



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
HEALTH

Institute for Health Policy and Leadership

February 13, 2019 | Issue 48

Healthcare News At A Glance

National

Johnson and Johnson to display prescription drug price on television advertisement– The company will display both the list price and potential out-of-pocket cost to the consumer for their oral blood thinner Xarelto. The Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary has called upon other companies to do the same.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) finds 22 percent of Walgreens stores sold tobacco products to minors– Walgreens had nearly 1,800 violations. The FDA placed the company on notice and filed a ban prohibiting one of its locations from selling tobacco products for 30 days. The FDA found that companies such as Walmart, Rite Aid, and Dollar General were also in violation.

FDA sends warning to dietary supplement companies over “unproven claims” of treatment and prevention– The FDA plans to improve oversight of dietary supplements by looking into possible updates and creating new strategies of enforcement procedures.

HHS releases new rules to ensure better access to electronic health records– The rules would require hospitals to provide electronic health data to all patients who receive their health insurance through a government agency. The rule would also require providers to publicly report any instances of blocking or limiting the availability of electronic health records. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) each proposed recommendations including the development of a standard user interface.

Commonwealth Fund releases results of 10 years of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)– The report finds that the number of people who are uninsured and the amount of time that people experience coverage gaps have declined. Roughly the same amount of adults between the ages of 19 and 64 continue to be underinsured compared to when the law was first enacted. Moreover, a larger proportion of insured people are underinsured now than in 2010. The authors suggest Medicaid expansion and limits on short-term health insurance plans as potential solutions.

Highlighted Healthcare Studies

1. Study in the *BMJ Journal Tobacco Control* finds that electronic cigarette companies increased their nicotine content from 1 to 2 percent to 5 to 7 percent. The researchers hypothesize that the success of Juul, which started with a 5 percent nicotine content, is what spurred such an increase. A single pod with 5 percent nicotine content contains as much nicotine as an entire pack of cigarettes.
2. Study in the *Journal PLOS ONE* finds that some antidepressants such as Prozac and Zoloft inhibit a liver protein from breaking down certain pain-relieving opioids such as Vicodin. Patients who are taking antidepressants and pain medications have worse pain control after discharge from the hospital.
3. Study in *Pediatrics* finds that the proportion of gun-owning, non-Hispanic, Caucasian families with children increased by seven percentage points between 1976 and 2016. The researchers said that this partially explains the rise in child mortality.
4. Study in *Radiology* finds that the victims of domestic violence have a greater number of fractures in specific areas and are four times as likely as non-victims to undergo imaging tests.
5. Study in the journal *Science* finds that an experimental pill that injects insulin into the stomach lining is successful in lowering the blood sugar in pigs. The results are comparable to a standard insulin shot.

California

Report by the Union of Concerned Scientists finds that California's air pollution disproportionately affects people of lower socioeconomic status and people of color– The analysis finds that African Americans and Latinos breathe 40 percent more particulate matter than Caucasians. Asians are exposed to 20 percent more pollution than Caucasians. Moreover, households that do not have a car experience 20 percent higher pollution than average when the income is less than \$20,000 a year. There is also geographic variation in the amount of pollution. In areas with a relatively lower amount of pollution, low-income communities are still disproportionately affected.

Other States

New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene bans sales of foods infused with cannabidiol (CBD)– The department is not permitting food places to sell any foods or drinks with products not approved as safe for consumption, including the cannabis derivative CBD. Some cities and states that have legalized marijuana, either recreationally or medically, have also been working to prevent the sale of CBD-infused goods for the same reason.

Texas Department of Insurance mediation program for patients with unexpected hospital bills sees increase in complaints– Within a year of the expansion of the mediation program that made more consumers eligible, the department saw an increase of over 115 percent in problematic bills. The program negotiates a fair price for services, mostly over the phone. In 2018, the program decreased the total amount of all the charges from \$9.7 million to \$1.3 million. New York, California, and Florida have laws in place that prevent surprise billing to various degrees. Colorado lawmakers have introduced a bill to do the same.

New Hampshire's Division of Public Health Services notes a rapid increase in hepatitis A cases– More people were diagnosed in the last three months with the virus than the average annual diagnoses in the last five years. The division's officials believe that the epidemic may be occurring due to individuals who are homeless and/or have a substance use disorder.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) finds spike in sex-trafficking activity in Georgia due to Super Bowl– The operation was conducted by multiple local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and organizations. They rescued nine juveniles and nine adult victims. An FBI agent reported that such activity tends to increase during large-scale events.

Department of Justice joins Pennsylvania prosecutors to file civil lawsuit against Philadelphia's supervised injection sites for opioids– The nonprofit Safehouse was planning to open up the very first supervised injection facility in the nation. The lawsuit says that opening such a site will violate the Controlled Substances Act which has a provision that makes it illegal to maintain spaces that store, produce, or distribute illegal drugs. Those opposed to the sites believe the sites will promote the use of opioids and illegal substances. Those in favor reference the success of such facilities in Canada and Europe and say the sites will help prevent unintended deaths by having staff present and ready to act in case of emergencies.

Measles outbreak spurs demand for vaccines in Washington– The orders for state-supplied children's vaccines increased by 30 percent in January 2019 compared to January 2018 throughout the state of Washington. In some counties, the orders increased by nearly 500 percent. After more than 50 people were confirmed to have the measles this year, parents have been bringing their children into clinics to get vaccinated. Many counties in Washington have a lower than adequate vaccination rate and Washington is one of 17 states that allows for non-medical exemptions from vaccination requirements.

Utah lawmakers limit Medicaid after voters successfully passed Medicaid expansion ballot initiative last year– The new legislation will reduce the number of new people eligible for Medicaid by half and will include work requirements that have not yet been approved by the administration. The new eligibility requirement is an income of \$12,000 a year or less per individual as opposed to \$17,000 a year. If the administration does not approve the Medicaid waiver, the measure will revert to what was originally passed in the ballot measure.

Missouri, Alabama, and Mississippi among the seven states being targeted for new HIV initiative–The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) director stated that the goal is to reduce AIDS by 90 percent within 2030. The administration's plans include increasing funding and creating local HIV Health groups to promote prevention and treatment in areas that have the greatest number of new infections. Many of these states have not expanded Medicaid.

CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Updates

27.1%

Percentage of high school students who reported using some tobacco product in 2018.

47.2%

Percentage of adults who were aware of all five symptoms of a heart attack. This represents a 7.6 percentage point increase since 2008.

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

Massachusetts lawmakers considering bill to make changes to reimbursement of dental schools through Medicaid– The bill calls for the creation of a task force to review all healthcare reimbursement-related laws, identify payment structure for teaching facilities in Boston to receive funds from MassHealth (Massachusetts's version of Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program), and provide recommendations for basic and restorative oral health services to dental schools in Massachusetts.

Hunger as a Health Issue

The Fun City Challenge will be awarding \$5,000 to the winner next week– The challenge is an initiative that asks teams to find ways to address food insecurity and poverty in the Philadelphia region. Five finalists are competing. One group created an application that connects volunteers to supermarkets that have excess foods. The volunteers can then take the foods to people in need. One team proposed creating an outreach team that identifies people in need and educates them.

Mental/ Behavioral Health

Study in the *Journal of American Medicine Pediatrics* finds that nearly 50 percent of children with mental health conditions do not get the treatment they need– Almost 17 percent of the 46.6 million children in the survey had at least one mental health condition, and 50 percent of them were not receiving treatment from a mental health provider. The data also indicated geographic variation. For instance, Hawaii had the least prevalence of mental health issues in children at 7.6 percent while Maine had the greatest with 27.2 percent prevalence.