



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
HEALTH

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Healthcare News At A Glance

National

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) project that cancer will surpass heart disease as number one cause of death in the US within two years— The projections are based on a study conducted by Stanford Medical School researchers. The researchers studied more than 32 million deaths between 2003 and 2015. The findings indicate that while the mortality rate dropped by 12 percent over this time period, there was an increase in the number of counties with cancer as the leading cause of death. High-income counties experienced a greater decrease in mortality rates caused by heart disease and cancer compared to lower-income counties.

Companies like General Electric are teaming up with hospitals to reduce direct costs and improve health outcomes— Cost reduction and outcome improvement in maternal care has been a particular focus for these companies that cite maternal care costs as the largest chunk of high-cost claims. The companies also believe that reducing unnecessary procedures can help decrease workforce turnover. General Electric saved \$2 million since 2016 by providing a bundled payment program that covers non-high-risk pregnancies with a single payment rate for 136 of its employees.

Seniors in some states may soon have access to in-home care through Medicare Advantage— Nearly half of the states will begin covering these services starting next year that could affect nearly 780,000 beneficiaries. Each plan will differ in terms of what kinds of benefits are covered and out-of-pocket costs. Anthem Health Insurance plans to include alternative medicine, daily care visits, and personal home helpers for some beneficiaries. The goal is to bridge the gap between Medicare and long-term care by providing in-home care focused on preventive health services.

Veterans Health Administration reports large numbers of vacancies in rural and high-cost urban areas, which may lead to long wait times— More than 20 percent of health care jobs are vacant in Montana and Colorado Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities. Some reasons cited for the vacancies include a lengthy hiring process and a less competitive salary compared to equivalent private-sector jobs. The new Secretary of VA will focus on filling primary care and mental health vacancies, and will look to increase salaries as well as implement student loan forgiveness.

Highlighted Reports and Studies of the Week

1. Study from *PLOS One* showed that 220,000 deaths could be avoided every year with a 163 percent tax on processed meats and a 34 percent tax on unprocessed meats.
2. Study from the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* of over 9,600 injury compensation claims in Maryland between 2008 and 2016 indicated that workers above the age of 60 that filed for these claims were most likely to continue refilling their opioid prescriptions beyond 90 days.
3. Study from the *Urban Institute* found that safety-net programs decreased the number of hardships by 48 percent for low-income families with children from 1992 to 2011. The share of individuals who experience food insecurity decreased by 72 percent.
4. Study from the *Annals of Internal Medicine* revealed that the United States ranked second in the greatest increase in drug overdose deaths for men (4.3 percent/year) and women (5.3 percent/year) following Estonia in 2016.
5. Report by the CDC concluded that there was a 17 percent increase in the number of gun homicides in the US from 2012 to 2016. Suicide by firearm increased by 21 percent from 2006 to 2016.
6. Report by a United Nations advocacy group found that the number of women and girls using contraceptives increased by 17 percent in the last 6 years amongst many developing countries. This led to the prevention of 20 million unsafe abortions between 2017 and 2018.

California

With more than forty confirmed deaths and hundreds missing, Camp Fire has been declared California's deadliest fire– Apart from the destruction of thousands of structures and the death of more than 40 individuals, the fires are also leading to poor air quality and adverse health conditions for individuals who are more than 100 miles north of the fires due to the strong winds.

Mass shooting in Thousand Oaks led to the murder of 12 individuals by a Marine veteran with possible mental health illness– The veteran was seen by a mental health specialist who determined that he may have post-traumatic stress disorder, although he was not involuntarily committed for psychiatric evaluation. The weapon was thought to have been obtained illegally and was prohibited under state law given the size of its magazine. Incidentally, there was an influx of firearm purchases by many fearful residents in Thousand Oaks following the shooting.

Last week, California voters passed Propositions 4 and 11– Proposition 4 authorizes the sale of a \$1.5 billion bond that will be used to develop infrastructure for children's hospitals. The Legislative Analyst's Office predicts that the bond will cost Californian taxpayers \$80 million every year for the next 35 years. Proponents say that this will aid hospitals in keeping up with the seismic safety requirements. Opponents argued that a large portion of the funds will be allocated to hospitals that are already generating surplus revenue. The passage of Proposition 11 means that emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics will remain on duty during their meal breaks. The proposition was introduced largely through the ambulance industry as a reaction to the 2016 California Supreme Court decision that private-sector security guards must receive uninterrupted breaks. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, the failure of the proposition to pass would result in an increase of \$100 million in costs every year for the ambulance industry. Proponents of Prop 4 spent \$11 million and proponents of Prop 11 spent \$30 million.

Medical Board of California is cracking down on physicians unnecessarily prescribing narcotics– In what has been termed the "Death Certificate Project," the board has been investigating death certificates from 2012 to 2013 to determine whether physicians' prescription patterns resulted in drug overdose deaths. The project has been going on for three years with 23 physicians facing disciplinary action and hundreds more to be questioned. The California Medical Association (CMA) and physicians are pushing back arguing that the impact of the opioid epidemic was not well known at the time that the prescriptions were written.

Other States

Federal commission asks Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to consider pausing Medicaid work requirement rollout in Arkansas– More than 8,400 people in Arkansas have already lost their Medicaid health insurance due to the work requirements. The Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) is requesting the Secretary of the DHHS to pause the rollout in Arkansas as well as other state approvals until a more efficient system of notifying and educating people is developed.

New Hampshire and Arkansas among many states to transition to electronic cards for people receiving benefits through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)– By 2020, all states will have to transition to electronic cards. Currently, many states, including New Hampshire, were still using paper vouchers. The transition requirement was put forth after public health officials determined that the vouchers were placing a stigma on the beneficiaries because they were conspicuous, and were inconvenient because all benefits had to be used at the time the voucher was redeemed.

Medical marijuana is now legal in 31 states– On November 6th, voters in Missouri and Utah passed ballot initiatives to legalize the use of medical marijuana. In Utah, the medical marijuana business will be highly regulated by the state. Growing marijuana at home will remain illegal. In Missouri, medical marijuana users will be allowed to have plants in their homes. Michigan became the tenth state to legalize recreational marijuana. Voters in North Dakota did not pass Measure 3, which would have legalized marijuana for recreational use.

Problems remain despite passage of Illinois state law that prohibits police departments from firing officers for seeking mental health treatment– Officers who have inpatient stays at mental health facilities are required to give up their firearm owner's identification (FOID) card. Instead of firing officers, the police department began placing them on desk duty if the card was taken from the officer. As a result, officers began neglecting their mental health. Legislators may consider making revisions to the law as some are pushing for the complete elimination of FOID cards while others say that more knowledge is required so that officers understand that FOID cards are not taken away without sufficient cause.

Healthcare-Related Surveys

53%

Percentage of patients who reported that they would prefer non-medical alternatives to treatment such as nutrition plans and meditation.

92%

Percentage of healthcare providers who reported feeling concerned about the new Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) rule that requires providers to display their standard prices online.

95%

Percentage of physicians who earned a positive payment adjustment in the first year through the Quality Payment Program's Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS).

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

Children's oral care product manufacturers are beginning to shift the focus from marketing to parents to marketing directly to children– The Innova Market Insights data indicates a 4 percentage point increase in the number of children-focused products launched between 2016 and 2017. Companies are beginning to focus on the flavors that children will enjoy along with marketing that will attract their attention. To keep parents invested, the products have labels such as “natural” or “sugar-free.”

Hunger as
a Health
Issue

Next week is National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (HHAW)– Communities in America recognize HHAW as a time to spread awareness about hunger and poverty and ways to address the root cause of these issues. The event was founded at Villanova University in 1975, and is now celebrated in over 700 high schools and universities throughout the US.

Mental/
Behavioral
Health

World Health Organization (WHO) released the *Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (2013-2020)*– This first-ever guideline highlights ways that the health community can address the mental health needs of all people. It includes tailored recommendations to address co-morbidity such as HIV/ AIDS or cardiovascular disease and severe mental disorders. The recommendations were made to be culturally and economically relevant for all countries.