

THE UNION

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Other Voices

Scott McFarland: Unfortunate situation could affect your health

We believe the community should be aware of a situation with hundreds of our patients, which can affect other community members, their friends and families in the future.

We want to let the community know about a matter that is disrupting the ability of hundreds of seniors who are on Medicare managed care plans and other people with commercial managed care plans to continue to receiving their care at Western Sierra Medical Clinic.

We are disappointed that these seniors — often the most fragile, high-risk members of our community with the most complicated health issues — and other patients are being greatly limited by where and by whom they are treated, despite the fact that many have been Western Sierra patients for more than 10 years.

Western Sierra believes their continuity of care potentially will be compromised with the termination of a contract by Nivano Physicians Inc., formerly known as Sierra Nevada Medical Associates Inc. (IPA). Roseville-based Nivano manages the care of some of our friends and neighbors through its contracts with commercial insurance companies, and physicians, specialists and groups, such as Western Sierra.

Unfortunately, Sierra Nevada Medical Associates, now part of Nivano, terminated its long-standing contract with Western Sierra despite our every effort to prevent this decision. As a result, Nivano has already started transferring the care of these elderly and other patients to medical providers that are not part of Western Sierra's care team.

Nivano's decision to terminate the contract "without cause" is unrelated to the quality of care we provide – and it puts our patients in a tenuous position by transferring their care elsewhere ... many patients transferred by Nivano will no longer have easy access to Western Sierra's one-stop health center in Grass Valley ...

Nivano's decision to terminate the contract "without cause" is unrelated to the quality of care we provide – and it puts our patients in a tenuous position by transferring their care elsewhere without their explicit consent or choice.

Consequently, many patients transferred by Nivano will no longer have easy access to Western Sierra's one-stop health center in Grass Valley and some will be forced to travel through the Yuba River canyon up Highway 49 to North San Juan to see a medical provider with whom they have no previous relationship.

In addition, the continuity of care for these patients is compromised beyond primary care services. The unfortunate decision by Nivano has a secondary effect of potentially limiting their access to specialists, an important part of their care.

We urge other medical providers in our area to be part of the solution by stressing the importance of resolving an avoidable issue that has created unnecessary confusion among many of our most vulnerable residents and potentially affects their access to necessary, quality health care.

Our patients can also contact their insurance company and Nivano, at 530-271-3200, to ask to be re-assigned back to Western Sierra at least through Aug. 1, 2016, to allow Western Sierra and the community time to find a solution to this unfortunate and unnecessary dilemma.

Scott McFarland is the chief executive officer at Western Sierra Medical Clinic in Grass Valley.