

## **Medical Leadership Council May 20, 2009 Meeting Summary**

Short version: 608 words

### **New Developments in Medical Leadership Council Work**

Convened by The California Endowment, The Medical Leadership Council on Cultural Proficiency (MLC) met May 20 in Oakland. Meeting topics included how to ensure language access and cultural proficiency are addressed in the national health information technology efforts, reports on several member organizations' Endowment-funded projects, and an update on national efforts to address health care interpreter certification.

**Endowment Advising on Health Information Technology Standards:** As federal and State agencies work to make billions of dollars of federal stimulus money available to support the adoption of health information technology (HIT) nationwide, The Endowment is supporting California efforts to ensure new standards address language access and cultural proficiency.

As much as \$36 billion of the \$787 billion in federal economic stimulus funds will be allocated to HIT. The Endowment and others are supportive of HIT efforts which focus on improving patients' health and also provide patient-centered information, such as the gathering of patient demographics, including race, ethnicity, and language. The foundation also advocates that HIT support be provided in particular for minority/small/solo medical practices, community clinics, school health services, and public and nonprofit hospitals.

**MLC Project Updates:** Representatives of three organizations reported on the progress their institutions have made on Endowment-funded projects.

The California Health Care Safety Net Institute is leading the REAL Data Planning Initiative to assist public hospitals in better standardizing data collection protocols and capturing and using meaningful data on race, ethnicity, and preferred language.

Catholic Healthcare West (CHW) has developed the CHW Qualified Medical Interpreter Program, provides some video remote interpreting, and has made collecting race, ethnicity and language data in the admitting process uniform among eight admitting systems.

Sutter Health now infuses cultural proficiency throughout the organization by linking this work to the system-wide 'dashboard' of measures rather than treating it as a separate initiative. This includes a focus on eliminating health care disparities as part of overall clinical quality and enhancing provider/patient interactions as part of service excellence. Sutter also has established staff interpreter competency testing, online interpreter skills training, and evaluated the health care interpreting skills of 1200 staff.

**New MLC Grants:** Representatives of three organizations beginning new Endowment-funded projects provided an overview of their plans for the next year.

The California Medical Association will assist independent practices with bilingual staff evaluation; assist physicians in evaluating and improving their practices' language access services; and partner with the University of California-Sacramento Center to increase interest in medical training among a diverse pool of undergraduate students.

The California Primary Care Association will develop a comprehensive fact sheet detailing how cultural and language proficiency can be integrated into state and national patient centered medical home efforts.

The San Joaquin Medical Society (SJMS) will create a toolkit, including a video, to assist other medical societies in developing local versions of DECISION Medicine. This two-week program, designed by SJMS, introduces 24 diverse students to the field of medicine through hands-on field study opportunities each year.

**National Health Care Interpreter Certification:** Representatives of the California Health Care Interpreting Association also serve as members of the National Coalition on Health Care Interpreter Certification. The coalition is committed to developing a national certification process to ensure competency. In recent surveys, the group has learned that although stakeholders support a national certification process, opinions vary widely on what that should include. Discussions continue.

**New MLC Video:** A 10-minute video describing the MLC's work offers uniquely personal views on the policy issues the group is convened to address. It's available for viewing at [http://medicalleadership.org/diverse\\_patient\\_populations\\_video.shtml](http://medicalleadership.org/diverse_patient_populations_video.shtml).

**Next Meeting:** The Council will meet on November 18, 2009 at The California Endowment's Center for Healthy Communities in Los Angeles.