

UW POPULATION HEALTH INSTITUTE

formerly Wisconsin Public Health & Health Policy Institute

E-NEWS - January 2006

Vol. 6, No. 1

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Information for E-news is compiled from several sources, including websites and lists from the *Wheeler Report*, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Kaiser Family Foundation, Commonwealth Fund, *Milbank Quarterly*, *Health Affairs*, Urban Institute, *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, Wispolitics.com, Handsnet, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, *The New York Times*, *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, *Milwaukee Business Journal*, *Wisconsin State Journal* and others.

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STATE NEWS

Wisconsin Falls in National Health Rankings

According to United Health Foundation's 2005 America's Health Rankings, Wisconsin fell from No. 9 to No. 13 from 2004 to 2005. Minnesota came in at No. 1, while Mississippi was last at No. 50. While researchers found that childhood poverty and the prevalence of obesity had increased, most of Wisconsin's other health measures improved. They just didn't improve as quickly or as much as in other states. The state's high rate of smoking was cited as a challenge. One of Wisconsin's improvements was a 0.5 percent decrease in the number of people who don't have health insurance. The state also saw the number of cardiovascular deaths per 100,000 people drop from almost 320 in 2004 to 312.5 in 2005. From 1990 to 2005, the state's infant mortality

rate dropped from 8.9 deaths per 1,000 births to 6.2 deaths per 1,000 births. Wisconsin's poorest residents still face the highest rates of infant death.

<http://www.wausaudailyherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051213/WDH0101/512130388/1581>

HIRSP state health plan set for changes

2005 WI Act 74, signed by Governor Doyle in December, allows for restructuring Wisconsin's Health Insurance Risk Sharing Program (HIRSP).

<http://www.jsonline.com/bym/news/dec05/377877.asp>

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) memo summarizing the bill can be found at:

http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2005-07Bills/113005_AB844SB451.pdf

Area hospital rate increases range from 4.8 to 8.9 percent

The *Milwaukee Business Journal* reports on upcoming rate increases for hospitals. Hospital officials continue to blame "too-low reimbursement from Medicare, Medicaid."

http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2005/12/12/story7.html?hbx=e_sw

WI Survey Finds Less Smoking and Better Use of Seat Belts

The Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a biennial report whose 2005 results were released by the state's Department of Public Instruction, found that the state's high school students are: smoking less than they did eight years ago, wearing car seat belts and bike helmets more, and of those who have sex, almost eight in 10 use birth control. The survey found that 60% of high school seniors think everyone their age considers it OK to have five drinks in a row, which it defines as binge drinking. But only 4% of those students thought such behavior wouldn't harm them. Drug use varied by grade; freshman were almost twice as likely as seniors to use inhalants. But seniors were far more likely to have tried club drugs, including Ecstasy, as well as cocaine and marijuana. Younger teens experiment with a variety of drugs whereas seniors often tire of experimentation and simply favor alcohol.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/dec05/378802.asp>

On a national level, alcohol use and cigarette smoking are down among teenagers, but prescription drug and sedative abuse are on the rise. According to the Monitoring the Future study, 14 percent of high school seniors, 11 percent of 10th graders, and 7 percent of 8th graders said they had used tranquilizers, barbiturates or sedatives for non-medical reasons.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/20/national/20teen.html?th&emc=th>

Governor Gives Lautenschlager Authority to Take FDA to Court

Gov. Jim Doyle gave Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager authority to sue the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for delaying approval of over-the-counter sales for emergency contraception. "FDA's postponement in making a decision is the result of politics, not science,

and negatively impacts the health of women," Doyle says in a letter to Lautenschlager.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/dec05/376393.asp>

Medical Malpractice Caps Vetoed by Doyle

Gov. Jim Doyle vetoed new caps on pain and suffering damages to victims of medical malpractice, saying they weren't different enough from the previous set of limits to pass constitutional muster. Business leaders and many state lawmakers predicted that without caps on non-economic damages in malpractice cases, physicians could face skyrocketing premium costs, move and leave Wisconsin in a health care crisis. Plaintiffs' attorneys and victims' rights advocates countered that caps unfairly punish the most severely injured - while allowing full payback for less-serious injuries - and have little substantial effect on the overall legal liability landscape.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/dec05/375058.asp>

Wisconsin's family docs facing more unpaid medical bills

The Milwaukee Business Journal reports on the growing difficulties faced by independent family physicians in collecting from patients. The problem is linked to high-deductible health care plans, substantial coinsurance increases, and an increasingly complex combination of payment sources (as some bill payments are split among health savings accounts, flexible spending accounts, patients and insurance companies).

http://www.bizjournals.com/industries/health_care/health_insurance/2005/12/19/milwaukee_story8.html?f=et162&hbx=e_vert

Children's Hospital & Health System to operate Medicaid HMO

Children's Hospital & Health System, based in Wauwatosa, has received state approval to operate an HMO for Medicaid recipients in Milwaukee, Racine, Waukesha and Kenosha counties. The health system's executives decided to pursue a share of the growing Medicaid HMO market because about 50 percent of Children's patients are Medicaid recipients and the number of Medicaid HMOs has declined. They also consider this HMO a good fit with Children's services, including clinics in 30 Milwaukee public schools. Enrollment should begin in February.

http://www.bizjournals.com/industries/health_care/health_insurance/2005/12/26/milwaukee_story5.html?t=printable

Aurora Health Care's "stripped-down clinics"

The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel reports that Aurora has established a network of low cost health care clinics, staffed by nurse practitioners to provide basic services. The clinics are conveniently located in places like malls and supermarkets, and services may include treating common illnesses such as sore throats and ear infections, providing flu shots and sports physicals.

<http://www.jsonline.com/bym/news/dec05/381044.asp>

Hospital-Clinic Agreement May Reduce Emergency Room Visits

Covenant has pledged more than \$250,000 to help Milwaukee Health Services open a clinic in northwest Milwaukee. The goal is that it would take patients who currently seek basic health care - and reduce the number of patients at the emergency departments of Covenant's two hospitals in that area, St. Michael Hospital and St. Joseph Regional Medical Center.

Covenant estimates that 78% to 83% of patients at St. Michael's and St. Joseph's emergency departments could be treated by primary care physicians.

<http://www.jsonline.com/bym/news/dec05/375016.asp>

Wisconsin Counties Ranked Among Most Polluted in Nation

Wisconsin ranks seventh among the states in total health risk from industrial air pollution, according to The Associated Press analysis. Worse off states are Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Texas and Michigan. Brown County was second to Milwaukee County for the number of census tracts in the state that are in the 5 percent most polluted in the nation. Rock County was third. Green Bay's West and Preble high schools were in neighborhoods that are among the worst 5 percent in the nation for industrial air pollution.

<http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051214/>

[GPG0101/512140521/1207](http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051214/GPG0101/512140521/1207)

Onus on Landlords to Clean Up Lead in Homes

Landlords typically pay around \$1,050 to \$2,400 for lead abatement, according to the Milwaukee city Health Department. Under a program for homes in certain areas of Milwaukee, the city will pay for half of the cost. The offer is good as long as owners have the work done within 30 days of receiving an order from the city. For the 4% of landlords who do not comply, the city can get a warrant to enter their properties, do the work and charge them.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/metro/dec05/375344.asp>

Great Lakes Governors Agree to Protect Lakes

Great Lakes governors and the premiers of Ontario and Quebec agreed to an accord that in most cases would ban new diversions of water outside the basin of the lakes. Officials said the cumulative effects of several large diversions could harm the lakes. Only 1% of the lakes' water is renewed each year. Anything more than that could lead to falling lake levels.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/dec05/377611.asp>

Wisconsin's State of Preparedness

Wisconsin has plenty of labs and places to treat patients in a major disease outbreak or bioterrorism attack, but lacks a computerized disease-tracking system and enough ventilators, a new report says. Wisconsin meets five of 10 criteria, ranking in the middle among states in preparedness. State and hospital officials say Wisconsin is more ready for health emergencies than suggested by the report, released by Trust for America's Health.

<http://www.madison.com/wsj/home/local/index.php?ntid=64204&ntpid=3>

Physicians Insurance Co. of WI Merged with ProAssurance Corp.

Physicians Insurance Co. of Wisconsin has agreed to merge with ProAssurance Corp. in a deal valued at \$100 million. PIC Wisconsin is the largest writer of professional liability insurance in the state, with more than 9,000 policies covering physicians, dentists, clinics and health-care networks in eight states.

<http://www.madison.com/wsj/home/biz/index.php?ntid=64478&ntpid=2>

Complaints on Rise Over Limited Access to Cold Medications

A new state law making many cold medications controlled substances is causing congestion at some pharmacies now that the cold season is in full swing. Oct. 1 was the deadline for grocers to remove the products from their shelves. Common cold remedies, such as some versions of Sudafed and numerous other brand name and generic products, now can be sold in Wisconsin only under the supervision of a licensed pharmacist. The Wisconsin law, like similar measures in other states, was passed in an effort to stem the illegal manufacture and use of methamphetamine.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/dec05/375557.asp>

Legislation passed in the House, restricting the sale of cold medicines nationally. Under the proposal, Sudafed and similar medicines would have to be under lock and key in stores. Buyers would have to sign a sheet and show a driver's license. Purchases would be limited to one box a day and three boxes a month.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/15/health/15meth.html?>

<th=&adxnl=1&emc=th&adxnlx=1134656177-SXwWoRcg//3XQ+aTJJkrKQ>

Snowmobile Safety Bill Sent to the Assembly for a Vote

Assembly Bill 840 passed the Joint Finance Committee, putting into motion a plan to set a maximum speed limit of 55 mph for snowmobile operation during hours of darkness and secure nearly \$33,000 in funds to improve snowmobile patrol and safety efforts. Last year, there were 37 snowmobile-related fatalities.

<http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051201/>

<GPG0101/512010433/1207/GPGnews>

UW Orphan Study Finds Hormone Differences

Early childhood neglect has been associated with emotional and social abnormalities. UW scientists examined the levels and responses of two hormones, oxytocin and vasopressin, in children who had lived in Russian and Romanian orphanages. The hormones are known to be linked with emotional intimacy and sociability. They discovered that even after these children had been adopted by stable Milwaukee families and lived with them for an average of three years, the levels and responses of these hormones still appeared irregular.

<http://www.jsonline.com/alive/news/dec05/374860.asp>

UW-Madison Researchers Make Progress Against Parkinson's

In a study that could lead to a therapy for people with Parkinson's disease and other neurological disorders, UW- Madison researchers have used stem cells to deliver a disease-fighting protein to the brains of rats. Stem cells were engineered in a lab dish to become "mini-pumps" releasing GDNF, or glial cell line- derived neurotrophic factor. When the cells were injected into the brains of rats with Parkinson's, they restored damaged tissue. The technique, in humans, would require a one-time surgery involving several injections into the brain.

<http://www.madison.com/wsj/home/local/index.php?ntid=65201&ntpid=5>

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

United Health Foundation's 2005 America's Health Rankings

America's Health Rankings is a yearly analysis of the relative healthiness of the American population. The report offers a composite assessment of each state's health using 18 different health measures.

<http://www.unitedhealthfoundation.org/ahr2005.html>

Web Resources for 2010 State Health Plan

Two new Web tools are available to assist local efforts to achieve the goals of the 2010 state health plan:

"Evidence-Based Practices for Healthiest Wisconsin 2010" is a site that can help in deciding which prevention strategies will work to improve the community's health. <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/statehealthplan/practices/index.htm>

"Tracking Health Conditions-Wisconsin State Health Plan 2010" is a data query module that provides state, regional, and county-level data on the priority health conditions that were identified in Healthiest Wisconsin 2010, the state health plan. <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/statehealthplan/conditions/index.htm>

National Evidence-Based Public Health Website

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officers has launched a new section of its website to highlight initiatives and research to increase the evidence base for public health interventions. The section provides fact sheets summarizing recommendations of the Task Force on Community Preventive Services on topics such as diabetes, oral health, physical activity and violence.

http://www.astho.org/?template=evidence_based_ph_practice.html

Medical Banking™: How is the Marriage of Healthcare and Finance Good for Consumers?

Web cast released by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and *U.S. News & World Report*.
<http://bcbshealthissues.com/events/medicalbanking/>

Performance Measurement: Accelerating Improvement

The first Institute of Medicine report in the Pathways to Quality Healthcare Series, *Performance Measurement: Accelerating Improvement*, focuses on the selection of measures to support the quality improvement efforts of a diverse set of stakeholders, and on the creation of a common infrastructure for guiding and managing a consistent set of such measures nationally and regionally.

<http://www.iom.edu/report.asp?id=31310>

Health Insurance and the Nonstandard Worker

"Nonstandard" workers those employed on a part-time, temporary, or contractual basis are far more likely than regular, full-time employees to lack health care coverage, experience gaps in their coverage, or depend on their spouse's employer coverage or public insurance programs, according to a new Commonwealth Fund report [On the Fringe: The Substandard Benefits of Workers in Part-Time, Temporary and Contract Jobs](#).

http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=324095&#doc324095

Fertility, Family Planning, and Reproductive Health of U.S. Women:

Data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth A 3-page brief on this CDC report can be found at:

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/series/sr23/pre-1/sr23_25.htm

For the full 244 page report, go to:

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_23/sr23_025.pdf

Data on Health Care Provider Revenues

by ambulatory health-care services, hospitals, physicians offices, nursing and residential care facilities and social assistance firms. From the 2004 Service Annual Survey: Health Care and Social Assistance (NAICS 62)

<http://www.census.gov/econ/www/servmenu.html>.

EVENTS

Healthy Wisconsin Leadership Institute Community Teams Program

The first annual 2006-07 Community Teams Program is designed to enhance collaborative leadership and community and public health skills among teams of individuals who are mobilizing communities to identify and solve health problems. This is an intensive year-long shared learning experience that includes a series of face-to-face workshops and distance-based

educational sessions. Access to expert coaches is available for teams as they put new skills to work on health improvement projects within their communities. Team applications available beginning January 3, deadline to apply is February 8.

http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/UWPHI/education/leadership/ldrshp_cover_page.htm

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Strongest Links: Economic Development and Early Childhood: January 13th

A collaborative event designed to link community agencies, business leaders, policy makers and consumers in the active commitment to improving the lives of young children and families in Wisconsin. The Madison Concourse Hotel, 8:30-4:00; Registration deadline: January 5, 2006.

<http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/strongLink/objective.htm>

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READING ROOM

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Financial Burden of High Medical Costs - Urban Institute

A recent report published by the Urban Institute offers evidence that many adults and families are contending with considerable financial burdens for health care, even when enrolled in health insurance. "Lowering Financial Burdens and Increasing Health Insurance Coverage for Those with High Medical Costs" says high-cost individuals, the top fifth of health care spenders, expend an average of \$13,965 each year. And the top 10% of spenders account for 70% of health care spending. The report examines options, including federal financing of state high-risk pools combined with federal guidelines on benefits and eligibility.

http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311261_financial_burdens.pdf

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Health Coverage of Young Widens With States' Aid

The number of American children without health care coverage has been slowly but steadily declining over the past several years as health care costs continue to rise and fewer employers provide insurance. In the past year, 20 states have taken steps to increase access to health coverage for children and their parents and nine states have reversed actions they took during the 2001-3 economic downturn to limit benefits. The chief factor determining how many children are covered is the income eligibility level set by the states under SCHIP.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/04/national/04states.html?th&emc=th>

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Soda Lawsuit Planned by the Center for Science in the Public Interest

In a lawsuit to be filed in the next few months, the Center for Science in the Public Interest will seek to ban sales of sugary beverages in schools. Across America, almost half of all public schools have exclusive contracts with beverage companies. According to a report published in August by the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, 75 percent of all high schools, 65 percent of all middle schools and 30 percent of elementary schools have beverage contracts. Stephen Gardner, staff lawyer for the center, argues that soda and other sugary beverages are harmful to students' health and that selling those drinks in schools sends a

message that their regular consumption is perfectly fine.

The \$92 billion beverage industry, dominated by Coca-Cola and PepsiCo, is gearing up for a counterattack. Last week, the American Beverage Association, the lobbying group for the beverage industry, released a study arguing that soda sales in schools are not a significant contributor to rising childhood obesity rates.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/07/business/07soda.html?ex=1135141200&en=62ac94375925151b&ei=5070>

Studies Reveal Need for More Breastfeeding Support in US

Prenatal attitude toward breastfeeding, maternal age, and socioeconomic resources are among the factors that influence whether a woman will terminate breastfeeding before her infant is likely to experience any benefits, new research suggests. Numerous studies have documented the health benefits of breastfeeding, such as a decreased risk of upper respiratory infections for the infant and possibly even a reduced risk of death.

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/518390>

Socioeconomic Status in Health Research

Problems with measuring socioeconomic status (SES) frequently included in clinical and public health studies as a control variable and less frequently as the variable(s) of main interest could affect research findings and conclusions, with implications for practice and policy. Authors of this study recommend an outcome- and social groupspecific approach to SES measurement that involves (1) considering plausible explanatory pathways and mechanisms, (2) measuring as much relevant socioeconomic information as possible, (3) specifying the particular socioeconomic factors measured (rather than SES overall), and (4) systematically considering how potentially important unmeasured socioeconomic factors may affect conclusions.

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/294/22/2879>

GAO Reports Find Flaws in Drug Benefit

Two recent Government Accountability Office reports indicated "serious flaws" in the implementation of the Medicare drug discount card. An Oct. 28 GAO report found that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' oversight of the drug card sponsors was constrained because the program was implemented within a six-month time frame. Another report, issued on Nov. 18, said that CMS was able to raise awareness for the drug card program but was not able to adequately inform and assist beneficiaries with its education and outreach efforts. These efforts did not provide information that was "clear, accurate and accessible," the report found.

http://www.cmwf.org/healthpolicyweek/healthpolicyweek_show.htm?doc_id=325745#doc325748

Gates' Grand Challenges in Global Health

Bill Gates pledged \$450 million to global health research projects " to make sure that innovation wasn't reserved just for big-ticket items like [cancer](#) and [heart disease](#)." Winning proposals included bananas and sorghum that make their own vitamin A; chemicals that render mosquitoes unable to smell humans; drugs that hunt down tuberculosis germs in people who do not even know they are infected; and vaccines that are mixed into spores or plastics or sugars and can be delivered in glasses of orange juice or modified goose calls.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/06/health/06gates-all.html?th&emc=th>

Washington State Ban Keeps Smokers 25 Feet from Public Doorways

A law passed overwhelmingly by voters in November went into effect, not only banning indoor [smoking](#) in public accommodations but also requiring people who light up to stay at least 25 feet from the door of any such place. Officials in Washington say the ban is the toughest anywhere in the country to be adopted statewide. The new law requires owners of restaurants, bars, stores and any other public place to take measurements and draw lines designating where smokers may stand.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/10/national/10smoke.html?](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/10/national/10smoke.html?th=&adxnml=1&emc=th&adxnmlx=1134402310-46QQ6/FiWSGPCt0kU/Qt0Q)

[th=&adxnml=1&emc=th&adxnmlx=1134402310-46QQ6/FiWSGPCt0kU/Qt0Q](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/10/national/10smoke.html?th=&adxnml=1&emc=th&adxnmlx=1134402310-46QQ6/FiWSGPCt0kU/Qt0Q)

DuPont to Pay \$16.5 Million for Unreported Risks

The Environmental Protection Agency said Wednesday that it had reached a \$16.5 million settlement with DuPont, which it had accused of failing to report information about the health and environmental risks of a substance used in making Teflon and other plastics. The agency said DuPont had withheld information about perfluorooctanoic acid, a chemical known as PFOA that is used in processing high-performance plastics, from residents near the company's plant in Parkersburg, W.Va., where the chemical contaminated local waters. The agency said the company had information on the chemical's potential risk as early as 1981 but did not report it, as required by the federal Toxic Substances Control Act.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/15/politics/15enviro.html?th&emc=th>

House and Senate Reached Compromise on Budget Savings Package

The cuts to Medicare and Medicaid would largely follow the House version of the bill, increasing cost-sharing for Medicaid patients and maintaining a fund designed to encourage the participation of managed care plans in Medicare. The budget savings package would cut a net \$6 billion from Medicare, the health program for the elderly, down from estimates of \$8.3 billion. The bill would save a net total of \$4.8 billion from the low-income health care program Medicaid, according to a preliminary Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate.

[http://www.cmwf.org/healthpolicyweek/healthpolicyweek_show.htm?](http://www.cmwf.org/healthpolicyweek/healthpolicyweek_show.htm?doc_id=328949&#doc328950)

[doc_id=328949&#doc328950](http://www.cmwf.org/healthpolicyweek/healthpolicyweek_show.htm?doc_id=328949&#doc328950)

Revised Labor-HHS Bill Gives Additional \$90 Million for Rural Health Programs

The revised bill includes \$90 million in additional funding for rural health care programs. It also would give \$9 million to a rural health research and policy program that was to be eliminated under the original bill and \$39 million to a rural health grant outreach program -- the same amount it received in 2005 -- instead of a previously proposed 73% cut. In addition, area health education centers, which help recruit and retain health professionals in underserved areas, would receive \$29 million, instead of the previously proposed \$2 million. <http://bcbshealthissues.com/proactive/newsroom/release.vtml?id=189931>

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