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CRAIN'S HEALTH pulse

A daily newsletter on the business of health care

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Wednesday, November 1, 2006

TODAY'S NEWS

WESTCHESTER COUNTY

Moody's affirmed Westchester County Health Care Corp.'s Ba2 rating on \$107 million of senior debt and revised its outlook to "stable" from "negative." The revision reflects the agency's view that better management has stabilized financial performance. But the rating still reflects a weak financial profile and limited resources available to repay debt obligations. Among WCHCC's strengths are the "vested interest of Westchester County that this facility remains open" and its negotiation of more favorable contracts with health plans, Moody's says. The biggest challenge is uncertainty about what will happen when the corporation's dependence on the county ends next July.

CMS CONTRACT

Comprehensive Care Management in the Bronx has received a Medicare Advantage contract from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid for a special needs plan for people who are living in or eligible to live in an institution. The nonprofit, part of the Beth Abraham Family of Health Services,

PULSE EXTRA: This week's edition looks at data on personal health care spending in New York and the rest of the United States. To read *Pulse Extra*, scroll down to Page 2.

Hospitals switch to chaplains for hire

A change in Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations regulations may be behind a steady rise in business for agencies that provide professionally trained and monitored hospital chaplains.

The Manhattan-based HealthCare Chaplaincy—a group with Protestant roots that became multifaith in the 1980s—notes increased demand for its services since the commission issued guidelines on standards for providing spiritual counseling.

"We seem to be filling a tremendous need," says a spokesman for the chap-

laincy. "Doctors don't get the training in total mind-spirit healing that clergy can do." And though some hospitals rely on part-time volunteers, he says, even when budgets are tight, hospitals view full-time clergy as beneficial to patients and staff.

The nonprofit places hospital chaplains at salaries that it says are higher than the national average of \$50,000 to \$85,000. All are full-time workers and receive benefits. The service has contracts with 17 area hospitals and rehab facilities, mostly in Manhattan. That includes Lenox Hill Hospital, which recently hired a new chaplain.

hopes to sign up 200 to 500 members over the next 12 months. "We're starting out slow, and we expect to build," a spokesman says.

ASSISTED LIVING

A national survey by MetLife Mature Market Institute shows a wide range of average monthly rates for assisted living care. The low was \$1,742 in North Dakota, and the high was \$5,197 in Bridgewater, N.J. The rate in New York City was \$3,371; various figures from upstate included \$2,559 in Syracuse and \$2,891 in Rochester. They rates are for private-pay patients with a room and private bath. The

survey defines assisted living as services that include room, board of two meals a day, housekeeping and personal care assistance.

AT A GLANCE

SYMPOSIUM: The Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence and the New York Academy of Medicine are holding a symposium on the nursing shortage and possible remedies on Nov. 3 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., at 1216 Fifth Ave. (at East 103rd Street). For information, e-mail event@jonascenter.org or call (212) 609-1583.

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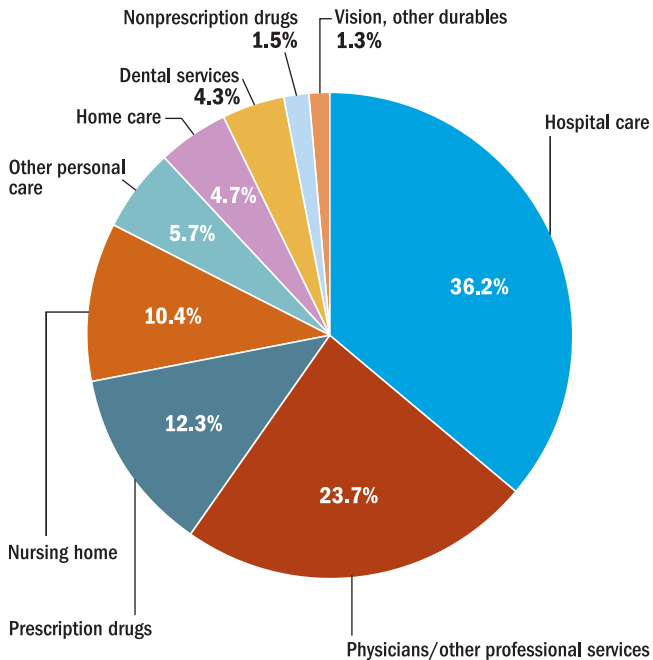
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A special report on health care in New York

extra

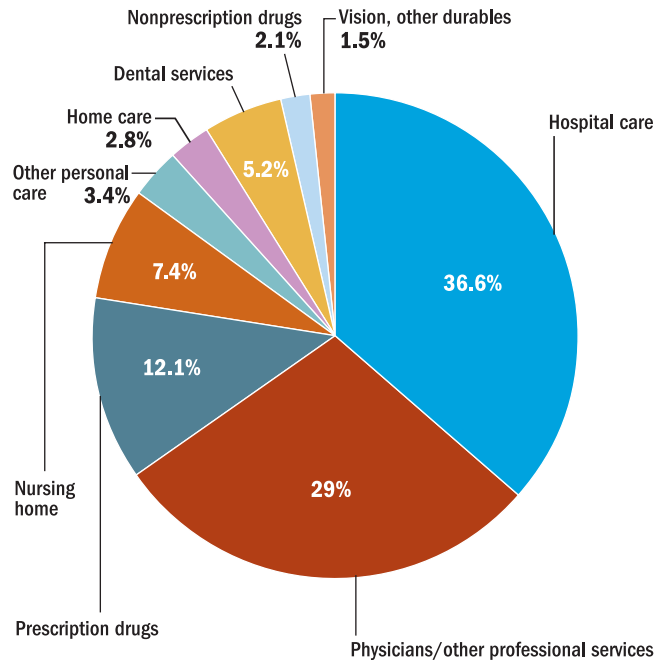
This edition of *Pulse Extra* looks at data on personal health care spending in New York state. Between 1994 and 2004, spending by New Yorkers rose 84%, compared with a 92% rise for all Americans. In that period, the share that New Yorkers spent on hospital care fell 6.1 percentage points, while the share that went for prescription drugs rose 6.3 percentage points. The full report was released by the New York State Conference of Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans from data compiled by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

NEW YORK STATE



Total does not equal 100% because of rounding.

UNITED STATES



Total does not equal 100% because of rounding.

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