

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update – Monday, October 8, 2018

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate in recess Monday

House

- House in recess until the midterm elections

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *Senate sends bipartisan package to fight opioid epidemic to Trump's desk.* “The Senate on Wednesday overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan bill aimed at fighting the opioid crisis, sending the measure to President Trump’s desk. The 660-page bill includes a range of measures aimed at fighting the opioid addiction crisis. The legislation lifts some limits, which lawmakers called outdated, on Medicaid paying for care at addiction treatment facilities. It cracks down on illicit opioids being imported by mail from other countries and fueling the epidemic. The legislation also lifts limits on nurse practitioners and other providers being able to prescribe the addiction treatment drug buprenorphine.”
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/409751-senate-sends-bipartisan-package-to-fight-opioid-epidemic-to-trumps-desk>
 - *Congress targets misuse of hospice drugs.* “Hospice workers would be allowed to destroy patients’ unneeded opioids, reducing the risk that families misuse them, according to one little-noticed provision in the bipartisan opioids bill headed to President Donald Trump’s desk for his likely signature. The bill would empower hospice staff to destroy opioid medications that are expired, no longer needed by the patient because of a change in treatment or left over after the patient dies.”
 - Read more: <https://khn.org/news/congress-targets-misuse-of-hospice-drugs/>

- **Week Ahead**

- ***House Democrats plan investigations blitz over Trump health policies.***

“Democrats are quietly preparing to launch a slew of investigations into the Trump administration's health care moves if they retake the House in November, aiming to freeze the White House's efforts to unravel Obamacare and probe the administration's care of immigrant kids. The wide-ranging inquiries, coordinated across multiple committees, would focus on the administration's most controversial actions on health care, which include chipping away at the Affordable Care Act, urging the courts to gut the health law's protections for pre-existing conditions, and separating migrant families at the border, lawmakers and aides told POLITICO.”

- Read more: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/10/03/house-democrats-trump-health-policies-824436>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- ***HHS announces \$2.6 million in prizes to redesign dialysis as part of KidneyX.*** “The Kidney Innovation Accelerator (KidneyX) is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the American Society of Nephrology (ASN). HHS and ASN plan to hold a series of KidneyX prize competitions to develop innovative solutions that can prevent, diagnose, and/or treat kidney diseases. Prize competitions challenge individuals, communities, businesses, institutions, and non-profit organizations to achieve defined goals in a defined timeframe. In KidneyX prize competitions, HHS and ASN plan to offer cash prizes and other incentives to increase the number and variety of problem-solvers addressing critical issues in kidney health. Every KidneyX prize competition will define a problem, without a preconceived notion of what the solution(s) should be, and ask participants to find solutions. Think better, think bold, think big.”
 - Read more: <https://www.hhs.gov/idealab/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/KidneyX-Redesign-Dialysis.pdf>
- ***FDA to call out drugmaker misuse of citizen petitions.*** “Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Scott Gottlieb spelled out steps the agency will take to crack down on companies that ‘game’ the generic drug approval process to delay the competition, the latest in a series of moves aimed at juicing up the market for cheaper generic drugs. In a revised draft guidance open for public comment, the FDA said it wants to effectively name and shame companies that inappropriately use citizens petitions and refer cases of uncompetitive behavior to the Federal Trade Commission.”
 - Read more: <https://www.biopharmadive.com/news/fda-to-call-out-drugmaker-misuse-of-citizen-petitions/538753/>
- ***Trump's trade deal includes major win for pharma.*** “The Trump administration's new trade deal with Canada and Mexico includes a big win for pharmaceutical companies and Republicans – a provision to protect biologic drugs from competition for 10 years. Why it matters: Republicans say this will spread the cost of developing new drugs beyond the U.S. market, lowering American drug prices. By shielding the drugs from

generic competition in Canada and Mexico, the measure will also help pharmaceutical companies reap more profits abroad.”

- Read more: <https://www.axios.com/trump-trade-deal-nafta-drug-prices-pharma-d9f76a89-8572-44d0-9784-963eca85b1c8.html>
- ***Summary of significant changes to the Medicare Program Integrity Manual Chapter 13 – Local coverage determinations.*** “The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has revised chapter 13 of the Medicare Program Integrity Manual (PIM). This chapter describes the local coverage determinations (LCD) process. The revision was in response to a provision of the 21st Century Cures Act intended to improve transparency in the LCD process. The manual includes instructions, policies and procedures for Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) that administer the Medicare program in different regions of the country, as well as guidance for stakeholder engagement in the process.”
 - Read more: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/summary-significant-changes-medicare-program-integrity-manual-chapter-13-local-coverage>

Articles of Interest

- ***Dialysis industry scores win with California bill veto.*** “California Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed a bill late Sunday that would have, among other things, capped payments at lower Medicare rates for dialysis facilities that have financial ties to charities that subsidize patients' commercial insurance. Why it matters: It's a huge win for dialysis companies like DaVita, and for and charities linked to the dialysis industry – like the American Kidney Fund, which lobbied heavily against the bill. Now the industry will look to defeat a midterm ballot measure that would place a much more restrictive cap on dialysis clinics' profits.”
 - Read more: <https://www.axios.com/dialysis-industry-win-california-bill-veto-335eccdc-82cf-4575-921c-38cf1302a7e7.html>
- ***Lilly's diabetes drug data impresses, hurts rival Novo's shares.*** “Eli Lilly and Co said on Thursday its new two-in-one diabetes drug was successful in lowering blood sugar and reducing weight, sending its shares to a record high and weighing on those of arch-rival Novo Nordisk. The novel drug targets two key gut hormones at the same time, and could pose a threat to currently available single-hormone drugs, which form a large and growing part of Novo's business.”
 - Read more: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lilly-study/eli-lillys-diabetes-drug-shows-promise-in-mid-stage-trial-idUSKCN1ME11Z>
- ***Vitamin B supplements may protect kidney function in children with diabetes.*** “Vitamin B supplements have a protective effect on kidney function in children and adolescents with type-1 diabetes, according to research presented today at the 57th Annual European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology Meeting. These findings indicate that simple supplementation of vitamin B complex may protect against the development and progression of kidney disease in children with diabetes, which could promote improved health and quality of life in adulthood.”

- Read more: https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2018-09/esfp-vbs092518.php
- ***Diabetes, dementia can be deadly combination.*** “The risk of death from dangerously low blood sugar is much higher among seniors who have both diabetes and dementia than those with diabetes alone, a new study finds. Researchers analyzed data from nearly 20,000 people aged 65 and older with type 1 or type 2 diabetes who were followed for up to five years after their first recorded low blood sugar episode. Those with both diabetes and dementia had a 67 percent higher risk of death following dangerously low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) than those with diabetes alone, according to study findings.”
 - Read more: <https://consumer.healthday.com/diabetes-information-10/diabetes-management-news-180/diabetes-dementia-can-be-deadly-combination-738227.html>
- ***Practice setting a key factor for early career nephrologists, GW report determines practice settings found to influence income and job satisfaction.*** “The American Society of Nephrology (ASN) released a new analysis of the kidney health workforce that identifies practice setting as a key factor for nephrologists starting their careers. Authored by researchers from the George Washington University–Health Workforce Institute (GW-HWI), *Early Career Nephrologists: Results of a 2017 Survey* is available online at <http://www.asn-online.org/workforce>. Among the report’s key findings: In general, women and male USMGs were more likely to practice in academic settings, while IMGs were more likely to practice in group practices. Nephrologists in group practices were more likely to work longer hours as well as weekends and evenings but they also made more money. Nephrologists in academic settings are more satisfied with their positions and may trade off work hours and income for lifestyle considerations.”
 - Read more: <https://www.newswise.com/articles/practice-setting-a-key-factor-for-early-career-nephrologists%2C-gw-report-determines-practice-setting-found-to-influence-income-and-job-satisfaction->
- ***Chronic kidney disease outcomes can be improved by expanding specialist care.*** “Providing specialized medical care and coordination to patients whose kidneys are failing before they need dialysis treatment could save the U.S. health care system more than \$1 billion annually, according to a new RAND Corporation analysis. About 60 percent of the savings come from avoiding the initiation of kidney dialysis in a hospital setting, while the remainder stems from other improvements in care. The findings are published in the *Journal of American Society of Nephrology*. The analysis by researchers shows savings only when the specialized care is extended to people in the latest stages of kidney disease and not when patients are at earlier stages of their illness.”
 - Read more: https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2018-10/rc-ckd092818.php
- ***Baxter, Mayo Clinic ink collab deal to develop US-based renal care center.*** “Baxter said today that it inked a collaborative deal with the Mayo Clinic to develop a new renal care center of excellence in the US. The new renal care center will be located at the Mayo Clinic’s dialysis center in Jacksonville, Fla., Baxter said, and will integrate Baxter’s Renal

Care Services clinical service model and CKD management system. The center will look to serve patients across the 'continuum of renal care,' Baxter said, from chronic kidney disease management through to transplants."

- Read more: <https://www.massdevice.com/baxter-mayo-clinic-ink-collab-deal-to-develop-us-based-renal-care-center/>
- ***America is on the verge of a nursing crisis.*** "By some accounts, nursing shortages have bedeviled the U.S. economy off and on for decades. But they now seem to be growing more acute. America has around 3 million nurses, and it's one of the economy's fastest-growing jobs. Yet the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects there will be 1 million vacancies for registered nurses by 2024. What we have here is surging demand and a bottleneck in supply. The result is a country on the verge of a nursing crisis."
 - Read more: <http://theweek.com/articles/797779/america-verge-nursing-crisis>
- ***Scientists behind game-changing cancer immunotherapies win Nobel medicine prize.*** "American James Allison and Japanese Tasuku Honjo won the 2018 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine on Monday for game-changing discoveries about how to harness and manipulate the immune system to fight cancer. The scientists' work in the 1990s has since swiftly led to new and dramatically improved therapies for cancers such as melanoma and lung cancer, which had previously been extremely difficult to treat."
 - Read more: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nobel-prize-medicine/2018-nobel-medicine-prize-awarded-for-cancer-research-idUSKCN1MB21T>
- ***Caregivers or marketers? Nurses paid by drug companies facing scrutiny as whistleblower lawsuits mount.*** "In lawsuits filed over the past year against several of the largest drug makers, whistleblowers have raised questions about whether the use of nursing staffs — which AbbVie called nurse ambassadors — is medically appropriate or a multimillion-dollar violation of public trust. The lawsuits contend the companies hired third-party contractors to deploy nurses — sometimes by phone, sometimes in patient's homes — to ensure that prescriptions were refilled. The drug makers also allegedly provided kickbacks to physicians in the form of free insurance processing assistance, medical practice management software, and marketing assistance to persuade them to prescribe their drugs."
 - Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2018/10/02/nurse-educators-humira-whistleblower-lawsuits/>
- ***Study: 1 in 3 US adults eats fast food each day.*** "A government study has found that 1 in 3 U.S. adults eat fast food on any given day. That's about 85 million people. It's the first federal study to look at how often adults eat fast food. An earlier study found a similar proportion of children and adolescents ate it on any given day. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the numbers Wednesday. It's based on a survey of about 10,000 adults over four years. The study did not find a difference between men and women. But higher-income families ate fast food more often than lower-income families, and blacks ate it more than other racial or ethnic groups. Health officials say too much high-calorie fast food can lead to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other health problems."
 - Read more: <https://apnews.com/bbf792ce08f744cd8783350c144a9ccc>

- ***Patients give doctors high marks for prescribing antibiotics for common sniffles.***
 “Physicians in the study prescribed antibiotics for respiratory tract infections at about twice the rate that would be clinically appropriate based on the prevalence of bacterial infections, according to Dr. Rita M. Mangione-Smith, the division chief of general pediatrics and hospital medicine at Seattle Children's Research Institute who was not involved with the study. But she also pointed out that antibiotics are routinely overprescribed for respiratory tract infections in most care settings. Overprescribing of antibiotics is a growing medical and public health concern. Antibiotics can have side effects like severe diarrhea, and overprescribing them can contribute to antibiotic resistance.”

 - Read more: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/10/03/653446952/patients-give-doctors-high-marks-for-prescribing-antibiotics-for-common-sniffles>
- ***Watchdog says nurse ballot question could cost \$900m a year.*** “A health care watchdog agency, weighing in on a contentious political issue, said Wednesday that a union-backed state ballot question to regulate nurse staffing in hospitals could cost the Massachusetts health care system more than \$900 million a year. The state Health Policy Commission’s new report provided ammunition to opponents of the measure about one month before Election Day and dealt a blow to the Massachusetts Nurses Association, which wrote the ballot question and has argued the costs would be modest.”

 - Read more: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2018/10/03/watchdog-says-nurse-ballot-question-could-cost-million-year/Vr8tEhQL2rEPwis0ppHa5N/story.html>
- ***The \$1 tool that might curb the overdose epidemic.*** “Fentanyl, which is 50 times as potent as heroin, laces many batches of heroin and cocaine, and it is now involved in at least half of all opioid overdose deaths. More than 70,000 people died of drug overdoses last year – the equivalent of about three 747 plane crashes each week. However, there’s evidence that a two-inch fentanyl test strip can help drug users avoid overdosing. When dipped into a drug, the strip reveals – with the presence, or absence, of a red line – whether that drug contains fentanyl. Researchers suspect that if more drug users had access to the strips, they could test their drugs and use less, or possibly not use them at all.”

 - Read more: <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2018/10/study-shows-fentanyl-test-strips-keep-addicts-safe/571981/>
- ***Flu season is coming. If you live in a large city, it may stretch longer than elsewhere, study says.*** “The length of the flu season may vary depending on where you live, with large cities enduring longer periods of transmission and smaller cities experiencing shorter, but more explosive, spread, a new study suggests. The study doesn’t assert that one’s risk of contracting influenza varies depending on the size of any given community. Rather, it argues that in less populous places, flu needs the right atmospheric conditions to spread effectively. In large cities, those conditions don’t matter quite as much.”

 - Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2018/10/04/flu-season-may-stretch-longer-in-big-cities/>