

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, July 31, 2019

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate is in session July 29 – August 2

House

- House is out of session for the month of August

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *Sweeping budget deal passes House despite weak GOP support:* “The House with limited Republican support passed a massive budget deal Thursday that would free lawmakers to hit the campaign trail next year without fretting about fiscal turmoil keeping them tied down in Washington. Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) – who hammered out the deal during weeks of talks with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin – flexed her political muscle and rounded up 219 Democratic votes for the measure, an impressive display that more than offset the lack of Republican support.”
 - <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/07/25/house-gop-budget-vote-1433848>
 - *Drug cost bill advances but GOP resistance spells trouble:* “A prescription drug compromise that would lower costs for Medicare recipients and save billions for Medicare and Medicaid cleared a key hurdle in the Senate on Thursday, but Republican resistance signaled trouble as the legislation faces floor consideration. The Finance Committee voted 19-9 to advance the bill, but it passed because of unanimous support from the panel’s Democratic minority, while a majority of Republicans

opposed it. The bill would for the first time limit out-of-pocket costs medication costs faced by seniors to \$3,100, starting in 2022. Currently there is no cap, and some Medicare recipients face copays rivaling a mortgage payment.”

- <https://www.apnews.com/aa62ac89089d4263b8ea5ce522733424>

- **Rep. Porter Calls for Investigation into Dialysis Industry Practices:** “Congresswoman Katie Porter (CA-45) today called on a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) watchdog to investigate dialysis providers and patient advocacy groups that are putting patients’ lives at risk and increasing the cost of care for taxpayers. Porter requested additional oversight after hearing complaints that patients were being pushed toward more expensive insurance options to increase dialysis center profits and to prevent patients from accessing kidney transplants.”
 - <https://porter.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-porter-calls-investigation-dialysis-industry-practices>

- **Week Ahead**

- **Senate will not vote on bipartisan health costs bill before leaving for August:** “The Senate will not vote on a bipartisan measure aimed at lowering health care costs before lawmakers leave Washington for the August recess. Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) said in a joint statement that the Senate “does not have time before the August recess” to consider the bill. Alexander had pushed for the measure to get a vote this month. Alexander and Murray are now expressing hope that the Senate will vote on the bill upon returning in September.”
 - <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/454476-senate-will-not-vote-on-bipartisan-health-costs-bill-before-leaving-for>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- **Trump administration would force hospitals to disclose secret prices:** “The Trump administration wants to force hospitals to disclose to patients how much they charge for all supplies, tests and procedures. A new proposal released Monday aims to make it easier for patients to shop around for the best price by forcing hospitals to disclose what are often secret rates negotiated with insurance companies. Under the policy, hospitals would be required to post online all charges for all items and services provided by the hospital beginning Jan. 1, 2020.”
 - <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/455223-trump-administration-would-force-hospitals-to-disclose-secret-prices>

- **Exclusive: White House preparing order that would cut drug prices for Medicare:** *sources:* “U.S. President Donald Trump is considering a sweeping executive order that would cut prices on virtually all branded prescription drugs sold to Medicare and other government programs, according to two industry sources who had discussions with the White House. The order under discussion would be much broader than the Administration’s previously disclosed proposal to lower prices on physician administered, or Part B, drugs by tying prices to lower costs in other countries.”
 - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-drugpricing-exclusive/exclusive-white-house-preparing-order-that-would-cut-drug-prices-for-medicare-sources-idUSKCN1UJ354>
- **Trump gives boost to state drug import plans:** “The Trump administration has softened its stance on drug importation, giving a boost to states that want to curb rising drug prices by importing medications from Canada. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar last week said he and President Trump “are committed” to making importation work. The development marks a significant break from the traditional GOP position, which is opposed to drug importation. Republicans often cite concerns over the safety of imported drugs.
 - <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/454631-trump-gives-boost-to-state-drug-import-plans>
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- **FDA approves first treatment for severe hypoglycemia that can be administered without an injection:** “The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today approved Baqsimi nasal powder, the first glucagon therapy approved for the emergency treatment of severe hypoglycemia that can be administered without an injection. Severe hypoglycemia occurs when a patient’s blood sugar levels fall to a level where he or she becomes confused or unconscious or suffers from other symptoms that require assistance from another person to treat. Typically, severe hypoglycemia occurs in people with diabetes who are using insulin treatment. Baqsimi is approved to treat severe hypoglycemia in patients with diabetes ages four and older.”
 - <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-treatment-severe-hypoglycemia-can-be-administered-without-injection>

Articles of Interest

- **Association Between Plant-Based Dietary Patterns and Risk of Type 2 Diabetes:** “In this systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective observational studies assessing the association between plant-based dietary patterns and risk of type 2 diabetes among adults, higher adherence to plant-based dietary patterns was associated with a lower risk of type 2 diabetes; this

association was strengthened when healthy plant-based foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts, were included in the pattern. Findings were broadly consistent in several prespecified subgroups and in sensitivity analyses.”

- <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2738784>
- ***Bernie Sanders leads caravan into Canada to purchase cheaper insulin with American prices rising:*** “The Democratic primary campaign trail took a detour north of the border Sunday, when Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders led a group of roughly a dozen people with Type I diabetes into Canada to purchase insulin for a fraction of the price they would be charged in the United States. Rising insulin costs have led an estimated one-in-four patients to ration the drug, a potentially deadly -- and increasingly commonplace -- practice among those who either lose insurance or cannot afford plans that sufficiently cover their expenses.”
 - <https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/28/politics/bernie-sanders-canada-cheaper-insulin-cnntv/index.html>
- ***A simple bureaucratic organ donation fix will save thousands of lives:*** “The partisan debates raging across the U.S. are often framed as a battle for the nation’s soul. The battle for our nation’s organs, however, is a distinctly more bipartisan affair. Both President Trump — via executive order — and elected officials from both parties are pushing for reforms to improve the U.S. organ donation system in order to save lives and taxpayer dollars. It is a step in the right direction for the more than 113,000 Americans currently on the organ waiting list — and a testament to the importance of collecting accurate data to hold public institutions accountable for their outcomes.”
 - <https://www.statnews.com/2019/07/24/a-simple-bureaucratic-organ-donation-fix-will-save-thousands-of-lives/>
- ***For Many Diabetes Patients, Skin Patches and Phones Are Replacing Finger Pricks:*** “Diabetes patients are increasingly using electronic skin patches and their phones, instead of pricking their fingers, to do the complex job of managing a disease that affects more than 30 million Americans. The transformation in blood-sugar testing suggests how harnessing technology and data may drive improvements for disease management — and profits for manufacturers.”
 - <https://www.wsj.com/articles/devices-for-diabetes-patients-spur-growth-at-medical-firms-11564392603>
- ***On A Mission To Help People Control Diabetes — And Save Money On Insulin:*** “The Wickhams have set out to answer that question in Tennessee’s Grundy County, which ranks lowest on the scale of residents’ health. Grundy’s

population of 13,000 has the shortest life expectancy in the state and an elevated rate of diabetes (16% of adults), which can eventually result in blindness, kidney failure or amputations. Norris said trying to overhaul her diet by herself was confusing and difficult. And when things didn't change, the doctor just kept increasing her dosage of insulin."

- <https://khn.org/news/on-a-mission-to-help-people-control-diabetes-and-save-money-on-insulin/>

- ***Pfizer, Mylan strengthen ties, create new company:*** "Pfizer, the country's largest drugmaker, is creating a hybrid new drug company by combining its off-patent branded drug business with the generic pharmaceutical company Mylan. Pfizer's Upjohn, which sells one-time blockbusters like Viagra and Lipitor that have lost patent protection, will be spun off and then it will combine with Mylan, a \$10 billion company. The complex deal, expected to close in the middle of next year, will create a company with estimated 2020 revenue in excess of \$19 billion, with sales in more than 165 countries. The name for the new company has yet to be determined.
 - https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/pfizer-to-absorb-mylan-creating-generic-giant/2019/07/29/d691267e-b205-11e9-acc8-1d847bacca73_story.html?utm_term=.6df408705cf9