



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
HEALTH

Institute for Health Policy and Leadership

March 11, 2020 | Issue 99

Healthcare News At A Glance

National

Federal government passes \$8 billion bill to tackle novel coronavirus (COVID-19)– The bill includes funding for public health agencies for vaccines, tests, isolation and quarantine measures, sanitation of public areas, and tracking of cases. Some of the funds are earmarked to help with combating the virus overseas and some will be used to subsidize small business loans.

Health insurance industry announces relief for out-of-pocket costs related to COVID-19 for covered consumers– America's Health Insurance Plans include Cigna Corp and Anthem, Inc. The trade group announced last week that diagnostic tests that are ordered by a physician and potential cost-sharing fees related to coronavirus care may be waived. Some states have issued emergency orders requiring health insurance companies to waive co-pays for coronavirus testing. In related news, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) became the first federal agency to ask people to work from home "out of the abundance of caution."

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) finalizes two new rules to allow patients to access health data– The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology will now require healthcare providers to provide electronic patient data for free. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will be tasked with ensuring that information exchange between providers is secured. Proponents of the new rules say that the ability to access electronic health information will lead to better healthcare utilization by increasing transparency and accessibility. Opponents, such as the American Hospital Association, fear that the rules do not go far enough to protect consumer's personal health information.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends Ebola vaccine for vulnerable groups– The panel recommends that individuals over the age of 17 who may have been exposed to the Ebola outbreak as healthcare personnel, first responders, or laboratorians should receive the preexposure vaccine against the Ebola virus.

New online pharmacy program launches for generic medications– The startup known as Ro will be shipping generic medication for a flat fee of \$5 per month per prescription for over 500 generic drugs.

Highlighted Studies of the Week

1. Study from *Current Biology* finds that the switch to daylight savings time increased the risk of fatal car accidents by 6 percent between 1996 and 2017. No similar increase was seen in the transition to standard time.
2. Meta-analysis from the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* of nine studies finds that female physicians are 46 percent more likely to die by suicide compared to the general population of women while male physicians are 33 percent *less* likely to die by suicide compared to the general population of men.
3. Study from *Clinical Infectious Diseases* finds that high-dose vaccines for the influenza virus were 32 percent effective among people over the age of 65 while the standard-dose were only 6 percent effective.
4. Study from the *Annals of Internal Medicine* finds that the median incubation period for COVID-19 is roughly 5 days and that 98 percent of people who develop symptoms do so within 11.5 days after contracting the virus.
5. Study from *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology* finds that more than 36 percent of children who visited one of 51 children's hospitals in the US were prescribed antibiotics on each of the days tested.
6. Study from *PLOS Medicine* finds that there was a 66 percent lowered risk of the presence of amyloid deposits (brain plaques related to Alzheimer's disease) in people who drank one to 13 standard alcoholic beverages (moderate drinkers) compared to those who abstained completely.

California

California orders full service commercial and Medi-Cal plans to eliminate out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 testing– The health insurance companies are also required to notify their customers of this new order. In similar news, the state doubled the number of people screened for COVID-19 but healthcare experts say that testing is not occurring for enough people. Currently, there are only nineteen public health labs in the state that have kits for testing COVID-19. Only those with fever, cough, and flu-like symptoms are being tested.

Governor of California focuses on homelessness and mental health in State of the State Address– In the address, the governor outlined some proposals to address mental health. One of the proposals includes a nearly \$700 million investment to provide mental health to vulnerable residents through housing aid and other treatment mechanisms. Another proposal includes placing a deadline for counties to spend the funds they received from the Mental Health Services Act by June 30th in efforts to encourage counties to utilize all the funds.

Physician group pushing to include processed meat to the Proposition 65 list that provides cancer warnings on hundreds of products– In June 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer deemed processed meats to be carcinogenic to humans and the World Health Organization affirmed that 34,000 cancer cases every year can be attributed to diets that are high in processed meats. The physician group filed a lawsuit against California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard citing that the department is not fulfilling its legal duty to add such substances to the list.

Other States

New Mexico governor signs bill capping insulin copays at \$25 per month– The governor signed the bill last week making the caps the lowest in the country. The governor signed additional bills to address the cost of high prescription drugs such as importation from Canada and reduced out-of-pocket costs for patients who receive their health insurance through the state's health exchange. In similar news, Virginia lawmakers passed a bill capping out-of-pocket costs for insulin at \$50 per month while Colorado and Illinois capped it at \$100 per month.

Maine voters choose to keep strict vaccine laws– Residents of Maine voted to keep the law that eliminates non-medical exemptions including religious and philosophical exemptions for childhood vaccines. The law will take effect next year in September. Last year, Maine experienced an outbreak of the whooping cough when vaccination rates dropped below the required percentage for herd immunity among kindergarteners. In response, lawmakers passed a bill to eliminate non-medical exemptions for childhood vaccines. While the measure was supported by every major medical organization, some groups fought the measure with a referendum. A majority of the voters rejected the attempt to remove the exemption.

Virginia joins list of states banning conversion therapy for minors– Nineteen other states have also banned conversion therapy which is the process of changing a young person's gender identity. The governor cited that such practices have been discredited and can worsen the mental health of youth who go through the process. The ban will go into effect on July 1st and will prohibit providers and counselors who currently hold licenses from offering such therapy to minors. The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, and the American Psychological Association have also backed a nationwide ban.

St. Louis, Missouri, to receive new four-year medical school– Ponce Health Sciences University will be committing \$80 million to open a new campus in St. Louis for minority and low-income students who are not able to receive admission to traditional medical schools. The school is expected to open in 2022 with 150 students.

Congresswoman of Iowa creates an endometriosis caucus– Representative Abby Finkenauer (D-Iowa) formed the caucus to seek federal grant money for research into treatments for endometriosis after having been diagnosed with the condition at the age of 18. There are more than 200,000 cases per year of this condition every year in the US. The condition occurs when tissue that is similar to the lining of the uterus begins to grow in the ovaries and bowels, leading to inflammation. The new caucus will push forward a social media awareness campaign.

Healthcare Polls and Surveys

37%

Percentage of medical school students who reported that they “seriously considered” dropping out of medical school due to stress according to a poll conducted by Kaplan.

42%

Percentage of US providers who believe that COVID-19 is a mild threat compared to 37 percent that believe it is a moderate threat and 12 percent that believe it is a severe threat according to a survey by M3 Global Research.

70%

Percentage of consumers that reported that text messages was their preferred form of scheduling appointments followed by email (25 percent) and phone (5 percent) according to a survey by Zipwhip.

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

Study in *Diabetologia* finds an association between tooth brushing and diabetes risk– More than 100,000 people were studied over ten years. The study results indicate that people with periodontal disease had a 9 percent higher risk for developing diabetes. Brushing teeth twice a day was associated with a 3 percent reduced risk for diabetes compared to individuals who brushed less than twice a day.

Hunger as
a Health
Issue

Food banks and charities in the United Kingdom anticipate high demand for food for vulnerable families amidst school shutdowns caused by COVID-19– Many children from low-income households receive their meals in school. The new virus has caused the shutdown of many schools and gatherings. Some foodbanks have struggled to keep up with basic supplies. Many charities are now partnering in preparation to provide food to families in need, including potentially delivering the meals door-to-door.

Mental/
Behavioral
Health

Maryland lawmakers introduce bill to authorize State Highway Administration to post suicide prevention information on electronic highway signs– The bill calls for targeting high-risk suicide zones and proposes including information such as a hotline number to be displayed along with the other traffic messages. Studies show that the age-adjusted suicide rate in the state was 10.2 per 100,000 people in 2018, signifying the highest rate in over ten years.

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