

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, July 17, 2019

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate is in session July 15 – July 19

House

- House is in session July 15 – July 18

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *Republican-appointed judges appear to side with Texas challenge to Obamacare:* “Two Republican-appointed judges hearing a Trump-backed challenge to Obamacare strongly suggested Tuesday that when Congress eliminated the penalty for not buying health insurance it threw the entire landmark health care law into question, including protections for those with pre-existing conditions. Such a ruling would threaten to wipe away coverage for millions of Americans and have a dramatic impact on a presidential race that is already focused on access to and costs of health care, nearly 10 years after President Barack Obama signed his signature domestic achievement.
 - <https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/09/politics/obamacare-appeal-arguments-texas-california/index.html>
 - *Children urge Congress to renew funds for diabetes research:* “More than 160 children with type 1 diabetes made a personal plea for lawmakers to approve more funding to research the disease at a hearing Wednesday before the Senate Special Committee on Aging. The children were dressed in blue shirts and Committee Chairwoman Susan Collins (R-Maine) also sported a light blue jacket in solidarity. “Your passion and hope for a cure are contagious,” Collins said. “I’m inspired by that sea of blue that is out there.”

- <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/452473-children-urge-congress-to-renew-funds-for-diabetes-research>
 - *Grassley: Deal to lower drug prices moving forward 'very soon':* "Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) said Thursday that he plans to advance a bipartisan deal to lower drug prices "very soon." "While the final details are still being negotiated, we're on track to report a bill out of committee very soon," Grassley said in a statement. Grassley has been in negotiations for months with Sen. Ron Wyden (Ore.), the panel's top Democrat, and the pair are close to a deal, though there are still questions as to whether objections from other Republican senators on the committee could derail it."
 - <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/452660-gop-chairman-deal-to-lower-drug-prices-moving-forward-very-soon>
- **Week Ahead**
 - *Sanders to join diabetes patients on trip to Canada to buy cheaper insulin:* "Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) announced Thursday he will accompany patients with diabetes on a bus trip to Canada to buy insulin that's available at cheaper prices than in the U.S. The move comes as Sanders seeks to burnish his progressive bona fides as he vows to lower drug costs if elected president. He will make the trip with members of Insulin4All on July 28."
 - <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/452581-sanders-to-join-diabetes-patients-on-trip-to-canada-to-buy-cheaper-insulin>
 - *Democratic chair: Medicare negotiating drug prices not moving before August:* "A measure lawmakers have been working on for months to allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices will not move forward before Congress leaves for the August recess, said a key Democrat involved in the legislation. "I really wanted to see that done pre-August, and I don't think that's going to be the case," said Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), the chairwoman of the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee."
 - <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/453293-dem-chair-medicare-negotiating-drug-prices-not-moving-before-august>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- *Trump signs executive order aimed at improving kidney disease treatment:* "President Trump on Wednesday signed an executive order that he says would improve the lives of patients with kidney disease while lowering health care costs. The order instructs federal agencies to pursue strategies that will diagnose kidney disease sooner, make treatments less expensive and encourage more

people to donate healthy kidneys. "This action will dramatically improve prevention and treatment of this life-threatening illness while making life better and longer," Trump said at a signing ceremony Wednesday, surrounded by patients."

- <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/452460-trump-signs-executive-order-aimed-at-improving-kidney-disease-treatment>
- ***Trump officials seek plan B on drug pricing rule:*** "The Trump administration suffered a blow when a federal judge blocked a key rule about drug price disclosures just hours before it was scheduled to take effect. U.S. District Judge Amit P. Mehta in Washington, D.C., on Monday sided with a coalition of drug companies and blocked the Trump administration from implementing a policy that would require prescription drug manufacturers to disclose list prices in TV ads."
 - <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/452272-trump-officials-seek-plan-b-on-drug-pricing-rule>
- ***As Its Drug Pricing Plans Fall Through, Trump Administration Turns To Congress To Act:*** "The Trump administration has dropped one of the meatiest portions of its plan to reduce drug prices. The Department of Health and Human Services said it will no longer pursue a rule that would have prohibited the payment of certain rebates on drugs in Medicare Part D and Medicaid plans. The idea was to target the middlemen, pharmacy benefit managers, whose negotiations with drugmakers and insurers influence the costs consumers pay for drugs."
 - <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/07/11/740845050/as-its-drug-pricing-plans-fall-through-trump-administration-turns-to-congress-to>

Articles of Interest

- ***A 'No-Brainer'? Calls Grow For Medicare To Cover Anti-Rejection Drugs After Kidney Transplant:*** "For nearly a half-century, Medicare has covered patients, regardless of age, who have end-stage renal disease, including paying the costs of kidney transplants and related care, which run about \$100,000 per patient. But coverage ends after 36 months for those younger than 65 who don't otherwise qualify for the program — and that includes payment for the vital immunosuppressive drugs that cost thousands per patient each month."
 - <https://khn.org/news/kidney-transplant-anti-rejection-drugs-medicare-coverage/>
- ***Sununu To Sign Bill To Protect Health Coverage for Those With Pre-existing Conditions:*** "A key portion of the federal Affordable Care Act that gives

protection to people with pre-existing conditions will soon be enshrined in New Hampshire state law. Republican Governor Chris Sununu said Tuesday he intends to sign the bill authored by Senate Democrats. Sununu's statement comes on the day that lawyers in a federal case that could overturn the Affordable Care Act hold oral arguments.

- <https://www.nhpr.org/post/sununu-sign-bill-protect-health-coverage-those-pre-existing-conditions#stream/0>

- ***Study Reveals Substantial and Persistent Gaps in Quality of Care for Patients with Chronic Kidney Disease:*** “Newswise – Washington, DC (July 11, 2019) – A recent analysis found that U.S. patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) have a high prevalence of uncontrolled hypertension and diabetes, and a low use of statins that has not improved over time and is not concordant with guidelines. The findings appear in an upcoming issue of CJASN. Managing CKD is complex and involves the use of multiple interventions to protect patients’ health and prevent kidney failure. These include making lifestyle changes and/or taking medications to control hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes.
- <https://www.newswise.com/articles/study-reveals-substantial-and-persistent-gaps-in-quality-of-care-for-patients-with-chronic-kidney-disease>
- ***Capacity Building in Nurse-Led Health Centers to Address Substance Use Disorder:*** “Recognizing that community-based safety-net providers must be equipped to respond to the health needs of substance users in primary care settings, the proposed initiative seeks to build capacity to engage in participatory research related to the health needs of individuals with substance use disorders. Specifically, the proposed initiatives will focus on building clinician and patient capacity to participate in research that addresses the concomitants of substance use, especially in three main areas: medication assisted therapy (MAT); addressing persistent pain; and reducing infectious disease. In addition, clinicians and patient stakeholders will be engaged to build capacity to participate in research design, implementation, and dissemination. Project activities will focus on building infrastructure to disseminate PCORI-funded research and products related to integrated behavioral health and primary care services to NNCC’s national network of nurse leaders and safety-net providers.”
 - <https://www.pcori.org/research-results/2019/capacity-building-nurse-led-health-centers-address-substance-use-disorder>
- ***A National Examination Of Long-Term Care Setting, Outcomes, And Disparities Among Elderly Dual Eligibles:*** “The benefits of expanding funding for Medicaid long-term care home and community-based services (HCBS) relative to institutional care are often taken as self-evident. However, little is known about the outcomes of these services, especially for racial and ethnic minority groups, whose members tend to use the services more than whites do, and for people

with dementia who may need high-intensity care. Using national Medicaid claims data on older adults enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid, we found that overall hospitalization rates were similar for HCBS and nursing facility users, although nursing facility users were generally sicker as reflected in their claims history. Among HCBS users, blacks were more likely to be hospitalized than non-Hispanic whites were, and the gap widened among blacks and whites with dementia. Also, conditional on receiving HCBS, Medicaid HCBS spending was higher for whites than for nonwhites, and higher Medicare and Medicaid hospital spending for blacks and Hispanics did not offset this difference. Our findings suggest that home and community-based services need to be carefully targeted to avoid adverse outcomes and that the racial/ethnic disparities in access to high-quality institutional long-term care are also present in HCBS. Policy makers should consider the full costs and benefits of shifting care from nursing facilities to home and community settings and the potential implications for equity.”

- <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05409>

- ***Man donates kidney to protest ban on blood donation for gay men:*** “A Virginia man reached out and donated a kidney to a stranger after learning that he would no longer be eligible to give blood donations because of his sexuality. Barton Lynch, 24, told The Washingtonian that he recently entered into a same-sex relationship, a decision he learned would exclude him from donating blood to the Red Cross in the U.S. as a result of a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) policy banning blood donations from men who have been in a same-sex relationship in the last year.”

- <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/452708-man-donates-kidney-to-protest-ban-on-blood-donation-for-gay-men>

- ***Blood donation centers are out for young blood:*** “Facing an aging donor base that could lead to an inadequate supply, blood banks across the country are ramping up efforts to woo younger generations to donate regularly. Without more regular millennial donors, the health care consequences could be severe. “People need to understand that the demand is constant,” said Kate Fry, CEO of America’s Blood Centers, an organization of independent community blood collection centers.”

- <https://www.statesman.com/news/20190714/blood-donation-centers-are-out-for-young-blood>

- ***Stevie Wonder tells London concert he will have a kidney transplant:*** “LONDON (Reuters) - Stevie Wonder told thousands of fans watching him perform in London on Saturday night he is due to have a kidney transplant in September. The singer, songwriter and musician told the crowd at an event in Hyde Park that he had a donor lined up, and was making the announcement to

avoid rumors spreading about his health. "I'm going to have surgery, I am going to have a kidney transplant in September of this year," he said as he finished his performance, according to footage posted on Twitter by those at the concert."

- https://www.reuters.com/article/us-people-stevie-wonder/stevie-wonder-tells-london-concert-he-will-have-a-kidney-transplant-idUSKCN1U20G8?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axiosam&stream=top