

✓ Capitola Health Center County health administrator opposes planned health center

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SANTA CRUZ — The county's top health official is urging the Board of Supervisors to formally oppose the proposed Capitola Health Center because of its "ability to screen out the poor."

Elinor Hall, the county's health services administrator, will ask the supervisors to oppose the proposed private, for-profit health center at the board's 9 a.m. meeting today.

Because the 24-bed hospital, outpatient surgical facility and medical office complex will not have an emergency room, Hall said, "there will be no entry way ... for those lacking a private physician, which is disproportionately the case for Medi-Cal, Medi-Cruz and uninsured patients."

Medi-Cal, Medi-Cruz and low-income, uninsured patients are considered risky

because of traditionally slow and low pay-back rates from the state, and a high degree of default from those without insurance.

"We ought to expect all hospitals to take their fair share of the patient population that is not profitable," said Hall.

If Capitola Health Center refuses Medi-Cal/Medi-Cruz patients, it should "contribute financially to those patients' care in another setting," she said.

The health center, said Hall, could do that by either paying into a fund to support those medical institutions that do serve the poor, or by agreeing to take a "fair share" of "charity" welfare patients.

"There really does need to be some kind of recognition that there are a lot of uninsured people who are entitled to emergency care and there is no mecha-

nism to pay for them," said Hall.

Hall said Capitola Health Center officials — who were out of town and unavailable for comment Monday — have been "receptive" to the "fair-share" idea.

In addition, the HSA administrator will today ask the supervisors to:

- Adopt a resolution outlining the county's "basic principles regarding new hospitals and institutional health services";

- Direct board Chairman Fred Keeley to write a letter to Capitola Health Center officials detailing the county's concerns about patient access, and its need to have input into matters that affect community health care;

- Request an update Nov. 19 on the status of talks between health center officials and the county about access to services for Medi-Cal outpatients.