



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
HEALTH

Institute for Health Policy and Leadership

Healthcare News At A Glance

National

Supreme Court grants appeal on an Affordable Care Act (ACA) case— In the coming months, the Supreme Court is expected to hear an appeal of a ruling by a lower court that stated that the ACA's individual mandate was unconstitutional.

Surgeon General urges public to stop purchases of face masks as a prevention measure against the novel coronavirus— Through his social media account, the Surgeon General wrote that the medical masks are not an effective preventative measure against the virus and that purchasing them hinders health care providers' access to masks.

US Preventive Services Task Force releases new sets of recommendations— The task force recommends that healthcare professionals screen all adults between the ages of 18 and 79 years, including pregnant individuals, for hepatitis C. This recommendation is an update from the 2013 recommendation that asked healthcare providers to screen high-risk individuals born between 1945 and 1965. In similar news, the task force declined to recommend or oppose cognitive screening for older adults, citing a lack of high-quality scientific evidence that universal screening of all adults over the age of 65 would lead to improved quality of life.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data finds increases in pediatric flu death and obesity— The CDC data indicates that there were 32 million illnesses, 310,000 hospitalizations, and 18,000 deaths due to flu this season. The agency also determined that the 2019-20 flu season had the highest pediatric death toll since 2004, with the exception of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. In a separate report, the CDC finds that the prevalence rate of obesity hit a 20-year high between 2017 and 2018 with a rate of more than 42 percent.

Clinical trials for treatment for novel coronavirus are underway— The trial has already begun in Nebraska and is expected to have 400 patients in 50 locations around the world. The antiviral remdesivir will be tested.

Office of Inspector General report finds that high-risk drugs may not always be traced throughout the system— The office determined that 48 percent of the high-risk drugs they were tracing could not be successfully tracked all the way through the supply chain. The office is calling for more stringent paperwork requirements for manufacturers.

Highlighted Healthcare Studies

1. Study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open* finds that there was a 2 percent reduction in uncompensated care spending for nonprofit hospitals in Medicaid expansion states that was offset by a 2 percent increase in unreimbursed Medicaid expenses.
2. Study in *JAMA Network Open* finds a decrease from 5.5 new opioid users per 1,000 enrollees to 4.6 new opioid users per 1,000 enrollees in a private health plan after the passage of a 2018 Florida law that limited opioid prescriptions to three days for nonchronic pain.
3. Study in *JAMA Internal Medicine* finds that female department chairs in medical schools in the US have average salaries that are \$70,000 less than their male counterparts after adjusting for academic productivity, years of experience, and specialization.
4. Study in *Advances in Nutrition* finds that a systematic review of 29 journals indicates no association between a child's consumption of whole-fat dairy products and weight gain.
5. Study in *Ophthalmology* finds that roughly three-quarters of those who came to an emergency room for facial trauma from electronic scooter-related injuries were under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
6. Study in *Vaccine* finds that the flu vaccine was 74 percent effective in keeping children with H1N1 out of the hospital between 2005 and 2019.
7. Study in *Pediatrics* finds that 63 percent of pediatricians screened children for developmental delays in 2016.

California

California monitoring more than 8,000 people for novel coronavirus symptoms– The people being monitored arrived on commercial flights from areas where they could have possibly been exposed to the virus. Currently, the state only has around 200 test kits. The CDC director said that more tests will be sent to California in order to expand testing. In similar news, an older woman in Santa Clara County contracted the novel coronavirus last week, making her the second case of unknown origin of the virus in the US. Finally, Los Angeles County declared a public health emergency due to six new cases of the new coronavirus.

US Department of Education finds that the University of Southern California (USC) mishandled the sexual abuse cases against the health center's gynecologist– The department released findings last week that indicated that the University had already known about the allegations against the gynecologist during the investigations but failed to disclose this information to federal agents. Moreover, the university did not investigate at least nine cases against the gynecologist between 2000 and 2009. USC will provide \$215 million in a class action settlement to over 18,000 patients.

Other States

Cities and states all over the US declare public health emergencies over novel coronavirus to request resources for handling possible outbreaks– Early this week, San Antonio, Texas, declared a public health emergency after one woman tested positive for the virus during a quarantine. Additionally, the city of San Francisco declared a local emergency along with several counties in California including the counties of Santa Clara, Sonoma, Orange, and San Diego. Finally, Florida and Washington also declared a state of emergency to bring resources such as the National Guard to combat the outbreaks.

New York's Metropolitan Transit Authority announces plans to clean the city's subways and buses regularly to decrease the chance of the coronavirus spreading– The authority announced that trains and buses would be cleaned every three days and turnstiles, handrails, and ticket vending machines would be cleaned on a daily basis. There was one case of the novel coronavirus reported in New York last week and it did not involve the subway. In other New York news, the federal government denied an \$8 billion request to extend its expanded Medicaid reform program that includes funding to cut down on avoidable hospital use, invest in the healthcare workforce, and provide support for safety-net hospitals.

Georgia experiencing hepatitis A outbreaks– More than 70 cases of hepatitis A were reported in north Georgia recently. Local health officials are recommending hepatitis A vaccines for at-risk individuals, and health departments around the state are offering them for free.

Rhode Island offering medication-assisted treatment for all prisoners with opioid addiction– With a \$2 million annual budget, the state is able to offer all inmates with counseling and all three of the medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Brown University researchers found that this program has decreased overdose deaths of recently incarcerated people by 66 percent from 2016 to 2017.

Colorado's governor releases plan on state public option– The plan indicates that the state option could lead to a 20% monthly cost savings for consumers. According to public officials, the plan would benefit rural hospitals. It includes payments to hospitals at a starting rate of 155 percent of the rate of Medicare reimbursements. The Division of Insurance estimates that between 4,600 and 9,200 people will participate in the plan.

West Virginia's senate passes bill to create a trust fund from Medicaid funds– The bill calls for allocating \$150 million of Medicaid funding into a trust fund in case Medicaid funds run short in the future. The bill is now headed to the House of Delegates.

Nonprofit to proceed with opening an injection site in Philadelphia– After a federal judge refused the Justice Department's attempts to block the plan, a nonprofit wants to proceed with opening a supervised injection facility in the city. This facility would allow those with drug addictions to use drugs under supervision. The facility would also provide them with information for treatment and health services. The city has over 1,100 overdose deaths annually. A US attorney has expressed plans to appeal the federal court's decision to the 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals.

Healthcare-related Surveys and Polls

46%

Percent of respondents who said they dipped into retirement funds or other savings in order to pay their medical bills according to a survey by NBC News and Commonwealth Fund.

55%

Percent of respondents who reported feeling some amount of concern over a potential widespread outbreak of the novel coronavirus in the US according to a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

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

American Dental Association (ADA) and American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) urge CMS to consider preventive coverage in dental plans–

The ADA and AAPD asked CMS to promote optimal oral health by providing comprehensive preventive oral health practices in all dental benefit plans. The organizations also included a list of procedures that should be 100% covered such as topical fluoride applications, oral health risk assessments, and athletic mouth guards. The comments also discussed premium adjustment percentages, maximum annual out-of-pocket limits on cost-sharing, and quality rating systems.

Hunger as
a Health
Issue

Organizations host meal packing event to provide tens of thousands of meals for children in Tennessee–

The group One Country Give partnered with Numana Inc for the Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee. More than 500 volunteers packed 165,000 meals. To learn more about food insecurity and meals provided to children in school, check out *our issue brief*.

Mental/
Behavioral
Health

Legislators in Virginia pass bill to require full-time teachers to undergo mental health awareness training– School boards will be required to adopt and implement mental health awareness training programs for full-time teachers. Teachers will be trained on recognizing the signs of mental health issues. Roughly 1 out of 5 children with serious mental illness get the help they need, and around 130,000 youth suffer from serious mental illness in Virginia.

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