

UW POPULATION HEALTH INSTITUTE

E-NEWS - May 2006

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In This Issue

STATE NEWS

- Family Care Program Expanding Statewide
- Other Health-Related Laws Newly Enacted
- "Moves Afoot to Shed Lights on Hospital Costs"
- WCHQ Initiating Physician Quality Measurement Pilot Project
- Milwaukee Mayor and others Meet on Gun Violence
- WI Prison Suicides are Twice the National Average
- Clean Air Regulations to Attack Pollution on Four Fronts
- Wisconsin Joins Lawsuit against EPA
- Appleton Smoking Ban Survives
- New Policy Limits Students' Soda and Fat Consumption
- Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery Biomed Complex Proposed
- State Senate Panel to Make Recommendations on Care and Housing for Mentally Ill
- *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* Series on Mental Health System

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

- Governor's eHealth Quality and Patient Safety Board

- AHRQ Releases New Report to Health Providers Adopt Health IT
- New Healthcare Journalism Rating Website
- National Alliance on Mental Illness - Grading the States 2006 - Wisconsin
- Framework for Action to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Birth Outcomes
- AHRQ Chartbook Profiles Racial/Ethnic Differences
- Wisconsin 2004 Family Health Survey
- Wisconsin BadgerCare Plus Website
- *The World Health Report 2006 - Working together for health*
- Immigrant Health Policy Reference Library
- New Women's Health Info at Statehealthfacts.org
- Patient-Centered Care Practices
- Variations Across Medicare Drug Plans
- Cross-National Studies of Patients' Health Care Experiences
- New Tutorials on Health Policy and Access to Care
- States' Colorectal Cancer Programs Report Cards
- Promoting Healthy Development Survey

EVENTS

- Pay-for-Performance Web Conference, May 16
- Milwaukee Public Television's Two-Part Series on Wisconsin Health Care, May 19-26
- Training for Childhood Brain Development: May 16-17 and June 21-22
- Efficiency in Health Care: What Does it Mean? How is it Measured? How Can it be Used for Value-Based Purchasing?: May 23-24
- 2006 Children Come First Conference: June 14-15

READING ROOM

- Massachusetts Health Plan: What Can We Learn
- "The Deficit Reduction Act: Review of Key Provisions"
- "Can States Stretch Medical Dollars? Lessons from Utah"
- Medicare Nonprofit Plans Score Higher Quality
- Medicaid Hurdle for Immigrants May Hurt Others
- University of Michigan to Provide Diabetes Medicine
- Chrysler Program Improves Health of Diabetic Employees
- RAND Study: All Socio-Demographic Groups at Risk for Poor Quality Health Care
- A System for Rapidly and Accurately Collecting Patients' Race and Ethnicity
- Complementary and Alternative Medical Therapy Use Among Chinese and Vietnamese Americans
- Researching Differences in Heart Disease between Women and Men May Improve Diagnosis and Treatment
- A Boost for Breast Cancer Prevention

- Cheap Burgers Revive McDonald's
- Low Health Awareness among Obese People
- New Resources on Childhood Obesity

STATE NEWS

Family Care Program Expanding Statewide

Governor Jim Doyle this week signed Senate Bill 653, legislation to expand the Family Care program statewide, eliminating waiting lists for community-based long term care programs over the next five years. About 11,500 people, including more than 500 in Brown County, are currently on waiting lists for Family Care, which provides affordable long term care options for seniors and people with disabilities who don't want or need to live in nursing homes.

Family Care currently serves residents in five counties across the state. Senate Bill 653 will allow the program to expand to all 72 counties and raise the statutory cap on the percentage of the state's eligible population Family Care can serve from 29 percent to 50 percent.

A study of the Family Care pilot program released last year found that in 2003 and 2004, the program saved a monthly average of \$55 per person in Milwaukee and \$452 per person in the other four counties with the program.

The expansion of Family Care will help reach the goal Governor Doyle has set for the state: to reduce the overall use of nursing homes by 25 percent over the next 8 years. The Department of Health and Family Services has awarded \$1.4 million in planning grants to counties around the state to prepare for Family Care's expansion. These grants are helping develop partnerships between multiple counties to lay the groundwork to implement Family Care programs and eliminate waiting lists for community-based long term care.

<http://www.wispolitics.com/index.iml?Article=61838>

Other Health-Related Laws Newly Enacted

The WCCF Budget Project recently provided this summary of selected other major legislation signed into law in Wisconsin:

- Medical Malpractice Cap: WI Act 183 caps noneconomic damages in malpractice lawsuits at \$750,000. The WI Supreme Court had ruled a previous, much lower cap, to be unconstitutional. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=410140>
- Medicaid Funding: WI Act 211 fills the deficit in the MA Trust Fund and increases funding for nursing homes. <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2005/data/AB981hst.html>
- Med School Enrollment Cap: WI Act 175, eliminates the Medical School enrollment cap that now limits the class size to 143 students. <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2005/data/SB549hst.html>
- Health Care Claims Information: WI Action 228 contracting with a data organization for collection, analysis and dissemination of health care claims and information. This will help support the work of the newly formed Wisconsin Health Information Organization (WHIO).

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2005/data/AB907hst.html>

- **Health Benefits Purchasing Coops:** WI Act 231 modifies the law relating to group health care plans offered by health benefit purchasing cooperatives. <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2005/data/AB926hst.html>
- **Shaken Baby Syndrome** - Act 165 requires the production of brochures and materials on the dangers of shaking a child and requires hospitals, county departments and maternity homes to distribute that material. In addition, schools will be required to provide instruction on Shaken Baby Syndrome to students in 11th grade, as well as in one of grades 5 through 8. Newspaper coverage can be found at: <http://www.wsaw.com/home/headlines/2502786.html>
- **Protective Placement & Services:** WI Act 264 makes numerous changes to chapter 55 of the statutes, which governs protective placement and protective services for persons with disabilities. It also makes changes to provisions in several other chapters of the statutes relating to guardianship and services for disabled persons. <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2005/data/AB785hst.html>
- **Licensing Midwives:** WI Act 292 establishes a licensing procedure for nurse midwives. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=414661>
- **Public Health Modernization Act:** WI Act 198 <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2005/data/AB881hst.html>

DHFS Secretary Nelson: "Health Insurance for All Kids"

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/May06/May5/0505dhfshealthkids.pdf>

"Moves afoot to shed light on hospital costs"

Comparison shopping for hospitals is easier in Wisconsin than in most of the country, thanks to a private effort to showcase state-collected data. <http://www.stateline.org/live/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=136&languageId=1&contentId=97914>

WCHQ Initiating Physician Quality Measurement Pilot Project

The Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality, a group of health care systems and large physician practices, has been selected as one of six sites nationwide for a federal pilot project that will measure the quality of care provided in doctors' offices and clinics. The project's goal is to develop a practical model for collecting information from thousands of physician practices and then put it in a form that can be useful for consumers and doctors.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=409101>

Milwaukee Mayor and others Meet on Gun Violence

Mayors from 15 cities gathered in New York to intensify efforts to combat illegal firearms. Mayor Bloomberg of New York is working to enlist politicians nationwide in the fight to put pressure on Congress and others to tighten the availability of guns. The group included the mayors of Washington, Dallas, Philadelphia, Seattle and Milwaukee, among others. They signed a six-point "statement of principles" that called for punishing gun possession "to the maximum extent of the law," prosecuting dealers who knowingly sell guns to criminals through so-called straw purchasers and opposing two bills

before the House of Representatives that would restrict cities' access to gun-tracing data. The statement also called for better technologies to detect illegal guns, coordinated legislative and litigation strategies and outreach to other cities. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/26/nyregion/26guns.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

WI Prison Suicides are Twice the National Average

More than half of state prison suicides in Wisconsin occur in single-cell "segregated" units where inmates are kept apart from the general prison population, though only 10 percent of the beds in the 22,000-person system are segregated. The suicide rate in segregation units is about 10 times that of general units, according to a recent Department of Corrections suicide prevention report. Suicides in Wisconsin prisons average about twice the national number.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2006-04-19-voa74.cfm>

Clean-Air Regulations to Attack Pollution on Four Fronts

State officials are writing new regulations designed to crack down on emissions from coal-burning power plants and other industrial sources. The new limits, which are expected to cost industry more than \$1 billion, will affect several pollutants that are responsible for everything from respiratory illnesses to making fish unhealthy to eat. Once in place, four different sets of regulations mandated by the federal government will cut ozone, particle pollution, visibility-reducing haze and mercury. The Clean Air Interstate Rule will place new pollution controls on utilities and some factories to fight ozone and particle pollution. Another measure would rewrite the state's new mercury reduction law so it would mirror a new federal law. All of the measures will go to the state Natural Resources Board and the Legislature later this year and during 2007. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=416329>

Wisconsin Joins Lawsuit against EPA

Ten states, joined by environmental groups, sued the Environmental Protection Agency over its decision not to regulate carbon dioxide pollution as a contributor to global warming. New York, California, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Wisconsin filed the lawsuit in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. The states, led by New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, want the government to require tighter pollution controls on the newest generation of power plants. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=419272>

Appleton Smoking Ban Survives

Appleton voters rejected efforts to exempt bars and other businesses from the smoking ban. Just over 57 percent of voters favored keeping the ban in place. Appleton's workplace smoking ban has been in place since July 1 and, according to bar owners, has resulted in significant loss of income. Bar owners agree the next step is pursuing a statewide smoking ban. <http://www.postcrescent.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060405/APC0101/604050590/1003>

In a related article, 17 states now have no-smoking laws in effect, as do 461 towns, cities and counties elsewhere. That means it's now illegal to smoke in about 43 percent of U.S. bars, restaurants and workplaces. And at many other job sites, employers have voluntarily barred smoking in enclosed spaces. http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-04-22-no-smoking_x.htm

New Policy Limits Students' Soda and Fat Consumption

The Oshkosh school district is proposing new student wellness and nutrition policies and new nutrition standards. Soda will slowly be phased out of vending machines and replaced with water and 100 percent fruit juices. Under the 2004 federal Child Nutrition Act, the district must implement the policies by the start of the next school year. The policies set a guideline that no more than 30 percent of the calories in the majority of non-food service foods sold in schools should come from fat.

<http://www.thenorthwestern.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060419/OSH0101/604190422/1128>

Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery Biomed Complex Proposed

University of Wisconsin Chancellor John Wiley announced a total of \$100 million in donations toward the construction of an on-campus biomedical research complex. The proposed Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery will include two centers — one public, one private — and will engage in an array of medical research, including using human embryonic stem cells to help cure multiple types of diseases and advance regenerative medicine. UW alumni John Morgridge, chair of the board of Cisco Systems, and his wife, Tashia, donated \$50 million to the private Institute for Discovery, a contribution matched by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation and the state. Private funding for the institute, to be named the Morgridge Institute, will allow the center to sidestep federal regulations limiting stem-cell research.

http://badgerherald.com/news/2006/04/04/big_money_big_resea.php

State Senate Panel to Make Recommendations on Care and Housing for Mentally Ill

State Senate committee members promised to present recommendations to Gov. Jim Doyle and the state Legislature to improve conditions for hundreds of people in Milwaukee County with severe mental illness who are living in dangerous conditions. Representatives of the state Bureau of Quality Assurance and the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division were ordered to submit recommendations before the committee takes up the matter again in three months. The hearing by the state Senate committee was called in response to a series of articles last month in the Journal Sentinel. The newspaper found that hundreds of people in Milwaukee County with severe mental illness are living in dangerous and sometimes deadly conditions, places with rats, roaches, broken toilets, no heat, broken smoke detectors and structural defects where some landlords serve moldy or stale food. Earlier, committee members were told that Milwaukee County mental health care workers are in violation of a court decree to not release people from psychiatric care to places that aren't clean and safe.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=413899>

***Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* Series on the Mental Health System**

"A test for a just society" - March 21 editorial concluded the series and has links to the articles (on the right side of the page).

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=409538>

"A hauntingly familiar tale" - Mar. 19 - Preyed upon by opportunists and neglected by the people we pay to care for them, hundreds of Milwaukee's mentally ill people are fending for themselves. It's killing them - literally. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=409370>

"Promise of care made but broken" - Mar 20 - How did filthy homes with questionable landlords and long lists of building code violations become acceptable housing for people with mental illness? <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=409442>

"What can be done?" - Mar. 21 - A host of steps can be taken to make sure people with mental illness live in safe places. One of the first: Local bureaucrats need to stop ignoring the problem and blaming each other. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=409576>

"Pain, suffering, and then more" - April 5 - Editorial examines the potential impact to mental health services in Milwaukee County of proposed federal cuts in funding for case management services. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=413267>

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

Governor's eHealth Quality and Patient Safety Board Materials

Governor Doyle's eHealth Quality and Patient Safety Board held its kick-off planning forum on May 5. Materials about the planning process and from the event are available at the Board's website, along with an online survey for stakeholders. <http://ehealthboard.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/>

AHRQ Releases New Report to Help Providers Adopt Health IT

AHRQ Director Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D., released a new health information technology (IT) report that acknowledges that while health IT has been shown to improve quality of care for patients, most health care providers need more information about how to implement these technologies successfully. The report, *Costs and Benefits of Health Information Technology*, is a synthesis of studies that have examined the quality impact of health IT as well as the costs and organizational changes needed to implement health IT systems. This report reviews scientific data about the implementation of health IT to date, as documented in studies published through 2003. It does not project future health care benefits or savings, in contrast to other reports. The report was prepared by AHRQ's Southern California Evidence-based Practice Center-RAND Corporation. <http://www.ahrq.gov/downloads/pub/evidence/pdf/hitsyscosts/hitsys.pdf>

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) - Grading the States 2006: Wisconsin

This is a comprehensive analysis of mental health care systems in 15 years. Every U.S. state has been scored on 39 specific criteria resulting in an overall grade and four sub-category grades for each state. The national average grade is D. http://www.nami.org/gtstemplate.cfm?section=grading_the_states&lstd=683

New Healthcare Journalism Rating Website

Newspaper and magazine health coverage will be reviewed online at a new Web site created by University of Minnesota journalism professor Gary Schwitzer. The reviewers will monitor top newspapers, magazines and other media outlets, including The Associated Press, and rate their coverage of health issues. Articles will be rated on a scale of one to five stars, and the reviewers also will post comments. A team of 20 reviewers from universities and clinics across the country will write the critiques.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20060417/ap_on_he_me/health_journalism&printer=1;_ylt=AgXoyXplRNjEZbmkD49G..5a24cA;_ylu=X3oDMTA3MXN1bHE0BHNIYwN0bWE-

Framework for Action to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Birth Outcomes

The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services released "A Framework for Action to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Birth Outcomes." The Framework for Action describes the impact of infant mortality and its disparate burden among Wisconsin's racial and ethnic communities. Four areas of emphasis are delineated for the next five years: communication and outreach; quality improvement; community and evidence-based practices; and using data to monitor trends and evaluate interventions. <http://www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/healthybirths/framework.htm>

AHRQ Chartbook Profiles Racial/Ethnic Differences

http://www.meps.ahrq/Papers/CB14_06-0004/CB14.pdf

Wisconsin 2004 Family Health Survey

This document contains a wealth of information from the annual family health survey. <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/stats/pdf/04fhs.pdf>

Wisconsin BadgerCare Plus website

Links to various information about the BadgerCare plus proposal, including a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes it.

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/badgercareplus/news/index.htm>

Late last week DHFS issued a press release regarding some of the stats from the Family Health Survey: "Study Shows BadgerCare Plus Will Improve Health for Middle and Low Income Families":

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/April06/April7/0407dhfsbadgecare.pdf>

The World Health Report 2006 - Working together for health

The report reveals an estimated shortage of almost 4.3 million doctors, midwives, nurses and support workers worldwide. The shortage is most severe in the poorest countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where health workers are most needed. The report also lays out a ten-year action plan in which countries can build their health workforces, with the support of global partners.

<http://www.who.int/whr/2006/en/index.html>

Immigrant Health Policy Reference Library

This new compendium summarizes data and research on immigrants' health coverage and access to care. The library also includes a list of organizations that conduct analysis on the impact of major health policies on immigrants and presents research on specific populations, including Latino, African and Asian immigrants.

<http://cme.kff.org/Key=10421.CVG.L.C.JxtgYd>

New Women's Health Info at Statehealthfacts.org

Information on states that have expanded eligibility for coverage of family planning services under Medicaid has been updated and is available for all states and the nation. New data on states that allow individual providers to refuse women's health services have been added. Data on refusal policies for institutions have also been added and include data on abortion, contraceptive, and sterilization services. New information on requirements for insurers to cover contraceptive drugs, devices, and services has

been added and is available for all states and the nation.

<http://www.statehealthfacts.org>

Patient-Centered Care Practices

A new national survey finds that while a wide majority of physicians are in favor of "patient-centered care," less than a quarter score high in incorporating patient-friendly practices into the care they deliver. Results from the [Commonwealth Fund study](#) indicate that America's doctors still have a way to go in adopting information technology, practicing team-based care, and collecting feedback from their patients.

http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=365654&#doc365654

Variations across Medicare Drug Plans

Medicare's new private stand-alone drug plans vary significantly – in terms of covered drugs, out-of-pocket costs for specific medications, and restrictions placed on the use of certain drugs – according to a [new analysis released](#) by the Kaiser Family Foundation. The study examined formularies, drug costs and utilization management tools in drug plans offered by 14 national and near-national organizations.

<http://www.kff.org/medicare/7489.cfm>

Cross-National Studies of Patients' Health Care Experiences

Two new studies compare patients' experiences in the US with those in other countries:

Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall: An Update on the Quality of American Health Care Through the Patient's Lens analyzed 2004 and 2005 patient survey data for Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. Out of 51 indicators of health care quality, the U.S. ranked first on six indicators and ranked last or tied for last on 27, including measures of patient safety, patient-centeredness, efficiency, and equity. One area where the U.S. performed comparatively well was the delivery of preventive care.

http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=364436&#doc364436

[The U.S. Health Care Divide: Disparities in Primary Care Experiences by Income](#) reveals that differences by income were relatively rare in the other countries. The study also found that U.S. patients with below-average incomes were more likely to have negative care experiences than their counterparts in the other countries.

http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=364437&#doc364437

New Tutorials on Health Policy and Access to Care

Two new tutorials are featured at kaiserEDU.org. The first discusses the role of Congress in formulating health policy, including major differences between the House and Senate, key committees involved in the development of health policy, and some "Rules of the Road" for those who plan to get involved in Congressional policy-making. http://www.kaiseredu.org/tutorials_index.asp#Congress

The second provides an overview of policy issues related to accessing health care for people with disabilities. The tutorial provides information on the types and prevalence of disabilities in the U.S., the major health care financing mechanisms, and the interaction of the Medicaid program with the

Americans with Disabilities Act.

http://www.kaiseredu.org/tutorials_index.asp#Disabilities

States' Colorectal Cancer Programs Report Cards

According to the 2006 Colorectal Cancer Legislation Report Card, "A" grades went to states whose coverage laws include reference to the screening guidelines developed jointly by the American Cancer Society, the American Gastroenterological Association, the American College of Gastroenterology, and the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. http://www.cmwf.org/healthpolicyweek/healthpolicyweek_show.htm?doc_id=364623&#doc364629

Promoting Healthy Development Survey

PHDS is a parent survey that assesses whether young children (3–48 months old) receive nationally recommended preventive and developmental services. The PHDS can be used by health care providers, health systems, Medicaid agencies, and other stakeholders to measure and improve the quality of preventive and developmental care. http://www.cmwf.org/tools/tools_show.htm?doc_id=364630&#doc364630

EVENTS

Pay-for-Performance Web Conference

AHRQ is sponsoring a free Web conference for health care purchasers, health plans, and providers on May 16 from 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. EST. The Web conference will feature a panel of health services researchers and purchasers who will share the latest evidence and practical experiences on a range of issues related to the design and implementation of pay-for-performance initiatives. The discussion will offer lessons learned and practical tools of interest to public and private purchasers, health plans, and providers-whether they are contemplating, implementing, or evaluating pay-for-performance activities. Register for the workshop at: www.academyhealth.org/ahrq/p4pwebconference/

Milwaukee Public Television's Two-Part Series on Wisconsin Health Care

Fourth Street Forum <http://www.4thStreetForum.org>

Part I: Where Do Your Health Care Dollars Go?

Forum Date: May 18, 2006, Broadcast Dates: May 19,21

Who benefits as health care costs soar?What's the impact of bloated costs on you and on the quality of your health care?

Moderator: Enrique Figueroa, PhD, Director, Roberto Hernandez Center, UW-Milwaukee

Guest Panelists:

Donna Friedsam, MPH., Researcher, Associate Director for Health Policy, Population Health Institute, UW-Madison, www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi

Bill Jenkins, Principal, Jenkins and Associate, former President of Aurora Health Care Alternative Delivery and Community Programs, former CEO of Sinai Samaritan Medical Center, former CEO of Milwaukee County Medical Complex

Leigh LoPresti, MD , Assistant Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine, Medical

College of Wisconsin

Kristine Seymour, Vice President of Sales of Wisconsin, Humana

Part II: New Plans for Wisconsin Health Care

Forum Date: May 25, 2006. Broadcast Dates: May 26, 28

Ideas for tackling the crises in health care cost and delivery. Is change possible?

Can special interests be overcome in favor of better, cheaper health care?

Moderator: Jack Murtaugh, Co-chair, 4th Street Forum Executive Committee

Guest Panelists:

Linda Farley, MD, Wisconsin Coordinator for Physicians for a National Health Program (Wisconsin Health Security Act - www.wisconsinhealth.org)

Curt Gielow, 23rd District State Representative, (Wisconsin State Health Plan, www.wisconsinhealthplan.org)

Jason Helgeson, Policy Director to the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (Doyle's Healthy Wisconsin and Badgercare Plus Plans, www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov)

David Newby, President, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO (Wisconsin Health Care Partnership Plan <http://www.wisafclcio.org/features/Wis%20Health%20Care%20Proposal.htm>)

Training for Childhood Brain Development: May 16-17 and June 21-22

Two-day training for childhood brain development with special emphasis on early childhood development and practical applications will be held May 16th-17th at Hotel Mead in Wisconsin Rapids and June 21st-22nd at Waukesha County Technical College. Training will cover the biology of the brain, the impact of trauma, abuse, and neglect and the behavioral outcomes; social and emotional development with an in depth look at insecure attachment and intervention strategies; impact of poverty on the developing brain and nutrition and the brain including breastfeeding and will explore the correlation between brain development and early learning. For more information or to receive a registration brochure contact: Jeanne Erickson @ 608-284-0580 ext 301 or email jerickson@wccf.org

Efficiency in Health Care: What Does it Mean? How is it Measured? How Can it be Used for Value-Based Purchasing?: May 23-24

AHRQ and the Employer Health Care Alliance Cooperative are convening this May conference to discuss what it means to measure "efficiency" and how that understanding can be used to support value-based purchasing, comparative reporting and tiering. Alliant Energy Center, Madison, WI
<http://www.academyhealth.org/ahrq/efficiency/index.html>

2006 Children Come First Conference: June 14-15

The Children Come First (CCF) Conference offers sessions for parents and professionals with differing levels of experience. Wraparound training is offered as well at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. Featured plenary speakers are Janice Fialka and Paul Glasser. The conference will be held at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells, WI. The registration deadline is June 5th. For information contact Julie Laundrie at jlaundrie@wccf.org or phone 608-284-0580 ext 303.

http://www.wccf.org/CCF/ccf_2006home.html

READING ROOM

Massachusetts New Health Coverage Plan: What Can We Learn?

The recently approved Massachusetts health insurance law, includes mandates for individuals to have health insurance and for most businesses to offer it to their workers or face penalties.

However, Governor Romney recently vetoed the provision requiring employers to pay an assessment on employers not providing coverage. <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=41625>

For various perspectives on this landmark legislation, see the following links:

Commonwealth Fund President Karen Davis, in [Providing Health Insurance for All: What We Can Learn from Massachusetts:](#)

http://www.cmwf.org/aboutus/aboutus_show.htm?doc_id=368417&#doc368417

Heritage Foundation: Understanding Key Parts of the Massachusetts Health Plan <http://www.heritage.org/Research/HealthCare/wm1045.cfm>

Kiplinger's Personal Finance: A New Plan Covering the Uninsured

<http://www.kiplinger.com/personalfinance/features/archives/2006/04/masshealth.html>

AFL-CIO President Criticizes Massachusetts Health Care Law

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=41849>

"The Deficit Reduction Act: A Review of Key Medicaid Provisions Affecting Children and Families"

The FY 2006 federal budget (aka the DRA) includes many significant changes in Medicaid affecting children and families. This new analysis reviews the DRA changes, focusing on the benefits option, the cost sharing rules, the new citizenship documentation requirement, and the "Health Opportunity Account" demonstrations.

<http://jonesd.ihcrp.georgetown.edu/~jonesd3/reconbrief013006.pdf>

"Can States Stretch the Medicaid Dollar without Passing the Buck? Lessons from Utah"

This recent Kaiser Foundation report examines Utah's experience with a waiver that expanded coverage for primary care services to low-income uninsured parents and adults, offsetting costs by limiting benefits and raising cost sharing for poor parents. Although the primary care expansion helped fill a critical need for low-income uninsured adults, more than three-fourths of primary care enrollees needed services beyond the scope of their coverage. The limited coverage or the cost associated with services led one in three newly insured people to miss or postpone care and over half reported difficulty paying for medical expenses.

<http://www.kff.org/medicaid/kcmu030706pkg.cfm>

Medicare Nonprofit Plans Score Higher Quality

A recent article in the American Journal of Medicine reveals that Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in for-profit health plans received significantly lower-quality care than beneficiaries in not-for-profit plans in four important areas.

http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=344933

Medicaid Hurdle for Immigrants May Hurt Others

More than 50 million Medicaid recipients will soon have to produce birth certificates, passports or other documents to prove that they are United States citizens, and everyone who applies for coverage after June 30 will have to show similar documents under a new federal law. State officials worry that many blacks, American Indians and other poor people will be unable to come up with the documents needed to prove citizenship. In addition, hospital executives said they were concerned that the law could increase their costs, by reducing the number of patients with insurance. The new requirement takes effect on July 1. The budget office expects that 35,000 people will lose coverage by 2015.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/16/us/16medicaid.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

University of Michigan to Provide Diabetes Medicine

Trying to slow the growing health care costs of diabetes, the University of Michigan plans to provide most diabetes medicines free to insured employees and their families who need the drugs. The program, a two-year experiment, will cover about 2,000 people. Under the University of Michigan plan, starting July 1, participants won't be charged health insurance copays for certain generic drugs that control blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol and which address other diabetic problems. The project is expected to cost the university about \$800,000, and officials will evaluate long-term savings. If the project is successful, it could be made permanent and extended to other chronic conditions.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20060424/ap_on_he_me/diabetes_insurance&printer=1;_ylt=An7MILyZxt1zsbocLg8pb5a24cA;_ylu=X3oDMTA3MXN1bHE0BHNIYwN0bWE-

Chrysler Program Improves Health of Diabetic Employees

The [Chrysler Group](#) of Daimler Chrysler found that employees with diabetes improved their health in a recent six-month pilot program in which they received individual health coaching in the workplace. Chrysler has not determined whether the program reduced health care costs.

<http://bcbshealthissues.com/proactive/newsroom/release.vtml?id=198980>

RAND Study Finds All Socio-Demographic Groups at Risk for Poor Quality Health Care (March 15, 2006).

The study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, finds that while some disparities in care exist they are small relative to the gap between what everyone needs and what they are receiving.

<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/354/11/1147>

A System for Rapidly and Accurately Collecting Patients' Race and Ethnicity

The Commonwealth Fund reports that allowing patients to use their own words appears to be a powerful tool for health care providers to collect patient information. Also, having access to medical interpreters can significantly improve patients experiences, while substantially reducing racial and ethnic disparities as stated in another publication.

http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=360684

Complementary and Alternative Medical Therapy Use Among Chinese and Vietnamese Americans

According to a new study by Commonwealth Fund-supported researchers, physicians often are not aware of the alternative medical therapies--like acupuncture and herbal medicines--that their Asian American patients may be using. The researchers surveyed Chinese and Vietnamese Americans in eight urban areas. Their findings show that while roughly two-thirds of respondents reported using some form of complementary or alternative therapy, fewer than one of 10 discussed this treatment with their doctor. However, when patients did discuss it, they rated their health care higher.

http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=365994&#doc365994_

Researching Differences in Heart Disease between Women and Men May Improve Diagnosis and Treatment

Since 1984, more women than men have died each year from heart disease, and though overall coronary death rates have dropped in recent decades, most of the improvements have been in men. Researchers have come to realize that to improve diagnosis and treatment for women, they must sort out the ways in which their experiences with the disease differ from men. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/18/health/18hear.html?th&emc=th>

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A Boost for Breast Cancer Prevention

A drug used to prevent bones from thinning also offers millions of older women a powerful way to protect themselves against breast cancer, a large government-sponsored study has found. The study of nearly 20,000 postmenopausal women found that raloxifene reduces their chance of developing breast cancer as effectively as tamoxifen, the only drug previously shown to reduce the risk, but is less likely to cause serious side effects such as uterine cancer and blood clots. The findings indicate that raloxifene, sold under the brand name Evista, is a safer alternative for the estimated 9 million postmenopausal U.S. women at increased risk for breast cancer, experts said.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/17/AR2006041701178_pf.html

Cheap Burgers Revive McDonald's

The enormous success of the Dollar Menu, where all items cost \$1, has helped stimulate 36 consecutive months of sales growth at stores open at least a year. In three years, revenue has increased by 33 percent and its shares have rocketed 170 percent. McDonald's has attracted considerable attention in the last few years for introducing to its menu healthy food items like salads and fruit. Yet its turnaround has come not from greater sales of healthy foods but from selling more fast-food basics, like double cheeseburgers and fried chicken sandwiches, from the Dollar Menu.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/19/business/19mcdonalds.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

Low Health Awareness among Obese People

Obese people have a blind spot when it comes to their own weight problem, according to a study that showed only 15 percent of people in that category view themselves as obese. Among the consequences of low recognition of obesity are heightened risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and arthritis.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20060409/ap_on_he_me/diet_obesity_perception&printer=1;_ylt=AvYh_Xj9.1rxw7X4M4pHXeJa24cA;_ylu=X3oDMTA3MXN1bHE0BHNIYwN0bWE-

New Resources on Childhood Obesity

The Spring 2006 issue of the *Future of Children* contains nine articles relating to the high and rising rates of overweight and obesity among U.S. children, and presenting evidence on the multiple causes, consequences, and methods of dealing with the growing problem. http://www.futureofchildren.org/pubs-info2825/pubs-info_show.htm?doc_id=349724

For the Executive Summary, go to: http://www.futureofchildren.org/pubs-info3133/pubs-info.htm?doc_id=358265