Palliative Care
Enhancing Quality of Life Throughout Serious Illness

HPSJ is currently working under a planning grant from the California Healthcare Foundation (CHCF) to implement a Palliative Care Program for our HPSJ patients with Congestive Heart Failure, Chronic Pulmonary Disease, Late Stage Cancer and Advanced Liver Disease. The program is “Care Options” and will allow patients the option of choosing palliative care in their home, with special services to include visits by a palliative care certified RN/Social Worker and outpatient clinic visits, or telephonic palliative calls in close coordination with the patient’s specialist physician.

While many confuse palliative care with hospice care and sometimes even use the terms interchangeably, there are crucial differences between palliative care and hospice care.

**Palliative Care** refers to patient- and family-centered care that optimizes quality of life by anticipating, preventing and treating suffering. Palliative care throughout the continuum of illness involves addressing physical, intellectual, emotional and social, as well as spiritual, needs. Such care can be provided concurrently with curative care.

**Hospice Care** supports a delivery system geared to patients with limited life expectancy who are in the terminal state of an illness. While assisting patients, and family members, with a limited life expectancy, this care helps patients and family members cope as death nears.

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Men’s Health: Prevention is Key

Every year, more than 300,000 men in the United States lose their lives to cancer. To help men stay healthy, join us in making sure men understand prevention is paramount and that getting timely guidance from a doctor can keep a small problem from turning into a big one.

The 2014 National Health Interview survey found that 38.5 percent of men had not seen a doctor within the last 6 months, and 10 percent of men hadn’t seen a doctor in over a year. Forty percent of men tended to go to the doctor when they feared they had a serious medical condition, more than half of men surveyed agreed that health wasn’t something they talked about and 19 percent admitted they went so their significant other or loved one would stop nagging them.

If your patient would like to learn more about what they can do to stay healthy have them visit www.hpsj.com/mens-health.
General Needs Assessment (GNA)

Health plans are required to conduct a GNA to identify –

- Needs of each member, available health education and C&L (Cultural & Linguistics) programs and resources, as well as gaps in services.
- Special needs of seniors and persons with disabilities, children and adults with special healthcare needs, members with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and members from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

The findings are used –

To plan and implement culturally competent and linguistically appropriate services, health education and quality improvement programs and services.

Key Findings

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<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>San Joaquin</th>
<th>Stanislaus</th>
<th>California (State Average)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>7.91%</td>
<td>10.40%</td>
<td>3.58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
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<td>&lt;0.01%</td>
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<td>1.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
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<td>46.71%</td>
<td>52.96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
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<td>18.52%</td>
<td>31.03%</td>
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<td>Other/Unknown</td>
<td>6.74%</td>
<td>7.17%</td>
<td>5.97%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Languages Spoken by Health Plan of San Joaquin Members (2016)

- Afro-Asiatic (Other)
- Arabic
- Armenian
- Cambodian
- Cantonese
- Chinese
- Efik
- English
- Farsi
- Filipino
- French
- Gujarati
- Hindi
- Hmong
- Ilocano
- Japanese
- Korean
- Lao
- Mandarin
- Mien
- Navajo
- Other Chinese
- Other Non-English
- Other
- US Sign
- Vietnamese
- Persian
- Portuguese
- Punjabi
- Pushto
- Russian
- Samoan
- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Thai
- Turkish
- Urdu
- US Sign
More than half of survey respondents preferred to speak Spanish with their doctors.

Spanish-preferring members make up a significant majority of members in need of an interpreter.

Over half (52.9%) of respondents needing an interpreter use a family member or friend; of these:

- 63.8% felt more comfortable with friend or family
- 58.6% didn't know they could ask for an interpreter
- 55.2% of doctor offices didn't offer an interpreter services
- 22.4% of doctor or office staff "told me to bring a family member or friend"

Nearly 50% of respondents need help getting health information in their language

More than 1/3 (38.8%) require help getting an appointment with a specialist for themselves or their child

Spanish-preferring respondents (75.4%) indicate a much great need for help from HPSJ, particularly for health information in their language, versus those who do not need this help (16.5%)

Language, Communication, and Interpreters –

A major goal of cultural competence is making sure our HPSJ members understand the health care and education you provide. As a collaborator with the HPSJ provider network, please remember the following:

- Discourage the use of family members or friends for interpretation. The use of family, friends – and particularly minors – may compromise the reliability of medical information.
- Document in the HPSJ patient medical record that qualified interpreter services have been offered or requested and whether the patient has accepted or refused the services.

We are continuously communicating with members about the use and importance of requesting a trained interpreter.

Please assist by making sure your HPSJ patients understand the importance of a trained interpreter and schedule them with the appointment.

There is NO CHARGE to your practice when requesting an interpreter.

Do you have a patient who needs or would like an interpreter? HPSJ provides interpretation services. You can call 209.942.6320 to request an interpreter for HPSJ members.

Important message to your patients

Family members and friends are not the same as a professional interpreter. They are more likely to modify what the patient has actually said in their effort to be helpful.

A trained, professional, health interpreter does more than interpret for the patient. Their job is to help facilitate communication between you and your patient.

Tips for Working with Interpreters

- Allow enough time for the interpreted session.
- Avoid jargon and technical terms.
- Keep your statements short, pausing to allow for the interpretation. Say three or four short ones, and then stop in a natural place to let the interpreter pass your message along to the patient. The interpreter may need to hear the whole sentence before she can even start to interpret it.
- Ask only one question at a time.
- Be prepared to repeat yourself in different words if your message is not understood. If a response does not seem to fit with what you said, go back and repeat what you said in different words.
- Ask the patient – through the interpreter – to repeat what they have heard from you, to make sure they actually are hearing, and understanding.
- If you are unsure of how best to present health information to the patient, ask for suggestions from the interpreter.
Since 2015, Health Plan of San Joaquin’s Scholarship Program has encouraged young students with an interest in pursuing a health or medical career to lead them back to the Central Valley – the HPSJ Health Careers Scholarships Program (HCSP) – has partnered with seven local schools and programs to award two scholarships of $2,500 to each location. Nine of the scholarships had been identified as this PlanScan issue goes to press. From HPSJ’s seven program partners, here are the announced awardees and their area of health career concentration:

San Joaquin Medical Society – Decision Medicine
- D’Angelo Martinez, future physician
- Maha Siddiqui, future OB-GYN

San Joaquin Delta College – Nursing Program
- Mahedia Zadran, future OB-GYN
- Philysia Gipson, future pediatric nurse

Health Careers Academy High School (Stockton)
- Jose Aguilar, future cardiologist
- Kranesh Kumar, future physician

CSU Stanislaus, School of Nursing
- Debra Simon, future nurse

Modesto Junior College – Nursing Program
- Ashley Lee, future pediatric nurse
- Ricardo Olvera, future intensive care unit nurse

University of the Pacific
- Alfredo B. Rayray, future pharmacist

“‘This scholarship means the world to me because it not only will provide me with financial support, but also with a mentor that will help me throughout my first year in college.’

~ 2016 HCSP awardee, UCLA Nursing Student, Yuliana Estrada

In the first year of the mentorship program, HPSJ mentors challenged awardees to a Community Service Photo Challenge. Awardees who sent “selfies” of themselves participating in a service that benefitted the community earned a $100 Visa Gift Card!

2016 HPSJ Health Careers Scholarship awardee Mirian Garcia helps with a community garden project at UCLA where she has just completed her first year in the College of Nursing.

When asked about her experience as a mentor, HPSJ Clinical Pharmacist Kristen Tokunaga – a UOP pharmacy school PhD graduate who now helps guide UOP pharmacy interns, residents and mentees – said, “It has been such an honor to be part of a scholarship program that supports the success of its students in so many ways. As a mentor, I had an opportunity to positively impact someone else’s life.”
Building Tomorrow’s Health Care Talent Pool Goes Beyond the First Scholarship

HPSJ also offers a $1,000 Continuing Education Health Careers Scholarship Program. These additional scholarships help HPSJ maintain investments in our commitment to the community. To remain eligible, previous awardees must remain consistently enrolled in a nursing, medicine or pharmacy program at an accredited college.

“I am so grateful to Health Plan of San Joaquin for offering scholarships through the Health Careers Scholarship Program. The program encourages students from the Central Valley to pursue careers in health care and provides them with the tools they need to become successful health professionals. Receiving this award has encouraged me to continue pursuing my goals by furthering my education. It has been such an honor and a blessing to be a recipient of the HPSJ Health Careers Scholarship.”

– 2016 Continuing Education awardee Emily Medeiros

Mentors Added as Support for Local Health Careers Scholars Embarked on their Higher Education Paths

Beyond continuing to invest in scholarships for Central Valley future doctors, nurses and pharmacists, HPSJ will continue the mentorship program begun in 2016. Each Health Careers scholar is assigned a volunteer mentor from HPSJ staff who is available throughout their academic year to offer encouragement, perspective and the benefit of their own experiences navigating academia and the professional health care world.

The mentorship program has been shown to be especially valuable in supporting and guiding the first-year HCSP awardees as they advance into the unknown world of college life.

At San Joaquin Medical Society’s Decision Medicine 2016 Scholarship Awards Presentation are (from left): Mentor Cheron Vail (HPSJ Chief Information Officer) with her mentee Crystal Torres, HPSJ Chief Medical Officer Dr. Lakshmi Dhanvanthari, and mentee Si Jie Tang with her mentor, Fran Hattner (HPSJ Project Management Office Director).

The need for healthcare professionals in the Central Valley is great. The mentorship program serves as a reminder to the awardees to bring their talent back to the Central Valley after graduation. Without mentors to help promote the message that the Central Valley is a viable option for employment and needs talented healthcare professionals, awardees might forget about HPSJ’s financial support.

HCSP mentors devote time to the awardees inside and outside of work hours through texting, emailing, in-person meetings and phone calls. They help the awardees select classes, keep them connected locally, as well as offer them opportunities to job shadow, network and in some case work at HPSJ! It is said that people don’t care what you know, they want to know that you care.

For more information about Health Plan of San Joaquin’s Health Careers Scholarship Program, please visit: www.hpsj.com/scholarship-program.
Like any excellent health plan, providing world class customer service is one of the foundations of the not-for-profit Health Plan of San Joaquin (HPSJ) and its ability to provide access to quality care for each of our over 346,000 members. It is also the lynchpin for the day-to-day calls that support local providers and practitioners in the HPSJ network.

In March, HPSJ brought together front and back office staff from several of our provider offices in San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties for a focus group. Discussion focused on issues and concerns with the HPSJ Customer Service call center. “We wanted to learn, from providers, where we were falling short and where we were excelling,” said HPSJ Customer Service Director Mike McCarns. The group spent 90 minutes discussing why calls are coming into the Call Center and how effective HPSJ is in handling callers’ needs. “What we learned,” said Mike McCarns, “is helping us to reshape our current call center structure, as well as Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and training for each Customer Service Representative.

A couple of the changes HPSJ staff were able to implement immediately. These included the ability to provide Coordination of Benefits information to providers over the phone and the ability to make retroactive changes to a member’s PCP in the middle of a month.

As analysis of the provider feedback continues, we will be looking for ways to change our protocols and practices to ensure practice interactions with HPSJ are more timely, accurate, helpful and mutually pleasant. Local providers and practices staff are encouraged to continue the conversation by reaching out to their HPSJ provider services and customer call center representatives with comments and questions.”

To contact HPSJ Provider Services Department, call **209.942.6340**.
Customer Service can be reached at **888.936.PLAN (7526)**.

HPSJ Providers Speak, HPSJ Listens – Customer Service

Mike McCarns
Director of Customer Service

HPSJ Continues to Support Literacy Collaborations

Literacy development is a vital part of a child’s overall development. It is the foundation for doing well at school, socializing with others, developing independence, managing money and working.

- According to the University of the Pacific’s San Joaquin Literacy Report Card of 2015, only 27% of third grade students in **San Joaquin County** had reached English language arts proficiency, and the rest continue to lag behind the statewide average of 38%.
- Stanislaus READS! reported in 2016 that 71% of **Stanislaus County** third grade students do not read at grade level.

HPSJ is committed to continued support for literacy collaborations, believing that progress for literacy will improve member’s health and well-being through their ability to:

- Understand prescription instructions
- Comprehend the materials from HPSJ that explain their benefits
- Understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.
The third grade is such a critical benchmark because it is the last year a child is taught reading as a subject. In the fourth grade, students no longer ‘learn to read’ but must ‘read to learn’. The ability to read proficiently by the end of the third grade is a powerful indicator of future academic success.

In 2015, the California Department of Education released the first student scores from its new Common Core-based standardized testing system. The lower literacy rates were expected due to the implementation of this new standardized test. However, the literacy rate is still lower than hoped for, and it is seen as a serious concern.

Moreover, HPSJ partners with Rotary Read-In and local schools in our service area (San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties) to read grade-appropriate books for kindergarten through third grade. The books are then donated to the schools. Additionally, HPSJ staff joined together to create and staff a Little Free Library at the San Joaquin General Hospital Family Clinic. For almost two decades, HPSJ has partnered with the Stockton-San Joaquin County Library for Reach Out & Read, the national pediatric program that encourages pediatricians to model reading for parents and kids at well-child visits.

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Children’s Well Being – Staying Healthy In the Good Old Summertime

Help your patients stay safe and healthy this summer with the following tips:

1. **Sunscreen**

   **SUNSCREEN IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL** in the fight against skin cancer, including melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

   Americans will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime.

   **The American Academy of Dermatology recommends consumers choose a sunscreen which states on the label:**

   - SPF 30 OR HIGHER
   - BROAD SPECTRUM
   - WATER RESISTANT

   **For up to 40 or 80 minutes, Sunscreen can no longer claim to be waterproof or sweatproof.**

2. **Choose water when you’re thirsty**

   a. Sugar can hide in some of our favorite drinks
   
   b. Want something more exciting then water? Try adding cucumbers and some of your favorite fruits to your water for a tasty boost.

3. **Safety**—car crashes are the leading cause of death for children from birth to 8 years of age. To keep your kids safe:

   a. Keeps kids in a rear facing car seat until they are 2 years old
   
   b. Children under 8 or under 4’9” must be in a car seat or booster seat in the back seat

4. **Stay Cool**—need to get out of the heat? Free cooling zones can help you stay safe when it’s too hot outside

   
   b. San Joaquin—call the office of emergency services 209.953.6200 for locations
HPSJ Formulary & Coverage Policies – Available Online!

HPSJ’s full formulary is available online for viewing and reference. Please go to www.hpsj.com/formulary. The online formulary contains:

- Prior Authorization and Step therapy rule summaries and identifiers
- Specialty pharmacy restrictions
- Generic alternatives
- Formulary changes

Full coverage policies are also available at www.hpsj.com/pharmacy! Coverage policies explain in greater detail what is covered, why it is covered, and the clinical justification behind it. These are available online and are updated quarterly with P&T changes.