

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update – Monday, April 22, 2019

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate is in recess until April 29.

House

- House is in recess until April 29.

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *Cummings accuses Oversight Republicans of obstructing drug price probe:* “House Oversight and Reform Committee Chairman Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) on Wednesday accused ranking member Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) of deliberately trying to undermine the committee’s investigation into rising drug prices. In a letter sent Wednesday, Cummings condemned what he claimed were Jordan’s efforts to “actively obstruct” the committee’s investigation into prescription drug pricing.”
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/439357-cummings-accuses-oversight-gop-of-obstructing-drug-price-investigation>
 - *Democrats feud over drug pricing policy, as progressives push pragmatists to be bolder.* “At a recent meeting of the Democrats’ most liberal members, several lawmakers scolded Wendell Primus, a veteran aide to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, for aggressively pitching pharmaceutical policy they said fell short of the speaker’s campaign promises. Much of the controversy has been driven by Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-Texas), who last week publicly dressed down a veteran committee aide, accusing her of misleading him and shaping legislation to favor drug companies. And it’s not just the lawmakers — outside progressive advocacy groups aligned with Doggett are also fighting with more centrist organizations over the best path forward.”

- Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2019/04/15/democrats-feud-over-drug-pricing-policy/>
 - *Sanders courts GOP voters with 'Medicare for All' plan.* “Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) is trying to use “Medicare for All” to win over white working-class voters, many of whom supported President Trump in 2016. The 2020 candidate went on Fox News, Trump’s turf, on Monday night for a town hall, where audience members cheered when asked if they would support Medicare for All. Sanders shared the clip on social media several times the following day.”
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/439221-sanders-courts-gop-voters-with-medicare-for-all-plan>
- **Week Ahead**
 - Congress is out of session this week.

Regulatory and Administration Update

- *CMS Issues Final Rule for the 2020 Annual Notice of Benefit and Payment Parameters.* “The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today released the final annual Notice of Benefit and Payment Parameters for the 2020 benefit year, also known as the 2020 Payment Notice. The rule reduces user fees for plans offered on HealthCare.gov, and encourages the use of lower-cost generic drugs, while improving market stability and consumer choice.”
 - Read more: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-issues-final-rule-2020-annual-notice-benefit-and-payment-parameters>
- *Proposed Fiscal Year 2020 Payment and Policy Changes for Medicare Inpatient Rehabilitation Facilities (CMS-1710-P).* “On April 17, 2019, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) proposed a rule that would update Medicare payment policies for facilities under the Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility Prospective Payment System (IRF PPS) and the Inpatient Rehabilitation Quality Reporting Program (IRF QRP) for fiscal year (FY) 2020.”
 - Read more: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/proposed-fiscal-year-2020-payment-and-policy-changes-medicare-inpatient-rehabilitation-facilities>
- *HHS: Review of Monthly ESRD-Related Visits Billed by Physicians or Other Qualified Healthcare Professionals.* “The Comprehensive Error Rate Testing program's special study of the Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System codes for ESRD-related services found that for some codes, approximately one-third of the payments for ESRD-related services were improper payments due to insufficient documentation, incorrect coding, or no documentation submitted (CMS, Medicare Quarterly Provider Compliance Newsletter Guidance to Address Billing Errors, volume 5, issue 3, April 2015). We will review whether physicians or other qualified healthcare professionals billed monthly ESRD-related visits in accordance with Federal requirements (Social Security Act, §§ 1815(a) and 1833(e)).”
 - Read more: <https://oig.hhs.gov/reports-and-publications/workplan/summary/wp-summary-0000369.asp>

- ***CMS to allow copay accumulators, cut exchange user fees.*** “The CMS finalized a rule on Thursday that would allow health insurers to implement copay accumulator programs to prevent drug manufacturer coupons from applying to a patient's annual limit on out-of-pocket costs in situations where a generic drug is available.”
 - Read more: <https://www.modernhealthcare.com/insurance/cms-allow-copay-accumulators-cut-exchange-user-fees>
- ***Drugmakers Reveal List Prices Online After Pressure From Trump.*** “The world’s biggest pharmaceutical companies are revealing prices of their prescription drugs on websites for the first time in a bid to stave off pressure from the Trump administration to make even more public disclosures. The move by companies ranging from pharma giant Pfizer Inc. to biotechnology pioneer Amgen Inc. comes almost a year after U.S. President Donald Trump suggested in a blueprint for lowering medical costs that the government might require drugmakers to put list prices in their TV advertisements.”
 - Read more: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-04-18/drugmakers-reveal-list-prices-online-after-pressure-from-trump>
- ***Medicare payment rules hinder the fight against superbugs.*** “Late last year, a retirement community in Vermont was quarantined after an outbreak of antibiotic resistant bacteria swept through the facility, sickening 70 seniors. In pediatric oncology wards, children beating cancer are increasingly felled by drug-resistant bacteria and fungal infections. Every week, we hear more stories of infections that have become untreatable due to resistance.”
 - Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2019/04/17/medicare-payment-antibiotics-hinder-superbug-fight/>

Articles of Interest

- ***Kidney Patients And The GW School Of Medicine And Health Sciences Host Inaugural Global Summit Focused On Innovations in Kidney Care.*** “The American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP) and the George Washington University (GW) School of Medicine & Health Sciences (SMHS) are pleased to announce a major kidney disease education collaboration, the Global Summit on Innovations in Patient-Centered Kidney Care. The Global Summit takes place May 21-23, 2019 in Washington, D.C. at the George Washington University campus in the Jack Morton Auditorium. The Summit agenda, list of confirmed speakers, and registration information can be found at www.aakp.org/global-summit. Kidney patients, caregivers and medical students are invited to attend the event for free.”
 - Read more: <https://www.newswise.com/articles/kidney-patients-and-the-gw-school-of-medicine-and-health-sciences-host-inaugural-global-summit-focused-on-innovations-in-kidney-care>
- ***The Future of Nursing 2020-2030.*** “The Committee on the Future of Nursing 2020-2030 is holding three regional meetings to hear from you. The committee is interested in your insights on how to advance the profession of nursing to help our nation create a culture of health, reduce health disparities, and improve the health and well-being of the U.S.

population in the 21st century. Each meeting will feature panel discussions around a specific topic, followed by time for public comments.”

- Read more: <https://nam.edu/publications/the-future-of-nursing-2020-2030/>
- ***American Society of Nephrology Announces KidneyX Chair.*** “The American Society of Nephrology (ASN) announced today that John R. Sedor, MD, FASN, has been appointed Chair of the Kidney Innovation Accelerator (KidneyX) Steering Committee. KidneyX is a public-private partnership between ASN and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Dr. Sedor will lead the KidneyX Steering Committee to drive innovation and investment in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of kidney diseases.”
 - Read more: <https://www.kidneynews.org/policy-advocacy/leading-edge/american-society-of-nephrology-announces-kidneyx-chair>
- ***Breakthrough Kidney Disease Treatment Offers Hope for Hundreds of Millions with Diabetes Worldwide.*** “The drug canagliflozin was developed to lower glucose levels for people with diabetes but today has been shown to protect against kidney failure. It also significantly reduced the risk of cardiovascular complications including heart failure, which are common among people with kidney disease.”
 - Read more: https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-04/uoo-bkd041219.php
- ***Safety of Dynamic Intravenous Iron Administration Strategies in Hemodialysis Patients.*** “Intravenous iron therapy for chronic anemia management is largely driven by dosing protocols that differ in intensity with respect to dosing approach (i.e., dose, frequency, and duration). Little is known about the safety of these protocols.”
 - Read more: <https://cjasn.asnjournals.org/content/early/2019/04/12/CJN.03970318>
- ***Fears of Medicare for All, Drug Rebate Overhaul Feed Selling of Health Insurer Stocks.*** “Publicly traded health insurer stocks took a hit this week amid fears that Medicare for All momentum and the federal government's proposal to nix drug rebates to pharmacy benefit managers could threaten their business models or even their existence. The stock price of the largest publicly traded insurers were all trading down on Friday and for the week, with Anthem taking the biggest hit, falling almost 14%. Meanwhile, the S&P 500 stock index was up.”

Read more: <https://www.modernhealthcare.com/insurance/fears-medicare-all-drug-rebate-overhaul-feed-selling-health-insurer-stocks>
- ***Hickenlooper Expanded Medicaid, Created State-Run Marketplace To Insure Nearly All Coloradans.*** “Former two-term Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper is a rare breed in the 2020 presidential race — he’s running as a moderate. On health care, he supports universal coverage and boasts about Colorado’s record-low uninsured rate. But unlike many of his competitors for the Democratic nomination, he opposes “Medicare-for-all,” the single-payer federal system that would guarantee health care coverage to every American. Hickenlooper has been making the rounds on cable talk shows and is trying to distinguish himself as a compromiser. In an interview on MSNBC’s “Meet the Press,”

Hickenlooper said, “We got to almost universal coverage in health care in Colorado. We expanded Medicaid. We created one of the most innovative exchanges in the country.” His campaign website claims that “nearly 95 percent” of Coloradans currently have health care coverage.”

- Read more: <https://khn.org/news/hickenlooper-expanded-medicaid-created-state-run-marketplace-to-insure-nearly-all-coloradans-2/>
- ***Prostate Drugs May Raise Diabetes Risk:*** “Two commonly used drugs for treating an enlarged prostate may increase the risk for Type 2 diabetes. Benign prostate hypertrophy, or B.P.H., may cause difficulty in urinating or increased frequency and urgency of urination. A study published in BMJ examined the use of two similar drugs often prescribed for the condition, finasteride (Proscar) and dutasteride (Avodart), in 39,000 men. As controls, the 11-year study used 16,000 men taking tamsulosin (Flomax), a different type of drug for B.P.H.”
 - Read more: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/18/well/live/prostate-drugs-may-raise-diabetes-risk.html>
- ***Legislation Shielding People with Pre-Existing Conditions Clears House:*** “Lawmakers in Connecticut’s House of Representatives passed a measure Wednesday to safeguard people with pre-existing conditions who are on short-term health insurance policies, sometimes called temporary health insurance. They could not say how many people the bill would protect, but pointed to data compiled by the Kaiser Family Foundation showing that as many as 522,000 people younger than 65 in Connecticut have pre-existing conditions such as cancer or heart disease. It was unclear how many of those residents are on the short-term plans.”
 - Read more: <https://ctmirror.org/2019/04/17/legislation-shielding-people-with-pre-existing-conditions-clears-house/>
- ***Liver Illness Strikes Latino Children Like A ‘Silent Tsunami’:*** “In that low-income, predominantly Latino neighborhood, it’s pretty hard for a kid to avoid sugar. Last year, doctors at St. John’s Well Child and Family Center, a nonprofit community clinic seven blocks away, became alarmed by the rising weight of Diaz’s son, Adrian Mejia. They persuaded him to join an intervention study run by the University of Southern California and Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) that weans participants off sugar in an effort to reduce the rate of obesity and diabetes among children.”
 - Read more: <https://khn.org/news/liver-illness-strikes-latino-children-like-a-silent-tsunami/>
- ***Study: Genetic Test Predicts Middle-aged Obesity Risk:*** “The test examines more than 2 million spots in a person’s genetic code, seeking variants that individually nudge a person’s obesity risk up by a tiny amount. The researchers drew on previously published data about those variants to create a risk score. A high score didn’t guarantee obesity, nor a low score rule it out. But middle-aged people with scores in the top 10 percent were 25 times as likely to be severely obese as those in the bottom 10 percent, scientists reported in a paper released Thursday by the journal Cell.”
 - Read more: <https://www.apnews.com/60317e7a5ab54f1684c21eace9b953f9>