

# Visiting Nurse Sponsors Free Workshop on Healthcare Reform at Emory Midtown Hospital

"Remember that line, 'it's not your Daddy's Cadillac?'" Weyman Perry, Vice President, Business Development, Visiting Nurse / Hospice Atlanta, asked the 130 people attending the workshop "Healthcare Reform Nuts & Bolts: How the Changes Impact You and Your Patients."

"Well," he continued, "it's not your Daddy's healthcare any more either."

Visiting Nurse was the lead sponsor of the free, day-long event for healthcare professionals. Attendees included social workers, nurses, case managers, and discharge planners.

Other sponsors were Care Medical, Coram Specialty Infusion Services, Personal Care, and Sunrise Senior Living. The seminar, which offered 4 CEU hours, was held at Emory Midtown Hospital.

Organized by CEU Concepts, the workshop was well-received by the overflow crowd and inspired many spirited discussions. "We hope to do more seminars like this," says Perry. "There is definitely a need for them in this rapidly changing healthcare arena."

Adds Anne McSweeney, LMSW, President of CEU Concepts: "Clinicians are eager to know more about the new law, but the media covers only the most sensational aspects. At this workshop, clinicians learned the finer details and how they impact them and their patients."

The program featured a stellar line-up of speakers including Anton Gunn, MSW, Regional Director of Region IV Office of the US Department of Health and Human Services (Georgia is one of eight states in the Region); Cynthia Zeldin, Executive Director of Georgians for a Healthy Future;

Tim Sweeney, Senior Healthcare Analyst at Georgia Budget and Policy Institute; and a panel of legislators: Senators Renee Underman (R-Buford) and Curt Thompson (D-Tucker), and Reps. Valerie Clark (R-Lawrenceville), Pat Gardner (D-Atlanta) and Chuck Martin (R-Alpharetta).

The legislative panel's opinions on the Affordable Care Act were split fairly predictably along party lines. Underman expressed the hope that a change in the White House and Congress will result in a repeal of the Act, while Gardner and Thompson championed the new law. The five legislators agreed, however, that doctors and other medical providers should be paid higher rates under the Medicaid program.

Audience members asked about dental care, which many felt has not been adequately addressed by the Affordable Care Act, portability of insurance coverage, and insurance coverage for undocumented workers.

Gunn launched the day with an accessible and entertaining explanation of the Affordable Healthcare Act. He emphasized that it is the law and that his department is mandated to begin implementing the law as written until directed otherwise.



*Representative Valerie Clark (left) and Senator Renee Underman discuss the new healthcare law at a 1-day-long workshop for clinicians.*



*Weyman Perry, Visiting Nurse, welcomes seminar attendees.*



*(l-r) Representative Pat Gardner (D-Atlanta) and Valerie Clark (R-Lawrenceville); Senator Renee Underman (R-Buford); Representative Chuck Martin (R-Alpharetta) and Senator Curt Thompson (D-Tucker) gave their opinions on the new healthcare law.*

Zeldin provided in-depth information about insurance exchanges. According to her statistics, nearly two million Georgians are uninsured; one-fifth of the population. In raw numbers, only four states (CA, TX, FL, NY) have more uninsured people than Georgia. She explained the legislative issues; final legislation is expected in 2012 and if Georgia decides not to create an exchange, a federal exchange will be available for Georgia residents. Zeldin also pointed to primary care physician shortages in Georgia, particularly in rural areas, and the fact that Medicaid provider reimbursement rates are relatively low.

Sweeney provided valuable information on Medicaid in light of the new law. He

explained that Georgia is upgrading the antiquated Medicaid eligibility system: the state's FY 2012 budget includes a \$100 million bond to build a new eligibility system (90 percent federal funds). Children of state employees will now be eligible for Peach Care, and the state is embarking on efforts to "redesign" Medicaid.