

Health-care oracle tells hospitals to take a breather

San Francisco Business Times - by [Chris Rauber](#)

It may be too late logistically and politically, but iconoclast and health-care futurist Wanda Jones, of San Francisco's **New Century Healthcare Institute**, thinks California hospitals need a Plan B to replace what she sees as their willy-nilly rush to replace seismically unsafe facilities with replacements of the same general size and type.

Instead, she suggests they take a breather — using the economic downturn as a handy excuse — and rethink the whole process. Otherwise, Jones said in a recent New Century think piece, California will be burdened with huge construction projects it can't afford, and private health plans will be left, ultimately, holding the bag, since the state and federal governments won't be able to pitch in much to save the day.

Consumers will lose too, she writes, because debt service on these mammoth projects “could add several hundred dollars to a daily hospital bill,” and two or three times that figure for private insurers.

Her solution: Before building giant new acute-care hospitals, invest in new multi-specialty clinical institutes that include physicians' offices, related diagnostic and clinical services, and space to educate groups of patients with common chronic conditions. Sutter's **Palo Alto Medical Foundation** is probably the closest existing entity. “Face the building with a fitness center and a health cafe,” Jones suggests. “Add a medical hotel.” Support innovations, like remote monitoring of patients with wearable vital-signs monitors. Provide case management from the outset to patients with chronic ailments. Use the Internet to communicate with them.

Jones insists this model could cover “90 percent of what local residents need every year, month and week.”

Too good to be true? Lots of questions remain, including how to finance these institutes and circumvent state-mandated seismic rebuild deadlines. But worth a look; more later.

Kaiser moving ahead with San Mateo MOB

Kaiser Permanente's proposed new 64,700-square-foot medical office building at Franklin Parkway in San Mateo is headed into the environmental review process, after years on the drawing boards.

The new three-story MOB — Kaiser's terminology for a clinic and physician office building — will also feature a 300-space parking lot. Public comments are due no later than April 13, say city officials; after that, the Planning Commission will officially schedule a public hearing, now tentatively slated for April 14.

Kenneth Chin, San Mateo's associate planner, is handling the project for the city. The project, involving one of the last vacant parcels in the Bay Meadows I development area, had been moving quickly until it was delayed by Kaiser's systemwide review of construction projects, Chin said. That stopped progress for more than a year.

Linda Jensen, Kaiser's San Mateo area manager, said the new center will be more convenient for its roughly 40,000 enrollees nearby. It's expected to open in 2011, if OK'd by Kaiser's board.

Hither & Yon: Lumetra looks for new business; HWS inks deal

San Francisco-based Lumetra, which lost its longtime quality-improvement organization business for Medicare last November, says it's “firing on all cylinders” as it seeks new post-QIO opportunities.

CEO Linda Sawyer reports in the nonprofit company's monthly newsletter that it has 15 RFPs for new business “in the hopper” and is doing work for organizations such as the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, the Department of Managed Health Care, the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch of the California Department of Public Health and the Health Authority of Dubai.

Sawyer took over as CEO late last year, after Lumetra lost its longtime Medicare contract, worth an estimated \$20 million, under former leader Jo Ellen Ross. That represented a huge percentage of overall revenues, which totaled \$37 million in fiscal 2008.

San Francisco's **Health Workforce Solutions LLC** and **Allegory Inc.** recently signed a strategic partnership to offer training and management services to hospitals and health systems. It aims specifically at what the partners say is a “noticeable gap in leadership skills in the middle management ranks.”

David Cherner, HWS's managing partner, said the two will share revenue, but didn't share details. Cherner's consulting and research firm focuses on workforce issues in health-care organizations; Allegory, also based in San Francisco, provides leadership and communications training.

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