

Friends and supporters of IHP:

As many of you know, I took over the reins of IHP last month from its founding director, Bob Crane. As you might imagine, this is a step that fills me with excitement. Bob has done a masterful job since the inception of the Institute, creating a policy shop that has "played above its weight" for the past eight years. So I want to kick off the new era by thanking Bob, not only for his service to Kaiser Permanente and the Institute, but also for creating an environment that offers so many possibilities. All of us at the Institute look forward to continuing to draw on Bob's counsel in his new role as a fellow and member of the IHP Board of Advisors.

So what should you expect from IHP going forward?

- First and foremost, a continuation of the thoughtful approach that brings the knowledge and experience of the nation's largest private integrated delivery system to bear on health policy questions -- without imposing a "KP" point of view.
- Second, a redoubling of our efforts to "link, leverage, and lead."

February 2008

### **New IHP Publications**

[Improving Health Care Quality Through "Systemness"](#) by [Laura A. Tollen](#), Senior Policy Consultant at KP-IHP, is the third in KP-IHP's new "In Focus" series of informative policy primers on issues of current importance to health policymakers. In this paper, Tollen explains what is meant by "systemness," describing some of the basic advantages of organized care systems and the attributes that are common to them, including cohesion of physician practice, scale, and affiliation with a larger system.

### **IHP Observations Series**

IHP staff contribute short commentaries on timely health policy issues, research, and news events. Recent contributions include:

- [Lessons From Southern California Wildfires: Clinical IT Fosters Continuity of Care – January 11, 2008](#)
- [Surprising Level of Consensus Among CEOs at Health Affairs Summit – November 13, 2007](#)
- [Improving Care in Medicaid: IHP Roundtable Advances the Dialogue – October 24, 2007](#)

### **Upcoming IHP Events**

Invitational Roundtable: "Hospital/Physician Collaboration: Better Patient Care Through Aligned Incentives and Improved Systemness" - February 21-22, 2008, Dallas, TX

*Co-Sponsored by KP-IHP, the American Hospital Association, the Health Research and Educational Trust, and the Council of Accountable Physician Practices*

This invitational roundtable will bring together representatives from major hospitals and integrated systems to explore approaches to improving physician/hospital collaboration. Materials will be available on the KP-IHP website after February 22.

### **Other Upcoming Events**

[UC Irvine Health Care Forecast Conference - February 21-22, 2008, Newport Beach, CA](#)

*Co-sponsored by the California Health Care Foundation, Blue Cross of California, CIGNA Health Care of California, Hoag Hospital Memorial Presbyterian, KP-IHP, Toshiba America Medical*

Notwithstanding our perch within a huge organization, IHP is a small boat sailing in a large policy ocean. To be most effective, we need to link with like-minded organizations, leverage our combined resources, and lead in areas where we can move the policy needle. You will see us enhance existing relationships and develop new ones. You will see us draw more heavily on individuals inside KP. And you will see us focus more sharply on topic areas that play to our strengths—including especially the work done by KP's Community Benefit department, our new home.

- Finally, you will see us expanding the breadth and depth of our communications. In 2007, we launched two new communications channels: our "In-Focus" publications seek to translate technical policy concepts for a broader audience and our "Observations" series gives IHP (and soon KP) staff the chance to react to policy developments on a personal and timely basis. In the coming year, we will be working to shape our communications focus to get the right information to the right people at the right time in the right wavelength. We actively solicit your input in this area.

*Systems, and the University of California-Irvine Medical Center*

The conference provides a venue for dialogue among government and business leaders and academicians, who will share their perspectives and forecasts on key economic and political issues which impact health care in this country.

[UC Berkeley Workforce Conference - April 4-5, 2008, Berkeley, CA](#)

*Co-sponsored by World Health Organization's Department of Human Resources for Health, World Bank Health, Nutrition and Population (HNP) Africa Region, University of California, Berkeley's Global Center for Health Economics and Policy Research, University of California, Berkeley's Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, the Global Health Workforce Alliance, University of California San Francisco Global Health Sciences and KP-IHP*

The conference will highlight research advances addressing the lack of evidence for shaping health workforce policy, both within countries and across regions. Topics include how health workforce size, skills mix, and distribution affect care delivery, and policy recommendations for achieving adequate supplies of health workers. Registration for this event is closed.

[Surgically and Minimally Invasive Therapeutic Procedures: Devising Incentives to Improve the Evidence Base - Invitational Workshop - April 16-18, Washington, DC](#)

*Co-sponsored by KP-IHP, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the Commonwealth Fund, and Wellpoint, Inc.*

This workshop, organized by Nelda Wray, MD, and Carol Ashton, MD of the University of Alabama-Birmingham, will bring together representatives of five major stakeholder groups — interventionists, consumers, payers, device manufacturers and health policy experts—to discuss incentive-based approaches to generating evidence about promising invasive therapeutic procedures. This workshop is by invitation only.

[Forum: "Evidence-Based Medicine: Where Does Health Care Stand and Where Should We Be Going?" - June 5-6, 2008, San Francisco, CA](#)

*Co-sponsored by the Medical Technology Leadership Forum of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, and KP-IHP*

George Halvorson, Kaiser Permanente Chairman and CEO, likes to note that we live in interesting times. I want to echo George while noting that what many view as a curse is really a blessing. While our country's need for better policy is great and growing, our ability to improve health policy is at an all-time high and perhaps growing even faster—we know so much we did not know even a decade ago, and our tools are evolving rapidly. Achieving universal coverage, reducing cost growth to a sustainable level, eliminating health disparities, and improving care quality won't be easy. But moving policy discussions from talking about issues to resolving them is an essential step. Interesting times indeed! I look forward to working with all of you.

- Murray Ross  
Vice President,  
Director, KP-IHP

The term Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) is frequently invoked as the vehicle to value and efficiency in health care. Proponents focus on easily achievable aspects; opponents point to barriers and limitations. The purpose of the MTLF Forum is to clarify the meaning of EBM and to realistically assess the strengths and limitations of its use. Registration information to come.

### **IHP On The Road and In Journals**

Dr. Jay Crosson of The Permanente Federation and Dr. Paul Wallace, also of The Permanente Federation, and a Fellow of KP-IHP, were featured speakers at the [AcademyHealth National Health Policy Conference - February 4-5, 2008, in Washington, D.C.](#) Dr. Crosson spoke about the implications of the obesity epidemic, while Dr. Wallace addressed improvements in comparative effectiveness research. To view video and handouts from these and other sessions, please click the link above.

[Beyond Equal Care: How Health Systems Can Impact Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities](#) by [Kate Meyers](#), Senior Policy Consultant at KP-IHP, appears in the Winter issue of *The Permanente Journal*, (V12, no.1). This commentary explores how health care organizations can address health disparities in various arenas beyond the walls of the hospital or clinic.

### **More Information**

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