Over the past few years, CenCal Health had the opportunity to serve thousands of new members of our health plan. We’ve added benefits that were not available before and we’ve seen improved health outcomes as a result. We are proud to be a local community health plan that has made a difference and continues to make a difference in people’s lives.

So, just when you think you have the world figured out, it reminds you that you really don’t. I’m of course referring to the presidential election and its impact on health care in the nation, in California, and here on the Central Coast. I’m neither supporting nor regretting the election’s outcome as CenCal Health’s CEO – that not my role. What I will do is work with our great staff, our board of directors and the provider community to best manage whatever change comes our way.

There are dozens of questions as to what comes next, and unfortunately a lack of anything but speculative answers. Repealing the Affordable Care Act in its entirety will be difficult from a practical viewpoint, as facts can be stubborn things. Converting Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California) to block grants will also be difficult as (and make no mistake) less federal money for Medicaid will impact all states, red and blue.

That all being said, either or both of these efforts could happen. The roles of community-based health plans like ours in this instance is to outline for policy makers the factual impact of significant federal health policy changes, such as:

- The economic impact of hospitals, physicians and the community at large resulting from policy changes.
- The human impact resulting from such changes.
- The impact of the health care safety net from such changes.

Above all policy makers need to be reminded that health care expenses are a zero-sum game. Reduced federal funding for health care doesn’t eliminate the health care expense itself – it merely shifts it to other entities (hospitals, physicians, CBOs). At least we recognize that our valued providers should not and cannot support added burden and we will advocate on behalf of our community as we have done for over 30 years.

This is not meant to paint a dire picture of the future, as I don’t think that’s the case. I believe that 2017 will be to a large degree a year of uncertainty. Uncertainty isn’t necessarily good or bad, it’s just uncertain. What is certain is that CenCal Health, along with our partners in the health care community, will be working diligently to help promote and encourage a certainty that’s as beneficial to the Central Coast as possible.

At CenCal Health, we partner with our providers -- from promoting quality health care delivery to ensuring our members get the care they need at the right time and in the right setting. We encourage not only healthier outcomes and well-being for the people we serve; but also we “take care of our own” mentality that we think epitomizes our collective philosophy in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. We’re grateful for our providers who choose to work with us. Without you, none of what we do would be possible.

Robert E. Freeman
Chief Executive Officer
Introducing our new Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Darryl Leong and Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Takashi Wada

CenCal Health is very excited to introduce you to Dr. Darryl Leong as our new Chief Medical Officer. Dr. Leong received his BS in Chemistry from Reed College in Portland, Oregon and then went to medical school at State University of New York at Buffalo. He completed his residency at the University of Minnesota Hospital in Minneapolis. After receiving his M.D., Dr. Leong did neonatology for one year in Hawaii transporting infants between the islands. He then earned his Master's in Public Health from the University of Hawaii where he discovered his passion for public health.

Dr. Leong has been in public health for over 30 years and comes to us from Care 1st where he was the Acting Chief Medical Officer and Medical Director.

In addition, CenCal Health is also very enthusiastic to introduce Dr. Takashi Wada as our new Deputy Chief Medical Officer. Dr. Wada received his undergraduate degree in Biomedical Sciences from the University of California, Riverside and then went on to UCLA for his Doctor of Medicine and subsequently received his Master's in Public Health from the University of California, Los Angeles. After receiving his M.D. in Family Medicine, Dr. Wada worked for many years for a community free clinic. After working as a clinical physician and teaching at UCLA, he became the Director/Public Health Officer/Medical Director for the City of Pasadena Public Health Department.

Dr. Wada comes to us from the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department where he was the Public Health Department Director for the last seven years.

Please join us in welcoming both Dr. Leong and Dr. Wada to CenCal Health!

Notification of New Data Collection Requirements

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) has issued new regulations that require CenCal Health and other health plans to make significant changes around the collection and reporting of provider data. These new requirements allow for data to be transmitted electronically between CenCal Health and DHCS in a HIPPA compliant manner. In essence, this file is one very large, comprehensive roster of all CenCal Health providers that will be submitted to DHCS on a monthly basis.

There was a new law introduced by the State that changes the way CenCal Health provides our members a provider directory. This new law pertains specifically to the online provider directory available on the plan’s website and dictates the frequency of updates to the directory, as well as specific search criteria, beginning January 1, 2018.

Both of these regulations require CenCal to collect data that has not been required or collected in the past. The ultimate outcome will provide more accurate and timely information to members and create efficiencies in data collection for providers.

During January and February 2017, CenCal Health's Provider Services staff will be reaching out to all contracted providers to gather new data and affirm existing data. This outreach may come via email, a phone call and/or an in-person site visit. We ask for your help in gathering and providing your data in a timely manner.

If you have any questions, please contact CenCal Health Provider Services at (805) 562-1767.