



# DENVER MEDICAL BULLETIN

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## Governor Ritter’s Health Care Plan *The Colorado Health Plan*

Colorado’s new governor, Bill Ritter, has elevated health care reform to a priority for his administration and the people of Colorado. Last month the **Denver Medical Bulletin** outlined the steps Colorado physicians have taken to ensure their participation in this dialogue. This month we are publishing Governor Ritter’s “Colorado Health Plan”. Physicians should be cautiously optimistic that Colorado’s new leadership is seriously addressing the challenges facing our health care system and empowering physician leadership.

**H**ealth care costs are spiraling out of control, straining the budgets of Colorado businesses, families and individuals. More than 788,000 Coloradans lack health insurance – a number that grows every year and includes approximately 180,000 children.

Many Colorado businesses, particularly small businesses, are struggling to provide health insurance to their employees while still maintaining their competitive edge. Some businesses have delayed hiring or investment decisions because of escalating health care costs. Other businesses have reluctantly decided to stop offering health insurance to their employees. Employees are worried about their health care security, concerned that their employers will no longer provide coverage or will shift so much of the cost onto their shoulders that they will find it unaffordable.

Quite simply, our health care system is broken, and

this crisis will not be fixed by tinkering around the edges and making only small incremental changes. Solving this crisis is central to fulfilling the Colorado Promise. It will be one of my top priorities. I will work to make some immediate changes that will help improve access and lower costs. More importantly, I will embark on a year-long process to develop a Colorado Health Plan. I will work with all stakeholders to increase access and availability, improve quality and contain costs. Every resident of Colorado is a stakeholder, and everyone will play a part in the solution, including leading healthier lifestyles and making smarter decisions.

### The Colorado Health Plan

As Governor, I will lead an effort to bring all parties together to develop the Colorado Health Plan. The Plan will improve health care access, quality and affordability and promote healthy lifestyle choices. The process will be guided by eight fundamental principles:

- Basic health care should be available and accessible to all Coloradans.
- Health care for the 180,000 uninsured children should be an immediate priority.
- Health care should be affordable and financed in a cost-effective manner.
- High quality health care should be available and

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accessible regardless of geography.

- Health care reform must be developed collaboratively.
- Medicaid must become more efficient and effective.
- We should foster competition as a means to drive quality up and costs down.
- We all must take personal responsibility for our own health.

As Governor, I will provide strong leadership and bring together all stakeholders, including consumers, physicians, insurance companies, hospitals, device and drug companies, medical schools, large businesses, small businesses, unions and self-employed individuals.

I have already begun this process by meeting with dozens of people across the state who represent all aspects of the health care debate. I have listened to them and invited them to join me in working to solve our health care crisis. We know the complexities and magnitude of the problem. There is no "magic bullet" to fix all that is broken, but there is a path to a Colorado Health Plan that will improve access, quality and affordability. It will take a year to lead this development effort, and during this planning period there is much that can be done to improve care and reduce costs. My administration will address these action items from the first day we take office.

### **Making Health Care More Affordable**

While developing the Colorado Health Plan we will also move quickly to address rising costs. My plan addresses affordability in five areas:

**Containing Costs.** We can control costs for individuals, families and employers by:

- Leveraging the state's purchasing power to save money in the state budget.
- Joining a multi-state purchasing pool for pharmaceuticals and requiring state agencies to collaborate

when they purchase the same drugs and medical supplies.

- Improving the use of information technology.
- Combining the Massachusetts concept of a Health Insurance Connector with the idea of a "Small Group Enrollment Center" from a planning grant that Colorado received. This will create a single entry point to assist small businesses buying insurance. This would not be a purchasing pool, but would simplify the process of buying insurance for small businesses and individuals.

**Improving Medicaid.** Medicaid consumes over 20% of Colorado's general fund spending and offers a perfect opportunity for state government to lead by example. As Governor, I will:

- Quickly assess the loss of Medicaid managed care and work to establish new relationships with managed care organizations. Other states have demonstrated savings through Medicaid managed care while maintaining quality care.
- Aggressively work to fix the state's information technology infrastructure, including the troubled Colorado Benefits Management System (CBMS).
- Maximize the potential of the new Colorado Regional Health Information Organization to link providers with payers of health care electronically, including private insurers and Medicaid.
- Expand Medicaid disease management programs that reduce costs and improve quality.
- Re-establish the blue-ribbon commission that recently examined Colorado's long-term care system and issued 18 recommendations for making Colorado a national model for consumer choice and shifting care from institutions to home- and community-based programs. We must ensure that Medicaid-funded nursing home patients have advance directives in place, and that we are making full use

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**Denver Medical Bulletin:** Johnny E. Johnson, Jr., MD, DMS President and Publisher / Alan Y. Synn, MD, Chair of the Board / Nora E. Morgenstern, MD, President Elect / Randall M. Clark, MD, Treasurer / Kathy Lindquist-Kleissler, Executive Director / Barbara Kamerling, Program Director. The **Bulletin** is the official publication of the Denver Medical Society, established April 11, 1871, as the first medical society in the Rocky Mountain West. Published articles represent the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official policy of the Denver Medical Society. All correspondence concerning editorial content, news items, advertising and subscriptions should be sent to: The Editor, **Denver Medical Bulletin**, 1850 Williams Street, Denver, CO 80218. Phone (303) 377-1850. Fax (303) 331-9839. Web [www.denvermedsociety.org](http://www.denvermedsociety.org). Email: [dms@denvermedsociety.org](mailto:dms@denvermedsociety.org). Postmaster: Send address changes to 1850 Williams Street.

## Gov. Ritter's Plan

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of new federal dollars to help nursing home patients move back into the community if they desire and are able to do so.

- Purchase pharmaceuticals at a discounted rate through the federal 340B program when available.

**Focusing on Prevention.** The single best thing we can do to lower the long-term cost of health care is to focus far more on preventive care and wellness. As Governor, I will:

- Launch a "Strong Employees, Strong State" initiative to promote wellness at the worksite, particularly focusing on tobacco and obesity prevention.
- Create competition between local chambers of commerce to see who can engage the most local businesses in wellness activities. Arkansas has slowed the rate of obesity among children this way, and we can do even better in Colorado.
- Negotiate health insurance premium reductions for state employees who participate in a wellness program, expand hours of the State Employee Wellness center and challenge state employees and area businesses to compete in wellness activities.
- Expand chronic disease management programs in the state's Medicaid, S-CHIP and state employee health programs.

### Improving Accountability and Transparency

Too often, prices vary among health care facilities and providers, with no difference in outcome. Individuals and group purchasers of health care services should have the information they need to choose their sources of care wisely. We should expand transparency, and it should always be transparency with a purpose, focusing on data that can help improve quality and reduce costs. As Governor, I will:

- Support reporting efforts that make it easier for consumers to get information about patient safety, costs of care and quality of outcomes.
- Develop a website for physicians, hospitals and insurance providers to list their prices for common procedures.
- Use price and quality data in making purchasing decisions for state-funded health care such as Medicaid.
- Create a health outcomes report card through the developing Colorado Regional Health Information

Organization that is built on incentives for excellence. The report card would use data to report on population health indicators that can be tied to regional outcomes.

### Investing in Technology to Reduce Medical Errors

Medical errors in American hospitals, nursing homes and clinics represent a leading cause of death in the United States. We know from numerous studies that technology can dramatically reduce medical errors and in the process improve quality and reduce costs of care. As Governor, I will:

- Encourage work now underway to modernize the state's health information infrastructure. Colorado currently is one of nine states pushing ahead in this regard and has received federal and foundation grants to support the effort.
- Push for public-private partnerships to promote the wise use of technology to reduce medical errors, and work with major purchasers of health care to promote investment in health information technology.
- Promote regional health care quality collaborations to reduce costly medical errors and complications through better processes of care.

### Ensuring Access to Care & Coverage for All

We must begin moving toward a day when all Coloradans have health care coverage. The cost of the uninsured to society, businesses, families and individuals is significant. Here are several ways we can increase access and save money:

**Childhood Immunizations.** As Governor, I will ensure that Colorado becomes one of the 10 best states in the nation for childhood immunizations within two years by:

- Restoring accountability and leadership at the top.
- Improving participation in the Statewide Immunization Registry.
- Improving utilization of the Statewide Recall and Reminder System.
- Integrating mapping with our Immunization Registry to identify pockets of un-immunized children and then targeting those communities.
- Coordinating research and surveys about immunizations.
- Developing and disseminating educational vaccination materials.

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## Gov. Ritter's Plan

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**Child Health.** All of Colorado's children deserve a healthy start, including health insurance, a healthy lifestyle and a healthy family. It is unacceptable to have 180,000 uninsured children in Colorado. As Governor, I will:

- Ensure that all eligible children are enrolled in existing insurance programs such as S-CHIP and Medicaid.
- Work with our congressional delegation for full S-CHIP reauthorization and funding.
- Use tobacco tax revenue to insure as many children as possible.
- Fight childhood obesity by launching a Colorado Family Physical Activity Challenge, educating families on healthy lifestyles, promoting safe routes to schools that encourage more walking and creating a clearinghouse of all public and private grant opportunities to help communities start their own initiatives.
- Increase access to prenatal care to reduce Colorado's nearly 9% rate of low birth weight babies, one of the worst rates in the nation.
- Enhance preventive efforts to foster children's oral health. Oral health is critically important to the overall health and well-being of children. Left untreated, pain and infection caused by tooth decay can lead to problems in eating, speaking, and learning. Nationally, an estimated 51 million school hours are lost every year to dental-related illness.

**Maternity Care.** Colorado also ranks near the bottom in the number of women who seek care in the first trimester of pregnancy. As Governor, I will:

- Increase access to prenatal care by expanding publicly sponsored health care coverage.
- Prevent costly pregnancy complications by providing care coordination incentives to providers through state-funded health care programs, using models with a proven return on investment.
- Focus tobacco prevention and cessation efforts on pregnant women, and train health care providers to better help their pregnant patients quit.

**Establish a Small Business Health Insurance Team.** I will organize a Small Business Health Insurance Team of business owners and other stakeholders to devise

strategies for small business owners and their employees to access affordable health care.

**Rural Health.** Rural communities struggle to attract and retain providers, and patients often have difficulty reaching the care they need. As Governor, I will:

- Promote greater access to broadband and greater use of telemedicine, which can improve the ability of rural patients to receive health care when and where they need it.
- Build an adequate rural health provider workforce by supporting state-funded scholarship and loan forgiveness programs for rural providers.
- Ensure that the unique needs of rural providers are assessed and addressed before policy changes are enacted at the state level.

### Promoting Mental Health

Our minds are just as much a part of our health as our hearts. As Governor, I will:

- Invest in integrated community-based mental health services and focus on prevention measures such as proper medication and treatment. This will save money by reducing emergency room visits and correctional facility costs.
- Examine cost-effective programs that will save money in the long run, such as substance abuse prevention and early intervention for young people.
- Engage in a thorough review of our state's child welfare system to ensure our most vulnerable charges are receiving the care they need.
- Re-emphasize suicide prevention efforts. Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in Colorado and the second leading cause of death of Coloradans ages 10 to 34.
- Better integrate mental and physical health care.

### Conclusion

We cannot rely on Congress to fix our health care crisis. It is time for practical leadership to bring all parties together to develop a bold and sustainable health plan for Colorado. Fixing our broken health care system is a wise investment, not for the next election, but for the next generation and for the future of the state – for children, families, seniors and businesses. By making health and health care a priority, and with strong leadership, we can make Colorado the healthiest state in the nation.

## Denver Medical Library Toolbox

### Denver Medical Library Clinical Tools

The Denver Medical Library (DML) is one of the oldest and largest hospital-based libraries in Colorado and has been providing library services to Denver's medical community since 1893, when it was founded by the Denver Medical Society. Today, DML is operated by its own board of directors, whose members are appointed by the Denver Medical Society and the administration of Presbyterian/St. Luke's Medical Center. DML has now expanded its capabilities by offering instant access to digital archives of up-to-date data and medical information.

The Denver Medical Library serves physicians, employees, patients and family members, members of the Denver Medical Society and the Colorado Medical Society, and HealthONE employees. The Library houses more than 55,000 books and journals, including 450 current subscriptions. DML's computer network provides access to numerous resources as well as supporting internet-based email for all Library customers. Professional medical librarians are available for assistance during regular library hours.

### Family Health Library Tools

The Family Health Library was initiated in 1992 to provide support to patients and their family members. This collection houses nearly 2,000 items, including books, videos, consumer health magazines, and a fiction section. The FHL also distributes a wide variety of pamphlets and handouts. It provides access to health-related databases, internet-based email and photocopy and fax services. The Family Health Librarian develops health information packets tailored to the individual patient's or family member's specific need.

### Online Tools

#### Library Services

- Literature Searches
- Information Packets
- Document Delivery
- Interlibrary Loan
- Instruction/Training
- Computers with internet access, MS Office, APA Style template

### Print Resources

- Book and Journal collections support clinical medicine, nursing, most allied health fields, and healthcare administration.
- Historical collections include many titles from the early part of the 19th century.
- Shared online catalog includes materials from 11 health libraries in the Denver metropolitan area with reciprocal borrowing privileges at most.

### Electronic Resources

#### Databases

- Ovid Medline/PubMed
- Cinahl
- Cochrane EBM Reviews
- Health Business Full text
- Psychological & Behavioral
- Sciences Full text
- Regional Business News

#### Journals

- 300+ full text titles from Ovid's core medical, nursing, Lippincott collections
- 280+ full text titles from Ebsco's expanded medical and nursing collections
- Additional titles available from Health & Wellness Resource Center and other subscription databases

#### Clinical Combinations

- MCConsult
- SkolarMD
- UpToDate

Physicians are invited to help the DML to maintain its vast amount of medical archives and purchase future resources by making a contribution. The DML is a 501 (c)3 nonprofit corporation. Contributions to the Library are tax deductible. Ninety percent of each contribution is allocated to the Library's endowment fund to ensure its long-term survival, while ten percent is allocated to current acquisitions and operations.

The website is [www.denvermedlib.org](http://www.denvermedlib.org).



**Solo/Chamber Music Concert Series**

*Exempla-St. Joseph Hospital invites DMS physicians and guests to join them in a chamber music concert featuring Colorado Symphony Orchestra violinists.*

*Rainer Auditorium, Russell Pavilion  
Exempla-St. Joseph Hospital  
Tuesday, March 27, 2007*

*5:30 pm – Cocktails and Hors D’Oeuvres  
6:15 pm – Concert  
6:45 pm – Mingle with musicians, colleagues*

*Please RSVP to the Denver Medical Society  
at (303) 377-1850.*

## TDC Announces 2007 Patient Safety/Risk Management Seminars

*“Patient Safety and the Board of Medical Examiners”*

Wednesday, April 25, 6-8 PM  
Exempla-St. Joseph Hospital, Stern Elder Room

Saturday, November 3, 8 AM-noon  
Lowe’s Georgio Hotel  
(Seeking CME accreditation)

The Doctors Company has also announced an average 6.7% reduction in premium rates for Colorado policy holders effective January 1, 2007, for renewing policies. Depending on specialty and liability limits, some insureds could see premium reductions up to 25%.

“As the endorsed medical liability carrier of the DMS, TDC’s dedication to increasing patient safety is instrumental in providing physicians with the tools they need to be effective in reducing malpractice risks in their own practices,” said former DMS President David M. Charles, MD, Denver plastic surgeon and member of TDC’s Board of Governors.



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Website: [physiciancareers.kp.org](http://physiciancareers.kp.org)

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## MEETINGS & CONTINUING ED

April 1-4, 2007—**Pelvic Floor Disorders Symposium, A Multidisciplinary Approach.** Sponsored by Health ONE and Women’s Services at Rose. Kristinell Keil, MD, FACOG, FACS, Course Director. The meeting will focus on the latest diagnosis and treatment in female pelvic disorders including urinary incontinence, vaginal prolapse, fecal incontinence, defecatory dysfunction, sexual dysfunction and minimally invasive surgery. **CME sessions** are scheduled for early mornings and late afternoons, with opportunities for skiing and boarding in between. The HealthONE CMS Committee designates this educational activity for a maximum of **11 AMA PRA Category I Credits.** Sonnenalp Resort, Vail, CO. Register online at [www.rosemed.com](http://www.rosemed.com) or call (303) 320-7673 for registration information.

April 12-14, 2007—**27th Annual Medical Communications Conference.** Sponsored by the AMA. Keynote speakers will include: Julie Gerberding, MD, MPH, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Newt Gingrich, founder, Center for Health Transformation; Brian Duffy, Editor, U.S. News & World Report. **CME credit available.** Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay, Tampa, FL. For information call (312) 464-4582, or go to [www.ama-assn.org/go/mcc2007](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/mcc2007).

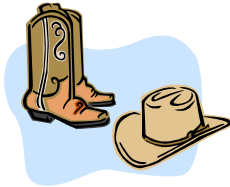
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Medical Societies Alliance**

invites

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Saturday evening, March 3, 2007



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