

California

The number of patients leaving the emergency room (ER) against medical advice increased by 57 percent between 2012 and 2017– According to the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, hundreds of thousands of patients are leaving ERs without being seen due to overcrowding and long wait times. In 2017, the median wait time at a California ER was 80 minutes longer than the nationwide median wait time. The counties of Fresno, Shasta, Yuba, Kern, San Bernardino, and Tulare had more than 5 percent of ER encounters that ended too soon.

Other States

Businesses and workers in Minnesota see roughly 10 percent hike in healthcare spending despite utilizing cost-saving strategies– In 2018, health care spending in Minnesota increased by three times the national growth rate. Companies in the state were already moving employees to high-deductible health plans and generic drugs. The state also had increased competition with national carriers introducing new plan options. Only 12 percent of employers switched plans despite 33 of them seeking new plans. The employers say this is primarily due to the rising costs of healthcare.

Another child dies in a Border Patrol holding area in Texas– This week, a 16-year-old boy died from the flu and was found unresponsive in the holding area. He was the fifth Guatemalan minor to die since December. After the child reported that he was not feeling well, he was diagnosed with the flu and prescribed Tamiflu. He was relocated to another station where he died after 18 hours.

Arizona passes bill to find information on missing Indigenous women– Arizona has the third highest number of missing and murdered Indigenous women in the country. The bill calls for the development of a task force to study the epidemic and determine how to reduce violence. There are currently 22 tribes in the state. Many have missing members. Montana, Washington, New Mexico, and Oregon have passed similar bills.

Several nursing homes closed in Massachusetts after licenses revoked for not paying employees– The team in charge has relocated over 90 percent of the residents. The state has closed down nearly 200 nursing homes between 2000 and 2018. The recent closures were pertaining to a New Jersey-based company that was struggling to pay the bills. Low Medicaid reimbursement rates were cited as a key driver of the closures.

Alabama legislature passes strictest abortion law in the country– Last week, the state passed a bill that would consider performing abortion at any stage a felony, even in the cases of rape or incest. Alabama's law is scheduled to go into effect later this year. There are currently only three abortion clinics left in Alabama. Ohio, Georgia, Mississippi, and Kentucky have passed "heartbeat bills" that ban abortion after a fetal heartbeat is detected, usually within 6-8 weeks. The laws directly conflict with *Roe v. Wade* and are likely to be challenged in court.

New Orleans' Emergency Medical Services forms liaison for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) communities– The role of the liaison is to train first responders on common health issues that LGBTQ people face and ways to respectfully care for these individuals as they are taken to the hospital.

County Executive of Wisconsin city signs resolution declaring racism a public health problem– The Milwaukee County Executive hopes that the resolution will influence county officials to frame the issues in terms of the health disparities that are caused by racism. Among the action items, the resolution states that the county will work to understand institutional and structural racism and develop strategies to increase diversity and inclusion.

Maryland hospitals filed hundreds of thousands of lawsuits between 2003 and 2008 and received \$100 million payments from unpaid bills– Hospitals in the state have been suing patients, particularly those from low-income or disadvantaged communities, for unpaid hospital bills. A spokesperson for the Maryland Hospital Association said that the hospitals work with patients who cannot afford to pay their bills. In other Maryland news, a group of undergraduate students at Johns Hopkins University formed a startup that utilizes low-cost reusable needles to perform cancer biopsies. Clinics in South Africa and Peru are interested in the device.

Healthcare-Related Rankings

The United Health Foundation ranked states according to the number of primary care physicians per 100,000 people. Availability of primary care physicians is associated with better patient health outcomes.

Highest

- 1) Rhode Island – 264.5
- 2) Massachusetts- 245
- 3) New York- 223.7

Lowest

- 1) Idaho - 95.7
- 2) Utah – 99.2
- 3) Nevada – 107.6

The United Health Foundation ranked states according to the rate of preventable hospitalizations per 1,000 Medicare patients. These kinds of hospitalizations tend to occur in outpatient settings.

Highest

- 1) Kentucky – 76.6
- 2) West Virginia – 75
- 3) Mississippi – 70.2

Lowest

- 1) Hawaii – 23.3
- 2) Utah – 27.9
- 3) Colorado – 31.2

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

Director of University of North Carolina (UNC)-Chapel Hill’s School of Dentistry looking to expand teledentistry model across the state– Currently, dental hygienists and dentists are mostly concentrated in five counties. North Carolina ranks 37th in the country in terms of the dentists per capita. The UNC director discussed the model at a summit last year and has garnered support from the North Carolina Dental Society.

Hunger as a Health Issue

Oregon to expand federal free lunch program to tens of thousands of students– The Oregon Center for Public Policy found that one in seven households in Oregon is food insecure. The new program is part of a school funding tax package that will charge businesses a 0.5 percent tax. The program will expand the provision of free and reduced meals for children from households with incomes of up to 180 percent to 300 percent of the federal poverty level.

Mental/ Behavioral Health

Company finds that while mental health awareness has increased, access to services and quality care is still lacking– The virtual behavioral health company AbleTo created a state of behavioral health report card and found that 60 percent of adults suffering from mental health issues do not receive treatment because the supply hasn’t caught up with the demand. While innovation and awareness received a “B+” on the report card, access, quality, and value received a “C” or lower.

If you would like to subscribe to our weekly newsletter, please [click here](#).