



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY  
HEALTH

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# Healthcare News At A Glance

## National

**After the mass shootings in Ohio, Texas, and California, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) states that mental illness is not the main issue**— The APA stated that blaming mass shooting on mental illness is going to further stigmatize those with mental illness and that there is scant evidence of any association between violent video games, mental illness, and mass shootings. APA's president added that the rates of mental illness are more or less similar around the world but other countries do not make access to firearms readily available. Other healthcare organizations also issued their statements that included a need for more firearm research and regulation. UnitedHealthcare will be offering mental health therapy through a phone line for anyone who has been impacted.

**Attorneys general (AGs) from 22 states request Congress to take action on manmade, toxic chemicals**— Per- and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals (PFAS) are a threat to public health. PFAS are dangerous at low concentrations and are often found in groundwater wells in public and private systems because of the use of firefighting foam. The chemicals do not degrade. The AGs have requested Congress to set strict limits on PFAS, designate them as "hazardous substances," and provide financial assistance to low-income communities that have unsafe drinking water.

**Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) proposes new outcomes measure for organ donations**— CMS proposed two new outcome variables that would determine how many organs are potentially available and how many are transplanted.

**Canadian healthcare leaders express concern over US president's announcement regarding drug importation from Canada**— After the US Health and Human Services Secretary announced that the department is looking for ways to set up a system to import pharmaceutical drugs from Canada, some Canadian healthcare leaders discussed their concerns. They fear that this may cause a further pharmaceutical drug shortage for Canadians. In similar news, a report by Vizient indicates that hospitals and health systems may see a 5 percent increase in pharmaceutical spending in 2020.

## Highlighted Studies of the Week

1. Study in the *Journal of Addiction Medicine* finds that 1.2 million people in America achieved long-term opioid recovery through formal addiction treatment, medication-assisted treatment, and other recovery support services.
2. Study from the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open* finds that in a sample where there were 188 adverse events related to surgery, more than 50 percent resulted from human errors.
3. Study from *Brain Injury* finds that nearly three-quarters of all youth traumatic brain injury-related emergency department visits are linked to common items such as furnishings, bicycles, footballs, and car seats.
4. Study from *Cancer* finds that cancer survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other non-heterosexual orientation had far less access to follow-up care and other services. They were also more likely to have worse mental and physical quality of life.

## Updates from Federal Agencies

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**- overdose rates in urban areas slightly exceeded the overdose rates in rural areas in 2017

**Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**-one in 20 duodenoscopes have disease-causing bacteria despite proper sanitation techniques

## California

**Kern Medical Center kicks off Valley Fever Awareness month**– In partnership with the Kern County Museum, the medical center's Valley Fever Institute will be hosting an awareness walk for valley fever in hopes that more people get tested if they display the symptoms. Valley Fever is a fungal infection that can cause multiple symptoms such as fever and cough, and oilfield workers have the greatest risk of infection. In the last decade, 150 people died from valley fever in Kern County.

**State auditor finds that multiple rural counties failed to ensure access to quality care for Medi-Cal beneficiaries**– The Joint Legislative Audit Committee asked the state auditor to review the counties to determine whether the quality and cost of care for those who were placed in managed care plans from fee-for-service plans in 2013 were comparable to those of their peers. The auditor determined that the quality was not up to par with the managed care plans and they failed to meet the minimum for several quality metrics. Similarly, eight rural counties that had their own non-profit managed care program were failing in six quality metric categories. The major managed care contracts will expire between 2020 and 2023, and the state auditor recommends that the regions move toward a county-operated health system.

## Other States

**In sponsorship with the American Medical Association, Becker's Hospital Review releases its 105 physician leaders of hospitals and health systems list for 2019**– The list recognizes those physicians who have demonstrated clinical expertise and strong leadership. Among the notable figures included was Loma Linda University Health's very own **Dr. Richard Hart!** Congratulations!

**Tennessee-based Le Bonheur Healthcare to make reforms after ProPublica investigation showed that the healthcare system was using aggressive tactics to collect unpaid medical bills from low-income patients**– Among other things, the company announced that it will stop suing patients that are also their own employees for unpaid hospital bills and will expand the financial assistance policy for families from 125 percent of the federal poverty line to 250 percent of the federal poverty line. The system will stop accepting court-ordered interest on the medical debt. Hospital officials also announced that the company will be raising the minimum wage from \$10.08/hour to \$15/hour by 2021. In other Le Bonheur news, physicians at the Children's Hospital successfully reconstructed a voice box for a 2-year old who had an obstructed airway using his ribs.

**Florida's surgeon general declares hepatitis A outbreak a public health emergency**– Since January, more than 2,000 cases of hepatitis A were identified in Florida which is almost four times the amount of cases in the entire year of 2018. Hepatitis A is a heavily contagious liver infection that is caused by a virus. The state's surgeon general is urging people to get vaccinated against hepatitis A and is recommending hospitals to screen for the virus and vaccinate high-risk people such as intravenous drug users, homeless individuals, and people with chronic diseases.

**UnitedHealthcare to provide \$1.1 million grants to nonprofits in Ohio to improve healthcare access**– As part of UnitedHealthcare's Empowering Health initiative to address the social determinants of health, the organization will be awarding four nonprofits: \$500,000 for a foodbank's new and leased refrigerated trucks; \$355,000 for two organizations to provide on-demand ride services to the hospital via passenger vans for youth and senior in isolated neighborhoods; and \$250,000 for a company that offers vision screening and glasses for low-income students.

**Texas Department of State Health Services finds that vaccinations have been decreasing**– The state requires vaccinations for seven vaccines including those against chickenpox, hepatitis A, and measles in order for children to enroll in schools. The number of exemptions is six times higher in the 2018-2019 school year than it was in the 2005-2006 school year. The exemption rates are particularly high in some pockets of large districts.

**Massachusetts considering opening a residential treatment facility for young men with video game addiction**– Tennessee's Odyssey Behavioral Healthcare has filed for a special permit to start up the Greenfield Recovery Center in Massachusetts that would serve as a voluntary program for men between the ages of 18 and 25 year who are suffering from gaming disorder. The center plans to charge \$600 per day and provide therapy, art, yoga, and music to the residents for an average of 45 to 90 days. Participants would be asked to check in all electronic devices on the first day. Odyssey Behavioral Healthcare already operates such facilities for eating disorder and social integration.

## Healthcare Polls and Surveys

# 22%

Percentage of Americans who reported that they are losing sleep every night because of healthcare expenditures or health insurance bills according to a survey by Bankrate

# 75%

Percentage of Americans who reported that they either do not have access to telehealth services or are not aware of any telehealth options according to survey by JD Power

# 86%

Percentage of Americans who reported that they have a great deal or fair amount of faith that scientists act in our best interest according to a survey by Pew Research Center

## 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

**North Carolina's Board of Dental Examiners support rule change allowing dental hygienists to have expanded role**– In the next few months, the rule change will undergo reviews, hearings, and public comments to determine whether dental hygienists should be allowed to clean teeth, take X-rays, and apply sealants without the supervision of an on-site dentist. The state has 165 Dental Health Provider Shortage Areas and roughly 75 percent of the counties have a shortage of dental health providers. Less than one-third of the dentists in the state participated in Medicaid in 2016. The rule change is supported by dentist from the state's dental schools.

Hunger as  
a Health  
Issue

**Zimbabwe faces a severe hunger crisis**– The World Food Programme (WFP) released a call for funding and donations to provide aid to people suffering from hunger in Zimbabwe. Despite being the leading food producer in the region, millions of people in Zimbabwe will be food insecure by October because of the devastating effects of a cyclone and climate change. WFP looks to put an emergency response plan in place for the next nine months at a cost of \$173 million.

Mental/  
Behavioral  
Health

**Multiple school districts in Wisconsin team up to provide mental health services in schools**– For the second year in a row, over 100 school districts across the state of Wisconsin are teaming up to split a large grant to provide mental health services. One school district is considering using its \$75,000 to strengthen its community partnerships, identify gaps in coverage, increase staff training, and roll out a suicide curriculum focused on peer mentoring. Last year, one school district acquired wellness coordinators and expanded on-site counseling.

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