



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
HEALTH

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Healthcare News At A Glance

National

The Support for Patients and Communities Act was signed into law last week– The opioid package includes legislation to expand telemedicine services and funding for opioid research. It also increases the ability of the United States Postal Service to scan suspicious international packages. Meanwhile, the Secretary of Health and Human Services announced that opioid-related deaths had finally plateaued this year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recorded 49,000 opioid-related deaths last year. To learn more about the contents of the opioid package, [click here](#).

Marlboro's manufacturer agrees to pull flavored products from market as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) cracks down on e-cigarettes– The company Altria agreed to pull out most of the flavored e-cigarette products and their "pods" until they undergo the FDA approval process to be used as an alternative to smoking cigarettes. The company is pushing the importance of e-cigarettes as harm-reduction tools but has explicitly stated that the rise in teenage vaping is concerning.

2016 report from the US Department of Agriculture indicates that \$75 million in food stamps were spent on sugary beverages– A paper published in *Society* highlighted the fact that low-income adults are more prone to weight gain, hypertension, and diabetes. Public policy researchers suggest making amendments within the Farm Bill to nudge individuals to make healthier choices. One suggestion is to offer a higher subsidy for fresh fruits and vegetables. One opponent argued that this would incentivize the individuals to use their own money to supplement the purchases of unhealthy foods. He argues that the benefits should ban the purchase of sugary beverages.

Amazon will sell blood pressure cuffs, glucose monitors, and other medical devices– The company has a partnership with a health brand consultancy known as the Arcadia Group. Amazon will be selling newly branded consumer-focused medical devices.

Highlighted Studies of the Week

1. Study from *the Journal of Rural Health* of more than 1.9 million births indicates that the incidence of opioid-use disorder is much higher in mothers who give birth in urban teaching hospitals (8.9/1,000 deliveries) compared to those who give birth at rural hospitals (4.3/1,000 deliveries) or non-teaching urban hospitals (3.6/1000 deliveries).
2. Study from *Vaccine* shows a 7.6 percentage point increase in flu vaccination uptake for employees that had paid sick leave benefits.
3. Study from *The American Journal of Cardiology* shows that there was a 91 percent increase in the number of cardiology-related claims between 2006 and 2015. There was an increase of 142 percent in total liability paid.
4. Study from *The Journal of Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* shows that children under the age of 10 can and do experience racism. Having a strong understanding of one's ethnic-racial identity can serve as a protective factor.
5. Study from *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* finds that over 33 percent of children who end up in the emergency room (ER) for a gun-related injury were hospitalized. Approximately 8,300 children (11/100,000 children) come to the ER for a gun-related injury.
6. Study from *JAMA* shows that aspirin can be more effective in preventing blood clots after knee surgery than anticoagulants.

California

California's LGBT Disparities Reduction Act went into effect in July this year, affecting meal delivery services such as Meals on Wheels– Meals on Wheels is now contacting individuals who are to receive the services or who are already receiving the services to ascertain information regarding the individual's sexual orientation. Four of the state departments are required to collect demographic data about sexual orientation, including the Department of Aging, the Department of Health Care Services, and the Department of Public Health. The move to collect more data has been backed by LGBT advocates.

New report indicates that indoor temperatures were higher than outdoors amidst the heat waves in California last year– This is the first study to test the temperatures inside various homes. The study identified low-income adults, elderly adults, and adults who were least likely to own air conditioners. It sheds light on the impact of climate change on heat-related illnesses as it disproportionately affects those of a lower socioeconomic background.

Two California cities have ballot initiatives that seek to fix health care costs– In November, voters in Palo Alto and Livermore will have the opportunity to decide whether to cap hospitals at 115 percent of “the reasonable cost” of providing direct care to patients. Stanford University has been a strong opponent, arguing that this will severely reduce the quality of care. There is also strong opposition from the city councils that the lack of expertise in appropriate regulation standards will result in litigation against the cities.

Other States

Maine's Attorney General takes the voters' side against the Governor who continues to block the expansion of Medicaid despite the ballot initiative being voted into law– The state's governor is making the argument that such a law cannot be passed if the Legislature does not have the means to fund it. If the law goes into effect, 70,000 people could potentially receive MaineCare.

While the state of Maryland makes improvements in children's lead exposure, Wisconsin is under heavy scrutiny for allowing the issue to spiral out of control– There was a ten percent increase in the number of children tested for lead poisoning in Maryland. In 2016, the state enacted a mandatory lead testing policy for toddlers which led to a 5 percentage point increase in 1-2-year-olds tested. In Baltimore, there was a 19 percent decrease in the number of children with lead poisoning. Nearly three-quarters of the children in the state were not tested last year. Meanwhile, the Milwaukee Health Department in Wisconsin is under a criminal investigation over the mishandling of the lead poisoning prevention and intervention programs.

Texas will receive two new medical schools after approval from the education board– The state already has 12 medical schools, three of which offer the Doctor of Osteopathy degree. The University of Houston school will be focused on the recruitment of minority students and training to serve in rural areas and inner cities. The University of North Texas school will be a private school running in conjunction with Texas Christian University to focus on “grooming empathetic scholars.”

Legislators of Iowa fast-tracked sexual harassment complaint procedures through an emergency ruling– Complaints of sexual harassment filed by state employees will be sent to the Department of Administrative Services for investigation. One official in favor of this argued that the previous policies for reporting such claims were unclear. A spokesperson from the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault argued that these policies were not enough to change the ineffective process.

Health insurance company in Utah offering patients with cancer, multiple sclerosis, and autoimmune disorders a transportation fee to Tijuana to purchase medications– The director of clinical operations for the health plan argues that paying for transportation costs and the \$500 payout is less expensive than paying for costly drugs in the United States. The benefits are termed pharmacy tourism benefits and will be offered for drugs for which there is price disparity between Mexico and the US. The maximum amount that patients can purchase is a three-month supply. The patients will be allowed to cross the border through a priority lane. Last week, the Trump administration issued a proposal to create an experimental price-setting formula that would fix Medicare Part B drug prices to levels that are comparable to other nations.

Hospital in Minnesota is under a federal investigation for a breach of human research rules– The inspectors determined that the Medical Center was testing antipsychotics and ketamine on patients in the emergency rooms without obtaining their consent.

Recent Illnesses and Outbreaks

New York

As of early this week, 33 cases of **measles** have been confirmed in Jewish communities. The illness was said to have been contracted during travel to Israel.

New Jersey

Six children died, and 12 others are sick at a rehabilitation facility from an **adenovirus** infection. This virus commonly affects tissue linings and causes serious infections in children.

Colorado

Three individuals detained in the Aurora immigration detention facility contracted **chicken pox**. Seven others were under quarantine for risk of contracting the virus.

Alaska

Seventy-five cases of **syphilis** were reported as of last week. One infant was reported to have been born with congenital syphilis. The last time the numbers were this high was in the 1970s.

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

Study shows an association between poor oral health and hypertension– In a study analyzing over 3,600 individuals, researchers determined that people who had periodontal disease were 20 percent less likely to manage their blood pressure at a healthy range compared to those without any oral disease.

Hunger as a Health Issue

Loma Linda's City Council declares its commitment to children's health by passing a resolution for children's health– The hard work of some residents led to the passage of a resolution that voices support of a Healthy-by-Default initiative which requires any food establishment serving a kid's meal to serve water, milk, or milk substitutes as the default beverage instead of sugary beverages. At the state level, SB 1192 was passed earlier this year. Healthy-by-Default will now be in effect state-wide.

Mental/ Behavioral Health

San Diego's County Board of Supervisors to decide on future steps to addressing the county's mental health– A survey indicated that 9 percent of individuals reported serious psychiatric distress in 2017. The number of calls to the county's psychiatric emergency response team increased by 24 percent since last year. The Board will determine how to integrate behavioral health into the healthcare system.