

**2009 New Jersey Health Policy Conference**  
**“More is Not Better: Improving Value in New Jersey Health Care”**

*Hosted by Rutgers Center for State Health Policy (CSHP) with  
funding provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*

**October 15, 2009**  
**Conference Bios**

**Richard J. Baron, M.D., F.A.C.P.**

Richard Baron practices general internal medicine at Greenhouse Internists, P.C., a five doctor group located 3 blocks from where he lives in the Mt. Airy section of Philadelphia. Greenhouse serves an economically and racially diverse community and provides over 16,000 patient encounters per year. The practice has been a pioneer in the comprehensive adoption of Electronic Health Records in the small practice environment. Dr. Baron served as Chief Medical Officer of Health Partners, a not for profit Medicaid HMO set up by 4 teaching hospitals in Philadelphia, from 1988 to 1996. He was the architect of the Best Clinical and Administrative Practices program, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Center for Health Care Strategies, working with medical leadership of Medicaid health plans around the country in learning collaboratives to improve the quality of care for their members. This program reached plans serving over half the Medicaid Managed care population in the U.S.

Dr. Baron received his A.B. in English from Harvard, his M.D. from Yale, did house staff training at NYU-Bellevue and served a 3 year obligation in the National Health Service Corps in rural Tennessee. He became a member of the NCQA Standards Committee in January, 2005 and became Chair of the American Board of Internal Medicine in July 2008.

**Jeffrey Brenner, M.D.**

Dr. Jeffrey Brenner, M.D. is a family physician who has worked in Camden, NJ, one of the poorest city in the country, for the past 10 years. For five years he owned and operated a solo-practice, urban family medicine office which provided full-spectrum family health services to a largely Hispanic, Medicaid population. Dr. Brenner attended Robert Wood Johnson Medical School where he helped start HIPHOP, the school's community outreach program. He completed a Family Medicine residency at the Swedish Health Center in Seattle, Washington. Dr. Brenner is currently part-time faculty in the Department of Family Medicine at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and works at the Cooper Health System in Camden where he teaches medical students, is the faculty advisor for student community service projects, and conducts research on urban health conditions in Camden, NJ. His primary professional interest is ensuring that all families receive high quality, culturally competent, personalized family health care in urban, underserved communities. Dr. Brenner founded the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers, a non-profit organization committed to improving the quality,

capacity, and accessibility of the healthcare delivery system in Camden. The organization operates a Citywide Care Management Project targeting "super utilizers" of the local emergency rooms and hospitals and Primary Care Capacity Building Project assisting local primary care offices. He is currently the Medical Director for the project.

## **Pamela S. Dickson, M.B.A.**

Pamela S. Dickson, M.B.A., deputy director for the Health Care Group, views the Foundation's role as "making change rather than making grants" and using its unique vantage point to leverage resources that can improve health and health care nationwide. She praises its focus on developing new strategies and partnerships to meet targeted health care challenges. Previously the team leader for RWJF's Disparities and Coverage Teams, Dickson's program activities have focused on increasing access and quality of care for all Americans, with a particular emphasis on reducing racial and ethnic disparities. She believes the Foundation can be a catalyst for "making connections between forces, people and groups in a way that no other sector can do."

Before joining the Foundation in 1997, Dickson held several senior positions in New Jersey state government. In one of these roles, she served as assistant commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health, supervising the state's all-payer hospital rate-setting system and the health planning program. She describes the process of implementing the rate-payer initiative as an exciting challenge in containing hospital costs while increasing access to care and providing incentives for efficiency to the state's hospitals. As director of health care reform initiatives, she worked closely with the governor's office, the Department of Health, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Insurance to implement New Jersey's 1993 Health Care and Insurance Reform Legislation.

Dickson has held positions as a member of the board of directors of the National Association of Health Data Organizations and of the Access for the Uninsured Steering Committee of the National Academy for State Health Policy.

She earned an M.B.A. in health care administration from the Wharton School of Business in Philadelphia and a B.S. in education from Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pa. She and her husband, Don, a retired educator who works with a homeless project in Philadelphia, live in West Windsor, N.J. They have two adult children.

## **Katherine Grant-Davis**

Currently, Ms. Grant-Davis is the President and CEO of the New Jersey Primary Care Association (NJPCA). The NJPCA is a non-profit corporation that represents the Federally Qualified Health Centers within the State of New Jersey. These health centers are the major providers of comprehensive community based primary health care within the state and have been for the last 30 years. There are 19 centers in New Jersey that operate 95 sites throughout the state. They provide care to approximately 346,000 patients in New Jersey. Under the leadership of Ms. Grant-Davis, these health centers are widely known around the state of New Jersey as providers of quality comprehensive care to thousands of uninsured and underinsured individuals.

Prior to that, Ms. Grant-Davis was the Chief of Staff for the New Jersey Department of Health. She oversaw the development of the New Jersey Business Group on Health, and the

development of new private funding initiatives such as the Governor's Voluntary Pharmaceutical Initiative. She was also the Director of Payment and Health Care Delivery for the Health Industry Manufacturers Association (HIMA) in Washington, D.C. HIMA is a national trade organization of more than 300 corporations engaged in the manufacture of medical devices, pharmaceuticals, diagnostic products, and health care information systems. Some of HIMA's member companies are Abbott Laboratories, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Dupont, and Hewlett Packard.

Other key experience: Assistant Director and Acting Director of the NJ DRG Hospital Reimbursement Program, Director of the NJ WIC Program; and Project Director for Title XX Implementation.

In 2005, Ms Grant-Davis was named as co-chair for Governor Jon Corzine's Department of Health and Senior Services Transition Team. Also, Ms. Grant-Davis was named to Governor James McGreevey's Transition Team for the Department of Human Services in 2000. She was also selected as one of the 100 Most Influential New Jerseyans by the City News in 1999.

Ms. Grant-Davis remains active with many organizations such as Jack and Jill of America, The Links, the March of Dimes, National Association of Community Health Centers, and the United States Swimming Organization. Both of her children were Junior Olympic swimmers and both received swimming scholarships to Division I universities. She and her husband Dr. Lansing Davis reside in Bucks County Pa.

### **Nicolette Highsmith, M.P.A.**

Nikki Highsmith is senior vice president for program at the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS). Ms. Highsmith leads CHCS' quality, measurement and improvement collaboratives, working with state Medicaid agencies, health plans, providers and consumer organizations. She also spearheads the development of public/private regional improvement programs.

Ms. Highsmith has significant experience in Medicaid, both as a state purchaser and a federal budget official, working previously as the deputy director of the Medicaid Managed Care Program for the state of Massachusetts. She was also a senior Medicaid analyst at the Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, in Washington, D.C.

Ms. Highsmith holds a master's degree in public administration from American University, and a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Texas.

### **Aline M. Holmes, R.N., A.P.N.C., M.S.N.**

Aline Holmes is the senior vice president for clinical affairs at the New Jersey Hospital Association in Princeton. In this position she is responsible for assuring that clinical and professional matters impacting NJHA's members are addressed proactively and for providing leadership in advancing specific NJHA initiatives and on-going efforts in practically all areas pertaining to healthcare. She is also the Director of the NJHA Institute for Quality & Patient Safety, where she has worked with hospitals, post-acute care facilities and home health agencies on a variety of initiatives to improve quality of care and patient safety for New Jersey residents. Some of these include a statewide collaborative to improve the quality of care in N. J. intensive care units and another one focused on preventing pressure ulcers in the elderly across multiple healthcare settings. Currently she is directing initiatives to improve heart

failure care for minority populations, improve end of life care for patients in the intensive care unit and improve perinatal care in NJ hospitals. She has been and is currently a principal investigator/project director on several patient safety improvement initiatives, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey.

After completing her undergraduate work at the University of Massachusetts in nursing, Aline served in the U. S. Navy Nurse Corps. She received her M. S. N. from the Catholic University of American in Washington, DC, and worked as a nursing administrator in hospitals in Washington, DC and Chicago before moving to New Jersey. She has held positions as vice president, patient care services, and chief operating officer/chief nursing officer of a multi-hospital system, as well as advanced practice nurse. She has worked in long term care and in managed care, and has held faculty appointments in N. J., Chicago and Washington, DC. She is a Senior Scholar in the Department of Health Policy at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia.

Aline speaks locally and nationally on patient safety and nursing and is a member of many professional associations. She serves on several boards and is active with a foundation devoted to children in the Camden and Philadelphia area.

## **Heather Howard, J.D.**

On November 29, 2007, Governor Jon S. Corzine nominated Heather Howard to be the 14th Commissioner of the Department of Health and Senior Services. She was confirmed as Commissioner by the Senate on January 8, 2008.

An attorney, Howard comes to the post with 15 years of policy experience at the state and federal levels. She has expertise in the areas of children and family issues, women's health, hospital and physician regulation, health programs for vulnerable populations, and efforts to expand health insurance coverage. She also has litigated health industry antitrust matters.

Before her nomination as Commissioner, Howard was Governor's Corzine's Policy Counsel for two years. She advised on all policy issues and directed the policy staff. She worked closely with the Governor's Commission on Rationalizing Healthcare Resources, a group studying the state's financially stressed health care delivery system, and played a key role in the successful effort to protect NJ FamilyCare, the state's health insurance program for low-income children and families, from federal cuts.

From 2001 to 2006, Howard worked in Washington, D.C., for then-Senator Corzine. She served as Legislative Counsel, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Planning, and finally as Chief of Staff. Howard advised the Senator on policy development, legislative strategy, constituent services, communications and personnel. She worked on legislation to expand access to prenatal care, increase federal funding to New Jersey health care providers, and protect the state's Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled program when the federal Medicare prescription program was implemented.

Before joining the Corzine staff, Howard worked in the White House where she served as Associate Director of President Bill Clinton's Domestic Policy Council, and Senior Policy Adviser to First Lady Hillary Clinton.

Howard earned her J.D. *cum laude* from New York University School of Law. Following law school, she served a judicial clerkship with Judge Martha Craig Daughtrey of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Howard was then accepted into the U.S. Department of Justice's

Honors Program, where she worked as a trial attorney in the Antitrust Division's Health Care Task Force.

From 1990 to 1994, she was legislative assistant and policy adviser to Congresswoman Nita Lowey of New York.

Howard also earned a B.A. *cum laude* in History and Spanish from Duke University. She lives in Princeton with her husband and son.

## **Fred M. Jacobs, M.D., J.D.**

Fred M. Jacobs, M.D., J.D. is an Executive Vice President for the Saint Barnabas Health Care System and Director of the Saint Barnabas Quality Institute. He is the former Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services appointed by Acting Governor Richard J. Codey in December 2004 and reappointed by Governor Jon S. Corzine in 2006. Among many initiatives taken by Dr. Jacobs during his tenure as Commissioner was an important role in the enactment of the New Jersey Smoke Free Air Act signed by Governor Codey in January 2006. He also led major statewide initiatives for management of childhood asthma, diabetes and childhood obesity as well as avoidance of second hand smoke exposure by children in homes and cars.

Dr. Jacobs was appointed to the New Jersey State Board of Medical Examiners by then Governor Thomas Kean in 1989 and was reappointed by Governor James Florio in 1993. He served as President of the Board from 1993 to 1995.

Dr. Jacobs received his bachelor's degree from Colgate University and his M.D. Degree from the University of Miami School of Medicine where he was elected to the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society. He trained in internal medicine at Maimonides Medical Center and Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City and completed a pulmonary research fellowship at the University of California, San Francisco Medical Center and a Chief Residency in pulmonary disease at Kings County Hospital Center in New York. He is Board Certified in both Internal Medicine and Pulmonary Disease. He is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians, the American College of Chest Physicians and the American College of Legal Medicine.

In 1969, he joined the staff at Saint Barnabas Medical Center in New Jersey where he has been Chief of Pulmonary Disease, Medical Director of the Intensive Care Unit and was elected President of the Medical Staff in 1987. Subsequently, he became Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs at Saint Barnabas Medical Center, and later, Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs for the Saint Barnabas Health Care System.

Dr. Jacobs has also held many faculty positions, including Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, New Jersey Medical School. In 1990, Dr. Jacobs graduated from Rutgers University School of Law in Newark, New Jersey and is admitted to the Bar of the States of New Jersey and Florida. Among the honors and awards received by Dr. Jacobs are the University Medal for Distinguished Leadership of the University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey and the Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Citizens Award of the Edward J. Ill Excellence in Medicine Foundation.

## **Christopher Koller, M.A., M.P.P.M.**

Mr. Koller became Rhode Island's first Health Insurance Commissioner in March 2005. The Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner is responsible for health insurance consumer protection, the financial solvency of RI's domestic health insurers, the fair treatment of providers by insurers and directing health insurers towards policies that improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of RI's health care system. In this role, Mr. Koller also coordinates the health policy agenda of the Administration of Governor Donald Carcieri and is on the faculty of the Program in Public Health at Brown University. Prior to this position Mr. Koller was the CEO of Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, a nationally recognized community health center-based Medicaid health plan. In this role he was the founding Chair of the Association of Community Affiliated Plans (ACAP). Mr. Koller has a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College and Master's degrees in Management and Religion from Yale University.

## **Douglas McCarthy, M.B.A.**

Douglas McCarthy, M.B.A., president of Issues Research, Inc., in Durango, Colorado, is senior research adviser to The Commonwealth Fund. He supports The Commonwealth Fund Commission on a High Performance Health System's scorecard project, conducts case studies of high-performing organizations, and is a contributing editor to the bimonthly newsletter *Quality Matters*. His 25-year career has spanned research, policy, operations, and consulting roles for government, corporate, academic, and philanthropic organizations. He has authored and coauthored reports and peer-reviewed articles on a range of health care-related topics. A *Chartbook on the Quality of Health Care in the United States*, coauthored with Sheila Leatherman, was named by AcademyHealth as one of 20 core books in the field of health outcomes. Mr. McCarthy received his bachelor's degree with honors from Yale College and a master's degree in health care management from the University of Connecticut. During 1996–1997, he was a public policy fellow at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

## **Wardell Sanders, J.D.**

As President of the New Jersey Association of Health Plans, Ward leads the state trade association that represents all nine of the major health plans in New Jersey, including the five Medicaid health plans. He became President in October of 2006, after serving as Vice President for seven months.

Prior to coming to the NJAHP in February of 2006, Ward served for 15 years in State government positions. Most recently, Ward was the Executive Director of the New Jersey Individual Health Coverage ("IHC") Program Board and the New Jersey Small Employer Health Benefits ("SEH") Program Board, the two State agencies charged with regulating the individual and small group health benefits markets, which covered about one million New Jersey residents.

Ward began his State service as a Deputy Attorney General in the New Jersey Division of Law representing the New Jersey Department of Insurance (now Department of Banking and Insurance), the SEH Board, and the IHC Board. He has been closely involved with New Jersey's health coverage reform programs since their formation in early 1993. Ward participated in a number of inter-governmental health coverage projects and was a member of Steering Committee Member of the New Jersey State Planning Grant under a grant provided by

the Federal Health Resources and Services Administration. As President of the NJAHP, he was appointed by Governor Corzine to both the Mandated Health Benefits Advisory Commission and the Health Care Access Study Commission, and by Senator Codey to the Medical Care Availability Task Force.

Ward has been a frequent speaker at national conferences sponsored by such entities as Academy Health, the Alliance for Health Reform, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the National Academy of State Health Policy, and the Urban Institute.

Ward is a 1991 graduate of the Villanova University School of Law, where he was an editor of the *Villanova Environmental Law Journal* and was the student commencement speaker. Ward is also a 1984 graduate of Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he received his BA in Government.

From 1984 to 1988, prior to earning his law degree, Ward worked in Washington, D.C. for the International Center, a human rights and foreign policy research organization.

Ward lives in Lambertville, New Jersey, with his wife and two children. Since January 1, 2008, Ward has served on Lambertville's City Council; he also has served on the city's Environmental Commission.

## **Bruce Siegel, M.D., M.P.H.**

Dr. Bruce Siegel is a Research Professor and Director of the Center for Health Care Quality in the Department of Health Policy at the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services. There he oversees the Aligning Forces for Quality initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Much of his work has sought to measure and improve the quality of health care received by Americans, with a focus on its most vulnerable populations. His contributions have included developing innovation in reducing crowding and improving hospital patient flow, eliminating ethnic and racial disparities in care, and supporting the safety net. Dr. Siegel's research projects have included work with the Commonwealth Fund, the California Endowment, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the District of Columbia and others on quality and equity.

Dr. Siegel has previously held the positions of New Jersey Commissioner of Health, President of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation and President of Tampa General Healthcare. In addition, he served as a Director of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, as a Senior Fellow at New School University, and as an advisor to the Institute of Medicine, the World Bank, hospitals, hospital associations, philanthropies, county and state governments, and pharmaceutical firms. He is a member of the Board of Stewardship Trustees of Catholic Health Initiatives.

Dr. Siegel received his A.B. degree from Princeton University, M.D. from Cornell University Medical College, and M.P.H. from the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. He is board certified in Preventive Medicine. He has written and spoken extensively on health care management, policy and public health issues. He and his wife, Dr. Maura Cooper, reside with their two daughters in Bethesda, Maryland.

## **Christine A. Stearns, M.S., J.D.**

Christine Stearns is a policy expert on health insurance and legal issues for the New Jersey Business & Industry Association. She staffs the Health Affairs Committee and the Legal Affairs Committee.

She serves on numerous State boards which regulate various aspects of New Jersey's healthcare system, including: Health Care Administration Board (HCAB), the Individual Health Coverage Program, the Small Employer Health Benefits Program, Council on Mental Health Stigma and the Health Care Access Study Commission. She also serves as co-chair of the Health Care Payer's Coalition, a non-profit PPO. In 2005, Governor Jon S. Corzine asked her to co-chair the Governor's Health Care and Senior Service Policy Group, which advised the Governor during the transition.

Ms. Stearns is an attorney with extensive political and legislative experience. She began her career as legislative aide for the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders, where she focused on environmental issues. Ms. Stearns also served as the Director of Legislative Affairs for the New Jersey Retail Merchants Association while earning a master's degree from Rutgers University.

Ms. Stearns then joined Princeton Public Affairs, the State's largest contract lobbying firm. She was responsible for working with a wide array of clients to develop and implement legislative and regulatory strategies. Ms. Stearns exhibited a strong ability to plan and implement grassroots campaign, managing several successful coalitions.

Ms. Stearns has also played significant roles in statewide campaigns. Most notably, she served as the Director of Women's Outreach for 2001 Victory, affiliated with the Statewide Democratic ticket for the 2001 election. She was also director of Surrogate Scheduling for the 2002 Lautenberg for Senate campaign.

Ms. Stearns is an active member of several women's organizations and community groups. She is a board member on the Women's Political Caucus of New Jersey and chairs the Board of PAM's List, a prominent political action committee.

A graduate of Douglass College, Ms. Stearns received her Juris Doctorate from Rutgers School of Law-Camden, and a master's degree in Public Policy from the Eagleton Institute of Politics. Ms. Stearns is a member of the bar in New Jersey.

## **Alfred F. Tallia, M.D., M.P.H.**

Dr. Alfred F. Tallia received his B.S. in biological sciences from Fordham University (*phi beta kappa, magna cum laude*) and his M.D. from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. He completed his residency and fellowship in family medicine at Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, and received his M.P.H. in healthcare organization and administration jointly from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) and Rutgers University. He is Professor and Chair of the Department of Family Medicine of the UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. In 2002 he was named a Master Educator by UMDNJ. A Board certified family physician, he is founding director of the health policy fellowship and chairs strategic planning for the medical school. His research focuses on the organization and quality of primary care in the healthcare system. He is a member of the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, and the American Academy of Family Physicians' Center for Research in Family Medicine and Primary Care, one of three nationally funded research centers. As a member of the board and

several committees of the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME), he has engaged in development and oversight of competency assessment requirements for physicians in the United States. He has chaired the governing committee of the United States Post Licensure Assessment System, a joint operation of the NBME and Federation of State Medical Boards, and the Committee to Evaluate the USMLE Program, the national group that recently recommended substantive changes to the United States Medical Licensing Examination. In 2009, he conceptualized and initiated the creation of Robert Wood Johnson Partners<sup>®</sup>, the integrated delivery system affiliated with the medical school. He serves on the executive committee of the Washington based Patient Centered Primary Care Collaborative, the coalition of payors, providers, and consumers advancing healthcare reform.

Prior to becoming Chair, he served as Vice Chair and associate director of research, during which time he helped foster growth of the department's research. The department now ranks among the top public schools in NIH funding. Earlier, as the department's director of graduate medical education, he led the development of the medical school's flagship New Brunswick based residency, widely recognized for providing innovative community based training for family physicians. During that time, he won the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Research Award for the landmark study (*Academic Medicine* 1994) that demonstrated family medicine residencies reduce patient care costs for hospitals and the healthcare system. He chairs strategic planning and has co-chaired the quality committee for the school's Robert Wood Johnson Medical Group, and served as chief executive of the Family Practice Center Corporation, a large multi-site, university primary care practice. The author of a popular medical review textbook in its 6<sup>th</sup> edition, and multiple abstracts, book chapters, and publications, he has been Principal or Co-Principal Investigator of grants funded by three NIH institutes, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Public Health Service, all focused on primary care quality of care, organization, and function. He has received direct grant dollars of more than \$12,000,000 as PI and Co-PI. He maintains an active medical practice in New Brunswick, caring for multi-generational, multiethnic families drawn from the academic and local communities of central New Jersey.