



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY  
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# Healthcare News At A Glance



## National

**\$857 billion spending bill includes allocations to Health and Human Services (HHS) for medication price-transparency and information technology (IT) among other things**— Last week, the Senate passed the spending bill which includes a \$2.3 billion allocation to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for Alzheimer's research, telehealth grants to provide obstetric care to women in rural areas, and a mandate to include prices on direct-to-consumer advertisements.

**EpiPen shortage pushes the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to take action**— Aside from approving the first generic version of the EpiPen, the FDA increased the expiration date by four months for some of the pen batches. The shortage stems from manufacturing problems occurring at Pfizer.

**Veterans Affairs (VA) mishandled thousands of sexual trauma claims last year**— A VA inspector general (IG) found that the VA improperly handled complaints related to sexual abuse and trauma. Hundreds of veterans' claims were denied due to improper training, outdated protocols, and mismanaged records.

**Number of teenagers addicted to anti-anxiety medications is surging according to addiction specialists**— Adolescents are increasingly beginning to use benzodiazepines, a class of anti-anxiety drugs, as an alternative to opioids. Such medications can be fatal if paired with alcohol or drugs, and there is no medicine for addiction-treatment. Many adolescents start by taking medications from their caretakers' medicine cabinet. Meanwhile, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced a new payment and service delivery model known as the Integrated Care for Kids (InCK) Model. The InCK Model will be targeted towards providing vulnerable youth who have been exposed to the opioid epidemic with adequate and accessible behavioral health and other medical care.

**US Department of Justice (DOJ) indicts two Chinese nationals in the drug overdoses of two from Ohio**— The two Chinese men were creating opioids laced with fentanyl and shipping them overseas. The indictment alleges that the shipments went out to 25 countries and 37 US states.

## Noteworthy Studies/Reports/Surveys

1. *NPR-IBM Watson Health Poll*- 3,000 households were queried nationwide, and the poll revealed that 59 percent of the occupants were aware of naloxone while 41 percent were not. Of the 59 percent who were aware, slightly more than one-third knew that naloxone requires a prescription and 34 percent did not know.
2. *Health Affairs*- Over 93 percent of eligible children were enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The five states with less than 90 percent were Alaska, Indiana, North Dakota, Texas, and Utah.
3. *Nature Human Behaviour*- Children (21 months and over) prefer "high-ranking" individuals. The preference withers if the individual lacks social interaction skills.
4. *British Medical Journal*- The United States and 13 other high-income nations experienced a decline in the life expectancy of women and men between 2014 to 2015. The decline was much greater amongst young adults between 20-30 years in the US whereas, in other nations, it occurred for people aged 65 years and older. The scientists attributed this to the opioid epidemic.
5. *Journal of The Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society*- Between 2011 and 2015, the percent of children's emergency department visits involving antibiotic adverse drug events was 46.2 percent. Amoxicillin and sulfamethoxazole caused a majority of the problems.

## CDC Updates

1. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated the flu vaccination recommendations for the 2018-2019 season. Among the updates is the re-emergence of the recommended use of nasal vaccines (live, attenuated strains of the flu) that were not recommended in the last two years.
2. The CDC issued a report last week that the number of HPV-related cancers increased from 30,000 (1999) to 43,000 (2015) in people aged 15-23 years. Between 2016-2017, however, the number of people between the ages of 12 and 17 who received the vaccination increased by 5 percent.

## California

**If passed, AB 2058 would require data collection on arrests made for driving under the influence of marijuana/cannabis**– Currently, the state does not discern between accidents caused due to the influence of alcohol and marijuana use while states such as Colorado and Washington do so. According to the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, marijuana-related traffic deaths went up by nearly 50 percent in Colorado since 2013.

**California Natural Resources Agency warns of the imminent threat that global warming poses to Californians**– The agency utilized over 40 peer-reviewed articles to give projections of what to expect so that the state can begin preparing. Between 6,700 to 11,300 additional heat-related deaths are expected annually by 2050. The report highlighted that authorities often do not adequately warn people about heat waves. Sea levels are expected to rise around 5 feet, putting the coastal cities at risk of flood and damage to the infrastructure.

**The Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System shows promise**– Authorized by CMS, this is the first and only running program of its kind. Currently, 19 counties in California participate and serve 10.9 million people. Twenty additional counties will be phased in. The program allows providers to expand mental/behavioral health services, follow-up with patients, and receive higher reimbursement rates.

## Other States

**Missouri's new law prohibiting calling food items "meat" if there is no meat in it goes into effect on Tuesday**– A vegetarian meat alternatives company, along with others, filed a lawsuit claiming that the law violates the First Amendment. With the growing popularity of plant-based meat alternatives and the advent of startups that create "clean meat" in tanks, the companies argue that the state is trying to stifle competition. On the other side of the argument, proponents of more stringent food labeling requirements are more concerned about meat grown in labs.

**Opioid epidemic could be reason for massive hepatitis A outbreak in West Virginia**– More than 1,000 people this year were infected with the virus, and more than three-quarters of them reported using illicit drugs. The outbreaks that occurred throughout Kentucky, California, and West Virginia had the same strain of hepatitis A and were all commonly occurring amongst large homeless populations.

**Illinois governor passes bill mandating health insurance coverage of egg and sperm preservation of patients with cancer and other diseases**– This bill could potentially impact more than 5,000 people who are diagnosed with cancer during a reproductive age (14-45 years). Undergoing treatment for cancer and other diseases may lead to infertility, and egg and sperm preservation can be expensive. Illinois follows Maryland, Connecticut, and Rhode Island with the passage of this bill.

**Texas state report finds that 80 percent of pregnancy-related deaths in the state in 2012 were avoidable**– In the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report, the researchers concluded that public health programs could have prevented some of these deaths. The report reaffirmed previous data showing that African American women were 2-3 times more likely to be at risk of death than Caucasian women. The researchers recommend expanding the time frame in which women can receive pregnancy-related care, increasing the budget to perform more research and outreach, and developing sound protocols for hospitals.

**Shooting in Jacksonville, Florida resurfaces the debate around mental illness and firearm violence**– Earlier this week, a 24-year-old Caucasian man from Baltimore opened fire in a public area, killed three people (including himself), and injured 10 others. The young man had a history of mental illness that included involuntary hospitalizations. One of the reasons he was able to legally acquire guns from Maryland is because psychiatric hospitals are not required to report involuntary commitments to the FBI.



## Children's Medication Recalls

### *King Bio*

More than 32 children's medications are being recalled due to microbial contamination. The medicines range from treatment of cold and cough to earaches. To date, no illness has been reported as a result of ingestion.

### *Pfizer*

Close to 30,000 children's Advil bottles had measuring cups that did not have the same measurement as those in the instructions. Owing to the fact that this could place children at the risk of overdose, the bottles were recalled.

## 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

**Nanotechnology makes ferumoxytol the next oral health breakthrough–** This molecule contains iron in a sugar coating that is normally injected to raise blood iron levels. The molecule is also bactericidal as it killed plaque-causing bacteria while preserving enamel in a lab setting. The molecule was effective in preventing cavities in rats. The product may be commercially available in a few years.

#### Hunger as a Health Issue

**It is time to shed light on agricultural behavioral health–** Small farmers have been struggling to stay afloat in America. Loss of farmland and economic instability cause a great deal of stress on top of lack of access to adequate mental health care in rural areas and social isolation. The risk of suicide is 45 percent greater in rural areas than urban ones. The daughter of a farmer who recently committed suicide is now working to raise awareness and destigmatize mental health treatment in Montana through media coverage and outreach.

#### Mental/ Behavioral Health

**Urban Institute survey indicates that 23 percent of American households suffered from food insecurity, making it the top challenge–** A survey of more than 7,000 households uncovered that Americans still struggle to pay for food, housing, and healthcare despite a healthy economy. The researchers warn that cuts to social programs and support services will place a more significant burden on those who are already struggling to get by.