Health Services
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

July 29, 2009

Los Angeles County
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*To improve health through leadership, service and education.*

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: John F. Schunhoff, Ph.D.
Interim Director

SUBJECT: **NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF PATIENTS TREATED BY BOTH COUNTY AND PRIVATE HOSPITALS**

On June 30, 2009, the Board discussed Agenda Item No. 73 regarding the Health Information Technology Strategy. During the discussion, Supervisor Yaroslavsky requested that the Department of Health Services (DHS) report back to the Board with an assessment of the number and percentage of patients who are treated at County hospitals and also treated at private hospitals.

DHS is aware that some individuals treated at our facilities have previously been treated by private hospitals, because some patients have reported this information to the providers. However, any information reported by the patient regarding treatment at other facilities is typically only included in the narrative notes made by providers in the patient's medical record. It is currently impossible to precisely quantify those individuals because, although a few large providers have developed tracking systems within their closed networks, neither public nor private providers have systems that can track individuals that move between systems.

We can, however, estimate the number of DHS patients seen in private hospital emergency rooms. In the most recent Patient Assessment Survey (conducted in 2005), over 800 randomly-selected patients at DHS and PPP outpatient clinics were asked about their emergency room use. Nearly 25% of all patients interviewed indicated that they had sought care at an emergency room at least once during the past year. Of these, about 7% indicated that they had gone to an emergency room at a non-County hospital. This translates to about 10,000 patients using both DHS or PPP facilities and private hospital emergency rooms annually.

In the future, implementation of a health information exchange could allow for tracking of information about individuals treated by County and private hospitals.

Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

c: Chief Executive Officer
Acting County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

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