

Peak News

Newsletter of the Pikes Peak Chapter of the Professional Association of Health Care Office Management, Colorado Springs, CO

PAHCOM Chapter of The Year 2009

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January thru March 2010



PPPAHCOM Member on UHC Advisory Council!

By Rudy Drautz, CMM

How can a busy Practice Manager ever find time to participate as a member of the United Health Care (UHC) Advisory Council? One of our Pikes Peak PAHCOM members who is very connected with several important ventures within our local chapter has somehow managed to do just that.

This practice manager is actively involved as an advisory board member of a local trade school, has contributed an article to the Colorado Medical Society concerning a practical guide for credentialing new physicians to a practice, and has made a multitude of other contributions. Sandra Robben-Weber is the administrator of St. Luke's Eye Care & Laser Center where she has served for over five years.

UHC's Advisory Council appointment began when Sandra was contacted by Marie Baker, UHC's Director of Provider Services, about being a member of the UHC Administrative Advisory Council in September 2009. Sandra's response was "Why me? I am just a small practice administrator." Marie had lots of convincing answers and Sandra agreed. (And, in Sandra's words, "Stability is an illusion in medicine!"). Sandra has worked in large and small physician practices and always tells it straight even if it does not personally affect her practice.

Sandra attended the orientation meeting and was greeted warmly. She sat next to really important people like Marilyn Rissmiller, Director of Health Care Finance at the Colorado Medical Society (still thinking, why the heck did they ask me?) and big CEO's from large, important practices in the room. Sandra thought to herself, "I don't know half of what these people do." Listening to the presentation and learning about the things the organizers want this advisory committee to look at, Sandra finally decided that maybe this would be great information to share with all of her peers and PAHCOM membership. Marilyn heartily agreed.

The purpose of the UHC Advisory Council is to provide ongoing medical practice staff input to United Healthcare and its affiliated companies. That dialogue will produce meaningful and mutually beneficial enhancement in the company's administrative interactions with physicians. As Marie said, "United truly wants to help the physicians to be successful and communication is the key to resolving issues". The committee will focus on priority issues.

- Opportunity to advance simplicity and coordination of the following areas:

Eligibility determination	Claims submission
Claims payment	Reimbursement policy
Contracting	Credentialing
Communication	Issues resolution process
- Opportunities and strategies that will advance the application of electronic and other technologies to realize simple, mutually beneficial and cost-effective data-based inter actions.
- Other emerging issues as proposed by the expert committee members and UHC.

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There will be quarterly meetings with conference-calls/web conferences held as needed. Sandra will be attending the following meetings: 6/8/2010 and 9/14/2010. There is a small honorarium for in-person attendance at the above meetings and Sandra has graciously donated it to the PAHCOM education fund.

One of the newest services that United Healthcare has rolled out is their Physician Advocate Program. The advocate is to make 8-12 different practice visits per week. The advocate is to visit offices and help educate office staff about UHC, answer claims issues, and assist your practice and your staff with any UHC concerns that may exist. Each physician advocate has received additional training and education in the things that are important to physician practices, i.e., claims, reimbursement, credentialing, etc. UHC has assigned two physician advocates to share responsibilities for the Colorado Springs area. They are:

Stacy Hoover, Physician Advocate

303.267.3357 (phone)/303.299.3137 (fax)

Email: stacy_hoover@uhc.com

Celeste Trevino, Physician Advocate

303.267.3479 (phone)/877.738.7774 (fax)

Email: celeste_trevino@uhc.com

It appears that this committee will receive some of the UHC alerts prior to their general distribution of information, i.e., the recent Radiology Imaging Update that Sandra forwarded to some of you. Sandra also attended a web-conference on the 2010 Secure Horizons member benefits plans available in each separate Colorado county. Sandra informed them that this is important information for any physician providing services to Secure Horizons membership. Offering this in a web-conferencing format would benefit the practices since it was only about 30 minutes in length (no one needs to leave the office). Sandra requested the slides presented, as these would give the practices a "quick reference guide" on the Secure Horizons benefits plans in the community for 2010. (slides for El Paso & Teller Counties available on PP PAHCOM website under Secure Horizons Flyer).

1. There is a Quick Reference Guide for Working with Healthcare Providers on claims issues, EOBs, unpaid claims, etc.

2. Sample ID Cards Samples available. United is also working on the continuation of the recently deployed National (WEDI) Workgroup for Electronic Data Interchange members cards and is now starting to prepare the next generation of ID cards. A separate focus group is being developed to help with the next update. This focus group includes many front office staff, billing staff, etc. from practices around the state. Watch for more to come.
3. Fee Schedule Update: Entire alert distributed in January. UHC has implemented the RVU's, CPT changes and coding edits effective January 1, 2010.
4. Consultation Codes: UHC will continue to reimburse consultation codes (99241-99245 & 99251-99255) for commercial plans. Secure Horizons, AARP, Medicare Complete, AmeriChoice consultation codes have been eliminated as CMS regulations are required to be same with these Medicare Advantage/Secondary type plans.
5. Quicken Health Care Expense Tracker: UHC and other payors (see website below) have partnered with Intuit to launch health care expense tracker to allow members the ability to manage their health care expenses. But, there is also an opportunity for physicians to receive payment. Please visit <http://healthcare.intuit.com/intuit-patient-payments-qhet/index.jsp>. Right now if you sign up, they are waiving the enrollment fee, etc. Otherwise, it is \$0.64/transaction. Check it out, as we are all trying to find ways to get paid more quickly. There is a demo on the website.
6. 2010 Secure Horizon's Plans Brief Descriptions are available for El Paso and Teller Counties. If you take care of members with Secure Horizons; this is a must guide for your office. The front office will love these.
7. Lab Corp: Does anyone have issues that need to be brought to someone's attention? United is listening! There are Lab Corp Executives that can help. Debbie Carlson and I attended this meeting, and we brought issues that area practices have been experiencing. Lab Corp is the primary lab for all Secure Horizon lines of business. Did you know that Lab Corp can set-up an online interchange with your practice? You can contact *Chad Carter, Regional Mgr of Business Development* 8490 Upland Drive #100 Englewood, CO 80112 Phone: 720.568.4411 Cellphone: 303.503.9079 Fax: 720.568.4222 Email: cartec6@LabCorp.com

UPCOMING EVENT: Tuesday, March 23, 2009, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. or 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. (second session with lunch has been added because of an overwhelming response) United Health Provider Relations Meetings for area

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PPPAHCOM Member on UHC Advisory Council! *(Continued from page 2)*

providers; offering an excellent opportunity to learn more about UHC and ask questions. The physician advocates will be contacting practices to see if they would like to volunteer to change to the later session, lunch will be provided. Come and meet the Physician Advocates. This will be held at the Penrose Cancer Center. Watch for an official invite from United Healthcare. **DON'T MISS THIS!!!!!!**

MOVING FORWARD: Anytime any of us have an opportunity to be a part of the panel with an insurance carrier (UHC is one of the biggest), we should jump on it. Yes, it could benefit your practice, but the physician community at large is just as important. So ... Sandra has agreed to serve for two years. She will update the PAHCOM membership through the PAHCOM Newsletter and at Breakfast Club Meetings, third Friday of each month, 7:00 a.m. Sandra considers it a privilege to serve and bring back information!

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### **TREATMENT PLAN FOR RECOVERY**

With a troubled economy and rising health care cost a local health care organization is addressing these concerns. They provide a service which helps speed up the recovery process for specific patients in rehabilitation enabling them to return to their regular activities much sooner and with better results.

Imagine technology so advanced that it may help stroke and other neurological patients regain lost mobility and achieve greater independence than believed to be possible. This highly sophisticated technology is now a reality right here in Colorado Springs.

The first technology focuses on central nervous system injuries that often result in foot drop, leading to instability and difficulty walking. The NESS

L300™ is a revolution in Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) technology, designed to help patients experiencing foot drop to regain mobility and help “normalize” walking and gait. The L300 uses *wireless* communication, eliminating cumbersome wires and allowing the therapist the ability to fine-tune settings while the patient is actually walking. This system is appropriate for a range of conditions, including stroke, traumatic brain injury, and incomplete spinal cord injury, as well as multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy and other neurological conditions.

The second device, the NESS H200™, is designed to help patients regain hand function. This system consists of a soft polymer fitting that rests over the patient's hand and forearm; stimulation from external electrodes move the hand and guide it through repetitive exercises. Based on the concept of neuromuscular re-education, repetition of movement teaches the healthy parts of the brain to relearn lost function. Clinical trials support the effectiveness of the H200 in returning function for patients in the acute phase of recovery following stroke, brain injury, and other neurological disorders, as well as for certain patients whose injuries are years old.

As your professional staff considers their treatment plan for patients who have experienced a stroke, traumatic brain injury, neurological disorders, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, and other neurological conditions consider contacting our organization to schedule our services.

To learn more about Bioness Inc. or the L300/H200, visit [www.bioness.com](http://www.bioness.com), or call 719-630-8000.

Article provided by Silver Sponsor:

Lisa Hinton, MS, CCC-SLP  
 Director Of Marketing Operations  
 HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of  
 Colorado Springs  
 325 Parkside Drive  
 Colorado Springs, CO 80910  
 (719) 630-2371  
 (719) 520-0387 (fax)  
[lisa.hinton@healthsouth.com](mailto:lisa.hinton@healthsouth.com)

### **Breakfast Club Serving Up Something Special!**

On the third Friday of every month PP PAHCOM members gather at the MAC for continental breakfast. Something special has evolved from sharing breakfast and ideas around the table. Most of the regular attendees at monthly Breakfast Club meetings are involved with local schools and colleges.

Breakfast Club members are committed to improving the educational experience of local medical assistant (MA) externs. Debbie Carlson, CMM, Administrator at Women's Associates and Breakfast Club originator, states that PP PAHCOM members expressed a growing concern regarding the lack of qualified MAs in the community.

From this discussion, Breakfast Club members developed a list of expectations—skills that qualified MAs should attain to be considered for employment. Steve Johanns, CMM, Administrator at Infectious Disease Specialists, took the lead and organized the list, as well as applicable behavior standards, based on group input. Within months, meetings were held with local schools and colleges who train MA's. Breakfast Club provided skill sets and behavior expectations to school contacts. Many PP PAHCOM's members stepped up to train externs from various schools. This program has been a great success and has been repeated semi-annually for several years. Today, several PP PAHCOM members participate in educational advisory boards. Debbie Carlson advises Remington College, Sandra Robben-Weber, St. Luke's Eye Care & Laser Center advises Pikes Peak Community College, and Judy Boesen [recently retired from Colorado Otolaryngology] advises PIMA. Judy is PP PAHCOM's educational liaison. She coordinates our semi-annual meetings with the schools. Judy states that we can always use more medical offices training externs. The payoff is well qualified employees. Many outstanding externs are now working in PP PAHCOM member offices as a result of this effort.

### **Renewing Your Lease – Where to Begin**

Lease renewals are typically not conducted on a level playing field. After all, the Landlord is in the business of real estate and most Doctors are not. By planning in advance and having professional representation, you can increase the probability of negotiating a lower lease rate as well as substantial Tenant Improvement and Free Rent Allowances.

#### **How does the lease renewal process work?**

An important clause found in a standard lease is the renewal option. This allows tenants to extend their lease for a predetermined amount of time (usually five or ten years) by giving their landlord six to twelve months written notice. Renewal options deal with specific lease rates, concessions such as free rent, tenant improvement allowances and whether a new base year for operating expenses will be granted. These terms are all negotiable and play a large role in the financial structure of a lease renewal.

#### **What are some common mistakes Doctors make during the process?**

One of the most common mistakes Doctors make is negotiating without the help of a commercial real estate professional; specifically, one who specializes in representing Medical Professionals. Some Doctors believe they can save money by not using a broker; but to benefit in real estate, you need leverage. Landlords are in the real estate business and negotiate with professional guidance. Selecting an expert to represent you provides the leverage needed to receive the best possible lease terms. Further, Landlords are responsible for paying commissions, not Tenants.

Another mistake Doctors make when entering into a lease renewal negotiation is not being familiar with their current lease terms and exposure. Prior to contacting their landlord about a lease renewal, every Doctor should be well aware of their current lease terms including every option and deadline. As mentioned, most leases contain options that must be exercised within a specific time period, typically six to twelve months prior to their lease expiration. If a tenant allows this period to pass, they risk losing all rights outlined in the option and starting the negotiations off at a disadvantage.

#### **What type of cost savings can be achieved through a successful renewal?**

If properly negotiated, Tenants can receive significant rent savings and build out allowances. It's very common to start a lease renewal at a lower lease rate than what is currently being paid. As the economy continues to struggle, Landlords are offering aggressive concessions and more attractive lease terms to good Tenants to keep their buildings leased. The amount of overall savings will depend on the availability of competitive vacancies, the efficiencies of the buildings, the market knowledge of the broker and the ability to negotiate business points and reduce overall exposure.

#### **When should the process begin?**

As a rule of thumb, Doctors should consider the renewal process 12 to 18 months in advance of their lease expiration. This is recommended so they can consider and compare all relocation options in the market before their current lease options expire. Tenants who miss their lease options incur more risk. Landlords view this as an opportunity to push rents higher as the window of opportunity to relocate closes. If tenants holdover, they often see penalties of 150 to 200 percent of their last month's rent and can also incur consequential damages if they holdover without permission. The bottom line is, if there is not ample time to relocate if necessary, the Landlord has a strong upper hand.

Article provided by new Silver Sponsor, Carr Healthcare

*Roger Hernandez is Vice President of Carr Healthcare Realty and specializes in representing Healthcare Professionals with all their real estate needs. Roger has successfully negotiated over 100 lease and sale transactions in the last three years alone. You can contact Roger at (719) 339-9007 or [roger@carrhr.com](mailto:roger@carrhr.com).*

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Sharing the CMM Excitement!!

Since 2001, PP PAHCOM continues its tradition of sharing the excitement about becoming a CMM [Certified Medical Manager]. Anyone who holds that prestigious title knows that it comes with hard work and sacrifice. In April 2010, several PP PAHCOM members will take the exam to become a CMM. Last year, four chapter members earned CMM designation: Cyndie Pluid, Suzanne, Roelof, Tracie Broome, and Valerie Velasquez. They have joined seasoned CMM's Bridget Pieffer, Chris Hall, and Steve Johanns in a tradition of mentoring to pass on their knowledge to this year's CMM candidates. PP PAHCOM has been successful in this initiative and all CMM's enjoy being able to pass on the torch to another group.

At present twenty PP PAHCOM members proudly display the CMM designation after their names. There is no requirement to be a CMM, yet for those who have studied, taken the exam, and now hold that title, this effort has added meaning to their career. Not only does the CMM designation add credibility, it is an accomplishment you carry throughout your career in health care management.

If you are interested in becoming a CMM take a look at the list of PP PAHCOM members on page 6 with the CMM designation after their name and ask them certification.

President's Point of View

Do you remember the 1989 movie "Parenthood" with Steve Martin? Late in the movie, Steve Martin's character, Gil Buckman is speaking with Grandma and complaining about his complicated life. Grandma comments that Grandpa took her for a ride on a roller coaster in her younger days. Although Gil is obviously underwhelmed, Grandma continues with "I always wanted to go again. You know, it was just so interesting that a ride could make me so frightened, so scared, so sick, and so thrilled all together. Some didn't like it. They went on the merry-go-round. That just goes around. Nothing. I like the roller coaster. You get more out of it."

I love Grandma's analogy. It's so fitting in practice management these days. And, undoubtedly, with more than 65 active members in our chapter, I'm not the only one holding a ticket for the roller coaster.

Dr Mark Levine, CMS helped us welcome 2010 by introducing key concepts in Value Based Purchasing, a payment structure radically different from Medicare's traditional fee for service reimbursement. In February, George Flynn, OSHA, showed us the OSHA side of an audit, a perspective no one really wants to experience. Annie Moats, PCH Training assured us in March that our employees are valuable assets of our organizations, and if we don't acknowledge them as such, just wait until the economy improves.

In between these events, we began planning a southern Colorado payer meeting, preparing candidates for the CMM exam, and we heard a first person account of the disaster in Haiti through the eyes of Dr Paul Rahill. And we're not even half way through the year.

The next quarter promises more of the same. We begin April with Tim Johnson, Castle Rock Medical Group, who is providing education on RAC audits...everything you ever wanted to know, but were afraid to ask. The Collaborative Efforts in Education group holds its semi-annual meeting in mid-April discussing extern programs and employer needs. Our annual conference in May brings Frank Cohen, MIT Solutions Inc, to give us an exhaustive mental workout in process improvement, LEAN, and Six Sigma in the medical practice with the goal of improving profitability. In harmony with the theme of the day, El Paso County and Colorado Medical Societies present application of theory through IPIP and CCGC. To minimize risk and associated costs, June brings us loss prevention with Mike Wacker, Six and Geving.

Who knew that we would face so many challenges? Please have your ticket handy. Fasten your seatbelt; the ride is about to begin.

Improving Profitability by Improving Practices—Frank Cohen, MIT Solutions, Inc

Profitability is a ratio of revenue over expense. Therefore, in order to be more profitable, one only needs to increase the numerator (revenue) or decrease the denominator (expense). The problem is, for the overwhelming majority of medical practices, little can be done to satisfy these criteria. Operational expenses have already been cut to the point where further cuts will affect quality of care and regarding revenue, the payers make sure, through the introduction of intentional constraints, that we never collect all we are entitled to be paid. Since being profitable is critical to the continuation of providing quality care and, at least in the traditional method, we can't seem to affect the ratio, what is the answer? Simply put, it is increasing efficiency. Imagine, if you could do even 5% more without increasing the consumption of resources, every penny would then go to the bottom line. In this session, Frank Cohen, statistician and Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt, will introduce you to process improvement models based on both Lean and Six Sigma with a focus on how medical practices can apply these to improve quality, profitability and compliance.

During this full-day session, attendees will be introduced to the tools that are required to develop and successfully complete a process improvement project, including the big three; process mapping, value stream mapping and cause and effect analysis. With these, any practice can begin immediately identifying and solving problems within their organization. Then, in order to implement these tools effectively and carry the project to problem resolution and implementation, attendees will learn about the two most effective deployment platforms around; DMAIC and PDSA. And finally, to make sure that you learn from your work and become more skilled at identifying and solving problems, we will look at different ways to form and work within effective teams and how to properly manage the project.

Join us for a full day at the Clarion Hotel, I-25 & Bijou, on Thursday, May 20, 2010. Attendees will receive a complete tool box, including documentation, worksheets, templates, sample reports and all pertinent data files necessary to understand and apply process improvement techniques within their organization.

PIKES PEAK PAHCOM MEMBER LIST

Pikes Peak PAHCOM proudly recognizes its members and its corporate sponsors.

Welcome our newest members: **Diana Herman, Gary Naleski, Denise Straub, Louise Tillery, and Tammy Wasinger.** We extend a warm welcome to honorary members, **Marilyn Rissmiller** and **Carol Walker.** Many thanks for their commitment to our success! We are pleased to have all of you join us!

We extend our sincere gratitude for the confidence renewing members have placed in this association by referring new members. Our Chapter is successful because of you.

Debbie Adams, Dr. Laura Feldman
Joan Austin, CMM, Pediatrics West, (Wheatridge, CO)
Julie Ballweber, Cardiodiagnostics of Colo Spgs
Vicky Bonato, Colo Spgs Internal Medicine
Kathy Bosche, CMM, Colo Hearing & Balance
Patti Boughton, Oak Springs Family Medicine
Jae Brinkmeier, Peak Gastroenterology
Tracie Broome, CMM, Colo Spgs Neurological Associates
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Debbie Carlson, CMM, Women's Associates
Linda Cisco, RN, Interventional Pain Mgmt
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Cindy Holdt, Pikes Peak Cardiology

Sharma Holst, CMM, Colorado Springs Orthopaedic Group
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Bridget Pieffer, CMM, Matthews-Vu Medical Group
Cyndie Pluid, CMM, Intermountain Foot and Ankle Associates, PC
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Suzanne Roelof, CMM, Mtn View Medical Group
Celine Ruiz, Women's Associates, PC
Patricia Scott, MA, Matthews-Vu Medical Group
Betty Smith, CMM, Dr. Steven Murk
AJ Stephenson, Assoc in Gastro & Endo Center
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Kevin Watson, Colo Otolaryngology Associates.
Rich West, Front Range Orthopaedics
Jill York, North Springs OB/GYN
Arlene Zimmerman, CMC, Colo Spgs Family Practice.

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 "We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails."

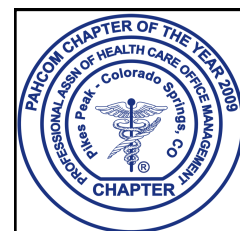
-Bertha Calloway, Founder of the Great Plains Black Museum

**Together we can reach great heights. !!!!!**

**If you know of others who would benefit by being a member of Pikes Peak Professional Association of Health Care Office Management invite them to one of our meetings.**

### 6 Ways to Bury a Good Idea

1. It will never work
2. We can't afford it
3. We've never done it that way before
4. We're not ready for it
5. It's not our responsibility
6. We're doing fine without it



## PP PAHCOM SPONSORS

Sincere thanks to all of our Corporate Sponsors whose sponsorship allows us to bring quality programs to our PP PAHCOM members.

**Our newest sponsor s are Agilize, CareMed Billing, Carr Healthcare Realty, ENT Federal Credit Union, Physician Sales and Service , Pikes Peak Hospice and Palliative Care, Servant Medical Imaging, and Shred-it**

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Phone: 719-634-3766  
Email: [julies@creditservicecompany.com](mailto:julies@creditservicecompany.com)

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Amy Wilson  
7110 Campus Dr. CSC 80920  
Phone: 719-550-6448  
Email: [awilson@ent.com](mailto:awilson@ent.com)

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Danie Kooch  
2420 E. Pikes Peak Ave CSC 80909  
Phone: 719-365-5245  
Email: [dana.kooch@memhospcs.org](mailto:dana.kooch@memhospcs.org)

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Phone: 719-432-6000  
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Jayne Lee  
6140 Tutt Blvd, CSC 80922  
Phone: 719-380-7226  
Email: [jayne.lee@servantmedical.com](mailto:jayne.lee@servantmedical.com)

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Brian Wagner  
102 S. Tejon St, # 750, CSC 80903  
Phone: 719-955-2000

Email: [bwagner@sierracre.com](mailto:bwagner@sierracre.com)

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Phone: 866-882-4552

Email: [medmarketing@highlandgrp.com](mailto:medmarketing@highlandgrp.com)

#### Vectra Bank

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111 South Tejon, # 103, CSC 80909  
Phone: 719-575-6405

Email: [randy.wilcher@vetrabank.com](mailto:randy.wilcher@vetrabank.com)

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Jay McKeown  
90 S. Cascade, Ste 200  
Colorado Springs, CO 80903  
Phone: 719-577-5581

Email: [jay.mckeown@wellsfargo.com](mailto:jay.mckeown@wellsfargo.com)

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Trish Frandsen  
5755 Mark Dabling Blvd, # 101 CSC  
80919 Phone: 719-630-7500

Email: [Trishf@wsijobs.com](mailto:Trishf@wsijobs.com)

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4595 Hilton Pkwy, #210, CSC 80907  
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10075 W. Colfax Ave,  
Lakewood, CO 80215  
Phone: 877-271-2645

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Doug Wilson  
3641 Star Ranch Rd, CSC 80906  
Phone: 719-576-4122  
Email: [dwilson@elkcreekcomputers.com](mailto:dwilson@elkcreekcomputers.com)

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Tracy Scranton  
205 N. Elizabeth, Ste 120  
Pueblo, CO 81003  
Phone: 719-375-9702

Email:

[Tracy@mobilerecordshredders.com](mailto:Tracy@mobilerecordshredders.com)

#### Pikes Peak Hospice & Palliative Care

Sue Minero  
825 E. Pikes Peak Ave, CSC 80903  
Phone: 719-200-4303

Email:

[sminero@pikespeakhospice.org](mailto:sminero@pikespeakhospice.org)

#### UMB Bank of Colorado

Cheryl Murphy  
730 Citadel Dr. E, CSC 80909  
Phone: 719-597-0170

Email: [CherylMurphy@umb.com](mailto:CherylMurphy@umb.com)

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Melanie Stahl  
120 E. Las Animas St, CSC 80903  
Phone: 719-471-3666

Email: [mel@applecoredesign.com](mailto:mel@applecoredesign.com)

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3522 N. Cascade Ave., CSC 80918  
Phone: 719-260-7570

Email: [Byron@aspenresource.com](mailto:Byron@aspenresource.com)

#### Commercial Cleaning Technicians

Greg Willis  
415 N. Union, CSC 80909  
Phone: 719-633-2233

Email: [cctpatti@msn.com](mailto:cctpatti@msn.com)

#### Frontier Business Products

Lowell Vine  
945 E. Fillmore St., CSC 80907  
Phone: 719-630-8725

Email: [fbplvine@vw-du.net](mailto:fbplvine@vw-du.net)

#### HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hosp.

Lisa Hutton  
325 Parkside Dr CSC 80910  
Phone: 719-630-7371

Email:

[lisa.hinton@healthsouth.com](mailto:lisa.hinton@healthsouth.com)

#### Hold the Phone

Bob Bosche  
906 Ellston Ct., Ste B, CSC 80907  
Phone: 719-235-7838

Email: [bob@hold-phone.com](mailto:bob@hold-phone.com)

#### PJ Promotions

Pam Franz  
3440 Youngfield St Box 118  
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033

Phone: 303-929-1230

Email: [pjpromotions@comcast.net](mailto:pjpromotions@comcast.net)

Pikes Peak Chapter of the  
Professional Association of Health Care  
Office Management  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Who to Contact:

Corporate Liaison, Debbie Carlson, CMM 632-8118  
Membership, Susan Ogden, CMM 634-1532  
President-elect, Stephen Johanns, CMM 578-5176  
Secretary, Kathy Bosche, CMM 442-6984  
Treasurer, Lori Trivelli, CMM 475-5065  
President, Janet Burch, CMM 955-7240

**Sharing Knowledge in Health Care Management**

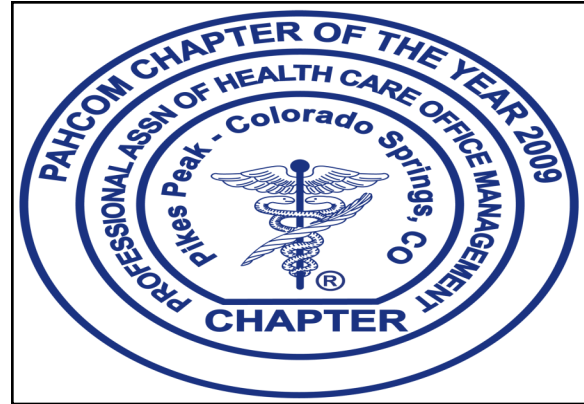
**PP PAHCOM News and Events**

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**Wednesday, April 7, 2010 8:00 –10:00 a.m.**  
**Memorial Administrative Center (Monarch Rm)**  
Tim Johnson, Executive Director, Castle Rock Medical Group presents *"A Detailed Look at CMS Program Integrity"*. Learn about CMS audits and appeals, payment criteria, evidence-based coverage, RAC audits, PSCs, ZPICs, and fraud & abuse.

**Friday, April 16, 2010 7:00–8:00 a.m.**  
**Memorial Administrative Center (Monarch Rm)**  
The Breakfast Club will host the first of two semi-annual meetings with representatives from local schools and colleges. Interested in hosting an extern? Join us and learn about programs, curriculum, skills and standards.

**Friday, April 23, 2010 7:00-8:00 a.m.**  
**Memorial Administrative Center (Durango Rm)**  
It's PAHCOM CMM Jeopardy! Help our CMM candidates prepare with their final study session—Jeopardy-style! Show your support and cheer them on. Test your knowledge, too! Candidates take the exam on Saturday, April 24th at 8:00 a.m. at the Pyramid Room, Memorial Hospital.

**Thursday May 20, 2010 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**  
**Clarion Hotel, I-25 & Bijou**  
Author and consultant Frank Cohen, MIT Solutions, Inc., shares secrets of practice efficiency in these days of tough economic times. We've explored ways to improve revenue and we've cut expenses. Now our cost savings must come in the form of efficiency. If you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it! Look for the brochure in April. **Save the date for this all-day event!!!**



**PEAK NEWS**

Volume 9, Issue 1 January thru March 2010

**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**  
**WWW.PIKESPEAKPAHCOM.COM**  
**BE SURE TO VISIT THE MEMBERS ONLY PAGE!**

PP PAHCOM relies on several communication channels. In addition to our web site, newsletters, and member e-mails, we enjoy professional relationships with members of the local and regional health care community. The El Paso County Medical Society, Colorado Medical Society, COPIC, Memorial Hospital, and MDNews have been especially generous with their resources in marketing our events. To these very special friends, our heartfelt thanks!

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Share The Knowledge

It is a known fact that PP PAHCOM managers are creative. Each of us works diligently to make our organizations more efficient, save time and money, develop new business, and satisfy patients. There are great health care management ideas out there, and we want you to share what you're doing. Here's the format. Include your name, your organization's name, and describe your management tip in 300–500 words. Explain the issue or problem you identified, the steps you took to resolve the issue or problem, and the outcome of your actions. Submit your completed tip in Word format to Editor, pppahcomnews@aol.com, subject " PP PAHCOM Management Tip".

Submit your management tip to PP PAHCOM. If we publish your tip, not only will your colleagues benefit from your experience, you could win a \$50 gift certificate!