THE DAILY CLIPS

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State aims for Medicaid dollars

Under the Dome
Sat. Jan. 8, 2011

BY ALAN M. WOLF - Staff Writer

State officials are seeking higher Medicaid payments for physicians and hospitals affiliated with the UNC Health Care System and East Carolina University, a move that has angered leaders at other hospitals.

UNC Health and ECU officials have worked for months with the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services. Their plan would take advantage of a federal provision that allows states to get more money for state-owned hospitals and their doctors.

The plan would bring tens of millions more dollars to improve care and access for the state's 1.4 million Medicaid patients, UNC officials say. Some of those patients have trouble finding physicians because of low reimbursements.

But the plan would create an unfair financial advantage for the two state-owned hospital systems and affiliated physicians, the CEOs at rival hospitals argue. For one thing, it would give doctors more incentive to affiliate only with ECU and UNC. They're asking Lanier Cansler, the secretary of health and human services, to drop or delay the proposal.

"We are sure it is not the intent of the State to use its authority to show favoritism or destabilize health care markets and ask that you take action to remedy this potential statewide cost and fairness issue," WakeMed CEO Bill Atkinson wrote to Cansler.

Atkinson said he learned only recently of the state proposal, which is scheduled to be approved by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on Jan. 20.

Atkinson said Friday that he has spoken with Cansler and officials in Gov. Bev Perdue's office and that "they're aware it's a concern for us."

The plan is just one of many under consideration by the state to "maximize the federal dollars in the Medicaid system," Cansler said. His department isn't trying to foster unfair competition, he said, and is seeking other ways to help WakeMed and other hospitals.

"We'll be working to get through this process to everybody's benefit," Cansler said.
But Atkinson and his lobbyists are alerting lawmakers and other hospitals across the state, trying to enlist their help in defeating the plan.

Some of Atkinson's anger stems from a simmering fight he is waging with UNC Health. In November, he accused UNC Health of using its state support to finance a "predatory" expansion strategy in Wake County and hurt WakeMed's business. His lawyers requested various documents and correspondence related to that strategy, but UNC Health hasn't responded.

**Plea for level playing field**

The Medicaid-fee issue goes well beyond any WakeMed-UNC Health rivalry, said Victor Dzau, CEO of the Duke University Health System.

"The state should be looking at making decisions for the good of everyone," Dzau said. "I am concerned about having a level playing field and fairness in the health-care marketplace. This proposal could create an imbalance."

Duke officials are scrambling to review the proposal, Dzau said. He hopes the state will change the plan before it's approved at the federal level.

"If they can't, I hope they'll take a bit more time" before moving ahead, he said.

The Medicaid plan isn't designed to hurt other hospitals, said UNC Health CEO Bill Roper. It won't divert any existing Medicaid money.

His team worked "thoughtfully but energetically and persistently" with state officials on the plan, which would bring more federal money to North Carolina and provide some relief for the strained state budget. Similar plans have been approved in more than two dozen states, he added.

"We didn't invent this system, and one of these days, it may not be possible for North Carolina to do this creative and innovative thing" if the federal government revamps the Medicaid system, Roper said. "Until that day arrives, we're making a mistake not to take advantage of something that will help the state and its citizens."

**No apologies**

Roper acknowledges that the proposal will make it more attractive for physicians to affiliate with the UNC Health system, since they will receive more money for treating Medicaid patients.

"I'm delighted with that," said Roper, who previously ran the federal agency that oversees Medicaid and Medicare. "I don't apologize for it."
UNC Health's efforts to sign up local doctors has been one of Atkinson's biggest beefs. UNC Health last fall announced an affiliation with a large cardiology practice in Raleigh long associated with WakeMed.

The Triangle's hospital systems are racing to affiliate with physicians, mirroring a national trend driven by changes coming under the federal health overhaul.

One tool UNC Health and its Raleigh subsidiary Rex Healthcare are using to recruit physicians in the Triangle is promising them higher reimbursement rates, Atkinson said.

"Even if this wasn't designed by UNC to do harm, it's a classic example of ivory tower thinking, and not recognizing that what they do can have much broader implications for many other organizations," Atkinson said.

alan.wolf@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4572
Chancellor Steve Ballard, have you received other e-mails about that horrible sign at the intersection of Greenville and Charles boulevards? Well, here's another one to add to the list.

What were you guys thinking? That thing is so garish, out of place, just plain ugly and in poor taste that it just boggles the senses. Additionally, it's such an abominable distraction that it will no doubt cause traffic accidents at the intersection eventually, if it hasn't already. The original one notified us just as well of ECU activities and was certainly much less offensive and more in tune with the architecture of the school and surrounding buildings of that intersection than the high tech monstrosity some committee, that obviously had taken leave of its good senses, deemed appropriate to install there. Each time I see it I'm tempted to throw my hands up in front of my face and yell, “No! No!”

Please consider removing it and if you must have something “techie” to let the world know that ECU is in the 21st century, try updating the original one, discreetly, please. Send the citizenry the message that ECU is still a school of higher learning, not some gamers' hangout, and an institution Greenville can still be proud of.

LINDA MORGAN
Winterville
As a citizen of Pitt County for 30 years, I write to applaud the decision by the Pitt County Board of Health to appeal the recent court ruling that four bars in Greenville are actually “private clubs” and therefore exempt from the law passed last year that banned smoking in bars and restaurants in North Carolina. The hazards of second-hand smoke are well researched and significant. Second-hand smoke is a health hazard to patrons and especially to staff at these bars. The fact that three of these bars are in close walking distance of our university campus will put our students at risk when they frequent these bars with their friends. This ruling should be overturned.

The ban on smoking in bars and restaurants is overwhelmingly popular across our state with close to three-quarters of North Carolinians approving the smoking ban. Moreover, the bar and restaurant ban on smoking has strong support here in Pitt County. According to the 2008 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, fewer than 10 percent of Pitt County residents thought smoking should be allowed anywhere in a bar and less than 2 percent of Pit County residents thought that smoking should be allowed anywhere in a restaurant.

I was exceedingly proud in 2007 when Pitt County was the first county in North Carolina to receive the “Fit Community Award” from the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission. Unless this ruling is overturned, Pitt County will stand out as a place in North Carolina that is insensitive to the health hazards of second-hand smoke. I hope our county leaders will openly support the appeal by the Board of Health. We have a reputation for wellness to protect.

CHARLES F. WILLSON, M.D.
Greenville
The new Croatan will host a Chili's Too and a full service Chick Fi La on ECU's campus.

ECU Notes: New Croatan opens
ECU News Services
Sunday, January 9, 2011

Former East Carolina University students who remember the Croatan from its early years will be surprised to learn where they used to pop in for a soft drink and sandwich has been replaced with a building housing two full-service restaurants.

Built in 1970, the Croatan had grown to house a Chick-fil-A Express and serve approximately 3,000 customers per day. The building was demolished in June 2009 to make way for the two-story building that will open Monday for faculty, staff and students. It is located off 10th Street on east campus near the Brewster and Rivers buildings.

The new Croatan will house two foodservice offerings: Chili's Too and an expanded, full-service Chick-fil-A. Private and public dining areas will be available on the first floor; the second floor will house Chili's Too, where customers can order at a counter and dine in a restaurant seating area.

Upstairs, the private dining area has been named “The University Club” and will provide table-service for faculty and staff members from 11 a.m to 2 p.m. and can be reserved by groups, including student clubs, for dinner meetings. On its walls are framed ECU sports jerseys and photos. Downstairs, two meeting areas will allow large groups, up to 120 people, to meet in “The Green Room,” or a small group in a side meeting room. In all, the two restaurant spaces can seat about 400 customers, approximately five-times more than the former Croatan.
The update aimed to address students' preferences, said Stephanie Sumner, marketing manager with ECU Campus Dining/Aramark.

“We've started advertising two months ago about the new facility's opening date and we're hearing a lot of buzz from students and everything we're hearing from them is positive,” Sumners said Thursday, as crews finished last minute details such as power-washing the outside walkways.

The structure will also be the first LEED-certified building on campus. LEED ratings measure the environmental sustainability of a building. Special lighting, water cisterns in the courtyard and ecologically friendly landscaping are planned.

An interesting component of the building, and part of the LEED accreditation, is that the bricks used on the outside of the building were reclaimed from a demolished N.C. tobacco warehouse.

The contractor for the project was Rodgers Builders from Charlotte. Campus groups interested in reserving dining space for meetings in the new Croatan should call ECU Catering at 328-4756.

**ECU hosts community lecture series**
Beginning Saturday and continuing through March 5, ECU will host the seventh annual Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions Program. Sponsored by the World Affairs Council of Eastern North Carolina and ECU, the program will run for eight consecutive Saturdays, with presentations from 10 a.m. to noon in the Rivers West Building auditorium. The Feb. 12 session will be held in Rivers, Room N102.

This year's lecture series will feature academic and professional experts who will discuss topics on rebuilding Haiti, U.S. national security, responding to the financial crisis of 2007-08, the Horn of Africa, the Caucasus, Germany ascendant, sanctions and nonproliferation, and global governance.

The first lecture on Saturday will be presented by Dr. Dursun Peksen from the Department of Political Science at ECU. He will discuss “Sanctions and Nonproliferation.” Sanctions have been created to curb nations in violation of international law, especially agreements concerning nuclear nonproliferation. How successfully have sanctions been applied against past violators? Is there any chance sanctions can curtail North Korea and Iran from continuing to develop nuclear weapons?

All events are free to full-time students and teachers, and a program book may be purchased for $19. For the general public, all eight session are $42, or $6 per session. The program book is not included. WAC members may attend all eight sessions and receive a program book for $32. To register for the event, please visit the Web site of the Great Decisions Program at [www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/greatdecisions/home.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/greatdecisions/home.cfm), and click on registration.
For more information about the Great Decisions Program and a complete list of speakers, visit the website or contact Dr. Sylvie Debevec Henning, ECU director of international studies, at 328-5520 or by email at hennings@ecu.edu.

Individuals requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should call 737-1016 (voice/TTY) at least 48 hours prior to the event.

Grant to study online rape victim treatment
An East Carolina University professor has been awarded $624,000 to study Internet-based psychological treatment for rape victims.

The three-year grant from the National Institute of Mental Health will help Dr. Heather Littleton, assistant professor of psychology, develop online cognitive-behavioral treatment for rape victims, a majority of whom don't seek counseling.

The study will focus on college women who have experienced rape as an adolescent or adult and have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in connection to that experience. About 25 percent of college rape victims have been found to be currently suffering from PTSD.

“They're fairly recent victims, so it's a good time to intervene before the symptoms become more chronic,” Littleton said. “They are likely more comfortable than other women doing therapy online or using the Internet, so it seemed like a good place to start.” Internet-based treatment for psychological trauma is a growing area of study, Littleton said. The U.S. military has shown particular interest in online-based treatment of PTSD-affected veterans, who often live hours from a Veterans Affairs treatment facility.

No model yet exists for rape victims, however.

Starting this month, Littleton will be refining the online intervention program and preparing for a pilot study that will start in the fall. The full clinical trial will start in spring 2012 and run for two years.

Eighty-six women will be randomly divided into two groups: those who can access a website with psycho-educational information, such as information on coping skills, and a second group that receives additional therapist-facilitated online treatment.

“The main focus is on the cognitive restructuring piece,” Littleton said. “We focus on common issues among rape victims, things like feeling to blame for the rape, having difficulty trusting other people, and concerns about safety. [We're focusing] on identifying and challenging distorted beliefs and thoughts they may have in those areas as a result of the rape.”
Littleton hypothesizes that the latte group will show more effective coping skills and fewer signs of PTSD when interviewed immediately after the 12-week treatment and again three months later.

Ultimately, she said, online treatment might offer a way to reach women who don't feel comfortable seeking face-to-face counseling.

“Certainly it could be used as part of a free-standing clinic. A college counseling center, perhaps, could offer students the option of pursuing treatment online if they're more comfortable with that,” Littleton said. “It could also be integrated into medical care as other online treatments, such as for depression, have been.”

The grant's co-investigator is Dr. Amie E. Grills-Taquechel, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Houston. The clinical trial will recruit women from both professors' universities.

“Online treatments, which have been empirically supported, have great potential because they may reach individuals who are otherwise unable or unwilling to attend traditional therapy sessions,” Grills-Taquechel wrote in an e-mail. “…With rape victims, in particular, there seems to be a great need to develop effective non-traditional format treatments since less than 1-in-4 will actually seek treatment.”

Littleton, who has been at ECU since 2008, has spent years studying women's adjustment after sexual assault, including coping among women who don't classify their experiences as rape even though they meet the legal definition of the crime.

The National Institute of Mental Health is part of the National Institutes of Health, a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
University considers options for new center
By Jackie Drake
The Daily Reflector
Saturday, January 8, 2011

Campus officials at East Carolina University are looking at options for a proposed new student center.

At its November meeting, the Board of Trustees authorized the facilities committee to begin a search for a designer to draw up conceptual plans for a new building in various potential locations with the current center, Mendenhall, being repurposed.

These concepts will be brought back to the board at the completion of the months-long process, Associate Vice Chancellor for Campus Operations William Bagnell said. The new student center would be more of a gathering place with increased meeting, study and leisure space as well as easier access, according to Bagnell.

“The existing student center doesn't have the draw (that the new one will),” Bagnell said. “People come and go for meetings but they don't really stay. We want to bring in those amenities and make this a gathering place for students.”

While a final location has not been selected, officials are considering two options — the green area immediately north of Mendenhall and the parking area immediately south. “We're going to try to locate some other possible sites as well,” Bagnell said.

The project is in accordance with the university facilities master plan. “If starting now and everything flows smoothly, then we're probably looking at a 2014 or 2015 opening,” Bagnell said, adding that an official timetable has not been set. “As a general rule, it usually takes about as long to design as it does to build.”

The new building is planned to be around 230,000 gross square feet with an estimated cost of $105 million.

A new student center would be funded by student fees, as are recreation centers and dining halls. Academic buildings are generally covered by state money.

The plan also includes a first-ever student center for the health sciences campus. The new building would be approximately 74,000 square feet with an estimated cost of $31 million. The auxiliary functions within the facilities — like the bookstore and dining services — would provide a portion of the project funds to build their requisite space, Bagnell said. Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or (252) 329-9567.
Thursday marks one year since Greenville residents Kathy and Dan Sprau embarked, with their son Zach, on a 111-day voyage around the world with the Semester at Sea program. Kathy, an author and motivational speaker, served aboard the MV Explorer as Lifelong Learners Coordinator. Dan, emeritus professor at East Carolina University, taught courses in environmental health. Zach, a senior at Appalachian State University, took 12 hours of credit aboard the floating college campus.

To commemorate their voyage, and to encourage others to consider a Semester at Sea excursion, Kathy Sprau shares some highlights and photos from her family's unique experience.

Can you really go around the world in 80 days? The answer is yes, but it's way more fun to make the voyage in 111 days.

 Semester at Sea is an academic adventure, a floating university excursion and the experience of a lifetime. We sailed from San Diego to Ensenada, Mexico, to pick up 585 college students representing 249 universities and 49 states, to head west into the open, azure seas — first to Hawaii (Hilo and Honolulu), then to Japan (Yokohama and Kobe). The next stops were in China (Shanghai and Hong Kong), followed by Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City). Next was India (Chennai and Kochin), in line to St. Mauritius Island, awaiting Africa (Cape Town and Accra, Ghana), topping off the worldwide educational excursion with Salvador, Brazil, and then returning to the United States via Fort Lauderdale in early May.
Here are some snippets from our experience:

**Jan. 17:** The MV Explorer, our ship and our home for almost four months allowed us to sleep in the same bed virtually every night as we sailed around the world. From Ensenada, Mexico, the westerly sailing direction never ceased.
Bump! We crossed right over the International Dateline. Moments before, we were seven hours behind Greenville in time, and suddenly we skipped a day and were 17 hours ahead of Greenville time. From that moment forward, we gained one hour almost every other day at sea. At last, the 25-hour day we've always dreamed of. What a life!

**Feb. 15:** Shanghai. Dan bought a double bass viol from a Chinese manufacturer. The real challenge proved to be getting permission to take the upright bass onto the ship. The rule in the ship handbook, issued personally by the captain, read, “No large musical instruments!” The issue was storage. Very fortunately, one of our friends had an extra bed in his cabin, so our new string bass had a place to sleep. That string bass pulled its own weight during the voyage as a source of lots of music via both Dan and Zach.

**Feb. 26:** Vietnam, Saigon/Ho Chi Minh City. We discovered that Vietnam is a country and not a war. Vietnamese love America, mostly for the economy. We learned how to step off the curb into the onslaught of four lanes of traffic filled with cars, trucks, buses and 3.2 million motorbikes. Very few traffic lights exist in the city, even at extremely busy intersections. To cross the street is terrifying, although, with training, one can actually miraculously arrive at the other side, at a very steady pace, and the traffic just flows around you. It's incredible to actually live through that experience.

**March 23:** Mauritius Island. It's in the middle of the Indian Ocean, where the water temperature matches the air temperature — about 87 degrees. The Dodo bird has been extinct for 250 years, but it lived in Mauritius, a gorgeous tropical island about 2,400 miles from India and about 2,400 miles from Cape Town. It is very far from anywhere! We loved the varying topography which included both mountains and pristine beaches with endless outdoor adventures available. Mauritius, surprisingly a democracy and quite stable, is the most eclectic country in the world and boasts 90 percent literacy.

**March 31:** Easter found us in Cape Town. We had seen the movie “Invictus” on the ship and then were awed and impressed with the slave museum featuring Nelson Mandela and his stirring passion to end apartheid.
Our daughter, Abby, a fifth-grade teacher in Greenville, S.C., joined us in Cape Town for five days of her Easter vacation.

**April 21:** Brazil, Salvador. We found the old part of the city, historical, quaint and beautiful, but dangerous. Our family took our major off-ship excursion into Chappada Diamentina, the mammoth national park, for hiking, panoramic views, sliding down very long and slippery waterfalls, magnificent panoramas and amazing topography, along with very quaint and safe little villages.
Although Brazil is a world power on the rise economically, it has many problems. The entire shipboard community experienced a new respect and appreciation for the law and order we generally enjoy in America.

May 5: Home to America to the port of Fort Lauderdale. When we arrived in our driveway at 3:44 a.m., having rented a minivan to transport the massive string bass in its white, coffin-like case, we noticed the calendar in our kitchen read December 2009. It was now May 6, 2010. We knew we had been gone a long time. Would we do it again, sail around the world in more than 80 days? We would do it in a heartbeat!

The Spraus are available for Semester at Sea presentations to organizations and schools. Call 355-2712.
Britts seek to take training facility to 'next level’
Monday, January 10, 2011

Athletes in eastern North Carolina looking to take their game to the next level now have a
new option.

Trent Britt and his wife, Gaynel, have opened Next Level Training Center on Wimbledon
Drive after completing major renovations to the facility that housed Courtside Athletic
Club and Triple Crown. Courtside continues to operate the outdoor tennis facilities. East
Carolina University leases 22,000 square feet of the 50,000-square-foot facility for indoor
tennis.

“The goal is to provide a first-class training environment dedicated to the continual
development of committed baseball, softball and volleyball players of all ages and
abilities,” Trent Britt said. “The real goal is to make it an all-inclusive facility for any
ability level to be able to either come in and work on their own, which is what
membership offers, or to offer services that are geared toward any level where we can
cater to what they need.”

The staff includes former college baseball players Rodney Harris, Dustin Sasser, Jake
Dean, Lance Martin and Brandon Henderson. Paige Baggett, who played four years at
ECU, provides softball instruction.

“I'm proud to say all of those are local products that have grown up here, played here and
played collegiately,” Britt said.
The East Carolina Junior Volleyball Club, a select team, also is based out of Next Level. The two courts are available to members outside of the club's five-month season. Next Level offers volleyball instruction and jump training.

Other features of Next Level, which is a member-based facility, are nine hitting cages, a 12,000-square-foot sport turf infield, a 3,000-square-foot youth training area, and a 3,000-square-foot fitness facility with 24-hour access available. Members also have access to an outdoor pool.

Services include personalized and group instruction for baseball and softball; clinics and camps; indoor hitting leagues; speed and strength classes for baseball and softball players or general fitness; and group athlete training. A full-time personal trainer is on site.

Next Level also will serve as a backup indoor practice facility for ECU and Pitt Community College baseball teams.

“We want it to be about the facility that we have and the services we offer and not about us,” said Britt, an ECU graduate and local youth coach for about 10 years. “My goal is for this to be a regional facility for the entire region of eastern North Carolina.”

Call 756-NEXT (6398).
John Lewis to speak at NCCU

Published Sun. Jan. 9, 2011
Staff Reports

DURHAM -- John Lewis, a Democratic congressman from Georgia and a giant in the civil rights movement, will speak at N.C. Central University this week as part of the university's Martin Luther King Convocation.

Lewis will speak 9:45 a.m. Thursday in the McDougald-McLendon Gymnasium. The event, part of a weeklong observance of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., is free and open to the public.

While a student at Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn., Lewis organized sit-ins at segregated lunch counters in the city. In 1961, he joined the Freedom Riders, who challenged segregation at Southern bus terminals.

In 1963, he became head of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which helped shape student activism during the civil rights movement.

Later in life he got into politics, first with the Atlanta City Council and later in the U.S. House of Representatives, to which he was first elected in 1986.
Brows take off

Retired Pitt-Greenville Airport manager James Turcotte is praised by the airport's board chairman as someone who didn't just do his job well but accomplished great things, among them the rehab of a World War II airfield and the enlarging of the airport and millions in capital improvements. He also apparently skillfully managed his relations with his board, which compensated Turcotte handsomely, to the tune of nearly $258,000 in his final full year on the job in 2008.

By contrast, the managers of much larger airports in Charlotte and Raleigh make $211,000 and $215,000 respectively. RDU has 270 staff members and an $86 million budget. Greenville's airport has 15 staffers and an annual budget of roughly $2.5 million.

The compensation numbers would not have come to light without the dogged pursuit of Terry Boardman, an instructor at East Carolina University, who pressed the airport board to release Turcotte's salary history under recent, overdue revisions to the state personnel law.

The News & Observer had a role as well, reporting on restrictions in the old law. Before the legislature made changes, boards were able to shield such information as job and salary histories that helped determine how a public employee's pension was calculated.

Turcotte's pension is a whopper. He could be receiving as much as $173,654 a year. The main question remaining, given that Turcotte has retired (and wasn't naming his own salary, anyway) seems to be: how did this happen? Board Chairman Alton Holloman defended Turcotte's pay as reflecting the airport's success and pointed out (unpersuasively) that it was covered by airport fees, not by city or county funds or federal grant money.

Beyond that, this was a small local board with a friendly relationship with its manager. Clearly the board was inclined to keep him happy and under its employ. Second, with outside sources of revenue such as fees paying the freight, perhaps the board mistakenly felt less of an obligation to keep a careful eye on things. Third, board members just weren't paying very close attention.

There is a fairly recent example of something similar. Local boards within the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control system have paid wildly differing salaries to administrators, including a situation in New Hanover County where the head of the system was making well over $200,000 annually despite the fact that the county's sales were considerably
less than those of larger counties. The situation prompted Gov. Beverly Perdue to order an investigation.

Nothing of that sort appears warranted in the case of the Pitt-Greenville airport. Rather, the lesson is that this local board and others should do their duty, which means providing genuine oversight rather than just showing up for meetings. Board memberships need to be taken seriously.

Read more: http://www.newsobserver.com/2011/01/08/906188/brows-take-off.html#ixzz1Aew22uzh