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Secretary Tavenner outlines top priorities



Clancy Holland, MD and Delegate John O'Bannon with Secretary of Health and Human Resources Marilyn Tavenner.

With a wealth of experience in the health care industry, few could have been better prepared for the job of Secretary of Health and Human Resources than Marilyn Tavenner. Her background is in nursing and hospital management and she brings a unique perspective to the role that will certainly benefit the Commonwealth.

"Marilyn Tavenner's experience in health care gives her a clear understanding of the demands facing physicians, nurses, hospitals and other providers," said Norris Royston, President of the Medical Society of Virginia. "We look forward to working with her to make improvements to the health care system in the Commonwealth."

Tavenner left the position of Group President of Outpatient Services at HCA to joining Governor Timothy Kaine's administration. In that position, she was responsible for company-wide operations of freestanding outpatient facilities. Before being promoted to that position, she was the only female division president for HCA. Under her leadership, hospitals in HCA's Mid-Atlantic Division were nationally recognized for their clinical excellence.

Tavenner was instrumental in bringing new technologies to those health care facilities. She worked to expand clinical capabilities, enabling them to provide pioneering procedures and quality care usually seen only at large teaching hospitals. Her community outreach included a partnership between HCA and J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College to create a learning environment for nursing assistants using donated hospital equipment.

Prior to working for HCA's Mid-Atlantic Division, Tavenner worked for many years as a nurse in both HCA hospitals and other facilities throughout the state. She primarily worked in critical care and emergency rooms.

As Secretary, Tavenner will oversee a variety of state departments including the Department of Health, Department of Health Professions, Social Services, Department of Medical Assistance Services, and several others.

While the challenges facing Virginia's health and social services agencies are numerous, Tavenner has identified five key issues to address during her tenure as Secretary of Health and Human Resources.

Secretary Tavenner's Top 5 Priorities:

- Assisting the uninsured
- Mental health services
- Medicaid reform
- Aging
- Work force issues

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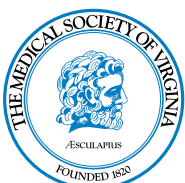
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Secretary Tavenner

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Assisting the uninsured

Virginia has nearly one million uninsured residents. As health care costs continue to rise, this number will only increase without efforts to improve the system.

"Physicians are well acquainted with the problems facing the uninsured," Tavenner said. "This is a problem that can't be solved overnight, but we can set long-term goals and start taking incremental steps to providing people with coverage."

Tavenner believes the state can begin to help the uninsured by providing support to smaller employers who want to provide insurance to their workers. While all businesses have experienced increases in their health care costs, small employers suffer more as a result.

Mental health services

Tavenner's second area of concern is mental health. Although the details of the budget may not be finalized for some time, both the House and the Senate have committed additional funding to improving the state's aging mental health institutions.

In addition, Tavenner wants the state to examine alternatives for providing care. "Virginia's mental health facilities do a wonderful job caring for these patients, but in some instances, community options may be more appropriate," she said.

Medicaid reform

As the state's Medicaid costs continue to increase at unsustainable rates, officials continue to look at ways to make the program more efficient. Tavenner will be targeting the following areas:

- Address administrative aspects of Medicaid to reimburse providers in a more timely manner.
- Target issues related to chronic disease management to help decrease costs.
- Examine the issue of long-term care to identify alternatives to nursing homes when appropriate.

Aging

As the nation's baby boomers approach retirement, Tavenner plans to examine the state's aging population. She will work to develop a comprehensive plan that examines the impact of the aging population on the state and propose strategies for providing care in the community and through the health care system.



MSV President Norris Royston, MD, talks with Marilyn Tavenner, Secretary of Health and Human Resources, during MSV's Legislative Reception.

Work force issues

The issue of nursing shortages has been widely covered by the media; however, Tavenner is equally concerned about shortages in the physician community. While working for HCA, Tavenner was involved in recruiting physicians. She noted this is especially challenging in certain specialties including cardiology, oncology and others.

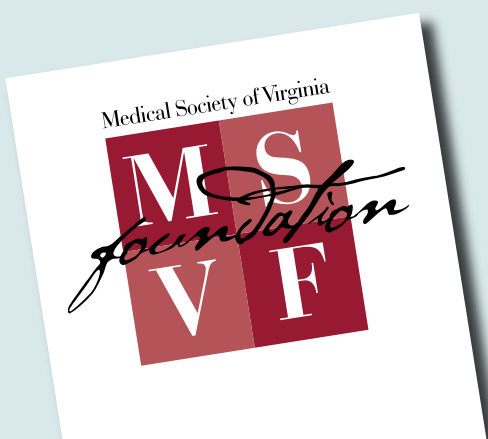
While her new position will be challenging, Tavenner said she looks forward to working with organizations to improve health care in the state. "I will be a strong voice for physicians and other health care professionals," she said. "I hope to work with the health care community to identify problems and develop strategic solutions."

"Marilyn Tavenner's experience in health care gives her a clear understanding of the demands facing physicians, nurses, hospitals and other providers."

Norris Royston

President of the Medical Society of Virginia

The Medical Society of Virginia Foundation (MSVF) is pleased to announce several changes to its staff.



Robin Cummings, who has served as the Foundation's Fund Development Associate for the past year, has been promoted to Director of Programs. Cummings will oversee MSVF's various initiatives including the Medical Student Mini-Grants, the Chronic Disease Improvement Initiative, and educational program offerings. She will also be involved in new program development.

MSVF also welcomed two new employees last month. **Suzannah B. Stora** is the new Director of Development and Public Relations. Stora comes to MSVF from the Kennedy Center, where she worked in development for the National Symphony Orchestra, with a focus on special events.

Katy Sawyer is the Director of MSVF's newest initiative, the Claude Moore Physician Leadership Institute. Sawyer has a wealth of program and grant experience, having worked for the Virginia Health Care Foundation, the Virginia Primary Care Association, and the Virginia Mentoring Partnership.

Charitable Contributions To Give or Not To Give . . .



Charitable contributions—we all think about them in terms of our private lives outside of the office, but how much thought do we give to such things as it regards to our business practices? There are many benefits to be gained from charitable giving, not

By **Ryan L. Losi, CPA**

just on your individual tax return, but from a business perspective as well.

In terms of a business' "goodwill" in the community, much can be said for the impact of charitable giving. The charitable contributions may even have a greater impact on the business' bottom line than the direct impact of the deduction itself. Businesses are often asked to donate to a number of charitable causes. From a business perspective, it's important to realize that the benefit can be reciprocal—the charitable organization receives your support, but then your business receives visibility in the eyes of the consumer.

Since business owners are often asked to sponsor charitable events, determining where to give is something you should consider. You should think about the audience who will receive your message and consider sponsoring events that have an audience that could lead to future business opportunities. For example, many consumers, all things being equal in terms of quality, education and experience, will make a decision to select a particular physician or practice based on the physician's or practices' respective reputations within the community. Having this goodwill in the community can not only solidify existing clients but gain you opportunities for new clients as well.

This increased visibility and goodwill within the community not only benefits your business in terms of gaining and retaining new clients, but it

can also help add value to your business in other ways. If you try to sell your practice, a practice with considerable goodwill in the community with a steady client base will potentially be worth more.

Additionally, there are income tax considerations that you should plan for as part of your business strategy. Sometimes the timing of your business' charitable contributions can have a large impact on your overall tax picture. To take things a step further, sometimes business owners set up charitable foundations to actively serve the community or perhaps passively by distributing the foundation's funds to other charitable organizations based on specific criteria. In either case, tax planning becomes even more important and in these instances, the charitable foundations can be used in connection with the business owner's overall tax planning strategy.

To find out more about how to plan your charitable giving from a tax planning perspective, speak with your accountant or call our offices to discuss tax planning opportunities that are right for your practice. Headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, Piascik & Associates provides premier personalized financial services to a number of physician practices, high net worth individuals, as well as private and publicly traded companies, including those with international operations. In 2004, the firm was recognized nationally by Practical Accountant magazine with a Practice Innovation Award. It also is the recipient of the 2004 Torch Award for Marketplace Integrity by the Better Business Bureau of Central Virginia. For more information, please visit us at www.piascik.com or call us at (804) 228-4179.



Practice Q & A



Q: My practice can't seem to keep good front desk personnel. Why is this happening and what can I do about it?

A: The role of the front desk professional requires that person to wear a variety of hats during the course of the work day. Among these are gatekeeper, communications expert, phone whiz, mediator, troubleshooter, and secretary. As the first person patients, drug reps, and delivery people have contact with, your front desk professional is the eyes and ears of your organization but most importantly, a reflection of the practice as a whole.

Whether it is on the phone or in person, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. High turnover rates are usually the result of frustrated employees who are not properly trained and/or do not have a full understanding of what their job duties, responsibilities and obligations are. Skill and knowledge training is the responsibility of the Practice Manager.

The Medical Society of Virginia offers a workshop which will help employees recognize the importance of the receptionist's role in the organization, create the right first impression, improve communication skills, handle incoming and outgoing calls, act assertively, develop strong time management skills, deal with difficult patients and present themselves as a professional. The seminar will be held April 27. For more information and to register please go to www.msv.org and click on Practice Management.

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