



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY  
HEALTH

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# Healthcare News At A Glance



## National

**Supreme Court rules 5-4 to lift the injunction on the “public charge” rule**– The new rule expands upon the criteria for determining whether an immigrant is considered a “public charge” by including the receipt of non-cash benefits such as government assistance for housing or food as criteria. An immigrant that is deemed a “public charge” may be denied legal status through a green card. In other news, the Supreme Court rejected a request to expedite the appeal of a ruling that the Affordable Care Act’s “individual mandate” violates the Constitution.

**Environmental Protection Agency introduces the Navigable Waters Protection Rule that reduces the number of waterbodies receiving protection under the Clean Water Act**– Multiple streams and wetlands will no longer be under federal control or subject to regulation under the Clean Water Act, leaving states and tribes the authority to regulate them. The EPA Science Advisory Board stated that the rule decreased protections for these water bodies. The EPA administrator stated that such a rule will help states in managing land and water resources.

**Surgeon General releases new report on smoking cessation after 30 years since last one**– The report highlights that more than 66 percent of adults who are currently smoking have expressed interest in quitting and that a majority of them tried to quit in the past year. In a recent speech, the Surgeon General urged those who wish to smoke to try clinical and population-based smoking cessation interventions rather than e-cigarettes.

**Amazon filed trademarks for Amazon Pharmacy in multiple countries including Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom**– In the last two years, the company purchased the Internet pharmacy business PillPack and branded Amazon Pharmacy in the United States. Recently, Amazon filed for patents in other countries.

**Senators issue letter to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requesting ban on plant-based-only products using labels such as milk, cheese, or yogurt**– Senators from Idaho, Maine, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Minnesota stated that the dairy terms should only apply to products containing dairy as dairy farmers are held to high compliance standards for those products.

## Highlighted Healthcare Studies

1. Study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Cardiology* finds that 18 children and young adults from two extended Amish families died from sudden cardiac arrest between 2004 and 2019 due to a rare genetic mutation.
2. Study in *JAMA* finds that preventive checkup rates in pediatric primary clinics increased from 74.9 per 100 children in 2008 to 83.4 per 100 children in 2016. During that same period, overall visits declined by 14.4 percent, mostly driven by a decrease in sick visits.
3. Study in *JAMA Network Open* finds that states that expanded Medicaid were associated with a 6 percent reduction in total opioid overdose deaths and an 11 percent reduction in heroin-related deaths compared to states that did not expand Medicaid.
4. Study in *JAMA Internal Medicine* finds that community-based diabetes screenings can be performed effectively and in a timely manner in barbershops owned by African American individuals. Between 2017 and 2019, approximately 28 percent of participants across eight barbershops in New York City had sugar levels indicating pre-diabetes.

## Updates on the Novel Coronavirus

- As of last weekend, the death toll was 106 and 4,500 people were diagnosed
- A majority of the deaths took place in Wuhan, China, and Chinese authorities implemented a travel lockdown in Central China for 35 million residents
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced five cases in the US including two in California

## California

**Number of people signing up for Covered California surpasses enrollment from last year**– The deadline for open enrollment is January 31, 2020, and roughly 318,000 people have already signed up. Covered California’s executive director anticipates that thousands more will sign up every day until the deadline. Officials find that many Californians may not be aware of the new state individual mandate. To learn more about the individual mandate, read *our policy brief*. In similar news, the president’s administration has given California 30 days to become compliant with federal law by removing the requirement that all insurance plans cover abortion. The state risks losing funds through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

**Panel of scientists to determine whether or not to list acetaminophen (generally known as Tylenol) to the list of carcinogens as per Proposition 65**– The public comment period closed this week and the panel is expected to make a decision by spring on whether acetaminophen should be labeled as a carcinogen. A panel of scientists listed the drug as a “high priority” drug in 2011 after some evidence was released suggesting possible carcinogens.

## Other States

**Thousands of high school students in Minnesota disclosed trading sexual acts for food, shelter, money, drugs or alcohol**– The state’s Department of Health released data showing that around 5,000 youth self-reported trading sexual activities for food, shelter, money or other things of value. Minnesota is the first state in the country to ask such a question and the health commissioner noted that this number may be a severe undercount. The state’s next step will involve identifying at-risk youth and developing treatment programs.

**Illinois signs legislation into law that caps insulin prices**– The cap is \$100 for a one-month supply of insulin regardless of the amount of insulin required to fill a prescription. Currently, the plan only applies to state-regulated commercial insurance plans. The Department of Insurance will also be required to investigate the causes of the rapid increase in insulin prices.

**Thousands of New Mexico residents at risk of losing Medicaid after minimum wage increase**– New Mexico raised the minimum wage to \$9 per hour with plans to increase to \$12 per hour by 2023. The Human Services Department expects that approximately 6,000 people may be at risk of losing Medicaid eligibility due to the first wage increase.

**Some states see first pediatric flu deaths of the flu season**– Minnesota recently reported the first pediatric flu death in the state for this flu season last week. Last flu season, 95 people and one child died from the flu in the state. An epidemiologist from the health department stated that a possible cause is the spread of an influenza B strain that had not been prevalent since the early 1990s. Similarly, Massachusetts also confirmed its first pediatric flu death last week when the teenager also passed away from the influenza B strain. Nationwide, there have been 54 pediatric deaths this season from the flu.

**Families affected by the public health water crisis in 2014 in Flint, Michigan, can file lawsuits against the city**– The Supreme Court refused to hear the city’s appeal when lower courts refused to dismiss the case brought upon by the residents of Flint. The residents alleged that the city’s switching of water sources from Lake Huron to the Flint River led to the death of 12 people from Legionnaire’s disease as a result of ingesting contaminated water in 2014. Several others reported hair loss, skin rashes, and lead poisoning.

**Church in St. Louis, Missouri, purchases millions of dollars in medical debt**– The United Church of Christ congregations and the Deaconess Foundation purchased \$12.9 million in medical debt for \$40,000 and cleared the debt away for more than 11,000 families. The church focused specifically on low-income families. Voters in the state will have the option to expand Medicaid through a ballot measure in November that would provide medical coverage for such low-income families.

**Lawmakers in Wisconsin passes bill to restrict the use of firefighting foam**– Firefighting foam consists of per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that can seep into the soil and drinking water supply and lead to increased risk of cancer, kidney disease, thyroid conditions, and auto-immune disorders. The bill limits the use of the foam in circumstances deemed unnecessary, such as training purposes.

**Milwaukee Veterans Administration conducted nearly 1,500 virtual medical appointments last year with free telehealth service**– Hundreds of patients participated in Milwaukee VA’s virtual appointment program that allows for video conferencing for medical appointments.

**Massachusetts Blue Cross Blue Shield releases new pilot program for non-invasive treatment of knee and low back pain**– Under the pilot program, beneficiaries will receive a foot-worn biomechanical device to treat their symptoms in conjunction with physical therapy visits.

## Recent Healthcare Related Surveys and Polls

# 51%

Percent of individuals with an annual income below \$35,000 that could not afford to fill prescription drugs according to a survey conducted by *NPR*.

# 66%

Percent of Iowa voters who listed the cost of prescription drugs as their primary healthcare concern according to a report by the *Los Angeles Times*.

# 70%

Percent of cancer patients who utilized the Office of National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) data to view their electronic records at least once in 2019.

## Newsbytes Relevant to Our Strategic Priorities

Have you checked out our latest resources from January 2020?



**Policy Brief: Vetoed 2019 Health Legislation in California**

**Issue Brief: Children's Oral Health in San Bernardino County**

**Blogs: The Devastating Impact of Vaping and E-Cigarettes on the Health of our Nation's Youth- Parts 1 & 2**

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

**Dental students from Tufts University receive American Dental Association Foundation community leadership award for Service With A Smile**– The program provides enhanced dental benefits for veterans with the goal of helping aging veterans retain their natural teeth. Among other services, the new funds will be used to provide meal vouchers to veterans who miss their meals at the shelter.

Hunger as  
a Health  
Issue

**Hospital in Illinois launches new software with electronic health record (EHR) system to monitor patients' diets within the hospital**– Alton Memorial Hospital will be utilizing My Dining within the EHR Epic. The hospital staff will be able to send patients' food orders, including allergies and supplements, to the hospital's café. Diet changes for the patient will be updated and tracked promptly through the software and staff will have the ability to track patients' nutritional compliance.

Mental/  
Behavioral  
Health

**New study finds that 1 in 20 teachers in England report long-lasting mental health problems**– The study looked at data from 20,000 teachers over 30 years. The findings suggested that the number of teachers suffering from long-lasting poor mental health increased by four percentage points over three decades. The turnover rate for new teachers in the first five years is roughly 30 percent. The authors suggest reducing workloads and promoting flexibility for teachers.

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