

Detroit entities scrap over health care contract

By Cornelius Fortune

Special to Sentinel-Voice

DETROIT (NNPA) — The Detroit Medical Center and Wayne State University's School of Medicine have been at odds for some time over the matter of \$12 million, but that's just a portion of the argument.

On one side, DMC's president and CEO, Mike Duggan, says the \$12 million is his right to take, according to Dr. Herbert C. Smitherman, WSU assistant dean of community and urban health.

Smitherman and his colleagues, Dr. Valerie M. Perisi, WSU School of Medicine, and Kenneth P. Lee, WSU associate dean of finance and administration, oppose Duggan's position.

In 2006, a term agreement signed between the two organizations stipulated payments to WSU of \$19 million for indigent care. The payments were established to support those WSU physicians. On Feb. 1, DMC reduced the payment by \$12 million (\$2 million from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and \$10 million from other specialties).

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DMC claims that the \$12 million is an overpayment and violates federal Stark and anti-kickback legislation. WSU disputes that claim.

"We provide \$50 million of free care. No other group in the state of Michigan provides that much," Smitherman said. "Of the \$50 million, \$19 million comes to us through this disproportionate share dollars. Another \$17 million comes from the state. Of the \$50 million we're covered by about \$36 million. Now we have \$23 million. It's a major blow to the under- and uninsured in Detroit."

This problem is more than just a difference of opinion, it touches the very lives of the

uninsured in the community.

Smitherman says 21 percent of the Detroiters are uninsured and 33 percent are underinsured (with Medicaid). Most of the uninsured receive primary care in the emergency room. Because of this, DMC and WSU combined see 75 percent of the uninsured in Detroit. Any reduction in funding is detrimental.

"We see more uninsured than Oakwood, St. John and Henry Ford combined," he said. "They don't carry as much of an uninsured burden and uncompensated care as

we do. Since we are so disproportionate, we have become the public hospital, but we have no public dollars."

The only real strategy is to work collaboratively with DMC to gain more funding from the state.

"I think we can go up to the legislators in unison and say we have a unified problem," Smitherman said. "It's not our fault, but we have a disproportionate burden of people who are without. We [have to] collaboratively come together and the state works with us to solve that problem."

Perisi said, "The longer you leave the uninsured and underinsured to fend for themselves in the emergency room and they don't get primary care, the worse the situation gets... It bleeds right over into everyone's premiums. That's what the legislators should be looking at: How can we have a hospital that's supported by our tax dollars? And then a series of primary care clinics, which is



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to really push out the much cheaper care which is preventive for people in their neighborhoods."

She says that the disagreement between DMC and the WSU School of Medicine will eventually hurt the university.

"This is a cumulative debt situation. It's over a period of years the DMC has just not paid its debt," Perisi said. "Now we have to consider laying off people because we see no indication that any of these debts are going to be paid. It was binding."

"We don't want to be vic-

timized by this situation. The other thing is not only should we be delivering a quantity of care to the un- and underinsured, I don't think there should be a second standard," Lee said. "There's a bigger problem here, but the way to solve it is not to cannibalize each other. Suing DMC is not going to solve the problem. Our intent is not to bring down the Detroit Medical Center. We don't want to destroy it. We just want to work things out in an equitable manner."

Cornelius Fortune writes for the Michigan Chronicle.

Economic peril: Is worst still ahead?

By Ashahed M. Muhammad

Special to Sentinel-Voice

(NNPA) - While America experiences turbulent economic conditions affecting even the nation's most powerful and influential financial giants, an even more severe economic downturn looms for Blacks and Latinos.

Though the subprime lending crisis is the latest economic factor affecting a large number of Americans, other factors, such as the rising price of oil, government budgets strained by costs of natural disasters and the increasing debt caused by the mounting cost of the Iraq War are wreaking havoc on America's economy. Economic confidence is low and significant numbers of American tax payers are feeling pinched even if they are unable to explain it.

There are also questions about how deep the economic crisis will go and how much Americans really understand about what is going on.

In the book "A Torchlight for America," Minister Louis Farrakhan wrote: "Most politicians are afraid to tell the full extent of the truth that America has seriously mortgaged her future, and that to reduce the deficit will require a great sacrifice."

In a new book titled, "The Three Trillion Dollar War" by Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, their research found that the Bush administration lowballed the estimated cost of the Iraq War saying that it would run between \$50 and \$60 billion. Before the war, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reportedly scoffed at the estimates of other economic advisers who said the cost could approach \$200 billion. Former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, who many consider to be the primary architect of the Iraq War, suggested Iraq's oil revenues would finance post-war reconstruction. This has yet to materialize and the cost of the war is being shouldered by American taxpayers.

In fiscal year 2008 alone, the Bush administration has asked for \$200 billion in financing approval from Congress.

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Your Horoscope Says... April 17-23

ARIES

Flexibility is the word for this week. Don't insist on being right, even if you think you are. You will gain more this week if you allow others the freedom to have their way rather than insisting that people do things your way.

Soul Affirmation: He who doesn't ask will remain a fool forever.

Lucky Numbers: 20, 36, 55

TAURUS

You don't have to worry about being alone in the journey that you have undertaken. You are on this path because someone guided you. Take the memory of their guidance as comfort and keep on trucking.

Soul Affirmation: Things are as I know them to be.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 47, 49

GEMINI

Commit to a way this week, lucky archers! You are developing your craft by practice and more practice. Accept recognition gracefully, and keep on task. You are investing in your art this week.

Soul Affirmation: Goodness is its own reward.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 32, 45

CANCER

Your word this week is "Persistence." Keep at the task of persuading others that your idea or vision is as remarkable as you know it is. You just need to get the word out, and you need to be persistent in your efforts. Make a game out of it and have fun!

Soul Affirmation: Often it's not what I say but the way I say it that gets the message across

Lucky Numbers: 1, 4, 37

LEO

Results that seemed like they would never show up may arrive this week, and it will make you very happy. Keep the feeling this week in mind so that you'll remember and benefit from it next time you are impatiently waiting for an outcome. Everything is working to your good.

Soul Affirmation: I give thanks for the chance to give.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 29, 33

VIRGO

Your exciting and adventurous self will want to come out and play. You'll be happiest if you are exploring something, and then topping it off with a visit to a restaurant that serves something you've never tried before. Live it up at the banquet of life this week!

Soul Affirmation: When I am clear about who I am, the world becomes clearer.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 15, 21

LIBRA

Watch for that item you've been wanting to be on sale at a good price this week. While you are feeling pretty confident with money, you don't want to splurge or overspend just yet. Keep your eye out for bargains for a little while longer!

Soul Affirmation: This week I find joy in the gifts that life has already given me.

Lucky Numbers: 23, 48, 50

SCORPIO

It's easy to take it easy! Just slow down and let each moment arrive at its own speed. You'll get a lot done this week if you get in tune with the rhythm of the week. Each moment has its own beat. Stay with it.

Soul Affirmation: The wisdom of the ages is revealed as my spirit.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 16, 42

SAGITTARIUS

Change is near, and it's going to be good. Clear your desk of pesky tasks this week and get your mind free to receive what life brings. Positive results help you feel even more positive.

Soul Affirmation: Someone wonderful is looking to find me.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 25, 27

CAPRICORN

You are the boss of your week this week, so act like the leader you are and let the week follow you around. Your creativity is soaring; schedule enough time to get some of your brilliant ideas on paper.

Soul Affirmation: Trust gives me a deep sense of peace and joy.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 30, 41

AQUARIUS

A steady stream of opportunities is beaming your way, lucky you and they contain endless variations of possibilities. Wear your instincts like a rainbow colored coat this week and gather the good resources that you need.

Soul Affirmation: Hope is future's way of shining on me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 16, 23, 35

PISCES

Some down time will work wonders for you this week. You've been running fast with your projects, and now it's time to slow it down. Try to spend time outdoors and with nature. Enjoy!

Soul Affirmation: Hope is a beautiful jewel. I enjoy owning it.

Lucky Numbers: 39, 45, 48