

UW POPULATION HEALTH INSTITUTE

E-NEWS - August 2006

Vol. 6, No. 8

Department of Population Health Sciences
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

The UW Population Health Institute's E-News is delivered monthly. Check our web site for additional information and updates: <http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/index.html>. To subscribe or unsubscribe, reply to [Judy Knutson](#) with the word "subscribe" or "unsubscribe" in the subject line.

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, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, *The New York Times*, *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, *Milwaukee Business Journal*, *Wisconsin State Journal* and others.

In This Issue

State News

- Healthy Wisconsin Council Appointed to Oversee Reform
- Doyle Proposes Expanded BadgerCare Coverage for Farm Families
- DHFS Issues Ops Memo for Citizenship & Identity Documentation
- Feingold and Baldwin Propose Health Insurance Coverage Expansion Pilots
- System Would Share ER Information: Linking Data Could Save Money, Improve Care
- More Charity at Hospitals: Burden Increases Due to High-Cost Plans, Uninsured

- Hospitals Profits Gap Grows: Urban Hospitals suffer; Healthy Profits in Suburbs
- Competition Could Cure Health Costs; Economist Pushes for Standards, Disclosure
- Mumps Test Unreliable; False Positives Numerous
- Columbia County Updates 911 System
- Surgeon General's Report Could Boost Milwaukee Smoking Ban
- "Smokeless Nights" Proposed for La Crosse Area Bars
- WI's Dwindling Forests and Farmlands May Be Temporarily Protected
- DNR Allows Lead to Stay in Badger Ammo Soil
- Healthy Communities Project and the Lawn Chemical Debate
- Wisconsin's First 2006 Case of West Nile
- Natural Disaster Unlikely to Strike Milwaukee; Terror Likely to Strike WI
- WARF Stem Cell Patents Re-examined
- Healthy Communities Project and the Lawn Chemical Debate

Research and Program Tools

- Obesity in America
- Commonwealth Fund Examines Ways to Expand Coverage in Medicaid, SHIP
- National Kids Count Data Book Released
- System of Care Resources for Children with Emotional Disturbance
- Program and Policy Resources on Physical Activity for Children
- First Analysis of Online Food Advertising Targeting Children
- Medicare Structure and Policy Discussed
- Dental Sealant Resource Guide
- Obesity in America

Events

- Online Coverage of the XVI International AIDS Conference: Aug. 14-18
- Second Wisconsin Health Information Outreach Summit: Aug. 16
- Consortium on Inclusion and Care of the Underrepresented in Clinical Research: Sept. 7
- eHealth Care Quality and Patient Safety Board, Consumer Interests Listening Session: September 12
- Current Concepts in Nutrition and Aging: Sept. 28

Reading Room

- EHRs: Will Save Money, Improve Care, Senator Frist Writes
- GAO Finds Medicare Drug Plan Information Often Incomplete and Incorrect

- Bush Administration Plans Medicare Cuts
 - Medicaid's Spending Growth Slows, Not Medicare's
 - Florida Supreme Court Tosses Out Judgment against Tobacco Companies
 - Federal funds strengthen MA university health insurance plan
 - Female Smokers More Likely to Get Lung Cancer, More Likely to Survive
 - High Rate of Complications Found after Bariatric Surgery
 - Pregnancy Centers Found to Give False Information on Abortion
 - Minnesota Doctors Push for Drug Disposal Research and Guidelines
 - More Kids on Prescription Drugs
 - Marketing to Kids Now Includes “Beer”
 - Recent Disasters and Epidemics Spark Interest in Public Health Careers
 - Chicago Proposal to Ban Trans Fats
 - Alcohol Remains Leading Substance Abuse Problem in Rural Areas
 - U.S. District Judge Says MD Wal-Mart Violated Federal Law
 - The Causes of Excess Death in Wisconsin by Life Stage
 - High Deductible Health Plans with HSAs: Emerging Evidence and Outstanding Issues
-

State News

Healthy Wisconsin Council Appointed to Oversee Reform

Governor Doyle has now appointed the Council that will develop his *Healthy Wisconsin* program, planned to lower health care costs by creating a statewide catastrophic reinsurance program in Wisconsin to offset the high cost of health care for individuals who suffer serious illness or injury. The *Healthy Wisconsin Council* is charged with developing an action plan to achieve the following: Reduce the uninsured rate in Wisconsin by 50 percent; Reduce health insurance premiums for individuals and small businesses by 30 percent; Strengthen the private insurance market in Wisconsin; Encourage more employers to offer comprehensive, affordable health coverage to their employees.

<http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/HealthyWisconsin/>

Critics of Doyle's Council say action is needed, not another study.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=457767>

Doyle Proposes Expanded BadgerCare Coverage for Farm Families

Governor Doyle has announced a new proposal to make farm families and the self employed eligible for BadgerCare Plus. Access to coverage is currently a problem for these families

because WI defines their income for purposes of Medicaid and BadgerCare as being the earnings before depreciation on farm equipment is subtracted. The newly announced wrinkle in BadgerCare Plus eligibility would use an income definition that allows depreciation to be deducted. This change is expected to make a little over 13,000 parents eligible for the proposed benchmark benefit plan, and that about 25% of them would participate at a public cost of about \$3.6 million annually (in state and federal funds), as well as \$4.3 million in premiums.

DHFS memo and the Governor' s press release:

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

WCCF article: "BadgerCare Plus (or Minus?)" : <http://www.wccf.org/wkj/606/story1.htm>

DHFS Issues Ops Memo for Citizenship & Identity Documentation

Wisconsin and other states have been trying to figure out to meet the federal requirements (and avoid potentially costly sanctions) for citizenship documentation, while minimizing the number of eligible people who lose coverage. DHFS has been scrambling to mine existing databases to find permissible documentation of citizenship and identity for as many of the existing MA participants as possible. As currently-enrolled people come up for their annual review of eligibility, DHFS is sending them letters indicating whether, based on review of their files, they need to produce documentation of citizenship and/or identity, and indicating what kinds of documents will suffice.

WI DHFS Operations Memo 06-32: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/em/ops-memos/2006/pdf/06-32.pdf>

On July 12, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued revised regulations for the new citizenship and identity documentation requirements (which took effect on July 1). The new regulations exempt individuals receiving Medicare or SSI benefits and individuals with presumptive eligibility status, and permit states to use electronic matches with the vital records database.

Kaiser Family Foundation Fact Sheet: <http://www.kaisernetwork.org/fe.cfm?id=2893>

CBPP, "Revised Medicaid Documentation Requirement Jeopardizes Coverage for 1 to 2 Million Citizens"

<http://www.cbpp.org/7-13-06health2.htm>

Feingold and Baldwin Propose Health Insurance Coverage Expansion Pilots

Senator Russ Feingold and Rep. Tammy Baldwin each introduced separate bills that would allow states to experiment with new ways to expand access to health insurance for the uninsured. Senator Feingold's proposal would enable states to design their own health coverage plans. States would have to compete to be able to take part, and the proposal is expected to cost \$32-billion over ten years. Feingold said he hopes the pilot programs will help lawmakers realize what works

and what doesn't, to create a nationwide plan.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article: <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=475836>

Representative Tammy Baldwin (D-Madison) is co-authoring the "Health Partnership Through Creative Federalism Act." The plan would give states more flexibility in the ways they cover uninsured residents. States could develop plans varying as widely as single-payer health care systems, creation of purchasing pools, use of health savings accounts, or some combinations of these; however, a minimum level of benefits would be required.

<http://tammybaldwin.house.gov/PRArticle.aspx?NewsID=1350>

System would Share ER Information: Linking Data Could Save Money, Improve Care

The Business Journal of Milwaukee reports that doctors and nurses in Milwaukee County hospital emergency rooms could gain nearly instant access to records from patients' past visits -- even at competing hospitals -- with a computer system clinicians believe would improve care and save millions of dollars. The system, which could launch by early 2007, is designed to streamline emergency procedures and steer many patients from emergency rooms to less expensive primary-care clinics.

One purpose of the technology is to expose patients who intentionally abuse the lack of coordination between hospitals. It also would flag emergency room users who legitimately need regular care for chronic illnesses and don't know where to go, then direct them to preventive treatment. The Wisconsin Health Information Exchange, a regional nonprofit group, would manage the system, train users and provide technical support. Medicaid, a government health plan for the poor, already provides technology that alerts providers if a patient has made three or more trips to an emergency room in the past year,

http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2006/07/03/story4.html?hbx=e_sw

More Charity at Hospitals: Burden increases due to high-cost plans, uninsured

The financial burden of providing free health care for the poor increased at nine of 12 Milwaukee-area hospitals in 2005, a trend industry experts said is likely to continue as the ranks of the uninsured rise and health plans become less generous. Froedtert Memorial Hospital in Wauwatosa reported the highest charity care increases in 2005. Charity is defined by state officials as care arranged ahead of time to come at no charge. It does not include other forms of uncompensated services, including bad debt and payment shortfalls from government programs such as Medicaid and Medicare.

A recent Wisconsin Hospital Association study found that 7 percent to 8 percent of hospital bills are a direct result of planned charity care. Another 17 percent to 18 percent comes from other

forms of uncompensated services such as bad debt or shortfalls in government reimbursement for Medicaid and Medicare cases.

http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2006/07/03/story2.html?hbx=e_sw

Hospital Profits Gap Grows: Urban hospitals suffer; healthy profits in suburbs

The Business Journal of Milwaukee reports that the profitability gap between hospitals serving affluent communities and those in poorer urban neighborhoods grew in 2005, a reflection of the continuing challenges in collecting payment from government-funded insurance plans and the uninsured. Profit margins last year at some suburban hospitals in metropolitan Milwaukee exceeded the national average several times over. Meanwhile, several hospitals in the city of Milwaukee barely broke even, according to financial reports submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Family and Health Services.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2006/07/10/story1.html>

Competition Could Cure Health Costs; Economist Pushes for Standards, Disclosure

The fundamental problem with health care is that we have a lot of competition, but the competition has been on the wrong level, Harvard economist Michael Porter said last week in Milwaukee. The only way to reform health care is to realign competition, focusing on what he calls "value-driven competition," or providing the best quality at the lowest cost.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=467830>

Mumps Test Unreliable; False Positives Numerous

Many of the 251 people thought to have contracted mumps this spring in Wisconsin may not have had it after all. Tests at the state Laboratory of Hygiene have produced numerous false positives, said state health officials who are reviewing the results with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. State officials are also checking medical charts of patients thought to have had mumps to see if their symptoms fit. Some people who tested positive may have had a different virus related to the flu, officials said. Also, some test results may have been false negatives, so some people with actual mumps may have been misdiagnosed. Test results from other states are also under review, CDC officials said.

<http://www.madison.com/wsj/mad/top/index.php?ntid=90239&ntpid=1>

Columbia County Updates 911 System

With a large, transient tourist population and a heavily used Interstate highway, Columbia County faces challenges in revamping the 911 system. In a recent three-month period, dispatchers

charted emergency calls from cell phones. They discovered in the informal survey that up to 70 percent of the emergency calls came in via cell phones, an important distinction because such calls cannot be traced to a specific location. A planned mapping system will give dispatchers accurate information about the location of a cell phone call in a moving car.

<http://www.madison.com/wsj/home/local/index.php?ntid=90243&ntpid=1>

Surgeon General's Report Could Boost Milwaukee Smoking Ban

The Surgeon General's new report on the dangers of secondhand smoke and the start of a restaurant smoking ban in Wauwatosa may encourage anti-smoking advocates and public officials consider another push in the city of Milwaukee and some surrounding suburbs. The proposal introduced a year ago would have outlawed smoking in nearly all workplaces, restaurants, bars and other buildings open to the public. The only exceptions would have been tobacco stores, outdoor patios and private homes not used as day care centers. Failing to win support, the proposal was amended, but the Common Council's Public Safety Committee chose to delay action.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=451826>

"Smokeless Nights" Proposed for La Crosse Area Bars

The La Crosse County Health Department has proposed "smokeless nights" for area taverns, bars and clubs. The nights would be voluntary and set by the business owner. The health department would like to see how successful such an event could be, and whether smoke free nights might encourage some to quit. They are looking at barriers that can prevent young adults from quitting smoking in a project funded by a \$100,000 grant from the American Legacy Foundation.

<http://www.lacrossetribune.com/articles/2006/07/21/news/00lead.txt>

WI's Dwindling Forests and Farmlands May Be Temporarily Protected

Large tracts of Wisconsin farmland and forests would be declared "working lands enterprise areas" and protected from development under a recommendation of a state task force that proposes offering financial incentives to participating landowners. The secretary of the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, who appointed the Working Lands Initiative to recommend ways to preserve the state's dwindling acres of forests and farmlands, said creating the enterprise areas is key to preserving Wisconsin's \$51 billion a year agriculture and food industry and its \$22 billion a year forestry and paper industry. The task force's draft report proposes a variety of funding options for the program, including offering participating landowners state-funded cash payments, state income tax credits and preference for existing state farm grants, loans and technical assistance. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?>

[id=454913](#)

DNR Allows Lead to Stay in Badger Ammo Soil

The DNR will still require that lead in the soil of the most contaminated areas at the plant be reduced to 30 part per million (ppm). However, less contaminated areas-those defined as non-industrial-will be permitted to contain as much lead as 250 ppm. The DNR reports that this is still much lower than the federal standard, but critics claim it still poses a danger to children.

<http://www.madison.com/wsaj/home/local/index.php?ntid=92388&ntpid=1>

Healthy Communities Project and the Lawn Chemical Debate

Amy Joyce, of Whitefish Bay, is a co-founder of the Healthy Communities Project, a group formed in 2001 to persuade others to stop using chemical lawn-care products that she says are hazardous to the health of humans and animals and destructive to the environment. The group has worked with the local school district to eliminate the use of lawn chemicals and persuaded Whitefish Bay village officials in 2003 to stop spraying two small parks. Producers of lawn care products dispute claims that lawn care products cause health or environmental ills. Joyce and others promoting the cause cite studies correlating lawn chemicals with cancer, Parkinson's disease and asthma. The Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Natural Resources are concerned about damage to waterways caused by the chemicals.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=475642>

Wisconsin's First 2006 Case of West Nile

A 70-year-old man tested positive for West Nile virus after giving blood during a recent Red Cross drive. This is La Crosse County's first case ever, and the first Wisconsin case reported this year. Sixty-six birds and one horse, but no humans, in Wisconsin have been infected with West Nile in 2006. A young girl from the La Crosse area may be the first case of La Crosse encephalitis this year -the county health department is awaiting test results. <http://www.lacrossetribune.com/articles/2006/07/19/news/01nile19.txt>

Natural Disaster Unlikely to Strike Milwaukee; Terror Likely to Strike WI

SustainLane ranked 50 U.S. cities in terms of likelihood of being struck with a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, major flooding, catastrophic hail, tornado super-outbreak, or earthquake. The cities with the greatest natural disaster risk are Miami, New Orleans, Oakland, San Francisco, Honolulu and San Jose. Tied for safest city are Mesa and Milwaukee, as they lack the conditions needed to create a natural disaster.

<http://www.sustainlane.com/article/996//U.S.+Cities+in+Harm%92s+Way.html>

Wisconsin as a whole may not be so safe. According to a report released by the Department of Homeland Security, Wisconsin is second only to Indiana when it comes to number of “national assets” that could be terrorist targets. The state supposedly has 7,146 sites at risk.

http://www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/OIG_06-40_Jun06.pdf

WARF Stem Cell Patents Re-examined

The Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights, joined by attorneys at the Public Patent Foundation, requested that the US Patent and Trademark Office re-examine three stem cell patents held by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation. The first two patents cover stem cells, including methods used to derive and grow them, for primates and for humans. The third patent involves a new method to grow stem cells without using animal products. The technique is considered key to safely developing the cells as therapies for conditions such as Parkinson's disease, diabetes and spinal cord injury. Critics claim WARF's patents are slowing the progress of stem-cell research in the United States. <http://www.madison.com/wsj/home/local/index.php?ntid=91581&ntpid=2>

Research and Program Tools

Obesity in America

Using data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this interactive report reveals the unimpeded progression of obesity rates over the last 20 years. State-by-state information on obesity prevention and control efforts is also provided.

<http://health.msn.com/reports/obesity/default.aspx?GT1=8307>

Commonwealth Fund Reports Examine Ways To Expand Coverage in Medicaid, SCHIP

Two new Commonwealth Fund reports outline how states and federal policymakers can implement policies to reduce instability and expand coverage.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=37993

National Kids Count Data Book Released

Earlier this month the Annie E. Casey foundation issued the new Kids Count data book, with a wealth of information on the status of children in each state. For Wisconsin, it shows that children living in extreme poverty nearly doubled from 2000-2004. Wisconsin's overall ranking

fell from 10th best to 13th. Despite the slippage, WI continues to have a fairly high ranking, thanks in part to the fact that only 6% of children in the state lack insurance (according to the US Census Bureau), compared with 11% nationwide. Although many of the Wisconsin trends were negative, there were a couple of areas of improvement. For example, the teen birth rate in WI fell 11% from 2000 to 2003, to 31 births per 1,000 girls; compared to a national teen birth rate of 42 births per 1,000 girls.

Wisconsin fact sheet : http://www.wccf.org/pdf/2006kcfactsheet_062706.pdf

WCCF press release: http://www.wccf.org/pdf/safetynetfailing_2006kc_pr062706.pdf

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=442600>

WI State Journal: <http://www.madison.com/wsj/home/local/index.php?ntid=89111&ntpid=3>

System of Care Resources for Children with Emotional Disturbance

The Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health has produced two new guides to support the successful development and implementation of local systems of care for children with serious emotional disturbance. The first is: Taking Charge: An Introductory Guide to Choosing the Most Effective Services for the Mental, Behavioral, and Emotional Health of Youth Within a System of Care

<http://www.tapartnership.org/advisors/TakingCharge.asp>

The second is: Juvenile Justice & Mental Health Working Together for the Best Outcomes for Youth With Serious Emotional Disorders

http://www.tapartnership.org/advisors/juvenile_justice/MH_JJ_pub.asp

Program and Policy Resources on Physical Activity for Children

The Georgetown University Maternal and Child Health Library has compiled a knowledge path about physical activity and children and adolescents. It offers a selection of recent resources that analyze data, describe public health campaigns and other promotion programs, and report on research aimed at identifying promising strategies for improving physical activity levels within families, schools, and communities. The knowledge path also provides resources that describe the consequences of sedentary behavior.

http://www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_phys_activity.html

First Analysis of Online Food Advertising Targeting Children

The Kaiser Family Foundation released the first comprehensive analysis of the nature and scope of online food advertising to children to help inform policymakers, advocates and industry experts. The report, *It's Child's Play: Advergaming and the Online Marketing of Food to Children*, found that more than eight out of ten (85%) of the top food brands that target children through TV advertising also use branded websites to market to children online. Access the

report, webcast, and presentation at:

<http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia071906pkg.cfm>

Medicare Structure and Policy Discussed

The National Academy of Social Insurance hosted a Medicare Academy in Washington, DC, to engage students in discussion on Medicare. The presentations feature discussion on the structure of the Medicare program, current policy issues in Medicare, and the new prescription drug benefit under Medicare. "Getting Involved in Medicare Policy," "Medicare: The Basics," and "Medicare Part D: A New Approach to Medicare Benefits" are available at:

http://www.kaiseredu.org/nasi_tutorial.asp?id=572

Dental Sealant Resource Guide

The National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center has released the 2nd edition of the Dental Sealant Resource Guide. The guide provides journal articles, materials, and organizational information about dental sealants and their use in preventing dental caries. The first section lists journal articles that appeared in the literature between January 2004 and March 2006. The second section lists materials, including books, curricula, fact/tip sheets, guidelines, manuals, reports, papers, and CD-ROMs. The third section lists organizations, including federal agencies, policy and resource centers, and professional associations that may serve as resources. <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/>

Events

Online Coverage of the XVI International AIDS Conference: Aug. 14-18

The Kaiser Family Foundation will webcast the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto. You can sign up to receive daily emails from August 14th to August 18th at: http://www.kaisernetwork.org/health_cast/hcast_index.cfm?display=detail&hc=1671

Second Wisconsin Health Information Outreach Summit: Aug. 16

The summit goals are to demonstrate quality evidence-based practices, tools and applications, present information about statewide health-based outreach initiatives, stimulate communication and collaboration among health and information professionals and update [Informed Caring Partners](#) and to advance their knowledge/skill in the use of IC resources. **8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., University Union, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay**

http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/outreach/summit_2006/

Consortium on Inclusion and Care of the Underrepresented in Clinical Research: Sept. 7

One presentation will be given by the UW Center for Urban Population Health on recruitment and retention successes with the COMBINE Study of alcohol-dependent males and females, and another by University of Pittsburgh Center for Minority Health on the design of their Community Research Advisory Board. [1244 Health Sciences Learning Center](#), 9 a.m.-noon. Information: 262-7456, tmduello@wisc.edu.

Governor Doyle's eHealth Care Quality and Patient Safety Board Consumer Interests Listening Session: Tuesday, September 12, 2006

To inform Wisconsin's 5-Year Action Plan for eHealth Care Quality and Patient Safety
1:00 p.m. -4:00 p.m., Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Contact [Alison Bergum](#).

Current Concepts in Nutrition and Aging: Sept. 28

UW-Madison faculty and other experts discuss the latest research and recommendations on nutritional issues for older adults. Pyle Center, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Cost: \$99, \$50 full-time students. Information: 262-1411, [Elaine Barrett](#).

Reading Room

EHRs: Will Save Money, Improve Care, Senator Frist Writes

The "systems for managing medical information remain far behind the times," Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) writes in a Washington Times opinion piece, adding, "Without better information technology, we will soon face a real health care cost crisis."

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/commentary/20060801-093445-1772r.htm>

GAO Finds Medicare Drug Plan Information Often Incomplete and Incorrect

Federal investigators reported that Medicare prescription drug plans generally provided incomplete and inaccurate information to callers asking questions about the new benefit. The findings, from the Government Accountability Office, are significant because the premise of the new program is that consumers will make informed choices among dozens of competing plans.

Investigators placed 900 calls to 10 of the largest companies that offer drug coverage to Medicare beneficiaries, and reached customer service representatives in 864 calls. The plans provided accurate, complete responses to one-third of the calls. Twenty-two percent of the 864 responses were inaccurate, 29 percent were incomplete, and no answers were provided to the other questions. Operators at the same company sometimes gave different answers to the same question.<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/11/washington/11medicare.html?th&emc=th>

Bush Administration Plans Medicare Cuts

Medicare payments for complex treatments and new technologies could be cut by 20%-30%. The secretary of health and human services said the new system would be more accurate because payments would be based on hospital costs, rather than on charges, and would be adjusted to reflect the severity of a patient's illness. A hospital now receives the same amount for a patient with a particular condition, regardless of whether the illness is mild or severe. The new plan is not expected to save money, but will shift around billions of dollars. Critics say the new system could be devastating for seriously ill patients.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/17/us/17medicare.html?th&emc=th>

Medicaid's Spending Growth Slows, Not Medicare's

CMS administration officials said that their midyear review of federal spending patterns shows a sharp slowdown in the growth of federal spending on the Medicaid program. But Medicare spending is growing more quickly than they estimated at the start of the year, despite lowered estimates of the cost of the Medicare drug benefit. CMS said the slowdown stems from various factors including waivers and other joint efforts by states and the federal government that result in greater use of private health plans. The agency also said greater use of home- and community-based care rather than nursing home care is reining in spending growth. The administration said it has lowered its five-year estimate of the cost of Medicare's Part D program -the new drug benefit- by \$34 billion compared with its estimate at the start of the year. But its five-year estimates for Part A are \$17 billion higher.

[http://www.cmwf.org/healthpolicyweek/healthpolicyweek_show.htm?](http://www.cmwf.org/healthpolicyweek/healthpolicyweek_show.htm?doc_id=384494&#doc384495)

[doc_id=384494&#doc384495](http://www.cmwf.org/healthpolicyweek/healthpolicyweek_show.htm?doc_id=384494&#doc384495)

Florida Supreme Court Tosses Out Judgement against Tobacco Companies

The Florida Supreme Court upheld a decision to toss out a \$145 billion judgment against tobacco companies in the U.S. The six-judge Florida court stated that smokers' cases "are highly individualized" and "do not lend themselves to class-action treatment." Last December, Big Tobacco won another large case in Illinois. The Supreme Court of Illinois threw out a \$10 billion

judgment against Philip Morris USA in a class-action consumer fraud suit that had accused the company of deceiving smokers by marketing its "light" cigarettes as having lower levels of tar and nicotine.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/07/business/07tobacco.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

Federal Funds Strengthen MA Universal Health Insurance Plan

The federal government has agreed to continue providing Massachusetts \$385 million in annual Medicaid money for the next two years while Massachusetts implements its landmark reform plan. State officials have said that the money, needed to subsidize coverage for low-income residents, is crucial to carrying out the ambitious new healthcare plan, which seeks to insure nearly all Massachusetts residents over the next several years.

http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2006/07/27/federal_funds_strengthen_mass_universal_health_insurance_plan/

Female Smokers More Likely to Get Lung Cancer, More Likely to Survive

International Early Lung Cancer Action Program Investigators reported that women have increased susceptibility to tobacco carcinogens, but have a lower rate of fatal outcome of lung cancer than men. The prevalence OR comparing women with men was 1.9, while the hazard ratio of fatal outcome of lung cancer comparing women with men was 0.48.

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/296/2/180>

High Rate of Complications Found after Bariatric Surgery

A new study by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality reports that 4 out of 10 obesity surgery patients develop a complication within 6 months of leaving the hospital. Researchers found that the complication rate among non-elderly obesity surgery patients with private insurance increased by 81 percent following hospital discharge—from 21.9 percent while they were still hospitalized to 39.6 percent by the end of the 180-day study period. The five most common complications were dumping syndrome, which includes vomiting, reflux, and diarrhea (nearly 20 percent); anastomosis complications (complications resulting from the surgical joining of the intestine and stomach), such as leaks or strictures (12 percent); abdominal hernias (7 percent); infections (6 percent); and pneumonia (4 percent).

<http://www.ahrq.gov/news/press/pr2006/obessurgpr.htm>

Pregnancy Centers Found to Give False Information on Abortion

Federally funded "pregnancy resource centers" are incorrectly telling women that abortion results

in an increased risk of breast cancer, infertility and deep psychological trauma, a minority congressional report charged. The report said that 20 of 23 federally funded centers contacted by staff investigators requesting information about an unintended pregnancy were told false or misleading information about the potential risks of an abortion.

<http://reform.democrats.house.gov/Documents/20060717101140-30092.pdf>

Minnesota Doctors Push for Drug Disposal Research and Guidelines

Minnesota physicians are urging the Environmental Protection Agency to study the public health consequences of flushing unused pharmaceuticals. The Minnesota Medical Association recently convinced the American Medical Association to take its request to the EPA. The AMA also plans to ask the agency to help develop guidelines for physicians and the public on the proper disposal of these drugs. The American Medical Association will urge the EPA to ramp up its pharmaceutical research and help develop guidelines for disposing of unused drugs.

<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2006/07/12/drugsdisposal/>

More Kids on Prescription Drugs

Experts say that between a quarter and half of all kids at summer camps take daily prescription medications. Allergy and asthma drugs are the most common, but many others take drugs for behavior management and psychiatric problems. A private company called CampMeds, which provides a summer's worth of prepackaged pills for kids, has seen its business boom. Their packages are marked with a name, date and time, so camp nurses simply have to tear them open and hand them out.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/16/us/16camps.html?th&emc=th>

Marketing to Kids Now Includes "Beer"

The line between kids' products and adults' products is becoming increasingly blurred. Adults shopping decisions might be affected by a sociological change called "age compression" - the idea that kids may be getting older younger and demanding adult products. Businesses are pushing iPods, portable DVD players and mini-cellphones for kids. A non-alcoholic Japanese beer called "Kids' Beer" carries the slogan, "Even kids can't stand life unless they have a drink." Companies hope to keep the young consumers' loyalty throughout their lifetimes; psychologists counter that children are not mini adults.

<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/AmericanFamily/story?id=2164932&page=2&gma=true>

Recent Disasters and Epidemics Spark Interest in Public Health Careers

Nationwide, there are 37 accredited public health programs, compared with 26 programs eight years ago. More schools are seeking accreditation, and at least four new programs will be up and running in the next year, according to the Association of Schools of Public Health. The demand for public health professionals is increasing as communities face an onslaught of health problems. Out of an estimated 450,000 public health workers nationwide, about 45 percent work in government positions, and there aren't enough professionals to meet the population's needs, experts say. The greatest demand is for public health nurses, followed by environmental scientists, health educators, epidemiologists and administrators, according to surveys. Increased federal funding for emergency preparedness and a greater emphasis among health insurers on prevention are also leading to greater interest among universities.

http://www.insidebayarea.com/ci_4007287?source=rss

Chicago Proposal to Ban Trans Fats

A Chicago City Council member is pressing to make it illegal for restaurants to use oils that contain trans fats. If approved, nutrition experts say, the ban will be the first in a major city. The aldermen recently voted to forbid restaurants to sell foie gras. Under the new proposal, establishments that failed to remove "artificial trans fats" from their kitchens would be fined \$200 to \$1,000 a day.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/18/us/18chicago.html?pagewanted=1&th&emc=th>

Alcohol Remains Leading Substance Abuse Problem in Rural Areas

Alcohol abuse remains a far more prevalent problem in small towns and rural areas of the country than methamphetamines. A new report from The Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire shows that alcohol abuse in rural America exceeds illicit drug abuse and that excessive drinking is a serious problem among rural youth, particularly in homes where parents are absent. The report is based on several national studies, including the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

http://www.raconline.org/news/news_details.php?news_id=4689

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/bal-te.md.walmart20jul20,0,1148757.story>

The Causes of Excess Deaths in Wisconsin by Life Stage

This new UW Population Health Institute Brief Report (Vol 1. No.3) finds that deaths due to preventable or treatable cancers, ischemic heart disease, motor vehicle accidents and other unintentional injuries, homicide, suicide, and other avoidable causes of infant death account for nearly 80% of the total excess deaths in WI. Since these eight causes also include the leading avoidable causes of death in each life stage, identifying and implementing interventions that

target these eight causes should improve health across all life stages.

<http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/publications/briefReports/Vol1No3.pdf>

"High-Deductible Health Plans with Health Savings Accounts: Emerging Evidence and Outstanding Issues"

This study lays out the advantages and disadvantages of using high-deductible health plans (HDHPs) with health savings accounts (HSA). It touches on why this approach may exacerbate risk selection issues and discusses how these plans can be a somewhat better deal for a large swath of the population that is younger and healthier, but only at some cost. While the study uses Missouri data, its findings are relevant for national policy.

http://tracker.ease.lsoft.com/trk/click?ref=znwrbbbs9_1-18dbx32f4dx