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STATE NEWS

Doyle's Medicaid funding plan attracts opposition
The Governor's budget proposes to fund the gap in the Medicaid budget through transferring $150 million from the state's patient compensation fund and creating a fund of revenue bonds from future tax revenue largely from tobacco sales. A similar attempt to transfer revenue from the patients compensation fund was killed in the Governor's previous biennial budget. While some health groups and a Rep. Hines have proposed raising the cigarette tax by $1 and raising $250 million, the Governor has said that he would consider vetoing Republican-backed legislation to increase the tax.


Hospital Association joins Medical Society in supporting cigarette tax increase
Guest Comment: Raise tobacco tax for good of smokers, state
Dr. Susan Turney and Steve Brenton, The Business Journal of Milwaukee

HSAs and health purchasing coops make progress in Legislature
The Assembly has approved bills related to HSAs and lifting the caps on health benefit purchasing cooperatives. Each of these bills must still be approved by the Senate:
AB 4 - Health Savings Account tax deduction - Adopts for state income tax purposes federal law as it relates to individual health savings accounts. It is expected to cost about $7.5 million in 2005-07. AB 4 passed 63-33, which is a little short of the two-thirds support that would be needed if the Governor vetoes it (as he did last session).
AB 5 - Removes certain limits on health benefit purchasing cooperatives. Passed 96-0 and messaged to the Senate.

**WHA website lists hospital retail prices**
A new website will allow comparison of retail prices charged by hospitals for more than 60 common medical procedures. The site does not show the actual charges to insurers who do not pay retail or "list prices." While the site doesn't give actual prices, it does show the overall discount insurers collectively receive for all procedures combined. The new website will be updated quarterly. Wisconsin health care costs are 25% above the national average.
www.wipricepoint.org.

**Hospital construction moratorium proposed**
Senator Carol Roessler (R-Oshkosh) has proposed a moratorium on hospital construction. A temporary ban on hospital construction is being promoted by ThedaCare President John Toussaint. The proposal is in part sparked by a spate of new hospital construction projects of Aurora Health in Waukesha, Green Bay and Oshkosh, despite unused capacity in many of those communities. A hearing was held on March 1 at the Senate Committee on Health.
The *Milwaukee Business Journal* published commentary, "Hospital moratorium deserves review":

**Report details Wisconsin losses in proposed federal budget**
According to estimates of the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, Wisconsin will lose $1.1 billion in federal spending from domestic discretionary programs between 2006 and 2010. Program reductions include loss of food and nutrition support for 9,300 pregnant women, new mothers and their children in the WIC program; loss of heating assistance for 8,400 low-income elderly and families and child care assistance for 4,500 children.
http://www.cbpp.org

**WI's high college binge drinking linked to adult binge drinking**
A study in this months American Journal of Public Health indicates a connection between Wisconsin's high adult binge drinking rate (26.3%) and the very high rate on college campuses. Wisconsin has the highest adult rate out of 40 states and the second highest college binge drinking rate. The study did not note if the high college binge drinking caused the high adult rate or vice versa. It did cite that Wisconsin is among the few states that did not have laws targeting high-volume sales of alcohol and that states that did not have these laws are more likely to have high college drinking rates.
Milwaukee physicians join in organized charity care program

Project Access, a national program to increase access to primary and specialty care, is organizing physicians in the Milwaukee area to provide care for those who do not qualify for governmental health programs such as Badgercare. The Milwaukee Medical Society and Partnerships for a Healthy Milwaukee have begun recruiting primary physicians who will pledge to see about a dozen patients each year. Specialty physicians will pledge to see about 20 patients each year. The program hopes to recruit about 75% of the practicing physicians in Milwaukee, though it needs about 65% of the workforce for the program to be a success.

See "Health care access for working poor: Milwaukee joins effort to treat the uninsured before they need ER" Erik Brooks, The Business Journal of Milwaukee

Race and ethnic disparities measurement toolkit

The Health Research and Educational Trust (HRET) has just released a new Web-based toolkit for collection of race, ethnicity, and primary language information by hospitals and other health care providers. With the recent announcement by the Department of Health and Human Services that the federal government will implement a national electronic medical record system in 10 years and with 22 states mandating the collection of race and ethnicity data, the need for standardization has become increasingly urgent. This groundbreaking toolkit has been developed to help hospitals collect accurate information from patients to meet regulatory and local community demands. The data can be used for monitoring health care delivery and quality of care by linking to clinical measures and targeting appropriate interventions to specific groups. The toolkit, which was developed with support from The Commonwealth Fund, can be accessed by going to www.hretdisparities.org/.

Understanding the State Budget

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families and League of Women Voters of Wisconsin is sponsoring a series of 10 Brown Bag lunch meetings across the state. Bring a bag lunch and learn about what the budget means in understandable terms. Each session will feature an overview of the 2005-07 State Budget, the ongoing fiscal challenges and an analysis of provisions that impact children and families. The meetings are scheduled from noon to 2:00PM and will include time for questions and answers about the state budget document and the budget process. You can find additional details and site addresses at the WCCF website at: http://www.wccf.org/projects/
Understanding the Bush budget proposal
Kaiser Family Foundation has released an analysis of the FY 2006 federal budget and comparative material on the current FY05 budget. [http://www.kff.org/newsroom/2006budget.cfm](http://www.kff.org/newsroom/2006budget.cfm)

Substance abuse and mental health survey
The bi-annual survey of the U.S. drinking, drug-taking, smoking and mental health is now available through SAMHSA. Rhode Island had the highest rate and Hawaii, the lowest rate of serious mental illness. The study found that more than one in five Americans binge drank in the past month (more than five drinks on one occasion) and one in ten smoked marijuana in the past year. [http://oas.samhsa.gov/nhsda.htm#NHSDAinfo](http://oas.samhsa.gov/nhsda.htm#NHSDAinfo)

Wisconsin 2003 birth data posted
2003 birth data has been added to the following modules of the WISH (Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health) query system: Birth Counts, Low Birthweight, Teen Births, Prenatal Care, and Fertility. Other enhancements were also made, such as adding new measures of prenatal care adequacy. You can find it on the DHFS website at: [http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/wish](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/wish)

Updated state-level women's health data
Updates at Kaiser's statehealthfacts.org include the number of states offering Medicaid waivers for family planning in 2005, and the latest figures for pap smears and mammograms. [www.statehealthfacts.org/r/women.html](http://www.statehealthfacts.org/r/women.html)

EVENTS

New approaches to health care governance. Monday, April 4, 2005, 12:00 - 1:00 pm
Louise Trubek, JD, with reaction and comments by David Riemer, JD.
1335 Health Sciences Learning Center, UW-Madison. contact Judy Knutson at jaknutso@wisc.edu, or see [www.pophealth.wisc.edu/UWPHI](http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/UWPHI)

Joint Committee on Finance announces hearing chedule
The JFC announced the following hearing schedule on the proposed budget bill:
March 9, Watertown, Health and Wellness Center, 1-7 PM
March 11, Cleveland, Lakeshore Technical College, 12- 5 PM
March 14, Menomonie, UW Stout, 3- 8 PM
March 15, Merrill, Prairie River Middle School, 12-5 PM
March 17, Madison, State Capitol, 10 AM- 5 PM
Association health plans attacked as inadequate and destabilizing
Federal proposals to expand Association Health Plans (AHPs) were attacked by a coalition of 1300 groups opposed to such legislation, including the American Diabetes Association, BCBS and the National Small Business Association. AHPs would largely be unregulated by state insurance commissioners and not be subject to mandates such as substance abuse treatment or well-child care. Nor would they be required to maintain consumer protections such as portability, maintenance of financial reserves or contributions to HIRSP.

Bush FY 06 Budget eliminates 14 HHS programs
Programs eliminated in the 06 Budget fund emergency medical services for children, hospital construction, traumatic brain injury and hearing tests for infants. In addition, the budget would eliminate a $59 million federal anti-obesity campaign that focuses on children. The White House defended the cut in the obesity program, arguing that the Nickelodeon and Disney television channels have mounted similar efforts. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, under which Wisconsin receives millions of dollars was also eliminated.

Avian pandemic imminent, says WHO
The Western Pacific director of the World Health Organization described the gravest possible danger of a global outbreak of avian flu. Meanwhile, the head of the CDC described the possibility of an outbreak as merely, worrisome. Describing the flu viruses as sloppy, promiscuous, and capricious, the WHO said that the major threshold event would mutation of the existing virus to allow its passage from human-to-human. In response to the threat 2 million does of vaccine are being stockpiled along with stockpiles of anti-viral drugs.

Half of health care costs wasted?
A study by Boston University School of Public Health found that half of the health care spending is due to waste, excessive prices and fraud. U.S. health care spending is projected to reach $1.9
trillion in 2005 or 15.5% of the US economy. The authors based their findings on comparisons of US medical costs with those of other countries and estimates of administrative expenses in the US health care system. Evidence on the administrative expenses are based on a study last year by Harvard Medical School that found that inefficiencies cost the country $400 billion in 2003. Other findings were that health care costs absorbed 24% of the nations economic growth between 2000 and 2005.

http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/hs/Health%20Costs%20Absorb%20One-Quarter%20of%20Economic%20Growth%20%202000-05%20Sager-Socolar%20February%202005.pdf

**Health spending to increase by 22% in ten years**

National spending for health care is projected to increase to 18.7% of the gross domestic product by 2014 according to a new article in Health Affairs. Nearly half of which will be spending by government health programs. National health expenditures will total $3.6 trillion in 2014. While spending growth for health services will slow over the next decade, it will still exceed general inflation rates for the economy as a whole. Government costs will accelerate over the decade and private spending will decline as the government assumes greater responsibility for Medicare prescription drug costs.

http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/content/abstract/hlthaff.w5.74

**Appeals Court sets back federal case against tobacco industry**

A 2-1 ruling in the federal Court of Appeals found that the tobacco industry could not be held liable for past misdeeds under the RICO (Racketeering) Act. The federal government is suing the tobacco industry for $280 billion that it had allegedly earned through fraud. The Justice Department can sue again alleging criminal- as opposed to civil- misconduct but that is a more difficult statement of evidence. Justice is also appealing the ruling to the Supreme Court. However, despite the ruling the Judge can make forward-looking remedies such as limitations on advertising, marketing and agreements to regulatory control. There is also speculation that Justice Department and the industry are discussing settlement of the complaint. Following announcement of the court ruling, prices for tobacco stock hit an all-time high.

http://www.timesdispatch.com/[...Common%2FMGArticle%2

**Very high rate of HIV infection among African-American women in 2003**

In 2003, the rate of new AIDS cases for black women was 20 times that of white women and five times greater than the infection rate for Latinas, according to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Black and Hispanic women accounted for 77 percent of all new AIDS infections in 1994. Nine years later, the rate was 85 percent, according to the agency. Black and Hispanic women made up 83 percent of reported AIDS diagnoses among women, although they represent only 25 percent of all women. AIDS is among the three top causes of death for black women ages 35 to 44. This development, epidemiologists say, is attributable to socioeconomic and demographic conditions specific to many African American communities. Black
neighborhoods are more likely to be plagued by joblessness, poverty, drug use and a high ratio of women to men, a significant portion of whom cycle in and out of a prison system where the rate of HIV infection is estimated to be as much as 10 times higher than in the general population.


Anti-smoking ads cut youth smoking rates
The American Legacy Foundations truth campaign prevented about 300,000 youths from becoming smokers between 2000 and 2002, according to a study published in this months American Journal of Public Health. But the foundation, which is funded from the tobacco industry as a result of its settlement with the nations Attorneys General, is due to lose almost of its funding and with it the ability to fund these ads. The study found that smoking among youth fell from 28% in 1997 to about 18% in 2002 and credits the campaign with 22% of the decline. Former DHHS Secretary Joseph Califano said, You cant rely on the tobacco industry to do this. They need children and teens to replace their dead and disabled smokers. Children are the key to this industry. http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/national/AP-Youth-Smoking-Ads.html

2004 National Healthcare Disparities Report released
The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality concludes that disparities relating to race, ethnicity and socio-economic status persist in the quality of and access to health care services despite improvements in some areas (e.g., diabetes treatment, mammogram usage and medication errors). It found that the quality of care for blacks was lower than that for whites for about two-thirds of quality measures and that access to care for blacks was less than whites in about 40% of access measures. For Hispanics, quality of care was less than non-Hispanic whites for about half of quality measures and access to care was below that for non-Hispanic whites for about 90% of access measures.

2004 National Healthcare Quality Report Among the many finding of this recent report is that federally supported health centers have improved care for low-income, uninsured and minority residents.

http://www.qualitytools.ahrq.gov/disparitiesreport/browse/browse.aspx

Health Affairs March/April 2005 issue focuses on racial and ethnic health disparities
"The Role of Health Insurance Coverage in Reducing Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health Care"
This paper in the latest issue of the journal Health Affairs reviews evidence from studies designed to quantify the contribution of health insurance to racial/ethnic disparities in access to care. The studies provide evidence that racial/ethnic disparities in access to a regular source of care could be substantially reduced by greater equity in health insurance coverage among Hispanics and African Americans. The March/April issue of Health Affairs is devoted to issues surrounding racial/ethnic disparities in health care and can be found online at: http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/content/abstract/24/2/398