

# Health/Education

## Oregon awarded grant to better coordinate Medicare, Medicaid

CONTRIBUTED STORY  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Oregon has received a \$300,000 grant to pursue better ways to manage the federal government's two multi-billion-dollar medical programs — Medicare and Medicaid — to improve care and control costs. The focus will be on about 40,000 Oregonians who are eligible for both programs, accounting for about 15 percent of beneficiaries but about 30 percent of costs. The programs, managed by the Federal Health Care Financing Administration, do not coordinate well with each other. Oregon has received the 18-month grant from the New Jersey-based Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) Foundation to support planning, data collection and analysis. Oregon is one of 12 RWJ project sites looking at integrating Medicare and Medicaid. The RWJ Foundation is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. "We will use this grant to develop models of more integrated, coordinated medical and long-term care to maintain and improve the health of Oregonians who are elderly and disabled," said Roger Auerbach, Senior and Disabled Services (SDSD) administrator in the Oregon Department of Human Services. SDSD and the DHS Office of Medical

Assistance programs are managing the project. As society ages, Auerbach said, Medicaid and Medicare costs are having more impact on state and federal budgets. "We have to deliver the most appropriate medical and long-term care to people in the most efficient manner possible to make our resources meet this increasing need," he said. Medicare is the federal health-care program for people ages 65 and older and people with long-term disabilities, and is financed solely by the federal government; Medicaid, a program for low-income people, derives nearly a third of its budget from state governments. Auerbach said coordination is important because if an elderly Medicare beneficiary becomes impoverished, he or she will probably depend on the state-supported Medicaid program that pays for long-term care. (Medicare pays for neither long-term care nor for drug costs; Medicaid pays for both.) Auerbach said better coordinating Medicaid and Medicare can balance complex medical and long-term care needs such as prescriptions, physical therapy, personal care, nutrition and housing. "This can make the difference between someone staying in the community or going to a nursing home," he said.

## Rhodes rewards two Oregon scholars

ASSOCIATED PRESS

As thousands of families and educators waited to hear who the next Rhodes Scholars would be, Jo Cannon of West Linn heard the good news — twice. First, her son, Ben, a 1999 graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, called to say that he had been awarded one of the 32 coveted scholarships. Then the staff at Reed College, where Jo Cannon works for the Committee on Fellowships and Awards, called to say that Reed's nominee, Derek Lyons of Portland, also had been selected. "Waiting for that phone call was just torture, but when it came, I felt calm," Jo Cannon said. "I was just so happy." Ben Cannon and Lyons were chosen from 935 applicants endorsed by 323 universities, the secretary of the Rhodes Scholarship Trust announced. They will join an international group of 95 who will receive two to three years of study at Oxford University in England, including all university fees and a stipend, a total value of about \$25,000 a year. The two survived a rigorous, three-stage selection process that began with college endorsements earlier this year, followed by a state selection committee that narrowed the field on Wednesday. On Saturday, the final selection was made by eight district committees following personal interviews with a panel of former scholars. In Minneapolis, Cannon and other applicants played Trivial Pursuit in a waiting room for hours before winners were announced. In San Francisco, Lyons paced in a similar waiting room. He said the process was fun, "very-scary, heart-pounding, clammy-hands kind of fun." When the winners were announced, "I tried really hard not to pass out," said Lyons, 21. "It was an incredible

honor just to be interviewed, but I didn't even hear the names of the other two candidates." Lyons is a senior majoring in chemistry at Reed. He grew up in Pullman, Wash., and took classes at Washington State University while still in high school under Washington's "running start" program. He graduated as his class valedictorian but chose Reed College over Yale and Stanford because Reed staff responded to his e-mail inquiries quickly and warmly. He intends to study computer science at Oxford, specifically artificial intelligence and artificial life. Cannon, 23, is a 1994 graduate of West Linn High. He plans to pursue a degree in politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford. He is considering a career in journalism, law or high school teaching. "I want to make a difference in my community, and one of the most important ways you could do that is teaching," he said.

## Oregon Health Plan smokers likely to be advised to quit

CONTRIBUTED STORY  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Oregon Health Plan members smoke at a rate almost double that of Oregonians as a whole — so encouraging them to quit is especially important. Now, an initiative to encourage doctor and dentist to advised Oregon Health Plan members to quit smoking appears to be paying off a new survey finds that Oregon doctors are encouraging Oregon Health Plan members to quit more often than doctors nationally or regionally. "We're seeing our own version of the Great American Smoke-out in doctors' offices all across the state," said Hersh Crawford, State Medicaid director in Oregon Department of Human Services. "Our goal is to make the smoking conversation as much a part of visit to the doctor's office as having your temperature taken or your blood

pressure checked." Crawford said the survey found that 70 percent above those nationally or in the Pacific states. For some of Oregon's 17 managed care plans, the rate was as high as 82 percent, he said. Smoking-cessation programs have been an Oregon Health Plan-covered benefit since May 1998. The health plan enrolls about 360,000 Oregonians. Forty-two percent of health plan members smoke compared with 22 percent of all Oregonians age 16 and older. "We know from research that people are more likely to adopt healthy behaviors if a physician recommends it," Crawford said. He said health plans contact with the state health plan are encouraging both doctors and dentists to recommend smoking-cessation programs to patients who smoke. "Because smoking is the nation's leading preventable cause of disease,

disability and death," Crawford said. "This is the most important thing we can do to improve Oregonians' health while also controlling health-care costs." This practice by physicians has added benefits because doctors who advise Oregon Health Plan members to quit are presumably also advising other patients to do so as well, Crawford said. Crawford said the next steps would be to find out whether patients follow their physician's quit-smoking advice and, if they do, whether they are successful in quitting. Oregon Health Plan members and other Oregonians may obtain information about smoking-cessation programs by talking with their health-care provider, managed care plan or by calling three state-run Quit Line toll free at (877) 270-STOP (Spanish: \*77-2-NOFUME or TTYU: 877-777-6534)



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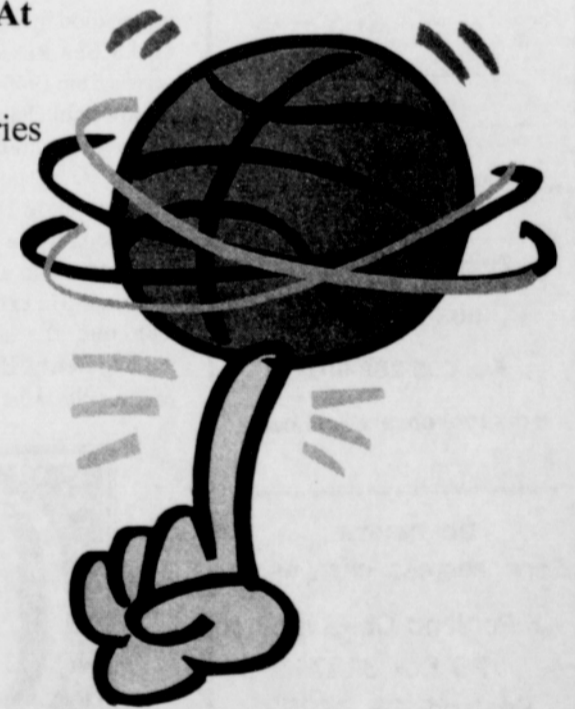
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