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Steward affiliates with Partners doc group

September 7, 2012 | By Karen Cheung-Larivee

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Ever-expanding Steward Health Care System is adding Hawthorn Medical Associates to its network of providers. Hawthorn Medical Associates, the Bedford, Ma.-based multi-specialty practice, on Wednesday announced a new 10-year affiliation with Steward, thereby ending its 14-year relationship with Partners Community Healthcare, *The Boston Globe* reported.

The news comes just eight months after Steward struck a deal with Compass Medical, a former physician group of Partners HealthCare, as well with the physician group Whittier Independent Practice Association previously affiliated with Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) a month earlier.

The Steward-Hawthorn deal, however, isn't competitive against Partners, a hospital spokesperson told *FierceHealthcare*.

"We feel that we are complementary with all academic medical centers in Massachusetts," Steward Media Relations Director Chris Murphy said. "We're not interested in growing just for the sake of growth." Because Hawthorn and other physician groups like it offer a level of tertiary and quaternary care that the community hospitals don't provide, such as transplants, Level one trauma care and advanced burn care, the providers and patients can benefit from the new relationship, Murphy explained.

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When asked about expansion, Murphy said, "We're not interested in growing just for the sake of growth. We're looking for real (clinical) integration in our communities."

Steward has 11 hospitals in its network with more than 17,000 employees, according to the company website.

For more information:
- see the *Boston Globe* article

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President of Steward hospital disputes his 'resignation'

April 20, 2012 | By Karen Cheung-Larivee

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The departure of Carney Hospital's president may not have been voluntary, as Steward Health Care System claimed, *The Boston Globe* reported. Bill Walczak, the former president of the Dorchester, Mass., hospital, last week abruptly left his post after 14 months on the job. In a company memo Friday, Steward Chief Operating Officer Josh Putter told the board, medical staff and employees that "Bill Walczak and Steward have decided to part ways." Steward spokesman Chris Murphy also told the *Globe* that Walczak had resigned and also said, "The decision for Bill to leave Carney was a mutual one."

However, Walczak told the newspaper he took issue with Steward for asserting the hospital president had quit. Walczak said Wednesday, "I did not resign from the Carney Hospital."

Carney Hospital is the only Steward hospital out of its network of 10 hospitals in the state that is losing primary care doctors. Under Walczak's tenure, the hospital operating deficit ballooned to \$20 million in 2011, the article noted. Article

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Filed UnderCarney Hospital, Steward Health Care System

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March 8, 2012 | By Karen Cheung-Larivee

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Filed UnderHospital Mergers, Landmark Medical Center, Layoffs, Steward Health Care Services

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Steward nabs Partners HealthCare physician group

December 8, 2011 | By Karen Cheung-Larivee

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Steward Health Care System nabbed another Massachusetts physician group, this time away from Partners HealthCare, reports *The Boston Globe*. Following the recent, highly contentious score of Whittier Independent Practice Association, a physician group formerly affiliated with Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Steward on Tuesday announced that the Compass Medical practice would join its expanding network.

The new Steward-Compass Medical deal ends a 16-year affiliated relationship between Partners and Compass Medical. Compass Medical, which has 90 physicians in eight offices, will likely refer thousands of patients to Steward-owned community hospitals, including Quincy Medical Center, Good Samaritan Medical Center, and Morton Hospital, according to the *Globe* article.

Compass Medical made the switch to better coordinate patient care with community hospitals, Compass Chief Executive Jamie Barber told the newspaper.

"Care needs to be a lot more coordinated and integrated than it is today," Barber said. "What we need are community hospital partners."

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However, there is growing concern in the area about Steward's expanding network. With a recent buying spree, the for-profit operator now has 10 hospitals in Massachusetts with more than 14,000 employees. Even more, community hospitals in the state are examining closely the contracts between Steward and the physician group, Whittier Independent Practice Association. Massachusetts Council of Community Hospitals this week called on the state attorney general to review the Steward-physician contracts, which they called "predatory actions against community hospitals."

- For more information:
- read the *Boston Globe* article
 - read the *Providence Business News* article
 - read the *Patriot Ledger* article

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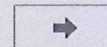
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Community hospitals call for AG review of Steward-doc contracts

December 6, 2011 | By Karen Cheung-Larivee

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Community hospitals in Massachusetts are calling on the state attorney general to review physician contracts under a recent deal between hospital operator Steward Health Care System and a physician group formerly affiliated with Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Whittier Independent Practice Association, reports *The Boston Globe*.

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Last month, Beth Israel claimed that the expanding for-profit health system lured away 150 physicians with potential kickbacks, as the recent deal between them could have violated federal and state anti-kickback statutes, it argued.

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Although Steward says the deal is legal, Massachusetts Council of Community Hospitals Executive Director Donald J. Thieme told Attorney General Martha Coakley that Steward's actions with Whittier Independent Practice Association were "predatory actions against community hospitals," according to the article.

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Steward spokesman Chris Murphy responded, "How is it predatory when we've written into the contract that they can refer patients wherever they feel is the most appropriate?" Murphy said.

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"This letter seems to be saying a system of 10 community hospitals is damaging community health care, which is our own business," Murphy added. "Without us buying these hospitals, most, if not all of them, would have failed or closed. We're out there as a business saving community hospitals and keeping patients in the community."

Comment

Steward Health Care has 10 hospitals in Massachusetts with more than 14,000 employees. With recent buys of area hospitals, Steward is looking to create pockets of geographically concentrated hospitals "to generate operational synergies and share resources to enhance financial stability and provide a wider range of services to patients," according to the organization's website.

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For more information:
- read the *Boston Globe* article

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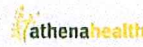
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Steward woos docs with potential kickbacks, Beth Israel claims

November 10, 2011 | By Karen Cheung-Larivee

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Furthering its reach in Massachusetts, hospital operator Steward Health Care System has proposed a sweetheart deal to 150 doctors affiliated with the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center's physician group, Whittier Independent Practice Association, that Beth Israel attorneys say could violate federal and state anti-kickback statutes, *The Boston Globe* reports.

A Steward spokesman said the deal is legal. But Beth Israel attorneys suggest the for-profit hospital operator lured the 150 physicians with a sweetheart offer that borders on illegal, according to the article. Whittier physicians stand to gain \$1.8 million to \$3 million in additional earnings if they join Steward and its global payment contract with insurance giant Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. The attorneys allege that Steward promised the physicians waived administrative fees and assumption of all downside risk, which could violate state and federal laws.

Whittier anticipates joining Steward Jan. 1, but Beth Israel Deaconess Physicians Organization has yet to sign a waiver to let the physicians go.

"We have a market full of very competitive leaders, and this [Whittier] switch is a precursor of things to come," said Thomas Glynn, public policy lecturer at Harvard's Kennedy School.

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Steward has purchased 10 community hospitals during the past year alone, according to the *Globe* article. In fact, Steward is set to own 20 percent of hospitals in the region, that is, one in five hospitals, according to an earlier *Patriot Ledger* report.

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"It's very concerning that longstanding community hospitals can't compete with private equity money," said Lawrence General Hospital President Dianne J. Anderson, whose hospital is affiliated with Beth Israel Deaconess, in the *Globe* article. "It's fundamentally changing the landscape of health care in Eastern Massachusetts."

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For more information:

- read the *Boston Globe* article (sub. req.)
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Hospital files for bankruptcy as it prepares for sale

July 5, 2011 | By Karen Cheung-Larivee

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With a \$56 million debt, Quincy Medical Center filed for bankruptcy on Friday in preparation for sale, according to *The Boston Globe*. Steward Health Care will buy Quincy Medical Center and make \$34 million worth of investments, as the hospital board decided to sell last Monday, according to the *Taunton Daily Gazette*.

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Burdened with debt from renovations, Quincy Medical Center elected to sell the organization, notes the *Globe*.

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"Given the size of our debt, there has to be some negotiations as to how much of the debt is paid down," said Quincy Medical Center's interim CEO John Kastanis in the *Gazette* article. "The liabilities of the hospital right now exceed assets, and the size of our debt is such that we needed to (file for bankruptcy)."

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The bankruptcy and deal are not expected to affect services, according to Kastanis.

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"We shouldn't be skipping a beat here at all," he said. "We will be continuing to compete and attracting more patients and doctors here. There should be no disruption in services."

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Last year, Steward bought out Caritas Christi Health Care and announced the acquisition of Essent Healthcare's Merrimack Valley Hospital and Nashoba Valley Medical Center, according to Steward's press website. In April, Steward also acquired Morton Hospital and Medical Center to form the largest community-based accountable care organization, according to a press release.

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In related news, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston is considering merging with Milton (Mass.) Hospital and Lahey Clinic in Burlington, Mass., according to *The Boston Globe*.

- To learn more:
- read the *Boston Globe* article
 - read the *Taunton Daily Gazette* article
 - read the Steward press release of the Morton deal
 - see the Steward press page

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Steward Health Care Systems lays off workers after buyout

June 9, 2011 | By Karen Cheung-Larivee

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As part of consolidation and a cost-savings measure, Steward Health Care System, LLC, yesterday laid off an unknown number of business office employees at Caritas Christi Health Care hospitals at its six locations in Eastern Massachusetts, reports the *Boston Globe*. The eliminated positions were in billing, finance, and accounts receivable departments.

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Earlier this week, Steward Health Care System on Tuesday signed a deal to buy Landmark Medical Center in Woonsocket, R.I., for \$71.6 million.

Last week, Local 5067 of the Northern Rhode Island Nurses and Allied Professionals signed an agreement with Steward, in which 75 employees at Landmark would be laid off, reports *Providence Business News*.

For more:

- read the *Boston Globe* article on the layoffs
- check out the *Boston Globe* report on the merger
- here's the *Providence Business News* article

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*Due to a reporting error, this article has been updated.

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Steward Health Care System eyes national expansion

January 13, 2011 | By Alicia Caramenico

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Steward Health Care System plans to replicate its Massachusetts community hospitals nationwide, reports the *Boston Globe*. Steward CEO Ralph de la Torre revealed the plan to go national at the J.P. Morgan Healthcare Conference in San Francisco this week.

The Boston-based company is developing a model of lower-cost, high-volume patient care that is unlike larger hospital organizations like Massachusetts General Hospital, Cleveland Clinic and Mayo Clinic. "In a world of Neiman Marcuses, we're OK being Filene's," de la Torre told investors.

Steward's national model will mimic the company's regional approach, with a very small centralized structure. To prepare for the national expansion, Steward is deploying information technology and establishing new delivery and payment systems to coordinate healthcare, operational efficiency, quality and safety, notes the *Globe*.

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"The main goal of getting bigger in a region is to gain [patient] volume," de la Torre said. "You can no longer go to the insurance companies and demand higher rates. Those days are gone."

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Steward, created by the new owner of Caritas Christi Health Care hospitals, owns six Catholic hospitals in Massachusetts. Steward's owner is Cerberus Capital Management, a New York-based private equity firm.

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For more:
- read the *Boston Globe* article

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December 9, 2010 | By Dan Bowman

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Cerberus Capital Management isn't wasting any time adding to its collection of Massachusetts hospitals. The New York-based private equity firm, which recently completed a deal to purchase the six-hospital Caritas Christi health system in Boston for close to \$900 million, agreed to buy two more Bay State hospitals for an undisclosed price via its Steward Health Care System company, the *Boston Globe* reports.

Essent Healthcare of Nashville, which currently owns Haverhill-based Merrimack Valley Hospital and Ayer-based Nashoba Valley Medical Center, agreed to the deal, which still awaits approval from public health regulators. Essent, Caritas and Vanguard Health System are the only three for-profit systems in the nonprofit heavy state.

Ralph de la Torre, the ex-Caritas and current Steward head, told the *Globe* that the goal is to treat patients where they live, especially in everyday situations.

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"These communities are exactly the communities we want to serve in Massachusetts," he said. "It's all about bringing care to the patients, not bringing the patients to the care."

The additions of Merrimack, a 124-bed facility with 550 employees, and Nashoba, which has 57 beds and 530 employees, only help to boost Steward's increasing stature in the region; it already boasts 13,000 employees, according to the *Globe*. The staffs at both hospitals will remain in tact, as will the free care and community benefits levels for each.

De la Torre maintains that the two facilities also will share resources with the six Caritas hospitals.

Mark Bard, managing director of Needham-based Navigant Consulting, which advised Caritas, told the *Globe* he expects more, similar deals to come, especially from Steward.

"Everyone talks about economies of scale, but in reality they're very rarely achieved," he said. "This helps [Steward] with contracting and helps them build their physician network. Whether this significantly shifts patient volume away from the local competition remains to be seen."

To learn more:

- read the *Boston Globe's* article

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Caritas Christi deal with Cerberus Capital gets AG's OK

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Cerberus sets its sights on ACO makeover for Caritas

November 9, 2010 | By Sandra Yin

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It's official. Caritas Christi Health Care is going to the other side. Now that its sale to Steward Health Care System LLC, a newly formed affiliate of Cerberus Capital Management, L.P. is complete, the Caritas system will operate as the largest for-profit healthcare network in New England, *WBUR* reports.

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As a result, Caritas will get access to much needed capital for upgrading its infrastructure and programs and dealing with pension obligations.

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Cerberus, which doesn't have experience buying hospitals--and which, perhaps, is best known for buying an equity stake in Chrysler as it was going down the tubes--gets a hospital system that is nearly \$500 million in debt.

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If you're wondering what's in it for Cerberus, some hints were sprinkled in the Caritas press release. It looks like Cerberus deal makers are hoping to make money off the healthcare reform by creating a Steward Health Care accountable care organization. Dr. Ralph de la Torre, Caritas CEO, who will stay on, notes that they are "investing in the Caritas hospitals for the long term and building a strong, community-based ACO for Massachusetts."

TOOLS

Current senior leaders at Caritas Christi Health Care will stay in place, according to the Caritas press release. The six Caritas hospitals will continue to deliver care that follows Catholic ethical and religious directives.

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Cerberus will take on \$495 million in Caritas debt, including unfunded pension obligations for about 13,000 retirees and employees, the *Globe* reports.

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Cerberus has also promised \$400 million in capital for infrastructure and technology improvements for the healthcare system, which includes St. Elizabeth's Medical Center in Brighton, Carney Hospital in Dorchester, Norwood Hospital, Good Samaritan Medical Center in Brockton, Saint Anne's Hospital in Fall River, and Holy Family Hospital in Methuen. Steward has also acquired the assets of other CCHC entities, including the Caritas Physician Network, Caritas Hospice and Home Care, Laboure College, and Por Cristo.

Contact Author

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- To learn more:
- read the Caritas Christi press release
 - read the *Boston Globe* article
 - here's the *Boston Herald* article
 - read the *WBUR* article

Related Articles:

- Cerberus clears last regulatory hurdle to Caritas deal
- Caritas Christi deal with Cerberus Capital gets AG's OK
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