



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
HEALTH

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Healthcare News At A Glance

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) introduces proposal to allow Medicare plans more decision-making power over protected class drugs–

Currently, Medicare Part D plans must cover six protected class drugs including HIV treatments, antidepressants, and cancer drugs regardless of cost. This proposal allows Part D plans to exclude drugs for which the market price increases faster than inflation. The CMS administrator and the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) believe that this will provide Medicare with more bargaining power and will discourage pharmaceutical price hikes. Some advocacy groups for seniors' health argue that this will endanger access to necessary medications for seniors.

Data from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate historically low abortion rates– The number of physician-reported abortions declined by nearly 25 percent from 2006 to 2015. The greatest drop, more than 50 percent, was observed in the teenage age group (15-19 years). The data also indicated an 11 percent increase in abortions being performed within six weeks of gestation. A similar trend has been occurring worldwide according to another report.

United States Preventive Services Task Force issue recommendation regarding pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)– The recommendation asks physicians to offer PrEP to all patients at risk for contracting HIV. Analysis of the data shows that less than 7 percent of eligible Americans used the drug in 2016, despite its proven efficacy in preventing HIV. The recommendations also provide guidance in determining at-risk groups.

Newly-approved EpiPen generic is no cheaper than brand drug– Teva Pharmaceuticals is selling its generic epinephrine pen for \$300, the same price as the Mylan brand drug. Mylan hiked the price to \$600 but reduced it after public outcry. When asked, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner stated that the agency is not allowed to control commercial pricing decisions and that usually, prices drop more with at least three generic competitors.

Highlighted Studies of the Week

1. Study from the *Journal of Applied Physiology* finds that the muscles of older exercisers have similar amounts of capillaries and enzymes as active people in their 20s. The aerobic capacities of older exercisers are 40 percent greater than their inactive peers.
2. Study from the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found a 245 percent increase in amphetamine-related hospitalizations between 2008 and 2015. The costs associated with these hospitalizations increased by 405 percent, totaling \$2.2 billion in 2015.
3. Study from the *Annals of Internal Medicine* indicated that diabetics who were covered through their employers were more likely to postpone necessary checkups (by 1.5 months on average), diagnostics (1.9 months on average), and medical procedures (3.1 months on average) if they switched from low-deductible to high-deductible plans.
4. Study from *Surgery* of 529 surgery patients found that complications related to surgery did not affect patient satisfaction with 72 percent of patients giving their surgeons the highest ratings—14 percent of those experienced complications.
5. Study from *Pediatrics* found that children who are who are obese have a 30 percent higher risk of asthma than children of healthy weight.

California

FDA and CDC lift warning on romaine lettuce that is not from northern or central California– Just before Thanksgiving, the CDC issued a warning to consumers that romaine lettuce may be infected with E. coli. This week, officials lifted the warning for any lettuce that was not harvested in northern or central California. Sixty-five people in twelve states became ill due to E. coli infections. Growers, processors, and sellers have been advised to label their individually packaged lettuce. Officials are also looking into methods of tracing products to prevent future outbreaks.

Other States

Kentucky receives federal approval for new Medicaid rules again after federal judge blocked the first attempt almost five months ago– Over 400,000 more individuals received healthcare benefits through Medicaid after Kentucky expanded its Medicaid program. Now, the state's governor looks to slash dental and vision benefits and implement "community engagement" requirements for able-bodied adults between the ages of 19 and 64, citing \$2 billion in savings over the next five years. Some state officials believe that a minimum of 95,000 people will lose their coverage.

Veterans Affairs (VA) in Connecticut will now be accepting 'bad paper' veterans after a veteran-turned-minister succeeds in his efforts to change state laws– Previously, veterans who were discharged for "other than honorable" reasons were denied health care and other benefits. Minister Thomas Burke was a veteran who was given an "other than honorable" discharge after he was found using a cannabis-derived psychoactive drug. Burke explained that he was using the drug to handle the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that was triggered by a traumatic event related to his time in service. The VA made an exception and offered him mental health services which led him to his role as a pastor during this recovery process. Due to his lobbying efforts, veterans with "bad papers" will now have access to state health care and other benefits if their discharge is related to PTSD, brain injury, or sexual assault. Similarly, a federal bill to expand mental health care to veterans with "bad papers" was passed earlier this year and can affect up to 500,000 veterans.

Minnesota Department of Health report sheds light on childhood diabetes– The report indicates that young adults were three to four times more likely than adults to be hospitalized for type I and type II diabetes or diabetes-related incidences. Type II is becoming more common in young adults due to the obesity epidemic. The state's Health Commissioner says that this report will allow Minnesota to focus on improving care for these populations.

Thirty-six children suffer from a chickenpox outbreak at a North Carolina school– The Asheville Waldorf school is one of 160 schools in the US that provides Waldorf education. The county health department suspects that the outbreak occurred due to a high rate of medical and religious exemptions for vaccinations at this school. The affected children will be under quarantine for 21 days.

Louisiana Department of Health found lead in drinking water of more than ten schools– Of the 23 percent of schools tested, 60 percent had excessive lead levels in the schools' drinking water. Some schools have not updated their plumbing structures since the late 1980s.

Boston company partners with Walmart to provide mental health treatment– Beacon Health Options opened a clinic in a Texas Walmart and provides a licensed clinical social worker who will take appointments online or by phone. A sliding-fee schedule is available for patients without health insurance, and the company is working with the Texas Medicaid program to get reimbursement approval. Their goal is to expand mental health care services in rural areas nationwide.

Ohio and dozens of other states have no regulations on mid-wives– Close to 60,000 deliveries occurred outside of the hospital in 2017. The rise in out-of-hospital deliveries sheds light on the regulation of non-nurse midwives. Many states have no regulations regarding these practitioners who often deal with life-or-death situations. Midwives can receive certification by attending midwifery training and passing a written test. There are currently 2,200 active certified professional midwives (CPMs) in the US. The American Medical Association is insisting on requirements that mandate CPMs to have malpractice insurance nationwide. Currently, Alabama, Indiana, and Florida are the only states that have this requirement.

Spotlight on Loma Linda

Center for Christian Bioethics forms new Advisory Council

The new Advisory Council will include experts in ethics, health care, and religion from places such as the University of California at San Francisco, Cambria Health Foundation, and Oregon Health and Sciences University. The new Advisory Council will provide a link between academia and healthcare and offer leadership and guidance to the center.

Loma Linda University Health (LLUH) Beaumont-Banning host successful food drive

This year, more than 120 volunteers, including administrators from LLUH, participated in the annual food drive. This community outreach event was a partnership between LLUH, Side by Side Humanitarian, and San Gorgonio Memorial Hospital. More than 500 community members were provided with food and other resources.

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

Columbia University's College of Dental Medicine (CDM) receives \$585,000 grant from Delta Dental to replace old mobile dental clinic van to help underserved children– The mobile currently serves children in the Bronx, Washington Heights, Inwood, and Harlem. The grant will allow CDM to replace the van with a newer model in order to continue providing care. The mobile clinic has more than 3,000 visits every year. For many children, the van is the only source of dental care.

Hunger as a Health Issue

New program helps cancer patients who are often underweight or malnourished due to treatment learn how to find healthy foods– The OhioHealth program partners cancer patients with dietitians who take them through the grocery aisles in Kroger and provide them with nutritional information, recipes, shopping lists, and a cookbook. The \$7,000 program is run through a Kroger grocery store in Delaware that was funded by the OhioHealth Foundation that also has a health center in Delaware.

Mental/ Behavioral Health

Universities and colleges in Tennessee are implementing mental wellness programs to help students– The number of college students seeking mental health treatment has increased by 13 percentage points in the last ten years with 33 percent of students having done so in 2017. College leaders in Tennessee schools drafted a recommendation in 2016. Since then, schools in the area increased the funding for their mental health research departments and implemented their own programs to improve access and encourage students to seek help.