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CRAIN'S HEALTH pulse

A daily newsletter on the business of health care

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Thursday, February 15, 2007

TODAY'S NEWS

PRINCETON OK

New Jersey approved Princeton Health-Care System's move to Plainsboro, where the system wants to build a 269-bed, \$350 million hospital on a 160-acre site by 2010. As a condition of approval, the state wants PHCS to expand outpatient-clinic operations, which will also move to the site, on Route 1. Township officials have yet to OK the plan but have approved the idea. In addition, the site would house a retirement community, a 180-bed nursing home, office buildings, research space and a 25-acre public park. The system is trying to sell the hospital's current downtown Princeton site to developers.

UNION VERSUS UNION

The workers who organize for the New York State Nurses Association are themselves in a battle with the union. NYSNA's organizers and other professional staffers, including those who negotiate NYSNA contracts, belong to Local 19 of Unite Here. That local has filed a series of unfair labor practice charges, claiming that NYSNA is refusing to discuss contract issues, including what Local 19 says is an increasing workload. A spokesman for the local concedes that NYSNA is offering workers comp time for the extra hours; the local wants

SCHEDULE: *Health Pulse* will not be published on Monday, Feb. 19.

Primary care lobby fights to be heard

While the administration fights for its health care budget against hospitals, nursing homes and labor, one faction supports Gov. Eliot Spitzer's plan to enhance primary care: the Primary Care Coalition, a group of five organizations. Its five-point agenda—to get more funding for a range of primary care functions—would save the state money through more cost-effective care. But budgeting more dollars for primary care isn't easy in this political climate. "We're thrilled to see there is interest," says Elizabeth Swain, CEO of the Community Health Care Association of New York State, part of the coalition. "We cannot allow our clear solution to the state's health crisis to be lost in the political battle."

The coalition's agenda will cost \$121 million. About \$40 million is for the indigent-care pool. The number of uninsured people visiting health centers has increased 50% in the last five years. Advocates also want to restore \$9.8 million in transition funding that was cut from the executive budget because it was mistaken for a member's item. And they are asking for \$40 million over three years in HEAL-NY and F-SHRP funding for 1,000 provider FTEs to adopt electronic health records.

Although the administration is a fan of primary care, what happens next isn't clear. "The biggest threat is that so many people are unhappy with the budget that our agenda will get lost," says Ms. Swain.

shorter hours instead.

HACKENSACK, PASCACK

Hackensack hospital will announce tomorrow whether it will pursue a merger with Pascack Valley Hospital. The hospitals have discussed merging since November. A Hackensack spokeswoman says factors such as market share were being assessed.

AT A GLANCE

WHO'S NEWS: Albany's Weingarten Reid

& McNally added two consultants. Al Kaplan will provide fiscal, health care and human services advice on budgetary, legislative and regulatory matters. He is a former state deputy budget director and deputy commissioner of OMRDD. Nancy Peters will provide writing, message development, media relations and communication services. Before starting a consulting business in 2003, she was director of communications for the Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee.

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