharmacists Association (NHPA) is hosting two events to help the Hispanic and Latinx Population increase their awareness on Covid Vaccinations, in an effort to help increase the vaccination rate.

Please invite your Hispanic and Latinx patients to the following events:

#### **Myths and Truths of Covid-19 Vaccinations and How it is Affecting our Hispanic Communities**

**Date:** Wednesday, October 13, 2021

**Time:** 5:30 p.m.

[Registration](#)

## **Mitos y Verdades Sobre Las Vacunas Covid-19 y Como Esta Afectando Nuestras Comunidades Hispanas**

**Date:** Thursday, October 14, 2021

**Time:** 5:30 p.m.

[Registration](#)

## **Supporting Behavioral Health Needs in Children: UCSF's Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Portal**

Do you have children and adolescents with mental health needs? Do you have difficulty finding local child psychiatry specialists to refer them to? Are you looking for ways to increase your skills to handle common behavioral health challenges yourself?

UCSF has developed a Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Portal (CAPP) to help meet increasing needs of pediatric primary care with mental health in the youth population.

### **Resources:**

- [CAPP Services and FAQ](#)
- [CAPP Fact Sheet](#)

## **Covid Vaccination Incentives for Primary Care Providers**

Within PHC's 14 counties, on August 25, about 65.2% of those aged 12 and over had received at least one Covid vaccination. Among PHC members in these counties the rate is about 47.1%, according to data provided by DHCS. To help increase the number of vaccinated Medi-Cal beneficiaries, DHCS has tasked PHC, and other Managed Care Plans, to help increase this rate. PCPs are a critical component of our plan to help increase vaccinations, and we would like to support you with your efforts. We are offering a 3-tiered financial incentive program for PCPs.

Additionally, our plan includes substantial other support for your work, which includes:

- Significant dollars for community grants to initiate and bolster the efforts of community-based organizations to provide and facilitate access to Covid vaccinations for the target populations
- Specific outreach to homebound PHC members
- A broad-reaching, multilingual media campaign aimed at the target audiences, focused on dispelling vaccination misinformation and encouraging vaccination
- A member incentives program for members vaccinated after 9/1/21
- Collaborating with larger pharmacies to identify unvaccinated PHC members picking up prescriptions and vaccinating them on site

Incentives offered to PCPs include the following:

- A fixed one-time incentive for the development and submission of a vaccination plan, followed by a report on the implementation of that plan.
- A cash incentive for each PHC Member partially or fully vaccinated by the provider site or a “finder’s fee” for each member verified to be at least partially or fully vaccinated and then documented in CAIR by the provider/site.
- A high performer QIP bonus based on the provider/site assigned PHC member vaccination rate at the end of the program (02/28/2022).

For more information, please visit the following links:

- [Specifications for Covid Vaccination Provider Incentives](#)
- For all details, documents, programs, grants, and weekly updates, visit PHC’s [Covid Vaccine Incentive Program webpage](#).

## Screening for Diabetes: Adjusting for Disparities

In August, the United States Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) updated its recommendation for screening for diabetes and pre-diabetes. In non-Hispanic white populations, screening is recommended for those aged 35 to 70 years old who are overweight or obese. Screening should begin “earlier” in Native American, Black, Latino, Asian American, and Pacific Islander populations. For Asian American populations, the USPSTF recommends a BMI cutoff of 23 or higher for overweight.

While screening may be done with a glucose tolerance test (2 hours after ingesting a 75g oral glucose load), a fasting blood sugar or hemoglobin A1c is more convenient. The range of values for pre-diabetes is 100-125 for fasting blood glucose and 5.7% to 6.4% for hemoglobin A1c.

The optimal interval for rescreening someone with a previous normal screen is not grounded in evidence. Best practice recommendations range from 1-3 years.

The American Diabetes Association recommendations are more aggressive, recommending universal screening (regardless of BMI) starting at age 45, and universal screening (regardless of age) if a person has a BMI over 25. This easy to remember recommendation helps address the disparities raised in the USPSTF recommendations, and allows a non-race based standard of care for preventive services, a goal increasingly promoted by many teachers of medicine.

## PHC Educational Opportunities and Events

### Quality & Performance Improvement Training Events

For up-to-date events and trainings by the Quality and Performance Improvement Department, please view our [Quality Events Webpage](#).

Looking for more educational opportunities? The Quality & Performance Improvement Department has many pre-recorded, on-demand courses available to you. Trainings include:

- The Role of Leadership in Quality Improvement Effort: Leaders from top performing organizations share how they were able to build a culture of quality.
- PCP QIP High Performers – How'd They Do That?: Learn how other PCP's accelerated in their QIP performance.
- ABCs of Quality Improvement: An introduction to the basic principles of quality improvement.
- Accelerated Learning Educational Program: An overview of clinical measures including improvement strategies and tools.
- Project Management 101 – An introduction to the basic principles and tools used in project management.

You can find these on-demand courses, and more, on our [Webinars Webpage](#).

## Recommended Educational Opportunities Outside of PHC

### Western Clinicians Network's Clinical Leadership Coaching

"The Western Clinicians Network (WCN) is offering dedicated coaching services to support developing clinical leaders in [their] four-state service area. Community health centers (CHCs) require clinical leaders to develop specific skills and operate in a distinct environment – in addition requiring unique care models, CHCs present constrained resources, recruiting and retention challenges, and specific regulatory requirements. [WCN's] coaching services are designed to support both current and developing clinical leaders to build leadership and management skills, troubleshoot professional challenge, and establish self-care and professional boundaries so they can serve the safety net over the long-term. WCN's Clinical Leadership Coaching offers a team of multi-disciplinary provider leaders with experience in a variety of states and professional settings."

View WCN's [Brochure](#)

Contact for a consultation: [wcn@cpca.org](mailto:wcn@cpca.org)

#### Program Cost

"\$5,000 for an initial six-month engagement, with flexible pricing models for continued engagement at varying levels of on-going support after that point."