



President's Message October, 2009



To Oregon Chapter Members, Colleagues and Partners,

Hard to believe that Fall is upon us: students back in school, Friday Night Flights are the highlights to see and trips down I-5 to watch our favorite Pac-10 team (Go Beavs!) At the same time, we are hearing, thinking, reading and listening to the debate around healthcare reform. As we all want to ensure that we have the resources necessary to improve the health of our communities. Below are some excerpts from a message from HFMA President Dick Clarke that I felt are important to share and touch the core of the issues that we as healthcare financial professionals are faced with:

"... We must relieve our economy of the burden created by the unsustainable growth in healthcare costs. Everyone deserves access to care coverage. And for both health and economic reasons, care should emphasize health promotion, coordination across settings, and outcomes that are consistent across regions and populations.

An overwhelming amount of data shows that our healthcare delivery and payment system is unsustainable. As financial leaders, we have to deal with this dysfunctional system. And for almost everyone--providers, patients, employers--it is very frustrating. Action is needed before the problems get worse.

Naturally, not everyone agrees on the tactics. Of particular concern to HFMA members and other providers is whether reform will result in arbitrary cuts to current payment rates without addressing the underlying issues that drive cost--namely the lack of coverage for far too many, conflicting payment incentives, and overpowering regulatory burdens. They worry that payment cuts will be used to pay for reform elements instead of thoughtful and appropriately timed changes in the payment system to get all components to operate within the goals of reform listed above.

Reform is too important not to get right, and the dimension of the task makes it complicated and often frustrating. Yet, it is my hope that, while we debate the path to reform, we keep in mind the overriding goals of reform and the benefit to our nation if we achieve those goals in a thoughtful, well planned way."

Our role as the Oregon HFMA chapter is to continue the high quality education programs as we move towards the changes that healthcare reform will bring. Our fall meeting with the Washington/Alaska chapter did just that. Presentations on healthcare reform by Former Governor Kitzhaber, OAHHS Andy Davidson and OHSU President Joe Robertson to the reality of how hospital CFOs are dealing with these economic challenges are just a few of the highlights. And I think all of us have some "take-aways" from the inspirational speaker Alison Levine. Thanks to all of our committees for making this just a valuable educational event.

Our up and coming events include our winter meeting which will be held on the campus of OHSU in Portland. Key themes will focus Hospital Provider Tax to implications of Provider Based Billing models. We will be offering some additional sessions on Wednesday afternoon particularly geared towards reimbursement issues. It will be held on February 17-19, 2010, so please hold the date for this exciting event.

Look forward to when we meet again,
Diana Gernhart
Oregon Chapter President