

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate is in Session all week.

House

- House is in session starting Tuesday, 5/14 at 2:00 pm.

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *Grassley, Wyden working on plan to cap seniors' drug costs in Medicare:* "Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) is working on a bipartisan plan to cap seniors' expenses for prescription drugs in Medicare as part of a broader effort to lower drug prices. Grassley told The Hill on Wednesday that one idea he is working on with Sen. Ron Wyden (Ore.), the top Democrat on the panel, is "some sort of maximum amount that one person would have to pay" for drugs."
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/442776-grassley-wyden-working-on-plan-to-cap-seniors-drug-costs-in-medicare>
 - *House votes to block Trump's eased health coverage rules:* "The Trump administration would be blocked from easing coverage rules required by President Barack Obama's health care law under legislation Democrats pushed through the House on Thursday as the two parties rejoined a battle that roiled last year's congressional elections. Under guidance the administration issued last year, states could allow insurers to offer low-cost, low-coverage policies that could deny coverage for people with pre-existing medical conditions. Democrats said that by blocking that language, Thursday's bill would protect patients with pre-existing conditions."
 - Read more: <https://www.apnews.com/0c335474c56e40c0af8c8f3084bc6de2>

- *Merkley, Burr Introduce Bipartisan Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2019:* “Oregon’s Senator Jeff Merkley and Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), introduced today the bipartisan Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2019, which would reauthorize, update, and improve critical programs that help to grow and support the American nursing workforce.”
 - Read more: <https://www.merkley.senate.gov/news/press-releases/merkley-burr-introduce-bipartisan-nursing-workforce-reauthorization-act-of-2019>
- **Week Ahead**
 - *House Budget Committee announces hearing on single-payer health care:* “The House Budget Committee on Friday announced that it will hold a hearing on single-payer health care on May 22, marking another step forward for the progressive proposal on Capitol Hill. The hearing will be the second one on the idea of single-payer, sometimes called "Medicare for All," that House Democrats have held this year since taking back the majority.”
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/443165-house-budget-committee-announces-hearing-on-single-payer-health-care>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- *Drug Industry Patents Go Under Senate Judiciary Committee’s Microscope:* “Congress isn’t making much headway in finding a solution to the problem of soaring prescription drug prices, but lawmakers from both parties are tinkering on the edges with legislation that aims to increase competition among drugmakers. A comprehensive piece of drug-pricing legislation is a high priority for Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.). And it could be introduced by mid-June, according to congressional staff.”
 - Read more: <https://khn.org/news/drug-industry-patents-go-under-senate-judiciary-committees-microscope/>
- *TV pitches for prescription drugs will have to include price:* “In a tweet, President Donald Trump celebrated the announcement, saying: “Historic transparency for American patients is here. If drug companies are ashamed of those prices_lower them!” Drug companies responded that adding prices to their commercials could unintentionally harm patients.”
 - Read more: <https://www.apnews.com/c58c22765603411781a30fa5ecff18b1>
- *States bring price fixing suit against generic drug makers:* “Attorneys general from more than 40 states are alleging the nation’s largest generic drug manufacturers conspired to artificially inflate and manipulate prices for more than 100 different generic drugs, including treatments for diabetes, cancer, arthritis and other medical conditions. The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Connecticut on Friday, also names 15 individual senior executives responsible for sales, marketing and pricing.”

- Read more: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/states-bring-price-fixing-suit-against-generic-drug-makers>
- ***Statement from Acting FDA Commissioner Ned Sharpless, M.D., on policy advancements to help bring interchangeable biosimilars to market:*** “The U.S. Food and Drug Administration plays an important role in helping to address the high cost of medicines through the development of science-based policies that can improve competition and patient access to safe and effective, high-quality and lower cost generic drugs, biosimilars and interchangeable biologics.”
 - Read more: <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/statement-acting-fda-commissioner-ned-sharpless-md-policy-advancements-help-bring-interchangeable>

Articles of Interest

- ***More than 500 drugs saw price hikes in the first quarter, study shows:*** “More than 500 drugs saw price hikes at the beginning of 2019, including price increases of nearly 3% prices for generics, according to a new report. Researchers at GoodRx, an app and website that tracks drug pricing and offers coupons, found a 2.9% price hike across brand-name and generic drugs in the first quarter of 2019. Most of that was reported in the first week of January, when drugmakers often raise their prices, according to the report.”
 - Read more: <https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/payer/more-than-500-drugs-saw-a-price-hike-q1-study-shows>
- ***Wisconsin Republicans Vote to Kill Medicaid Expansion:*** “MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin Republicans voted Thursday to scrap expanding Medicaid, legalizing medical marijuana, raising the minimum wage and a host of other priorities of Democratic Gov. Tony Evers as they begin dismantling his two-year budget plan. Evers and Democrats remain defiant, saying the public is on their side in support of expanding Medicaid. They ran on their promise to expand the health program for the poor and believe their victories in 2018 were due in large part to that position. Polls also show broad public support.”
 - Read more: <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2019-05-09/wisconsin-republicans-to-vote-on-killing-medicaid-expansion>
- ***States Step Up to Protect Insurance Markets and Consumers from Short-Term Health Plans:*** “Short-term, limited duration health insurance — known as short-term plans — was originally intended to fill short gaps when people transitioned between coverage, but is now being sold as a replacement for year-round comprehensive coverage. Short-term plans are not subject to the consumer protections of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As a result, they have numerous gaps and limits in their benefit design, and people with these plans can be denied coverage for certain conditions (see Exhibit 1).² Short-term plans may appear cheaper, but may result in higher out-of-pocket costs or in people going without necessary care. In one instance, a plan paid only \$11,780 toward \$211,690 for heart surgery, leaving the enrollee with about \$200,000 in bills. The insurer claimed this remainder exceeded the allowable amount under the plan.”

- Read more: <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2019/may/states-step-up-protect-markets-consumers-short-term-plans>
- ***Trump backs Fla. plan to import lower-cost meds from abroad:*** “In a move sure to get attention in a 2020 battleground state, President Donald Trump indicated Thursday that his administration may approve a Florida plan to import lower-cost prescription drugs from abroad for use by residents. It’s the latest flashpoint in a confrontation between the Trump administration and the pharmaceutical industry, which for years successfully has fought off importation proposals. Drugs in other economically advanced countries are often much cheaper because governments set prices.”
 - Read more: <https://www.apnews.com/444ad1c9d32a4e8da0a104e0ea47d00f>
- ***Washington to offer first ‘public option’ insurance in US:*** “A set of tiered public plans will cover standard services and are expected to be up to 10% cheaper than comparable private insurance, thanks in part to savings from a cap on rates paid to providers. But unlike existing government-managed plans, Washington’s public plans are set to be available to all residents regardless of income by 2021.”
 - Read more: <https://www.apnews.com/3370e660b151433a95633f21d3f4d85d>
- ***Nurse care coordinators are key to success of patient-centered medical home programs:*** “Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) programs include a team of primary care providers that manage patient care and oversee individual care plans. Their goals are to improve health outcomes, enhance quality, and reduce costs. Medicare and private payers have adopted these programs to improve primary care delivery. George Mason University’s College of Health and Human Services led new research on provider experiences with PCMH programs. To date, few projects have studied provider experiences with these programs. Providers said that nurse care coordinators (NCC) and individual care plans were key factors for improving health care quality and delivery.”
 - Read more: https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-05/gmu-ncc050919.php
- ***Transplants A Cheaper, Better Option For Undocumented Immigrants With Kidney Failure:*** “Uninsured, undocumented immigrants often go to the emergency room for treatment. Since 1986 the federal government has required that patients in the emergency room receive care, regardless of their immigration status or ability to pay. But caring for chronic conditions such as kidney disease or cancer in the emergency room is expensive. So some states are quietly expanding access for undocumented immigrants to obtain medical treatment beyond the ER.”
 - Read more: https://www.npr.org/2019/05/12/721800514/transplants-a-cheaper-better-option-for-undocumented-immigrants-with-kidney-fail?utm_medium=RSS&utm_campaign=news
- ***Mauck: Future of nursing depends on enhanced education:*** “One of the most important goals to emerge from that report was the need to promote a more highly educated nursing workforce. An associate’s degree in nursing is a historical baseline many veteran nurses achieved to pursue their registered nurse (RN) license and first nursing job. Some

would go on to earn advanced certifications or complete bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees."

- Read more: <https://www.heraldtribune.com/opinion/20190512/mauck-future-of-nursing-depends-on-enhanced-education>