

New avenue for dialogue with the RI Blues

In 2007, the Rhode Island Medical Society and Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, along with the national Blue Cross & Blue Shield Association, most Blues plans nationwide and several other state medical societies, arrived at a settlement of a class action lawsuit that had been brought in 2002 by the state medical societies. The settlement resolved a range of issues between the Blues plans and physicians regarding claims processing, contracting, and other areas.

One provision of the settlement obligates each Blues plan, including BCBSRI, to establish a new avenue of communication with physicians. The settlement stipulates that the members of the new body are to be cooperatively appointed by the state medical society and the corresponding Blues.

In Rhode Island, RIMS and BCBSRI have constituted a Healthcare Solutions Partnership Committee (HSPC), which is charged with identifying, exploring and resolving issues arising from the relationships and interactions between and among Rhode Island physicians, their patients, and BCBSRI. While BCBSRI maintains other structures and committees designed to promote dialogue with community physicians, the HSPC was established to meet the specific requirements set forth in last year's settlement agreement.

The twelve-member HSPC is to meet at least every six months and is comprised of physicians representing a spectrum of specialties. Four were appointed by the Rhode Island Medical Society; another four were appointed by BCBSRI. Those eight physicians then cooperated in appointing four more colleagues.

The HSPC is chaired by **PETER HOLLMANN, MD**, an internist and Associate Chief Medical Officer of BCBSRI. The other members of the Committee are: **NATHAN BERAHA, MD**, Pediatrics; **DAVID CARTER, MD**, Family Medicine; **MARLENE CUTITAR, MD**, General Surgery; **NITIN DAMLE, MD**, Internal Medicine; **VERA DEPALO, MD**, Pulmonary/ Critical Care; **KATHLEEN FITZGERALD, MD**, Gynecology; **ELIZABETH LANGE, MD**, Pediatrics; **DIANE SIEDLECKI, MD**, Internal Medicine; **MARGARET SUN, MD**, Family Medicine; **PETER TILKEMEIER, MD**, Cardiology; **BARRY WALL, MD**, Psychiatry.

Physicians are encouraged to bring issues or concerns to any member of the Committee for consideration at a future Committee meeting. Issues may include such things as:

- Initiatives to improve patient care and clinical quality
- Initiatives to enhance communication, relations, and cooperation between physicians and BCBSRI
- Clinical or administrative matters that affect interactions between physicians and BCBSRI

Contact information for each member of the HSPC, future Committee meeting dates, and full information about the terms of the settlement agreement (known as the Thomas/Love Settlement) are available in the "Provider" section of www.bcsri.com