

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, January 19, 2016

Congressional Schedule

House:

- Not in session.

Senate:

- The Senate reconvenes at 2 p.m. and will vote at 5:30 p.m. on the nomination of Wilhelmina Marie Wright to be a judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota.

Legislative Updates

- “A report Senator Patty Murphy released Wednesday on the duodenoscopy infection catastrophe touches on many points of failure. The Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) surveillance system, the report argues, does not receive information quickly enough. In this case, the lag caused the agency to waste time investigating an incorrect theory of the outbreak. While some of that lag is attributable to the medical device companies’ failure to promptly inform the agency of relevant information, another is the agency’s inadequate tools. The Agency’s databases do not track reports over time, and are difficult to search and query, says the report. But the biggest problem is the lack of unique device identifiers, which would allow the agency to query insurance claims and Electronic Health Record (EHRs) - and thereby detect problems more rapidly.” (Politico)
- Senate Innovations legislation: There are rumors the Senate’s counterpart to the 21st Century Cures Act could become a possibility.
 - “One upside of the State of the Union announcement regarding the cancer moonshot is that it is bound to give the 21st Century Cures Act a shot in the arm, because so many pieces of that legislation - including its push for interoperability - are key to improving cancer research.” (Morning Consult - <https://morningconsult.com/2016/01/21st-century-cures-act-delayed-by-partisan-bumps/>)

Regulatory Updates

- The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) has recommended a modest payment increase to the outpatient dialysis base payment rate by the amount specified in current law for calendar year 2017. (*The update to the 2017 outpatient dialysis base payment rate would be 0.55%*). In slides presented at the meeting last week, MedPAC projected a Medicare margin of 0.8% in 2016. <http://medpac.gov/-public-meetings-/meetingdetails/january-2016-public-meeting>
- “The Obama administration has released new guidelines that would make it easier for patients to access their medical records, which in turn would make it easier for people to participate in their health care, officials say. Under the guidelines, doctors and hospitals cannot require patients to state a reason for requesting their records, and cannot deny releasing them because of concerns that they would upset the patient.”(New York Times - <http://nyti.ms/1nj0X6Z>)
- The National Quality Forum has appointed Helen Darling, MA, interim president and CEO, following the resignation of Christine Cassel, MD, who is joining the leadership team at the new Kaiser Permanente School of Medicine. Ms. Darling will assume the role in March 2016. She is the former president and CEO of the National Business Group on Health. Please see the following link for a full press release announcement: <http://bit.ly/1njvKQX>
- **Dialysis Facility Compare: Inclusion of Additional Measures** - In October 2015, CMS requested Public Comment on the inclusion of additional measures to Dialysis Facility Compare (DFC) measures in order to:

- Increase transparency in the process and selection criteria
- Allow for increased input from the community on candidate measures
- Increase opportunity for the inclusion of externally developed measures on DFC

CMS will begin publicly reporting the following measures on DFC for the October 2016 Refresh:

- Bloodstream Infection in Hemodialysis Outpatients (NQF #1460)
- CAHPS (Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers) In- Center Hemodialysis Survey (NQF #0258)
- Pediatric Peritoneal Dialysis Adequacy: Achievement of Target Kt/V (NQF #2706)

Additional Information can be found in the full Public Comment Summary, which is available at: <http://bit.ly/1Ua5vqh>

Hearings

- The House Oversight Committee will hold a hearing on Jan. 26 to examine the rising cost of prescription drugs, and they've asked Martin Shkreli, the controversial CEO of pharmaceutical company Turing, to provide profits, expenses, and a slew of other

private financial data about his company. The pharma CEO was only too happy to boast about his financial acumen when he hiked the price of Daraprim by more than 5,000 percent last fall. Shkreli was recently arrested by the FBI on securities fraud charges. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-crime-shkreli-idUSKCN0UT2FN>

Other

- As we mentioned in last week's update, the 2016 NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program application cycle is open until February 25th at 7:30 pm. Please see this link to login and apply: <http://1.usa.gov/1PDveUe>
 - Additionally, NURSE Corp held a pre-recorded webinar to cover all facets of the application process. Please see the following link to watch the webinar: <http://bit.ly/1PDvjrd>
 - Additionally, they will be holding two technical assistance conference calls.
 - Call #1 will be held on Thursday, January 28th from 2:00 - 4:00 pm EST. The dial-in number is 1-888-790-3148 and the participant code is 7775191.
 - Call # 2 will be held on Thursday, February 11th from 7:00 - 9:00 pm EST. The dial-in number is 1-888-790-3148 and the participant code is 7775191.