

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update - Monday, September 25, 2017

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate convenes at 4 pm, set to vote at 5:30 pm on William Emanuel to be a member of National Labor Relations Board; confirmation would give Republicans a 3-2 majority

House

- House convenes at noon, votes postponed until 6:30 pm; considers 8 bills under suspension of the rules, incl. FAA reauthorization
- 5 pm: House Rules Committee considers H.R. 2824, which would extend the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Visiting Program for five years; and H.R. 2792, which would prevent Social Security benefits from being paid to individuals with an arrest warrant for committing a felony or violating parole

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *ASN and Advocates from 21 Other Health Care Organizations are on Capitol Hill Urging Congress to Support Kidney Disease Research and the Living Donor Protection Act.* "Advocates from the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) and the 21 other health care organizations listed below are meeting with their representatives and senators today. They will urge Congress to continue its historic support of research funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and to cosponsor and pass the Living Donor Protection Act (H.R. 1270), no-cost legislation to eliminate barriers to living donation and increase access to transplants."
 - DPG Senior Government Relations Manager Tony Mitchell participated on ANNA's behalf.
 - To read more: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/asn-and-advocates-from-21-other-health-care-organizations-are-on-capitol-hill-urging-congress-to-support-kidney-disease-research-and-the-living-donor-protection-act>

- *GOP facing likely failure on ObamaCare repeal.* “Congressional Republicans are facing the prospect of failing this week – perhaps for a final time – in their bid to repeal ObamaCare. Senate Republicans have yet to throw in the towel, but it seems more than likely their nine-month odyssey will be unsuccessful, with Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Rand Paul (R-Ky.) opposed to the measure and Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) leaning strongly against it. Republicans can lose just two votes and still muscle the bill through the Senate in the face of unanimous Democratic opposition.”
- **Week Ahead**
 - *ObamaCare repeal bill hanging by a thread.* “Senate Republicans' last-ditch effort to repeal and replace ObamaCare this year were dealt a major blow Friday when Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said he would vote against the bill. McCain is the second Republican, following Sen. Rand Paul (Ky.), to announce his opposition to the bill spearheaded by GOP Sens. Lindsey Graham (S.C) and Bill Cassidy (La.). Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) had aimed for a vote in the coming week but those plans are now up in the air. With only a 52-48 majority in the Senate, GOP leaders cannot afford to lose a third vote. If they can hold on to the rest of the caucus, Vice President Mike Pence could provide the tie-breaking 51st vote for repeal.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/health-reform-implementation/351968-week-ahead-fate-of-latest-obamacare-repeal>
 - *GOP changes Graham-Cassidy bill to win over wary senators.* “Senate Republicans on Sunday night circulated a revised draft of their bill to repeal and replace ObamaCare, aiming to win over key holdout senators. According to estimates of the state-by-state impacts obtained by The Hill along with the revised bill, Maine and Arizona would see boosts in funding. Alaska would see a small drop in federal funding.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/news-by-subject/healthcare/352187-gop-changes-graham-cassidy-bill-to-win-over-senators-wary-of-the>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- *ESRD Medication Reconciliation & Management TEP Conference Call.* “September 25, 2017, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM ET. The agenda and dial in information for the call is included below, and will be posted along with the TEP composition form on the [CMS website](#) in the near future.”
 - **Call-in Information:** Toll-Free Phone Number: 1-888-296-6500; Guest Code: 965094.
 - WebEx Link: <https://meetings.webex.com/collabs/#/meetings/detail?uuid=M80OS8FG17ER0OAAVWRHUP6LGE-BFTX&rnd=881915.69197>
 - **Meeting Agenda**
3:00 – 3:10 Review of In-Person Summary Report

3:10 – 3:55 Discussion of Measure Specifications
3:55 – 4:00 Public Comment Period

- For more information: <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/MMS/TEP-Current-Panels.html#ESRDMedREC&MGT>
- **Medicare contractors propose tougher rules for covering more frequent dialysis.** “Four contractors that process Medicare payments for dialysis care -- covering 31 states and close to 60% of the U.S. end-stage renal disease population -- are proposing nearly identical policy changes that would tighten rules for paying for more than three-times-a-week dialysis treatments. The exception would be treatment for patients with acute comorbid conditions outside the plan of care. While the proposed policies do offer billing codes and indicate more frequent dialysis can be covered with medical justification, the four Medicare Administrative Contractors--Novitas Solutions, Noridian Healthcare Solutions, WPS Government Help Administrators, and First Coast Service Options--make it clear in the language of the policies that nephrologists who prescribe more intensive treatment must include the patient assessment as part of the plan of care in order to get the therapy covered by the MACs.”
 - To read the full article: <https://www.nephrologynews.com/medicare-contractors-want-to-limit-payment-for-more-frequent-dialysis/>

Articles of Interest

- **Selena Gomez's Kidney Transplant Puts Lupus Center Stage.** “When pop star Selena Gomez revealed Thursday that she had a kidney transplant, she put the autoimmune disease lupus in the spotlight. Lupus turns the body's immune system against itself and attacks vital organs, including the kidneys, which is why it's so devastating. But little is known about what causes the disease, and no real cure exists. Treatments can only keep it at bay.”
 - To read more: <https://consumer.healthday.com/diseases-and-conditions-information-37/lupus-news-453/selena-gomez-s-kidney-transplant-puts-lupus-center-stage-726588.html>
- **This Gift Voucher Might Just Get You A Kidney.** “Seven-year-old Quinn Gerlach got a gift certificate from his grandpa a few years back – not for a toy, a book or a game. It was for a kidney. Gerlach was born with a single kidney, instead of the usual two, and it doesn't fully function. So, one day, he may need a transplant. Quinn's grandfather, retired Tulare County Superior Court judge Howard Broadman, 68, of Visalia, Calif., learned he has the right blood and tissue types to be a donor for Quinn. But Broadman feared he might die or be too sick to donate a kidney when it was needed.”
 - To read more: <http://khn.org/news/this-gift-voucher-might-just-get-you-a-kidney/>
- **How First 'Vouchers' in UCLA Kidney Donation Program Led to 25 Lifesaving Transplants.** “In 2014 a former judge from San Diego County approached the UCLA

Kidney Transplant Program with an unusual request: If the judge donated a kidney to a stranger now, could his then-4-year-old grandson, who suffered from chronic kidney disease, receive priority for a future kidney transplant if needed later in life? The suggestion from Howard Broadman, then 64 years old, initiated the kidney “voucher” program, an innovative system allowing living donors to donate a kidney now, or at some time in the near future, allowing a family member or friend to be given priority for a kidney transplant in the future if needed.”

- To read more: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/how-first-vouchers-in-ucla-kidney-donation-program-led-to-25-lifesaving-transplants>
- ***Scientists grow bullish on pig-to-human transplants.*** “Add your name to a waitlist for a kidney transplant in the United States today, and you’ll join around 100,000 people, many of whom have already been waiting years. The scarcity of life-saving organs for transplants has raised hopes for substitute organs from pigs, which have a similar anatomy to humans. But decades of scientific setbacks have kept clinical trials of that approach, called xenotransplantation, on the horizon. Now, a few teams are chomping at the bit. Exhilarated by recent results in monkey experiments, some researchers here at a meeting of the International Xenotransplantation Association are eyeing human testing.”
 - To read more: <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/09/scientists-grow-bullish-pig-human-transplants>