



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
HEALTH

Institute for Health Policy and Leadership

Healthcare News At A Glance

National

Rule regarding taking an immigrant's use of public services into account when determining citizenship eligibility may be finalized soon

The rule was created by the Department of Homeland Security last year. As a result, the number of people using public services (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and food banks) declined. Multiple studies have shown that immigrants put a much smaller burden on the healthcare system than native-born individuals and that subsequent generations of immigrants end up as great fiscal contributors compared to the native-born population.

Patients on Medicare Advantage will be required to try lower-cost prescriptions before more expensive ones

This step-therapy will be implemented for Part B drugs given at a hospital or doctor's office and for Part D drugs acquired at the pharmacy. If the medicine does not work, then patients are allowed to try more costly alternatives. Some patients worry that this will hinder the course of treatment because of the variance in side effects felt between patients. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) said that patients will have the ability to repeal decisions and can switch to a different Medicare Advantage plan that is not implementing step-therapy during the enrollment period.

CVS to consider cost-effective analysis to determine if insurance companies can exclude coverage of drugs with costly launch prices

The pharmacy is taking cost-management into its own hands by providing insurance companies with tools that are commonly used in European countries. The lobbying group Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) declared its opposition to a "one-size-fits-all effectiveness threshold."

CMS announces potential overhaul of Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) under Medicare

Medicare ACOs were started in 2012 and were designed to start with low-risk and transition to full-risk over a given period of time. Taking on risk means Medicare provides a set amount of money to care for a given population under an ACO. Any money that is saved can be kept by the ACO, but the ACO must pay extra if the costs are exceeded. ACOs have not been saving the kind of money that was originally anticipated. Skeptics warn that this will cause a large dropout in the number of participating ACOs.

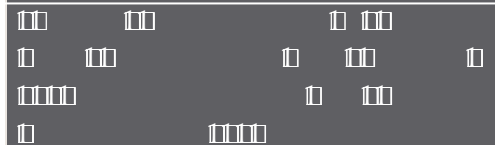
Updates Since the Stoneman Douglas High School Shooting

In February, seventeen people were killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The incident energized youth from all over the country to demand protection and safety in schools.

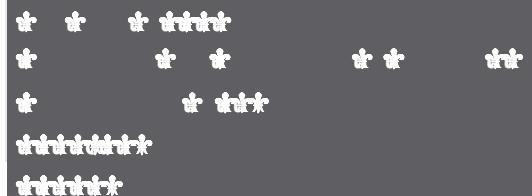
One highly controversial policy that was discussed was arming schoolteachers. Officials reported, however, that in rural areas in South Dakota and Wyoming where schools had been granted permission to arm teachers since 2013, very few schools participated.

Meanwhile, independent organizations have started several programs over the past few months to help bystanders learn to make quick decisions in helping victims who have already suffered from trauma. While this is not a prevention method, participants feel it will alleviate some of the burden. The federal government pledged \$1.8 million in grants to start a similar School-Age Trauma Training program that is meant to deal with the trauma that has already occurred.

The current administration's 5-pronged approach to combatting the high cost of pharmaceuticals



- Overhauling rebates
- Optimizing the areas for negotiation in Medicare
- Encouraging value-based care
- Addressing the reduced costs of drugs to foreign nations
- Promoting competition



California

LA County Board votes for pilot program to provide assistance to homeless individuals in vehicles–

The number of vehicles being used as the primary dwelling increased by 7 percent with more than 9,000 vehicles being used as of the 2018 Point in Time Count for LA. Out of concern for the potential health hazards that this can create for homeless individuals as well as the rest of the community (in terms of sewage and trash), the pilot program will focus on outreach to help connect homeless individuals to essential resources and educate them about the dangers of purchasing recreational vehicles that are in bad shape.

US Court of Appeals in San Francisco says the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) broke the law by allowing for a toxic pesticide to be sold despite mounting evidence of its harmful effects–

The court has mandated that the EPA ensure that chlorpyrifos, a widely-used pesticide that can harm neurodevelopment of babies with the slightest exposure, be removed from shelves. Farmers and environmental groups sued Scott Pruitt for lifting the ban that was placed in 2015. California was among many states that had sued the EPA. Since the late 1900s, chlorpyrifos has been the most widely used pesticide in the US. A Berkeley study in 2012 found traces of the pesticide in nearly 90 percent of umbilical-cord blood samples that were tested explaining its presence through the ability of the pesticide to seep into drinking water.

Many cities are opposed to state considerations allowing for marijuana delivery in areas that ban marijuana sales–

The opposition is being led by the League of California Cities group which is arguing that such policies are undermining the cities' decisions to regulate marijuana. There has been confusion in the past over whether deliveries can be made to areas where marijuana cannot be sold. Previous attempts of the California Senate to clarify the language met with opposition, and the efforts were eventually given up.

Three companies will be providing free telehealth services for California wildfires victims–

Physicians can provide diagnosis and treatment options for adults and children suffering from respiratory infections, allergies, and other non-emergency illnesses that may be resulting from the effects of the fires. Many will be able to provide mental health services for anxiety or depression that is triggered by the wildfires. The three telehealth companies are Doctor on Demand, MDLive, and Teladoc.

Other States

Seventy-five percent of those required to report their working eligibility for phase one of Medicaid work requirement rollout in Arkansas have not done so–

As of June, only 25 percent of the 10,000 people in Phase 1 have reported their work. Over 7,000 people may lose health insurance for the remainder of the year if they do not report for three consecutive months.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) find geographically varying increases in opioid-dependent mothers over 15-year period–

The rate of opioid-dependent mothers at labor in 2014 was four times the rate in 1999. Opioid use can lead to a range of adverse health outcomes from neonatal abstinence syndrome to death of either the mother and/or the baby. California and Hawaii had the smallest rate increases while Vermont and West Virginia had the greatest.

Idaho, Mississippi, and Florida amongst the lowest ranked in a report looking at how states follow the recommended public health policy stances on cancer prevention and treatment–

In conjunction with the American Cancer Society, the Cancer Action Network has been evaluating states on a yearly basis for the past 16 years with regards to how well their state and local policies improve access and quality of care for cancer patients and survivors. Some of the measures included whether or not a state expanded Medicaid and what kinds of benefits were being offered (tobacco cessation, screenings, diagnosis, etc.) by Medicaid in the states. California was only short on two of the nine measures: pain policy and access to palliative care.

Massachusetts Governor signs bill to improve treatment and diagnosis of Alzheimer's by requiring relevant healthcare workers to undergo new training for license renewal and hospitals to develop plans for dementia patients–

While some hospital spokespersons have acknowledged the challenge of such a task for large hospitals, many have already begun developing their plans and learning to recognize dementia patients upon admittance.

Along with a tranquilizer, a muscle relaxant, and a heart-stopping drug, fentanyl was used for the first time in an execution in Nebraska–

The last time Nebraska executed an inmate was in 1997. In 2016, Nebraska voters overturned a 2015 legislation that outlawed capital punishment. Other states may consider using fentanyl as well. Fentanyl has become infamous as the leading cause of overdose deaths linked to opioids.

Noteworthy Studies

JAMA

A study found that opioid prescriptions for wisdom teeth removal can increase the risk of opioid-dependence by almost three-fold. The study included 71,000 people between 2009-2015 with no prior history of opioid use (within 6 months of the surgery). The authors found that other anti-inflammatory medications can be prescribed.

NEJM

A study of over 6,000 women found that induced labor at 39 weeks of pregnancy had similar health outcomes as natural labor. It also had a 35 percent reduction in risk of hypertensive disorder as well as a 3 percentage point decline in the number of women who underwent a C-section. There was no reduction in perinatal deaths.

Annals

A study in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* compared the salaries of 374 full-time internists between 2017 and 2018. The study found that the median salary of male physicians was \$50,000 more than the median salary of female physicians. The discrepancy was evident throughout all specialties.

Newsbytes Relevant to Our Strategic Priorities



To bring focus to our work, the Institute for Health Policy and Leadership has identified three strategic priorities: oral health, mental health and hunger as a health issue. This segment highlights news articles relevant to these priorities.

Oral Health

People are buying “natural” fluoride-free toothpastes, and dentists are concerned– Dentists across the world want people to understand that merely brushing one’s teeth is not what is preventing cavities; it is the fluoride in the toothpaste that does this. Still, non-fluoridated toothpastes are trending as customers see the allure in an all-natural alternative to regular toothpaste. The second most bought toothpaste on Amazon is a fluoride-free toothpaste.

Hunger as a Health Issue

Scientists meet in Brazil to exchange ideas about soil sustainability in efforts to stave hunger worldwide– Soil has multiple roles including buffering changes in the climate, filtering contaminants from water, and providing crops to feed people. Better soil can improve food production and fight poverty. The scientists discussed the 10 largest threats to soil such as acidification and soil erosion, ways to improve soil that has already been damaged, and preventive measures to protect the rich soil in efforts to fight hunger.

Mental/ Behavioral Health

Medicaid to test capitated and fee-for-service payment mix for mental health services in efforts to integrate mental health into primary care– In three pilot programs, the Medicaid Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) in Michigan will be provided with a set amount of funds to contract with mental health providers to deliver a more comprehensive list of services to patients. The Section 298 plan will reinvest the remaining funds to expand services in the counties providing this service. The pilot program was originally going to be implemented in 2016 but was pushed to 2019 as stakeholders were trying to come to a consensus regarding the payment structure.

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