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## Coalition News

### Legislative Action Day; From My Perspective

Thank you to all who participated in the July 15 Legislative Action Day! This was the first Legislative Action Day I have attended. And as I told our Executive Director, Karlene, I had been avoiding them like the plague. Just the thought of meeting with a legislator made me break into a cold sweat. I really didn't feel competent or persuasive enough to have any real impact.

But when I heard that some people weren't attending because they didn't think it would do any good, I became motivated to act. I *needed* to be there.

Meeting with my senator proved to be a rewarding experience. Sure, he had heard it all before and he was sympathetic to the plight of adults in need of oral health care, but his hands were tied. What could he do? He felt compelled to explain how difficult things were with the economy. But our delegation expressed itself anyway. I found myself letting my heart do the talking, realizing that he needed to hear what I had to say. That made it easier to realize that he was just a guy with a tie on.

Afterwards, I felt frustrated. What impact *did* we have? But the reality is that all of the participants in our July 15 Legislative Action Day laid the foundation for future gains. And as we present ourselves as a resource to the Legislature on oral health issues, we are putting down the building blocks for a better future. If any of us are wondering what we accomplished that day, we have to know that we have accomplished a great deal.

As I told my senator as we were leaving, we would be back and we would keep bringing the message that oral health is primary health care and should not be optional or an easy cut when times are hard.

—Patti Ulrich, Board Chair, Michigan Oral Health Coalition

### New Look for Coalition Website Visit Us at [www.mohc.org](http://www.mohc.org)

The Coalition is pleased to announce the relaunch of its website. The first thing you'll notice is a crisper, more user-friendly design. The Coalition look is still there, but the website now features more intuitive navigation and fresh pictures. New features include a blog and MOHC Headlines. Visit us at [www.mohc.org](http://www.mohc.org) and learn more.

## 2009 Member Survey Coming Soon

Next week, Coalition members will receive a 2009 Member Survey by email. Our goal is to identify which areas of information, personal and professional development, education and advocacy members are most interested in. The survey should only a few minutes to complete, but will be of great assistance to the Board of Directors and staff. Thank you in advance for your help. We look forward to hearing from you. For more information, contact Karlene Ketola, executive director at (517) 381-8000, Ext. 218.

## New Program Year Kicks Off

### **Membership renewals still in progress!**

The membership renewal process is well underway for the Coalition. The Coalition is happy to give members new options to renew their membership! As always, you may pay your dues by fax or mail. New for 2009! We are making an online option available. Visit [www.mohc.org](http://www.mohc.org) and click on the "MOHC Online" button in the lower right hand corner. As we look ahead to our new program year, we hope you will continue your involvement in the Coalition. It will be an exciting, and challenging year as we fight to reinstate the adult dental benefit and begin to implement the new State Oral Health Plan. If you have any questions about your membership, contact [Rebecca Van Tassel](#), student coordinator at (517) 381-8000, Ext. 208.

## Treating Pregnant Women Training Now Available On-line

This February, the Coalition offered training for medical and dental professionals to discuss the need for oral health care in pregnant women. As a member benefit, the training is now available on-line at no additional charge. Click [here](#) for more information.

## Workplace Factoid: Add Some Pizzazz to PowerPoint

If you're giving a PowerPoint presentation, add a little zing to your project with some of the free templates available at [www.templateswise.com](http://www.templateswise.com). Categories include abstract, business, finance, nature and travel. There are also articles with tips that can help you improve your presentations.

## Coalition Mentorship Program; Valuable Opportunity for Students and Clinics

This past week, Melissa Christensen, project coordinator had the opportunity to visit Alcona Health Center Dental Clinic in Oscoda and talk with, Beth Gerow, one of our Mentorship Program students. Beth will be a senior this fall at the University of Michigan. Beth plans on attending dental school at U of M and sees herself practicing in a rural setting.

"The experience was everything I was looking for. Through the course of my week at Alcona Health Clinic I shadowed Drs. Merhi and Davis in the operatories as they performed various procedures; Dr. Merhi and Dr. Davis had time to sit down with me to discuss the [Medicaid] repercussions. Similarly, Dr. Krause took time out of her busy schedule to sit down with me and answer my questions regarding costs of starting up a clinic and maintaining a staff, as well as Alcona Health Clinic's outreach programs, like Project Connect--it was incredibly informative."—*Beth Gerow, University of Michigan*

For more information on the Mentorship Program, please contact [Melissa Christensen](#),

project coordinator at (517) 381-8000, Ext. 226.

## State News

### June Unemployment Hits 15.2 Percent

Michigan's unemployment rate shot to 15.2 percent in June, figures released by the Department of Labor, Energy and Economic Growth showed. The figure is the highest since May 1983. The number of unemployed workers leaped by 59,000 during the month, while the state's total number of employed persons fell by 35,000 in the month, the figures showed. The increase was 1.1 percentage points higher than the May rate of 14.1 percent.

### Prescription Assistance Programs

With an economy in turmoil and high unemployment rates continuing, it has become difficult for many individuals to afford the prescription drugs needed to stay healthy. The Greater Flint Health Coalition's Pharmacy Task Force has worked to address this problem through raising awareness of prescription assistance programs currently available. These programs are listed below:

[Partnership for Prescription Assistance](#)

[Astra-Zeneca Prescription Assistance Program](#)

[Pfizer, Inc. Prescription Assistance Program](#)

[Lilly Cares Prescription Assistance Program](#)

[Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan](#)

[RxAssist Prescription Assistance Program Center](#)

**Source:** Pharmacy Task Force of the Greater Flint Health Coalition

### Participants Needed for Survey of Work with Underserved Populations

Researchers at University of Michigan School of Dentistry are collaborating with a dental student on a project aimed at gaining a better understanding of the motivation of dentists who work with underserved populations. The web-based survey is anonymous and should take less than 10 minutes. For more information about the survey, visit the National Network for Oral Health Access Web site at <http://www.nnoha.org>.

### Requests for Examples of Successful Public Health Programs

The Campaign for Public Health Foundation is collecting examples of successful public health programs in all areas of study operating at the local, state, or national level. [Download](#) the survey form online and return it to [KristenL@CPHFoundation.org](mailto:KristenL@CPHFoundation.org) by July 24. Responses are welcome after that date, but those findings may not be mentioned in a white paper the Foundation will publish in August.

## National News

### Congress Makes Progress on Health Reform

Last week, Congress made significant progress on national health reform, passing bills out

of committees in both the House and Senate.

### **U.S. House of Representatives**

The 1000-page House bill, titled “America’s Affordable Health Choices Act,” is identical in most major respects to the draft version that has circulated for the past month.

Specific provisions include:

- Creation of a health insurance exchange to provide individuals and small businesses with a choice of coverage, including a government-funded public option
- Guaranteed coverage regardless of health status, with no exclusion for pre-existing conditions
- Affordability credits for low- and moderate-income individuals and families, with caps on out-of-pocket expenses
- Expanded and improved Medicaid for Americans living in poverty, plus elimination of the Medicare “donut hole”
- New investment to expand the health care workforce
- Penalties for employers who do not provide health insurance for their workers (with a small business exemption) and for individuals who refuse to buy it

Financing for the Health Choices Act, estimated at \$1.5 trillion, would come from a federal surtax on upper income brackets, including a tax of up to 5.4 percent for people making more than \$1 million per year, as well as from significant cuts in projected Medicare and Medicaid spending.

President Obama said in a written statement that the bill “will begin the process of fixing what’s broken about our health care system, reducing costs for all, building on what works, and covering an estimated 97 percent of all Americans.”

### **The Senate**

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee also passed its version of a health reform bill last week with a 13-10 vote along party lines. Titled the “Affordable Health Choices Act,” the bill provides for coverage provisions similar to those in the House Bill. The two versions of the Senate Committee must be combined into a single bill before going to the floor for a vote.

### **Oral Health Care within Health Care Reform**

Did you know that more than 51 million school hours and 164 million hours of work are lost each year due to dental-related absences? Last week, the American Association for Dental Research released its policy statement on Oral Health Care within Health Care Reform. As you know, the dental profession has evolved parallel to, but separately from, the medical profession. Medicine and dentistry have different educational, health care delivery and payment systems. But the mouth and body are not separate biologic systems. Recent dental research findings are uncovering the full extent to which oral health is linked to general health. [See full statement](#)

### **Engineering and Dentistry Come Together in WV**

Engineering and dentistry researchers at West Virginia University are working together to develop a better tool for the early detection of periodontal disease, a common cause of tooth loss in older adults and a major problem in West Virginia. Osama Mukdadi, assistant professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering in the College of Engineering and Mineral Resources, is the lead researcher on the two-year project, “Non-Invasive

High-Resolution Diagnosis of Periodontal Attachment Levels Using Real-Time Quantitative Ultrasound Imaging.” Dr. Peter Ngan, professor and chair of orthodontics, and Dr. Richard Crout, an expert on gum disease and associate dean for research in the School of Dentistry, are collaborating with Mukdadi on the project.

The team received \$393,575 from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research of the National Institutes of Health for the two-year project, which involves the use of ultrasound imaging to construct three-dimensional images of the human jawbone and surrounding tissues. The research team has applied for a patent for the technology and, after the current study is complete, they are planning clinical studies. The long-term goal, Mukdadi said, is to build a device that periodontists – dentists specializing in the treatment of periodontal disease – can use in caring for patients.

### **Recession Stressful on Kids; Parents Having to Make Tough Choice on Healthcare**

As the economy continues to falter, a poll recently released shows that parents must make harder choices about how to spend what money they have, and children – especially those who are uninsured or who are among the lowest income bracket – are more at risk because of it. The C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital National Poll on Children’s Health taken in May 2009 shows 44 percent of families’ financial situations have worsened in the last six months. To make ends meet, many have cut back on extras (65 percent), applied for government health coverage (24 percent), applied for free or reduced lunch programs (27 percent), and delayed taking their children to the doctor (11 percent) or dentist (16 percent).