

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, June 19, 2018

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate will meet at 10 a.m. to resume consideration of Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, 2019, H.R. 5895

House

- House will meet noon hour and 2 pm for legislative business; votes will be postponed until 6:30 pm; House expected to take up 18 suspension bills including Medicaid Reentry Act, H.R. 4005; Opioid Addiction Action Plan Act, H.R. 5590; Advancing High Quality Treatment for Opioid Use Disorders in Medicare Act, H.R. 5605; and Medicaid PARTNERSHIP Act, H.R. 5801

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *House passes 25 bills to fight opioid addiction and overdoses.* “The House has passed 25 bills to combat rising drug-related deaths from opioids, including prescription painkillers and heroin. The chamber will continue to weigh other anti-opioid legislation during the next two weeks. The issue has received bipartisan support amid overwhelming death tolls in lawmakers' home states. More than 42,000 people died from opioids in 2016, according to the latest-available data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.”
 - Read more:
<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/healthcare/house-passes-25-bills-to-fight-opioid-addiction-and-overdoses>
 - *McConnell: ‘Everybody’ in Senate likes pre-existing condition safeguards.* “Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said ‘everybody’ in the Senate wants to preserve consumer protections for people with pre-existing conditions, an Obamacare provision that the Trump administration last week said is unconstitutional and should be struck down in court. Obamacare’s prohibition

on insurance companies canceling or denying coverage for people with pre-existing conditions is among the most popular provisions of the 2010 law.”

- Read more: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/06/12/senate-pre-existing-conditions-health-care-mcconnell-621128>
- *Senate panel advances major drug prices bill.* “A Senate panel advanced key legislation that would prevent brand name drug companies from blocking access to much cheaper generic drugs. The Senate Judiciary Committee voted 16-5 on Thursday to advance the CREATES Act to the Senate floor. The bill would make it easier for generic drug makers to sue brand name drug makers that prevent access to samples of a product of which they want to make a cheaper generic version.”
 - Read more: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/healthcare/senate-panel-advances-major-drug-prices-bill>
- **Week Ahead**
 - *Lawmaker: Bill tackling maternal death rates to get vote before August.* “Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-Wash.) is confident her bill aimed at addressing increasing maternal death rates can pass, and says she has a commitment from leadership that a vote on the House floor will occur before August. Deaths related to pregnancy are on the rise in the U.S., and the rates are higher than other developed countries.”
 - Read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/391915-lawmaker-bill-aimed-at-addressing-maternal-death-rates-to-get-vote-before>
 - *Congress tackles mounting opioid epidemic.* “House Republicans are beefing up their efforts to tackle the nation's deadly opioid crisis, but some experts question how effective their piecemeal approach will be. Congress is touting its recent flurry of action – the House is on track to pass more than 50 bills addressing the issue by the end of this week – on an issue that is hitting many constituents hard, and one that lawmakers are sure to hear about on the campaign trail this year.”
 - Read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/392565-congress-tackles-mounting-opioid-epidemic>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- *Trump officials meet with drug companies to push for voluntary price cuts.* “Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) officials have been meeting with pharmaceutical companies to seek voluntary cuts in drug prices, according to sources familiar with the meetings. Voluntary cuts in prices would allow the administration to immediately tout benefits of President Trump's drug pricing plan, which was announced last month, rather than having to wait for any regulatory actions to be put forward and take effect. It is not yet clear whether any drug companies have agreed to cut their prices voluntarily.”

- Read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/391711-trump-officials-meet-with-drug-companies-to-push-for-voluntary-price-cuts>
- **NIH outlines plans for \$500M to combat opioid epidemic.** “Leaders of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on Tuesday published an outline of how the nation’s medical research agency plans to spend the \$500 million Congress gave it to fight the opioid epidemic. Specifically, the NIH will focus on improving treatments for opioid misuse and addiction and bolster strategies to manage pain, heads of the NIH wrote in an opinion piece published in the American Medical Association's JAMA.”
 - Read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/391860-nih-outlines-plans-to-spend-500m-to-combat-opioid-epidemic>
- **Drug makers considering ‘substantial’ decreases in prices, Azar says.** “Several drug companies are considering ‘substantial and material decreases’ in the prices for their drugs, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said at a congressional hearing Tuesday. His comments come about two weeks after President Trump pledged that “some of the big drug companies” would be announcing “voluntary massive drops in prices,” in the coming days, announcements he said were related to his administration’s broader campaign to lower drug prices.”
 - Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2018/06/12/drug-makers-considering-substantial-price-decreases/>
- **Trump administration is shutting down practice-guidelines clearinghouse for doctors.** “Physician societies, government agencies, and others issue detailed recommendations for everything from who should receive cardiac stents to which antibiotics patients should get to avoid infections after knee surgery. Until now, the most rigorous of those guidelines have been available for doctors to peruse in a single location: the government’s Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s National Guidelines Clearinghouse (NGC). NGC also takes the time to summarize the more than 4,000 guidelines it maintains, an indispensable service for the physicians who come to the site seeking information. After roughly a decade of budget cuts, however, AHRQ has defunded the repository, effective July 16.”
 - Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2018/06/13/ahrq-practice-guidelines-clearinghouse-shutting-down/>
- **Trump’s health chief suggests ‘massive’ drug price cuts not imminent.** “President Donald Trump’s top health care official is lowering expectations that drug companies will soon announce huge price cuts, undercutting Trump’s recent claims that his drug pricing plan would produce immediate results. Trump on May 30 said some of the largest pharmaceutical companies would announce ‘voluntary massive drops in prices’ within two weeks in response to his drug pricing plan released in mid-May. Wednesday will mark two weeks since Trump’s remarks, which drugmakers at the time said caught them by surprise.”
 - Read more: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/06/12/trump-drug-price-cuts-azar-641967>

Articles of Interest

- ***'Surgery in a pill' a potential treatment for diabetes.*** "Over the last decade, bariatric surgeons have made strides in performing weight loss surgery that not only reverses obesity but can also reverse type 2 diabetes in patients with both conditions. Despite dramatic improvements in quality of life and diabetes remission, the number of patients who pursue surgery remains relatively low, according to Ali Tavakkoli, MD, co-director of the Center for Weight Management and Metabolic Surgery at BWH. This prompted a collaboration between Tavakkoli and Brigham and Women's Hospital researchers to find a less invasive but equally effective treatment for reversing type 2 diabetes, one that can offer the same benefits as surgery but that may have wider appeal and application. In a paper published this week in *Nature Materials*, the team reports on results of a preclinical study in which an oral agent was administered in rats to deliver a substance that could temporarily coat the intestine to prevent nutrient contact with the lining in the proximal bowel and avoid post-meal spikes in blood sugar."
 - Read more: https://eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2018-06/bawh-ia060818.php
- ***Nurses play vital roles in health care. Why are they invisible in the media?*** "Nurses have made vital contributions to health and health care for generations and are essential players today. Nurses outnumber doctors by almost 3 to 1. So why are nurses missing in action when it comes to health news stories? A working group of nearly 20 researchers analyzed health news articles published in the leading print newspapers, weeklies, and trade publications of the day for the month of September 1997. The results confirmed what Woodhull suspected: Nurses were largely absent in media coverage of health issues. Just 4 percent of quotes in newspapers and 1 percent in weekly and industry publications were attributed to nurses. They were almost never included in photos that accompanied the news articles. And nurses were mentioned in only 14 percent of the articles."
 - Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2018/06/13/nurses-health-news-media-invisibility/>
- ***Nursing groups partner to address nursing workforce issues.*** "Nurse leaders have several concerns regarding the nursing workforce. First off, will there be an adequate supply of RNs to care for those in need of healthcare? Second, will these nurses have the education, skills, and training to function in an evolving, value-based environment? To address these issues, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the American Organization of Nurse Executives have formed a new national strategy to strengthen alignment between practice and academia. The goal of the collaboration is to advance innovative solutions to meet the demands of the current and future healthcare system."
 - Read more: <https://www.healthleadersmedia.com/nursing/nursing-groups-partner-address-nursing-workforce-issues-0>
- ***New Bluebird data show promising benefits for gene therapy, if they last.*** "New versions of Bluebird Bio's gene therapy for inherited blood disorders yielded significant benefits for patients, according to updated results from ongoing clinical trials released Friday. But whether those benefits will endure for the patients with those conditions, beta-thalassemia and sickle cell disease, remains an open question, even as the

Cambridge-based biotech prepares to submit for its first marketing approval in Europe by the end of the year.”

- Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2018/06/15/bluebird-bio-gene-therapy-update/>
- ***Double-checking diabetes medications may reduce re-hospitalizations.*** “Clinicians may take upwards of 15 minutes to double-check a patient's medication list in an electronic health record system, but according to a new study, this reconciliation process may be well worth the time for diabetes patients. In a paper to be published in the *Diabetes Care* journal, Brigham and Women's Hospital physician Alexander Turchin, MD, MS, and his colleagues assessed medication reconciliation programs at BWH and Massachusetts General Hospital, and found that they seem to be working.”
 - Read more: https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2018-06/bawh-ddm061118.php
- ***U.S. obesity rates rising again.*** “After briefly leveling off, the U.S. obesity rate may be climbing again, according to a preliminary study. The rate had been rising for decades until it appeared to plateau in recent years. But, in the new study, researchers found that the trend may have been short-lived. And if nothing changes, they estimate that half of all U.S. teenagers will be overweight or obese by 2030 -- as will one-third of kids between 6 and 11 years old.”
 - Read more: <https://consumer.healthday.com/vitamins-and-nutrition-information-27/obesity-health-news-505/u-s-obesity-rates-rising-again-734762.html>
- ***NIH study finds no significant link between brain injury and IV fluid treatment of pediatric diabetic ketoacidosis.*** “Giving children intravenous (IV) fluids to treat diabetic ketoacidosis – an emergency complication of untreated diabetes – does not appear to worsen the brain swelling that may accompany the condition, according to a study supported by the National Institutes of Health. The findings, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, contrast with widespread concern that providing too much IV fluid may result in serious brain injury.”
 - Read more: <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-study-finds-no-significant-link-between-brain-injury-iv-fluid-treatment-pediatric-diabetic-ketoacidosis>
- ***Metabolic effects of antipsychotics on adiposity and insulin sensitivity in youths.*** “Antipsychotic medications are commonly used in children for the treatment of disruptive behavior disorders, but potential benefits should be carefully weighed against the risk for adverse changes in total and abdominal adiposity and insulin sensitivity, known contributors to the development of early-onset type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other illnesses associated with premature morbidity and mortality.”
 - Read more: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/article-abstract/2683878>