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By Joe Fahy, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Governor's new chronic care group to focus on diabetes first

A state commission will assemble in Harrisburg today to begin the challenging task of improving management of diabetes and other chronic diseases throughout Pennsylvania.

In May, Gov. Ed Rendell issued an executive order creating the Governor's Chronic Care Management, Reimbursement and Cost Reduction Commission. Today, the group will hold its first meeting.

"We're excited because our work is beginning in earnest," said Ann Torregrossa, policy director for the Governor's Office of Health Care Reform.

The effort is part of "Prescription for Pennsylvania," the governor's plan to improve access to health insurance, cut health care costs and improve quality.

The commission is expected to focus first on diabetes, then move on to other chronic conditions such as depression, asthma and heart disease.

Many experts have expressed concerns that the current health care system, which focuses on acute care, is not optimally organized to care for people with chronic diseases. Payment systems, for example, generally do not provide incentives for health professionals to spend time with patients to help them manage their chronic conditions.

When he announced the chronic care commission earlier this year, the governor said about 78 percent of health care costs can be traced to about 20 percent of patients with chronic diseases.

"We cannot reduce the occurrence and cost of chronic diseases without aggressively addressing prevention, detection and treatment in a comprehensive, pro-active way," he said. "Setting that up will be the job of this commission."

The commission is expected to deliver a plan by Dec. 31 recommending changes needed to implement a model for improving chronic care statewide. If the governor approves the plan, some changes could begin to be implemented next year.

The 43-member panel includes officials from leading health insurers, hospitals, unions and other groups, as well as six ex officio members who lead state agencies.

Co-chairing the group are Diane Holder, president of UPMC Health Plan; Anne Morrissey, president of Pennsylvania Managed Care, Keystone Mercy and AmeriHealth Mercy health plans; and Rosemarie Greco, director of the Governor's Office of Health Care Reform.

Among the commission members from Western Pennsylvania are Anne Coyne, president of Ligonier Pharmacy; Dr. Michael Dunn, medical director of interoperability for the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center; Dr. Karen Feinstein, president of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation; Dr. Donald Fischer, chief medical officer for Highmark; Dr. Jerome Gloster, medical director for Primary Health Care Services; and Dr. Valerie Powell, professor of computer and information systems at Robert Morris University.

Other members from the area include Mimi Priselac, director of chronic care initiatives, Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative; Dr. S. Ramalingam, medical director, UPMC Health Plan; Dr. Ralph Schmeltz of Endocrine-Metabolic Consultants; Dr. Linda Siminerio, executive director of the University of Pittsburgh Diabetes Institute; and Thomas Tomczyk, principal, Mercer Human Resources Consulting.

More than 125 people expressed interest in serving on the commission, Ms. Torregrossa said. She said they likely will be invited to serve on one of several subcommittees that will probably be formed.

She said six regional learning collaboratives also will likely be established soon to help identify community resources that could help improve chronic care management.

CHRONIC CARE COMMISSION MEMBERS**			
Last name	First Name	Title	Affiliation
Benditt	Philip	Medical Director-PA and Southern NJ	UnitedHealthcare
Black	Albert	Chief Operating Officer	Hospital of the Univ. of Pennsylvania
Coffin	Susan	Attending Physician	Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Connelly	Eileen	Executive Director	SEIU Pennsylvania State Council
Coyne	Anne	President	Ligonier Pharmacy
Davis	Duane	VP and Chief Medical Officer	Geisinger Health Plan
Dunn	Michael	Medical Director, Interoperability, eRECORD	University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
Feinstein	Karen	President and CEO	The Jewish Healthcare Foundation of Pittsburgh

Fischer	Donald	Sr. Vice President and Chief Medical Officer	Highmark
Frey	Henriette	Associate VP of Finance	St. Luke's Hospital and Health Network
Gabbay	Robert	Ex. Dir., PA Institute for Diabetes & Obesity	M.S. Hershey Medical Center
Gensante	Elizabeth	Professor Emeritus	St. Francis University
George	Bill	President	Pennsylvania AFL-CIO
Gertner	Eric	Chief of External Programs	Lehigh Valley Hospital
Gloster	Jerome	Medical Director	Primary Care Health Services
Grant	Howard	Chief Medical Officer	Temple University Health System
Hartz	Leo	Chief Medical Officer	Blue Cross of Northeastern PA
Holder	Diane	President	UPMC Health Plan
Klazen	Frazierita	Asst. Director of Health & Human Services, Local Programs	PEW Charitable Trusts
McGlone	Cynthia	VP Healthcare Services	Albert Einstein Healthcare Network
Mesoras	Michael	Medical Director	Aetna, Inc.
Morrissey	Anne	President- Pennsylvania Managed Care	Keystone Mercy /AmeriHealth Mercy health plans
Naylor	Mary	Director, Center for Health Transitions	U. of Pennsylvania School of Nursing
Nicholas	Henry	President	1199C Union of Hospital & Healthcare Workers
Powell	Valerie	Professor, Computer and Information Systems	Robert Morris University
Priselac	Mimi	Director, Chronic Care Initiatives	Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative
Ramalingam	S.	Medical Director	UPMC Health Plan
Rumpf	Christopher	Medical Director	Capital Blue Cross
Schmeltz	Ralph	Consultant	Endocrine-Metabolic Consultants

Sebastianelli	Joseph	President & CEO	Jefferson Health System, Inc.
Siminerio	Linda	Director	University of Pittsburgh Diabetes Institute
Snyder	Richard	VP, Quality Management	Independence Blue Cross
Spires	Judy	President	Acme Markets
Taylor	Alan	Surgical Physical Assistant	Crozer-Chester Medical Center
Tomczyk ASA	Thomas	Principal	Mercer Human Resources Consulting
Torrisi	Donna	Network Executive Director	The Family Practice & Counseling Network
Weiss	Michael	Member	American Diabetes Associates
<p>**NOTE: The commission also includes these ex officio members: Rosemarie Greco, director, Governor's Office of Health Care Reform; Nora Dowd Eisenhower, Secretary of Aging; Joel Ario, Acting Insurance Commissioner; Dr. Calvin Johnson, Secretary of Health; Estelle Richman, Secretary of Public Welfare; and Kathryn Farley, executive director, Pennsylvania Employee Benefits Trust Fund.</p> <p>Source: Governor's Office of Health Care Reform</p>			