

**Response to “Health care professionals urge Barbour to change Medicaid”
8/23/03**

From Rica Lewis-Payton, Executive Director, Division of Medicaid

Medicaid “fix” already in

In Steve Gillespie’s recent column (“Health care professionals urge Barbour to change Medicaid,” August 23), Jack Holbrook, M.D. “expressed frustration over Medicaid red-tape.” Dr. Holbrook was also quoted as stating, “We don’t know about these double-secret meetings that occur, and there is nothing that tells us ahead of time so that we can provide input.” I responded to Dr. Holbrook’s concerns in a letter to him dated January 6, 2003. Dr. Holbrook was invited to contact our staff pharmacist if he had any further questions. Furthermore, our web site <http://www.dom.state.ms.us/> continues to give everyone access to our meeting schedules including the Drug Utilization Review meetings and the Pharmacy and Therapeutics committee meetings that are open to the public. These committees are comprised of Medicaid providers, including physicians.

Medicaid news has not been a secret to any of us who have lived in this state these past three years. Through Governor Musgrove’s leadership, and hard work by dedicated members of our legislature, and by our talented Medicaid staff, we have initiated cost containment measures that work. Nationally, prescription drug costs in Medicaid programs were expected to increase by 12% in Fiscal Year 2003. Mississippi’s Medicaid program experienced a **3% decrease** in drug costs for Fiscal Year 2003, and our administrative cost remained among the lowest in the country. While it may be easy for some to talk in general about initiatives, such as bulk purchasing and lowering the costs of prescription drugs, Mississippi Medicaid has been taking actions and prescription drug costs have decreased as a result.

We have maintained an effective and efficient Medicaid program through tough economic times and we will continue to fight for this vital healthcare program.

Rica Lewis-Payton
Executive Director
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