

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, May 29, 2019

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate is out of Session until May 31.

House

- House is out of Session this week.

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *Kidney Community Applauds Introduction of Bipartisan Senate Legislation to Improve and Expand Access to Kidney Care Treatments, Improve Quality of Life for Individuals with Kidney Disease and Kidney Failure: “Kidney Care Partners (KCP) – the nation’s largest kidney coalition comprised of physician groups, providers, patient groups, manufacturers and researchers – today praised the introduction of the Chronic Kidney Disease Improvement in Research and Treatment Act of 2019 (S. 1676) – a bill to improve the understanding of, and promote access to treatment for, chronic kidney disease and end-stage renal disease (ESRD), or kidney failure. The legislation was introduced by Senators Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Roy Blunt (R-MO).”*
 - <https://kidneycarepartners.com/press/kidney-community-applauds-introduction-of-bipartisan-senate-legislation-to-improve-and-expand-access-to-kidney-care-treatments-improve-quality-of-life-for-individuals-with-kidney-disease-and-kidney-f/>
 - <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1676?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22S.1676%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=1>

- *Sen. Alexander Releases Bipartisan Plan To Lower Health Costs, End Surprise Bills:* “In a year already marked by a wide variety of congressional health care legislation, Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.), the chair and ranking Democrat of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, on Thursday released the details of a plan they hope can help bring down health costs and eliminate surprise medical bills for patients. “These are common sense steps we can take, and every single one of them has the objective of reducing the health care costs that you pay for out of your own pocket,” Alexander said in a statement. “We hope to move it through the health committee in June, put it on the Senate floor in July and make it law.””
 - <https://khn.org/news/sen-alexander-releases-bipartisan-plan-to-lower-health-costs-end-surprise-bills/>
- **Week Ahead**
 - *Trump Ready To Force Transparency In Healthcare Pricing With An Executive Order:* “The Trump Administration wants to make it easier for patients and employers to comparison shop for healthcare. On transparency, one can't fault the Administration for not trying. So far, the measures implemented have mostly been baby steps. But, this is about to change as President Trump is expected to soon release an executive order on healthcare price transparency. If enacted, this executive order would mandate disclosure of prices throughout the healthcare industry, and be enforceable by federal agencies. It would provide patients and employers pricing data that reflect the negotiated rates between insurers, hospitals, and physicians.”
 - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joshuacohen/2019/05/27/trump-ready-to-force-transparency-in-healthcare-pricing-with-an-executive-order/#659b34e57636>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- *VA now transplanting kidneys that are positive for hepatitis C:* “Underscoring its mission of improving the quality of life for Veterans, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently began offering a new option to patients awaiting kidney transplants: organs that are positive for hepatitis (hep) C. In early March, a team from the Iowa City VA (ICVA) Health Care System (HCS) successfully transplanted hep C positive kidneys into four Veteran patients, then immediately began the treatment process to cure the viral infection that causes liver inflammation.”
 - <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5259>

- ***FDA Grants Priority Review for Canagliflozin to Treat CKD in T2DM:*** “The FDA has granted priority review for a supplemental New Drug Application (sNDA) for canagliflozin to decrease the risk of adverse renal and cardiovascular outcomes in adult patients with type 2 diabetes and chronic kidney disease (CKD). If approved for this indication, canagliflozin, which is marketed as Invokana, would be the first and only therapy in almost 20 years indicated to treat CKD in patients with type 2 diabetes when added to current standard of care, according to a press release issued by the drug’s maker, Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson.”

- ***CBO: Medicare for All gives 'many more' coverage but 'potentially disruptive':*** “Experts from Congress’s nonpartisan budget office testified Wednesday that a single-payer health care system would result in “many more” people with health insurance but would also be “potentially disruptive” and increase government control. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) experts made the remarks at the second hearing on a single-payer, “Medicare for All” system that House Democrats have held this year, this time at the House Budget Committee.”
 - <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/445036-cbo-medicare-for-all-gives-many-more-coverage-but-potentially-disruptive>

- ***Department of Health and Human Services: Protecting Statutory Conscience Rights in Health Care; Delegations of Authority:*** “This final rule revises existing regulations to ensure vigorous enforcement of Federal conscience and anti-discrimination laws applicable to the department, tis programs, and recipients of HHS funds, and to delegate overall enforcement and compliance responsibility to the Department’s Office for Civil Rights”
 - <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/final-conscience-rule.pdf>

- ***Modernizing Part D and Medicare Advantage To Lower Drug Prices and Reduce Out-of-Pocket Expenses:*** “This final rule amends the Medicare Advantage (MA) program (Part C) regulations and Prescription Drug Benefit program (Part D) regulations to support health and drug plans' negotiation for lower drug prices and reduce out-of-pocket costs for Part C and D enrollees. These amendments will improve the regulatory framework to facilitate development of Part C and Part D products that better meet the individual beneficiary's healthcare needs and reduce out-of-pocket spending for enrollees at the pharmacy and other sites of care.”
 - <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/05/23/2019-10521/modernizing-part-d-and-medicare-advantage-to-lower-drug-prices-and-reduce-out-of-pocket-expenses>

Articles of Interest

- ***Take it from a kidney transplant recipient: Extending immunosuppressive drug coverage saves lives, money:*** “Of course, organ transplants are not cheap. While significantly more cost effective over time than dialysis, the cost of a kidney transplant patient to the government is more than \$131,000 during the year of their transplant – a total that would be cost prohibitive for far too many of the patients I interact with today at the National Kidney Foundation, where I serve as CEO. Since 1972, however, Medicare has helped these vulnerable Americans with ESRD expenses – regardless of age. The Medicare ESRD program is a vital resource for those facing the most aggressive forms of kidney disease; covering expenses related to dialysis and transplantation.”
 - <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/healthcare/444310-take-it-from-a-kidney-transplant-recipient-extending>
- ***A lifesaver with a catch: Powerful new cancer drugs can trigger diabetes – and no one is certain why:*** “Roughly 1% of patients receiving immunotherapy drugs experience the same irreversible side effect. Making matters worse, oncologists have little clue why. “There are a lot of case reports,” said Dr. Kevan Herold, a clinical immunologist at the Yale School of Medicine who last year published a case series of his own. “But there isn’t a good understanding yet of who’s most likely to develop these adverse events from checkpoint inhibitors.””
 - <https://www.statnews.com/2019/05/29/a-lifesaver-with-a-catch-powerful-new-cancer-drugs-can-trigger-diabetes-and-no-one-is-certain-why/>
- ***Dialysis care offers lessons for achieving health equity in the U.S.:*** “Achieving health equity at a local level is challenging. Doing so consistently at a national scale is rare. Yet that is exactly what one U.S. health care sector – dialysis care – has been doing, substantially outperforming many other sectors of this ecosystem. The kidney community has overcome socioeconomic barriers and is reliably delivering excellent clinical outcomes regardless of where dialysis centers are located and who they are caring for.”
 - <https://www.statnews.com/2019/05/29/dialysis-care-offers-lessons-for-achieving-health-equity-in-the-u-s/>
- ***Health paradox: New US diabetes cases fall as obesity rises:*** “NEW YORK (AP) – The number of new diabetes cases among U.S. adults keeps falling, even as obesity rates climb, and health officials aren’t sure why. New federal data released Tuesday found the number of new diabetes diagnoses fell to about 1.3 million in 2017, down from 1.7 million in 2009.”
 - <https://www.apnews.com/4a5ae16a4c7e4a3983a078005ecec8c>

- ***How Great Nursing Improves Doctors' Performance:*** "Every physician can think of a time – probably many – when a nurse has saved the day. And indeed ample research shows that programs that foster a culture of excellent nursing have sweeping impacts throughout health care organizations. Hospitals participating in these initiatives see higher nurse satisfaction and retention, improved patient experience and safety, decreased mortality, increased revenues, and many other benefits. Our research adds to this body of work, showing a positive association between nursing excellence and physicians' performance."

 - <https://hbr.org/2019/05/how-great-nursing-improves-doctors-performance>
- ***Mandatory overtime for nurses at center of hospital strike:*** "A hospital strike now in its third week is putting a spotlight on staffing shortages at the same time Ohio lawmakers are debating legislation that would allow nurses to refuse mandatory overtime. Many of the nurses among the 2,200 workers on strike at Mercy Health St. Vincent Medical Center in Toledo say they are tired of repeatedly being on-call or forced to work beyond their regular shifts because of understaffing."

 - <https://www.apnews.com/f8d57f4964174ec1894c0746b662819e>
- ***DaVita's new CEO Rodriguez talks strategy, style and the future of kidney care:*** "The newest CEO of dialysis giant DaVita originally imagined he might do something in the financial realm, earning a bachelor's degree in finance and marketing from Boston College. He got his first taste in business when he and his brother started exporting dairy and other products from the U.S. to Mexico. But after relocating to Chicago to be closer to his then-girlfriend (now wife) who was earning her master's degree at Northwestern University, he discovered the world of healthcare at Baxter Healthcare. In 1997, he headed to Harvard Business School to earn an MBA before joining DaVita's predecessor Total Renal Care."

 - <https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/hospitals-health-systems/davita-ceo-javier-rodriguez>
- ***Colorado becomes first state in nation to cap price of insulin:*** "Diabetics in Colorado who use insulin to control their blood sugar levels won't pay more than \$100 per month for the drug starting in January thanks to a bill signed into law by Gov. Jared Polis on Wednesday."

 - <https://www.denverpost.com/2019/05/23/colorado-insulin-price-cap/>
- ***Hypertension found in children exposed to flower pesticides:*** "In a study published online May 21, 2019 in the journal Environmental Research, researchers at University of California San Diego School of Medicine found higher blood pressure and pesticide exposures in children associated with a

heightened pesticide spraying period around the Mother's Day flower harvest. This study involved boys and girls living near flower crops in Ecuador.”

- https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-05/uoc--hfi052219.php