

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, June 18, 2019

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate is in Session all week.

House

- House is in Session from June 18 – June 21

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *Lawmakers urge DOJ to launch criminal investigation of generic drug makers:* “Two top lawmakers urged the US Department of Justice on Thursday to launch a criminal investigation into the nation's generic drug manufacturers to see whether their executives conspired to raise prices at the expense of the American public. Rep. Elijah Cummings, chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, and Sen. Bernie Sanders, ranking member of the Senate Budget Committee, made the request in a letter to Attorney General William Barr and Assistant Attorney General Makan Delrahim.”
 - <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/13/health/generic-drugs-doj-investigation/index.html>
 - *House Democrats vote to overturn Trump ban on fetal tissue research:* “House Democrats on Thursday voted to block the Trump administration’s recent ban on using federal funds to conduct medical research that relies on material collected from elective abortions. An amendment from Reps. Mark Pocan (D-Wis.) and Ted Deutch (D-Fla.) to a broader health care spending package passed 225-193, largely along party lines. Three Democrats broke with their party and voted with Republicans: Reps. Collin Peterson (Minn.), Daniel Lipinski (Ill.) and Ben McAdams (Utah).”

- <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/448446-house-democrats-vote-to-overturn-trump-ban-on-fetal-tissue-research>

- **Week Ahead**

- ***House progressives challenge drug makers to come back to Capitol Hill:***
“WASHINGTON – House progressives on Wednesday called for executives from six drug companies to appear on Capitol Hill next week to justify what the lawmakers termed unjustifiable price increases – the latest public display of displeasure from the Democratic Party’s left flank regarding House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s approach to lowering pharmaceutical costs. The companies include four brand-name drug manufacturers: Merck, Eli Lilly, Gilead, and Pfizer, a spokeswoman said. The progressives also invited executives from two generic manufacturers: Mylan, the manufacturer of EpiPen, and Mallinckrodt, a company accused of paying bribes to boost sales of a treatment for a rare seizure disorder in infants. Mylan is also among the companies implicated in a sweeping price-fixing lawsuit filed by dozens of state attorneys general.”
 - <https://www.statnews.com/2019/06/12/progressives-call-drugmakers-to-testify-again/>
- ***Senate Judiciary Committee plans markup of drug pricing bill this month:***
“The Senate Judiciary Committee is planning a markup of legislation to lower drug prices this month, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), the panel’s chairman, told The Hill on Wednesday. The action from the Judiciary Committee is a sign of the movement on the issue of drug pricing in both parties, which could provide Congress with a rare bipartisan achievement this year. The Senate Finance Committee is also moving forward with drug pricing legislation this month or next.”
 - <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/448165-senate-judiciary-committee-plans-markup-of-bills-to-lower-drug-prices-this>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- ***FDA approves new treatment for pediatric patients with type 2 diabetes:*** “The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today approved Victoza (liraglutide) injection for treatment of pediatric patients 10 years or older with type 2 diabetes. Victoza is the first non-insulin drug approved to treat type 2 diabetes in pediatric patients since metformin was approved for pediatric use in 2000. Victoza has been approved to treat adult patients with type 2 diabetes since 2010.”

- <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-new-treatment-pediatric-patients-type-2-diabetes>
- ***CMS approves Washington plan for hepatitis C drug subscription deals:***
 “Washington became the fourth state to win a Medicaid state plan amendment allowing it to negotiate value-based purchasing agreements with prescription drug manufacturers. The CMS announced Wednesday that it approved Washington's proposal to let the state negotiate under a subscription model with makers of costly hepatitis C drugs. Under that model, the state would pay a fixed annual amount to a manufacturer to buy an unrestricted supply of hepatitis C drugs.”
 - <https://www.modernhealthcare.com/medicaid/cms-approves-washington-plan-hepatitis-c-drug-subscription-deals>
- ***CMS proposes to update e-prescribing standards to reduce provider burden and expedite access to needed medications:*** “Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a proposed rule that would improve patients’ access to needed medications by updating the prior authorization process for Medicare Part D, the program that provides coverage for prescription drugs that beneficiaries pick up at a pharmacy counter. The prior authorization process requires that providers supply additional clinical information to verify that the medication can be covered under the Medicare Part D benefit. The process promotes better clinical decision-making and helps ensure that patients receive medically necessary prescription drugs. The proposed rule would update the Part D e-prescribing program by adopting standards that ensure secure transmissions and expedite prior authorizations.”
 - <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-proposes-update-e-prescribing-standards-reduce-provider-burden-and-expedite-access-needed>
- ***Trump says he will roll out new health care plan in next couple of months:***
 “President Trump said he'll be rolling out a new health care plan in a couple of months, saying it will be a key focus in his 2020 reelection campaign. "We're going to produce phenomenal health care, and we already have the concept of the plan," Trump told ABC News in an interview aired Sunday night. "We'll be announcing that in two months, maybe less," he added, when prompted for specifics. Trump said "we almost had health care done," adding that ObamaCare "is a disaster," but "we've made it serviceable.””
 - <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/448829-trump-says-he-will-roll-out-new-health-care-plan-in-next-couple-of>
- ***Trump officials issue new rule aimed at expanding health choices for small businesses:*** “The Trump administration on Thursday unveiled a rule aimed at

expanding health insurance options for small businesses and others, the latest action stemming from President Trump's health care executive order in 2017. The White House framed the move as part of its efforts to expand health care choices for people now that efforts to repeal ObamaCare have come up short."

- <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/448478-trump-officials-issue-new-rule-aimed-at-expanding-health-choices-for-small>

Articles of Interest

- ***Including Family Caregivers In Seriously Ill Veterans' Care: A Mixed-Methods Study:*** "Family caregivers often serve as unpaid members of the home and community-based care workforce for people with serious illness; as key partners in the home-clinic continuum, they should be included in health care teams. The Campaign for Inclusive Care is an initiative within the Veterans Affairs health care system to improve provider practices for including caregivers of military members in treatment planning and decisions. We defined inclusive care using a literature review, provider interviews, and a caregiver survey. We found that inclusive care involves clear definition of the caregiver role, system policies for inclusion, assessment of caregivers' capacity, explicit involvement of caregivers, and mutuality in caregiver-provider communication. We recommend solutions based on this definition that can inform development of a national caregiver strategy, required of the Department of Health and Human Services by the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage Family Caregivers Act of 2018."
 - <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00012>
- ***Major doctors group votes to oppose single-payer health care:*** "The nation's largest doctors group on Tuesday voted against a measure that would have dropped its decades-long opposition to single-payer health care proposals. The American Medical Association's (AMA) House of Delegates voted 53 percent to 47 percent against the measure, but adopted a slate of proposals to shore up the Affordable Care Act. The AMA is part of a coalition of insurers, drug companies and hospital groups aggressively lobbying against "Medicare for All" proposals in Congress.
 - <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/448007-doctors-group-votes-to-maintain-single-payer-opposition>
- ***One-fifth of US surgeons still overusing riskier procedure to create kidney dialysis access:*** "Long-term hemodialysis is a lifesaver for approximately half a million patients in the United States with kidney failure (also known as end-stage renal disease, or ESRD) who are either waiting on or unsuitable for a kidney transplant. But before the external machinery can take over the function of the kidneys -- filtering and cleansing wastes from the blood -- a minor surgical procedure is needed to create a stable, functional and reusable access to the

circulatory system, usually through blood vessels in the arm. Two surgical methods for creating this "vascular access" are available, one overwhelmingly preferred whenever possible for its better durability, performance and safety. However, in a study using Medicare claims data, Johns Hopkins Medicine researchers report that one-fifth of seasoned U.S. surgeons are statistically performing the less-preferred procedure too often, even when unnecessary, and that providing them with a peer evaluation of such performance may lead to improved practices."

- https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-06/jhm-ouu061219.php

- ***Rural Health: Financial Insecurity Plagues Many Who Live With Disability:*** "Having good access to transportation — or not — has a huge impact on the health of people living in rural parts of the country, says Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco who studies the health of vulnerable populations. "If you go to less populated areas — rural areas — access to a car that functions well [and] the costs for gas becomes such an essential element," Bibbins-Domingo says. "Both to drive to seek medical care, as well as to drive to access the other resources that are necessary to pursue good health."
 - <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/06/12/730669446/rural-health-financial-insecurity-plagues-many-who-live-with-disability>
- ***Facebook debuts US blood donation tool, its latest public health move:*** "On Wednesday, Facebook launched a blood donation feature in the United States to help users find places to donate blood in their area and be notified when a nearby blood donation center may be in need. The feature allows users to sign up to be blood donors in the "about" section of their profiles and then receive notifications from blood donation centers. The tool comes just in time for summer, a season when blood donations are typically low."
 - <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/12/health/facebook-blood-donation-sheryl-sandberg/index.html>
- ***Maine legalizes medically assisted suicide:*** "Gov. Janet Mills (D) signed the Maine Death with Dignity Act, which lays out several steps a patient and physician must take before the procedure. The bill requires the patient to undergo two waiting periods and one written and two oral requests and obtain opinions from at least two physicians that a medically assisted suicide is appropriate. The bill authorizes "a person who is 18 years of age or older, who meets certain qualifications and who has been determined by the person's attending physician to be suffering from a terminal disease ... to make a request for medication prescribed for the purpose of ending the person's life."

- <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/448245-maine-legalizes-medically-assisted-suicide>
- ***U.S. drugmakers file lawsuit against requiring drug prices in TV ads:*** “U.S. drugmakers filed a lawsuit on Friday challenging a new government regulation that would require them to disclose the list price of prescription drugs in direct-to-consumer television advertisements. The lawsuit was jointly filed by Amgen Inc, Merck & Co, Eli Lilly and Co and the Association Of National Advertisers in the U.S. district court for the district of Columbia. The new regulation, which was finalized on May 8 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and set to take effect in July, is part of the government’s efforts to bring down the cost of prescription medicines for U.S. consumers.”
 - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-drugpricing-lawsuit/us-drugmakers-file-lawsuit-against-requiring-drug-prices-in-tv-ads-idUSKCN1TF2HJ>