



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
HEALTH

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Health News At A Glance



A Glimpse Across the Globe



Lassa fever numbers are beginning to rise in Nigeria. Some scientists say the rise is due to better surveillance methods while others say there is a noticeable increase in disease burden. Similar to Ebola, the viral infection causes bleeding from orifices. Eighty percent of infected individuals, however, are asymptomatic. The antiviral treatment is not entirely effective but is the only measure available.

National

Democrats push forward with expanding Medicare– Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) introduced the Medicare for All Act of 2017 (S.1804) last year in efforts to create a single-payer system. A new plan, Medicare Extra, follows the same idea but keeps health insurance sponsored by employers.

MyHealthEData and Blue Button 2.0 to give control of health records to patients– As part of Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services' plan to curb health care costs through innovation, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the rollout of applications that will allow patients to share their claims data, prescriptions, and prices.

Uber Health to address missed doctors' appointments– The ride-sharing service will allow physicians to arrange transportation to-and-from offices for their patients. Lyft, Uber's biggest competition, has already partnered with health care systems in California as well as an EHR company to integrate such services into patient care.

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) at odds with the American College of Physicians (ACP) over new diabetes guidelines– The ACP provided new recommendations for blood sugar levels due to risks from hypoglycemia. The ADA rejects the suggestions due to concerns about the premature dismissal of recently approved drugs.

A popular Christmas gift will now provide consumers with a breast cancer risk assessment– 23andMe was cleared by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to analyze DNA for specific BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations.

The CDC Vital Signs Report

The CDC releases a monthly report with a focus on pressing health issues. The March 2018 report indicated that emergency department visits for opioid overdoses increased from July 2016 to September 2017 by 30 percent. Large cities saw a 54 percent increase suggesting that the epidemic may be getting worse.

California



UC Berkeley Labor Center provides policy options in the wake of the incremental steps being taken to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA)– With 2.3 million residents receiving health care through Covered California, the individual mandate repeal could increase premiums. The researchers proposed the following policy recommendations:

- Add state premium subsidies to federal ACA subsidies
- Provide financial assistance to individuals suffering from out-of-pocket costs
- Limit the percentage of income spent on premiums for income-ineligible residents
- Allow children and spouses to benefit from state-funded subsidies for premiums and cost-sharing

California to take the lead in decisions regarding intersex infants– The Senate Concurrent Resolution calls for a delay in medically unnecessary surgeries for intersex individuals until the individual makes a conscious decision one way or another. Last year, California passed Senate Bill 179 that recognized a third, non-binary gender "X" on legal documentation. Similar to previous bills passed in Oregon and Washington D.C, SB-179 removed the requirements, such as the physician statement and mandatory court order, to petition for a gender change on current documents.

Other States

Florida House to decide on gun control bill– The Senate narrowly passed a bill that would ban bump stocks, increase minimum age, keep people with a record of mental illness away from acquiring guns. The bill does not include a ban on assault-style weapons such as the one used in the deadly mass shooting. Meanwhile, the governor of Oregon recently signed a bill restricting individuals convicted of domestic abuse and individuals with a restraining order from possessing firearms.

Florida legislature for backup power in nursing homes approved– The loss of power for air conditioning after Hurricane Irma resulted in the death of nearly 14 nursing home residents due to the heat.

Arkansas is the third state to gain federal approval for Medicaid Expansion work requirements– Following Kentucky and Indiana, Arkansas will impose work requirements on more than 280,000 individuals covered under the expansion but not those under traditional Medicaid. Nine states are still waiting on approval for work requirements. No decision has been made on rollbacks for the expansion program.

West Virginia sends bill opposing the use of Medicaid funds for abortions to voters– The November referendum will contain a resolution to terminate funds from Medicaid that are used for abortion. The state has toyed with many policies in the past regarding state funding for abortion.

New Hampshire bill seeks to curb “balance billing”– Through the practice, consumers can negotiate their bills with their insurers. The lawmakers have drafted House Bill 1809 to put an end to such negotiations for in-network treatment in the hopes that patients will not have to deal with surprise billing.

New York representatives angered over the potential reorganization of the 9/11 health care program– The current program is under the National Institute of Occupational Safety. A bill to move the program under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was recently proposed. Opponents believe this would cause unnecessary disruption to health care for first responders suffering from the adverse health effects caused by 9/11.

Highlighted Polls from Becker's Hospital Review

72%

Percentage of physician practices opposing mandatory Medicare alternative payment models.

25%

Percentage of patients who utilized virtual health services. This number was based on 2,301 individuals surveyed for the 2018 Consumer Survey on Digital Health Report. Seventy-four percent reported experience satisfaction.

14%

Percentage of older Americans who think that better health outcomes are a result of more healthcare. The University of Michigan Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation surveyed 2,007 adults between ages 50-80 years.

Strategic Newsbytes



To bring focus to our work, the Institute has identified three strategic initiative areas: oral health, mental health and hunger as a health issue. This segment highlights news articles relevant to these priorities.

Oral Health

Close to three-quarters of oral cancers now caused by HPV- Researchers in Florida stress the importance of the HPV vaccination for adolescent females and males. More than four times as many men are diagnosed with HPV oral cancer than women.

Hunger as a Health Issue

Anti-hunger groups are fiercely opposed to the America's Harvest Box program- Earlier this year, the President suggested providing boxes of packaged foods to half of the individuals on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; it was intended to replace the electronic benefits. One physician group sees promise in providing fresh food, but others believe this will discourage the needy by stigmatizing them and limiting their freedom of choice.

Mental/
Behavioral
Health

Researchers warn that the government should focus on more than one drug epidemic at a time- The national focus on the opioid epidemic may be overshadowing cocaine usage which has been a more significant problem amongst African American men than heroin in the past 20 years. Researchers advise a concerted effort against multiple drugs.