

ACA

Getting up to speed for open enrollment

AHA offers a wealth of resources to aid in the push for coverage

With November in full swing, that means leaves are starting to change color, Turkey Day plans are being made and, of course, open enrollment season on the insurance exchanges has commenced. What's your hospital doing to make sure that its community members are signing up for this crucial coverage?

Open enrollment for those looking to gain insurance coverage as part of the Affordable Care Act kicked off on Nov. 1 and will run through the end of January. Last year, some 7.3 million people signed up for insurance through the marketplaces, and another 8 million through Medicaid.

In the coming months, hospitals will be sought out for health plan details, and it's critical that they seize that role, says Shellie Byrum, senior associate director of communication strategies at the American Hospital Association. "Hospitals and health systems really are the go-to, trusted information source for everything health care," she says. "So, it's really important for them to be the ones to encourage their community to take a look at living the healthiest life that they can, and that includes getting health coverage."

To aid in that push, the AHA has a wealth of resources at its "Get Enrolled" web page, accessible through AHA.org. Six-hospital Wellmont Health System, Kingsport, Tenn., highlighted by the AHA as a role model, estimates that there are more than 400,000 uninsured who qualify for coverage in the Volunteer State, but aren't signing up, in some cases, because they're unaware of tax credits available to offset premiums.

To address that, Wellmont has hired four certified insurance navigators, assigning each of them a geographic territory and placing them in offices in their acute care hospitals. Activities on the docket will include community events, radio and TV announcements, billboards and social media advertisements.

"It's important for us to stay visible and talk to people about coverage not just during open enrollment," Martha Pearson, the system's director of patient access, tells the AHA. "Otherwise, it's out of sight, out of mind." — MARTY STEMPIAK ●

MOST WIRED

How Most Wired hospitals are using social media

Social media in health care is about more than building a brand. Digital interaction with the community also can improve care, communication and engagement. The results can be substantial. The Facebook page for Mayo Clinic, a leader in the use of social media, recently had more than 730,000 likes, and features popular offerings that include an interactive webinar with clinic physicians and a flu party for kids.

Social media and new digital technologies will play an important role in shaping the future of consumer-driven care, experts say. Researchers for the University of California, San Francisco, are studying the role of social media and wearables in health care, says Michael Blum, M.D., chief medical information officer and director of the school's Center for Digital Health and Innovation. The goal is to understand the characteristics that generate "stickiness" in the health care and wellness markets, Blum says.

More information can be found in the American Hospital Association online resource: A Hospital Leadership Guide to Digital & Social Media Engagement, at hospitalsocialmedia.tumblr.com. — SUZANNA HOPPSZALLERN ●

Checklist



- Develop social media guidelines for employees.
- Provide training and education on staff roles and goals for social media.
- Develop a policy on negative comments.
- Avoid disclosing confidential patient information.
- Monitor effectiveness of social media strategy and policies.

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA OUTLETS THAT MOST WIRED HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS ARE USING



FACEBOOK
98%



YOUTUBE
89%



TWITTER
85%



LINKEDIN
82%



BLOG
66%



MOBILE APP
57%



RSS FEED
37%



PINTEREST
32%



FLICKR
23%



YAMMER
19%

Source: Hospitals & Health Networks' Most Wired Survey, 2015



H&HN provides continuing coverage of the annual Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study and other IT issues. The Most Wired Survey is produced by a partnership of H&HN, the American Hospital Association's Health Forum and the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives.

Copyright of H&HN: Hospitals & Health Networks is the property of Health Forum and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.