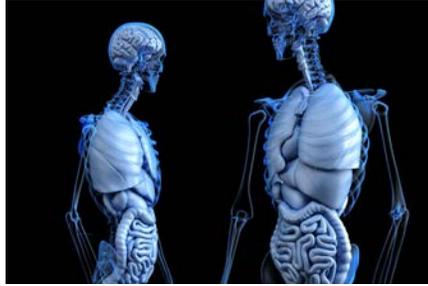




LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY  
HEALTH

Institute for Health Policy and Leadership

# Healthcare News At A Glance



## National

### Combining immunotherapy with chemotherapy shows promise during the first year of treating a common form of lung cancer–

A New York University study found that a combination therapy using Keytruda (an immunotherapy drug used to treat cancers of the stomach, skin, blood, etc.) resulted in a 20 percentage point increase in life expectancy for lung cancer patients compared to chemotherapy alone. While 75 percent of the patients relapsed after 1.5 years, experts believe this is a significant advancement in cancer research.

### Opioid overdose deaths led to an increase in organ donations since 2000–

A Johns Hopkins study found that organ donations have increased 24-fold in the past 18 years, largely driven by the opioid crises. Researchers say that survival rates from the transplantation are similar, and sometimes even better, as many of the organs are coming from younger victims. The United States has been facing an organ shortage with reports of 20-30 deaths a day for people waiting on the donor list.

### Patients requiring post-hospital care or rehabilitation are being turned away from nursing homes for taking opioid addiction treatments–

Some nursing facilities are rejecting patients who are currently taking methadone or buprenorphine even though this is illegal under the American with Disabilities Act of 1990. Lack of proper staff, stigma, or misunderstanding that addiction hinders health outcomes were reported as possible reasons. Behavioral health facilities are beginning to provide educational resources to reduce the stigma.

### An executive order was issued last week to various cabinets to devise rules that require beneficiaries to lose health requirements if they are not working–

The rules are aimed at means-tested programs under the premise that such restrictions will encourage people in poverty to gain financial independence.

## The American Medical Association (AMA) & The Opioid Epidemic

The AMA is in strong opposition to opioid prescription limits despite other medical and dental associations pushing for them. Physicians are concerned that the limits will affect their ability to provide patients with individual care.

The AMA has been a big proponent in combating the opioid epidemic through the development of a task force. The Opioid Task Force provides education and resources to help physicians understand how they can play a role in reversing the epidemic.

Additionally, the AMA proposed a payment model for opioid addiction treatment known as the Patient-Centered Opioid Addiction Treatment (P-COAT) alternative payment model. In efforts to make addiction treatment more affordable, this model incentivizes coordinated care amongst providers through two forms of payment: one for starting patients on medication-assisted treatment and the other for continuing it. Through the pilot program, funds will be provided for treatments, social services, and transportation. The AMA is currently seeking providers who are interested in participating.

## CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Highlights

Researchers at the Colorado Department of Public Health found that these were the top five industries in Colorado with the highest marijuana users:

- (1) Accommodation and food services
- (2) Arts, entertainment, and recreation
- (3) Other services (except public administration)
- (4) Construction
- (5) Real estate, rent and lease

With growing concern that marijuana use may lead to workplace injuries, these studies are the first of many to understand the implications of the legalization of marijuana and potential work-related injuries.

## California

**Los Angeles Mayor announces \$430 million budget to combat homelessness**– The new amount is nearly double of what was proposed in this year's budget. The funds will be borrowed as authorized by a 2016 vote. Part of the plan will include buying trailers and building structures for supportive housing. Sanitation efforts are also included in the plan.

**Senate bill may establish compensation program to make reparations for those harmed under the state's eugenics laws that were in effect from 1909-1979**– Following the footsteps of North Carolina which compensated victims of eugenics laws with \$25,000, a California Senate bill for making reparations is being considered. An estimated 20,000 Californians may have been forced to undergo sterilization due to race, socioeconomic status, or disability in the 70-year period.

## Other States

**A Maryland law limiting unreasonable price hikes for generic drugs was invalidated by Court of Appeals**– The law stated that Maryland's attorney general had the power to stop a company from increasing the price of a drug by more than 50 percent in one year. The Court of Appeals said that Maryland's regulation of interstate commerce was an overreach of state powers that is unconstitutional.

**City in Ohio raises minimum age to buy cigarettes, nicotine delivery devices, and tobacco products from 18 to 21 years**– Councilmembers from the city of Akron voted to increase the age to buy tobacco products and nicotine delivery devices from 18 to 21 years in a legislation called T-21. The reason is that the majority of sales to minors are through individuals between the ages of 18 and 20. Many of those who voted against the bill argue that the bill is paternalistic. The law is now in effect and will entail six months of education and certification for tobacco retailers in the city.



**Various Medicaid expansion attempts poise Utah to potentially provide health insurance coverage to 150,000 people**– In March, the governor of Utah signed a partial coverage bill that would provide Medicaid expansion to those who are at the federal poverty level (as opposed to the Affordable Care Act's proposed 138 percent of it) and would come with work requirements. This bill, which would provide health coverage for 60,000 people, is awaiting approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). In the meantime, the Utah Decides Healthcare group has secured enough signatures to bring full Medicaid expansion to the ballot for November elections. The future of health coverage for 90,000 Utah residents is uncertain.

**Bill to ban abortions for Down syndrome diagnosis makes it to the Pennsylvania Senate**– Currently, the state allows abortions for up to 24 weeks with no restrictions other than parents concerned about gender. A new bill that passed the House this week would add Down syndrome diagnosis to the list of restrictions. Recently, Arizona lawmakers have been considering a bill that would require women to fill out a questionnaire listing the reasons for seeking an abortion. Opponents of these bills believe that such laws are devised to shame women seeking abortions.

**New Jersey looks to reinstate statewide individual mandate**– In efforts to stabilize the insurance marketplace, the governor is considering a bill that would place a fine of 2.5 percent of income for households without health insurance.

## Noteworthy California Health-Related Bills to Watch For

### SB 1125

Introduced by Senator Toni Atkins (D-San Diego), this bill would allow providers to bill Medi-Cal twice in one day if a patient were to also receive mental health services on the same day.

### AB 3148

Introduced by Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula (D-Fresno), this bill would provide financial assistance for co-payments and deductibles for those whose incomes are 400 percent below the federal poverty level.

### SB 974

Introduced by Senator Ricardo Lara (D-Los Angeles), this bill would extend full Medi-Cal benefits to all undocumented immigrants with low income in the state of California.

## 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

**In light of Oral Cancer Awareness Month, some dentists provide free oral cancer screenings**— According to Encinitas Cosmetic Dentistry, close to 50,000 Americans will receive an oral cancer diagnosis and one out of five of them will result in death this year. Dentists urge patients to get screened for oral cancer. In other news, Oral Health America released a report stating that oral health outcomes have been improving, but half of the elderly that were surveyed reported feeling that their teeth are in poor/fair conditions. The report calls for a national strategy as America's elderly population grows.

#### Hunger as a Health Issue

**A strong partnership emerges to prepare for disaster relief efforts for hunger**— Feeding America and International Paper announced that they will be working together to prepare to provide food for future disaster relief efforts. The two organizations work to provide food to millions of Americans every year who are suffering from hunger and food insecurity.

#### Mental/Behavioral Health

**School choice plays a large part in college students' mental health**— A University of California-Davis professor found that students who attend schools in which their peers demonstrate lower academic ability (as measured by cognitive aptitude tests that were created by the researchers) than they are more likely to exhibit depressive symptoms. A possible reason is that such students may feel frustrated by unmet needs or lack of shared interests with peers.