

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS

NEWSLETTER:

P.O. BOX 2468, CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS 61801

NOVEMBER, 1978

HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS ARE NOW A MAJOR FORCE

The outcome of the Health Systems Agency (HSA) subarea election in September represents a milestone in the history of local health care planning. In a field traditionally dominated by health care providers, the public in great numbers elected an entire set of candidates endorsed by the CCHCC. Before the election, CCHCC members recruited over 500 new members to the subarea council, investigated all candidates and endorsed those concerned about public involvement, and then worked to elect all CCHCC candidates by nearly a two to one margin. Congratulations to those who were elected. Thanks to the public and CCHCC members that participated. The election signifies that an independent consumer organization can make a decisive difference in health care affairs.

CCHCC LEADER ELECTED HSA SUBAREA PRESIDENT

John Peterson, CCHCC leader and Urbana city councilor, has been elected president of the new HSA subarea council. He replaces Robert Owens, who announced his plans to step down after serving in the position for one year. Peterson has been active in health care consumer affairs in this area for several years. The CCHCC congratulates Owens for an excellent term in which subarea affairs were generally handled in a fair-handed manner.

GOOD NEWS FOR HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS

Two CCHCC leaders have been elected to the governing board of the Illinois Public Action Council in their annual meeting in Peoria. Joseph Ahearn of Champaign and Michael Doyle of Urbana both advocated formation of a statewide coalition of health care consumers....Robert Clinkscales, regional HSA president, has called CCHCC leaders to request a meeting to explain that the future of the agency depends in part upon gaining consumer confidence and support.... Barry Checkoway recently joined national consumer leaders in conducting training sessions for HSA board and staff members in Kansas. The conference was sponsored by HEW Region VII Center for Health Planning....Thomas O'Rourke was featured as a panelist on a WILL-AM radio program focusing on health care costs and practices....HEW officials have informed CCHCC members of their intention to draft a congratulatory letter recognizing consumer accomplishments during 1977-78....

HEALTH INSURANCE FORUM ANNOUNCED

Attend the CCHCC forum on HEALTH INSURANCE: ARE YOU GETTING YOUR MONEY'S WORTH? on Tuesday, November 14, at 7:30 P.M., in the Champaign Public Library and Information Center, 505 South Randolph, Champaign. Among the issues to be discussed are ways to determine the adequacy of health insurance policies, common misunderstandings about insurance benefits, and why insurance costs continue to rise and what can be done. Panelists will be Charles Gantt, Consumer Services Division, Ill. State Department of Insurance; Martin Nyholt, Capital Regional Manager, Blue Cross-Blue Shield, and Thomas O'Rourke, Professor of Health Education, University of Illinois. This forum is co-sponsored with the Union of Professional Employees, Local 2287. Come with questions and encourage others to attend.

ATTEND THE NEXT MEETING OF CCHCC

Attend the next meeting of the CCHCC on Tuesday, November 28, at 7:00 P.M., in the Champaign Public Library and Information Center, 505 South Randolph, Champaign. New members are invited to attend. CCHCC action proposals and programs will be considered. The classic film "The Crisis in Health Care" by the American Friends Service Committee will be shown. Come join the effort to improve health care to all residents of our area.

Election of consumer state to health board applauded

By Karen Payne
Morning Courier Staff

A leader of the Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC) said Friday that the election of a CCHCC-endorsed slate of candidates to the board of the sub-area committee of the local health system agency is "a milestone in the history of local health care planning."

"The election showed the public wants more direct involvement with health care matters," said CCHCC member Barry Checkoway. "Health care is too important to be left solely to those people who provide health care."

Thirteen of the 29 seats on the board of the Sub-Area Advisory Committee of the East Central Illinois Health Systems

Agency were filled Thursday in the election, in which 462 persons voted.

Checkoway said two local hospital administrators, Charles Dawley of Carle Hospital and Ronald Aldrich of Mercy Hospital, were among those with fewest votes received. "Providers are going to have to work with community people or they won't get elected," said CCHCC member Michael Doyle.

According to Checkoway, the change in board composition may mean more consumer involvement, expansion of public information and education and more technical assistance to community organizations.

Sub-area board member John Peterson said the sub-area committee eventually will con-

trol health care planning in the area and will have approval power over all proposed health care facility expansions that cost more than \$100,000.

"The people who were elected will have a tendency to look at some (expansion) issues more carefully than those who were unelected," Peterson said. He said the rapid rise in health care costs is "destabilizing" the United States economy.

"No one can argue with the quality of health care (in the country); it's the type of care, which is provider-oriented, not information and education oriented toward prevention," said newly-elected board member Thomas O'Rourke, University of Illinois associate professor of health and safety education.

Sub-area board member John Peterson said the sub-area committee eventually will control health care planning in the area and will have approval power over all proposed health care facility expansions that cost more than \$100,000.

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AHA TO MAKE POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The American Hospital Association has decided to join the not-so-select group of organizations who have political action committees in Washington.

The American Medical Association, the Federation of American Hospitals, and the American Dental Association are just some of the medical groups which make generous contributions to selected candidates through their political action committees (PAC).

The Federal Election Commission's report shows that the AMA's PAC was the top contributor to Congressional candidates -- through only the first seven months of this year it has distributed \$915,000.

CITIZENS!

Docters Offer Views On Hospital Expansion, Cost

By DON LEHMAN
Evening Gazette Staff Writer

About 25 persons turned out Thursday evening to hear doctors and hospital administrators addressing concerns about local hospital expansion and rising health care costs.

The meeting was sponsored by the Champaign County Health Care Consumers at the Champaign Public Library.

Allen Wynn, executive director of the East Central Illinois Health Systems Agency, said he believed the days of the "edifice complex" are gone.

"The edifice complex was the intense competition between hospitals," Wynn said. "If one hospital was seven stories tall and one down the street only two stories, the shorter building would build another floor to equal the other hospital."

There was duplication of services and equipment in the community because of these programs, Wynn said. Many times wings or floors were donated by wealthy patrons, but the hospital was responsible for the costly maintenance of bed, personnel and medical equipment for the additions.

William Siler, a pharmacist who is on the board of directors of Gemini House, said he deplores the trend toward institutionalization of health care in this community.

"Information about the program expansions have come so rapidly that I've wondered who was involved," Siler said, referring to the Mercy Hospital expansion.

Siler said he has about 30 years' service as a provider of health care and he has watched the trends.

"One of the most frightening things is the institutionalization of health care. One local hospital already has taken this step. Mercy is about to take it."

"The best example of institutionalized care is Veterans Administration and other government hospitals. Care in such hospitals becomes dehumanized. I know, I've been there."

Siler said he has been a

patient at Mercy and he told the administration that care there is adequate. "It is my contention, though, that the care is not as good as it should be for the cost."

If the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals were doing its job properly, Siler said, there are many hospitals that should and would be closed.

Urban Alderman John Peterson, long a vocal critic of the Carle Foundation Hospital and Carle Clinic expansions, said he has held a suspicion for a some time that hospitals are not as concerned with health care costs as they should be.

"Now I fear that the University of Illinois medical school (in Urbana) will result in higher costs for local residents," Peterson said.

A member of the audience, Dr. Allen Levy, UT professor of medicine in the School of Basic Medical Sciences, said there is no reason to believe that college medical residency programs add to the cost of health care in a community.

"Medical schools often have a salutary effect on health care," Levy said.

Michael Doyle, a member of the CCHCC and a health care coordinator at the Frances Nelson Health Center, said he believes that ECCHSA should consider a moratorium on all hospital expansion in the area until all the facts and figures are in and a rational decision can be made.

Joseph Ahearn, another member of the health care consumers organization, said he doesn't believe any expansion should be allowed until the fate of Champaign Air Force Base is decided.

Ahearn pointed out that there is a fairly modern hospital on the base that could be used to provide regional care in northern Champaign County.

"What's good for Champaign-Urbana may not be good for Champaign County," Ahearn said. He

suggested that more satellite hospital programs, to provide better health care in rural areas, be implemented by local hospitals.

Dr. Elsie Fields, medical director for Planned Parenthood Association of Champaign County, expressed concern that many smaller communities are in danger of losing their hospitals.

"We have got to persuade hospitals that the most sophisticated care is not necessary," Fields said. "We must persuade people that they don't have to go to the hospital with the most sophisticated equipment."

"Primary care can do much more for a person (than the equipment)."

"Our economy cannot bear the demands being made on it (by rising medical costs)."

Thomas O'Rourke, UT associate professor of health education, said that health insurance is the most significant factor in the increasing cost of health care.

As health care costs rise, people want more coverage, O'Rourke said. The more insurance people want, the higher the cost of insurance goes.

The more coverage a person has, the more care they are likely to demand from a medical institution.

"There is very little incentive to reduce costs," O'Rourke said.

Health care is unique in the field of competitive businesses, O'Rourke said. If there are too many gasoline stations in an area, some will close because they cannot afford to stay in business. If there are too many hospitals and a hospital isn't getting enough business, it simply raises rates to meet its needs.

O'Rourke suggested the establishment of an elected panel of healthcare supervisors, much like a school board, who are answerable to the electorate.

O'Rourke later said it is only fair to point out that patients must take part in their own care.