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Today's News Thursday, June 25, 2009

United and Memorial Ink Contract

UnitedHealthcare and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center announced a contract, effective July 1, to add the hospital to the provider network for United and Oxford. The contract covers MSK's facilities in New York City, as well as its five outpatient facilities on Long Island and in Westchester County and in New Jersey.

Former NYU Exec Gone Hollywood

At least three new hospital-based TV dramas with a New York angle have hit the air this season. While some may debate the credibility of the drug-addicted Edie Falco character on *Nurse Jackie* or *Royal Pains'* cavorting Hamptons doctor, TNT's new show, *Hawthorne*, boasts serious hospital chops. Lead writer Glen Mazzara is a former NYU Medical Center administrator. In 1998, he had a management job in the NYU emergency department, capping 12 years in NYC hospitals. But he decided to take a chance and follow his screenwriting dream to the West Coast. He's found steady work, including writing for FX's *The Shield*, which also featured an emergency room nurse as a heroine. Adding to *Hawthorne's* hospital cred, the mother of its star, Jada Pinkett-Smith, was a nurse in Baltimore. In a recent interview, Ms. Pinkett-Smith lauds the series for not "portraying nurses as sex objects for doctors."

NJ Reps Want VA Hosp

A bipartisan group of New Jersey legislators is pushing for a new veterans' facility on the site of the recently closed Kessler Hospital in Hammonton, which is being used as an urgent care center by AtlantiCare, based in Atlantic City. But local lawmakers say it's a perfect place to put a V.A. hospital to accommodate South Jersey's growing numbers of Afghanistan and Iraq veterans. Those soldiers tend to have problems, including traumatic injuries and severe mental health issues, not addressed by the few clinics serving the region. Vets must travel to East Orange, N.J., Philadelphia; or even Delaware to receive such care. The initiative is led by Sen. Jeff Van Drew, D-Cape May, and Sen. Christopher Connors, R-Ocean County.

Senate turmoil undermines bills

It became clear yesterday that the legality of any bill passed in the evenly split New York state Senate is doubtful, so it becomes less important for key health care bills to appear on Gov. David Paterson's list of bills to be tackled during the Legislature's special sessions.

Many activists and lobbyists had initially panicked this week when they found that their bills weren't on the proclamation list. But a spokesman for Mr. Paterson says the list for bills requiring senators' attention wouldn't be issued "until they get back to work."

For the record, here is the status of two notable health care bills. Legislation to make Timothy's Law permanent made it on to the list, as did a bill extending health care coverage to young adults [A.9036 (Morelle)/S.6030 (Breslin)]. This bill, negotiated last Friday evening, replaces A.8401/S.5469, which included an age-rated provision strongly opposed by Health Care for All New Yorkers.

As of yesterday, there was no sign from the governor's list of the noncontroversial bill that would extend Cobra to 36 from 18 months. It passed in the Assembly as well as the Senate Insurance Committee. Also absent was the highly controversial prior-approval bill.

At a Glance

GIFT: A \$3 million gift from an anonymous donor will establish an endowed professorship and a fellowship position at the Columbia University Department of Psychiatry's division of child and adolescent psychiatry. The posts will make up the Clarice Kestenbaum Professorship of Education and Training. Dr. Kestenbaum was the division's director of training for 20 years.

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