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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.

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STATE NEWS

Doyle Proposes Expanded Tax Break for Employee Health Premiums

Governor Doyle has proposed making all employee-paid health insurance premiums tax free. The Doyle Administration estimates the cost of the proposal to be about \$50 million per year. The Governor said the proposed deduction would benefit an estimated 637,000 families and individuals, with a typical family paying a \$300 monthly health premium saving about \$236 a year. Currently, more than 80,000 families who pay the entire cost of their health insurance are permitted to fully deduct their premiums (under a provision included in the last biennial budget bill). Governor's Press Release: http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/journal_media_detail.asp?locid=19&prid=2271

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=484804>

Editorial reactions to the Governor's plan:

LaCrosse Tribune: "Doyle health insurance proposal a good starting point for debate" http://www.lacrossetribune.com/articles/2006/08/20/opinion/1ed_0820.txt

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Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: "These deductions can help" <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=485283>

Appleton Post-Crescent: "Doyle's health care tax cut is dishonest, misguided" <http://www.postcrescent.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060818/APC0602/608180595/1036>

ABC for Health Proposes Universal Health Plan

Advocacy & Benefits Counseling for Health, Inc. unveiled a universal health care plan this morning (8/23), called the Pathway Plan. According to their press release, the Pathway Plan will extend BadgerCare coverage and include a buy-in component for individuals, small business and other employers. It would also "create The Office of Health Care Advocacy and Outreach to include a comprehensive advocacy piece featuring health benefits counselors, health care navigators, and independent outreach and enrollment brokers."

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/Aug06/Aug22/0822abchealthplan.pdf>

For additional information, go to: <http://www.abcforhealth.org/>

State health plan [HIRSP] rebounds in 2006

Wisconsin's health plan for people who can't buy insurance in the private market because of serious health problems rebounded strongly in its 2006 fiscal year after posting a sharp loss in 2005. The Health Insurance Risk-Sharing Plan, which insures about 18,650 people in Wisconsin, reported a loss of \$7.6 million for its fiscal year ended June 30, 2005, according to an audit by the Legislative Audit Bureau. The loss stemmed partly from an unexpectedly large increase in medical claims. But unaudited results for the 2006 fiscal year show a strong turnaround, with the plan tentatively reporting a profit of \$14.4 million.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=482204>

Most Consumers in Milwaukee Market Avoiding Consumer-Driven Plans

The Business Journal of Milwaukee reports that more employers are turning to consumer-driven health-care

plans to rein in their health costs, but enrollment in such plans remains anemic. Nonetheless, many industry players who say it's only a matter of time before the plans catch on with employees.

http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2006/08/14/focus7.html?hbx=e_sw

Giving up choice in exchange for cheaper health costs:

Narrow provider networks slowly gain acceptance among employers, consumers

The Business Journal of Milwaukee reports that Milwaukee-area health care consumers and employers are warming up to the idea of health plans that offer fewer choices of doctors and hospitals in exchange for less expensive premiums. The change in attitude toward so-called "narrow networks" comes after similar experiments failed in the Milwaukee market a decade ago, after employers and employees balked at health plans that didn't offer a wide choice of health care providers.

http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2006/08/14/focus2.html?hbx=e_sw

WI Hospitals Updating and Expanding

Nearly a dozen hospitals in cities like Watertown, Baraboo and Reedsburg have taken on extensive expansion or renovation projects and added the latest diagnostic tools like MRI machines and CT scanners. In Madison, all three major hospitals - St. Mary's, UW Hospital and Meriter - are remodeling and reconfiguring their space. According to the Wisconsin Hospital Association, this building boom is happening for several reasons: there's a projected need for more beds to accommodate an aging population, creating facilities for more outpatient care is becoming critical, and the number of emergency room visits has increased over the last five to six years, spurring a need for more space.

<http://www.madison.com/wsj/home/biz/index.php?ntid=95480&ntpid=2>

Milwaukee Tops List of Drunkest Cities

Forbes.com named Milwaukee "America's Drunkest City" on a list of 35 major metropolitan areas ranked for their drinking habits. To compile the list, a first for Forbes.com, staff writers used numbers from the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to rank cities in five areas: state laws, number of drinkers, number of heavy drinkers, number of binge drinkers and alcoholism. In each of those categories, Milwaukee came out near the top. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=487336>

Respect 21 Responsible Retailing Program Kicked-Off

Miller Brewing Company, in conjunction with Madison retailers, law enforcement, community leaders and Brandeis University, launched a program aimed at preventing underage access to alcohol. The program was pilot tested in Waukesha with positive results. The percentage of clerks asking for an ID rose from 74 to 87 percent, and the percentage of ID inspections rose from 69 to 86 percent.

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/Aug06/Aug22/0822millerrespect21.pdf>

Focus Groups Provide Feedback on Health Care

Forums are being held across the state to provide the Department of Health and Family Services feedback on how the under- and uninsured view the current state of state health care as Governor Doyle prepares to make changes to the current system. Participants are reimbursed \$20 for their participation in the focus groups. Some of the biggest concerns the DHFS has been hearing are from single adults, who aren't eligible for state-provided health insurance. Others have a hard time finding a local dentist who accepts BadgerCare, Medicaid or those with medical assistance. Participants are being asked about their thoughts on the current

enrollment process, feelings about co-payments and premiums, what they found frustrating about the system and what worked for them. <http://www.thenorthwestern.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060825/OSH0101/608250404/1987>

Oshkosh Firm Launches New Prescription Drug Website

An Oshkosh-based Web firm has introduced a competitive, Web-based marketplace for medications and the pharmacies that provide them. BidRx requires insured and cash paying consumers to create a membership account for free before they begin searching for prescribed medications. Consumers enter the size of pills required and the length of the dosage before being presented with the maximum cost of that prescription. But they also see comparable alternatives suggested by an independent board of academics and the prices of those medications, too. The director of sales and marketing at BidRx stressed that any decision to change prescriptions cannot take place without a doctor's approval. Pharmacies can choose to sell the drugs at different prices and consumers can select mail order or local pharmacies participating in the site.

<http://www.thenorthwestern.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060812/OSH0101/608120342/1128/OSHnews>

Housing Initiative Proposed for People with Chronic Mental Illness

Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker has proposed spending nearly \$250,000 in next year's budget to enhance housing programs for people with chronic mental illness. His plan calls for some realignment of county agencies, including the creation of a housing section specifically for the Behavioral Health Division. Plans also call for closer scrutiny of properties by paying City of Milwaukee building inspectors to issue certificates to landlords who want to house the county's mental health clients.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=486296>

Survey Finds WI Farm Families Underinsured and Uninsured

About one-third of Wisconsin farmers are either uninsured or only have catastrophic health insurance coverage, according to a survey released by the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation. The Farm Bureau conducted a survey in March 2006 of 500 farmers to determine the extent and costs of health care coverage of farmers. The Farm Bureau survey showed farmers who purchase their own insurance pay 93% more in premiums and other out-of-pocket costs, compared to those who get insurance from off-farm employment. The Farm Bureau survey found that 64% of farmers who had health insurance purchased it themselves, with 36% obtaining insurance through their own or a spouse's off-farm employment.

http://www.wfbf.com/health_care/Health%20care%20survey%20report.pdf

Prisoners' Health Care Costs Climb as Inmate Population Ages

The number of inmates older than 60 in the state prison system has nearly tripled in the last decade, according to an analysis of Department of Corrections inmate data by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. In the past seven years, inmate health care costs more than tripled from \$28.5 million in 1998 to \$87.6 million in 2005. Meanwhile, the prison population went up 25 percent in the same period to 21,763 inmates. There's a plan to develop a new, more-segregated workout room at the prison gymnasium encourage older inmates to stay healthy and reduce the costs of prison health care for degrading hearts or preventable diabetes. It's not out of the question that a "nursing home" building or unit may be in the future for Wisconsin's biggest prisons.

<http://www.postcrescent.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060828/APC0101/608280537/1979>

ATV Deaths on the Rise in Wisconsin

In 2005, Wisconsin experienced its highest number of ATV fatalities ever at 22, according to a report by the state Department of Natural Resources. Nationally, from 1982 to 2004, a Consumer Product Safety Commission report shows there have been 6,494 ATV-related deaths, with 2,019 of those involving children under the age of 16. As the death tally increases, the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission has proposed new mandatory rules to keep people safe, which include: making current voluntary construction standards mandatory for all ATV manufacturers, banning all three-wheel ATVs, developing better and more efficient youth-model ATVs, and increasing safety promotions across the United States.

<http://www.madison.com/wsaj/home/local/index.php?ntid=94619&ntpid=3>

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

BCBS Blue Health Intelligence

Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans have created Blue Health Intelligence (BHI), a resource aimed at improving healthcare quality through opportunities to share health information initially with employers, and in the future, with consumers and providers. The secure, HIPAA-compliant database is comprised of claims information (with no personal identifiers) from 79 million lives. Twenty Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans currently are participating in BHI. Access to the aggregate data will be available only to the participating Plans.

<http://bcbshealthissues.com/proactive/newsroom/release.vtml?id=208270>

Cross-Cultural Communication Practices in Health Care

A new Commonwealth Fund report, *Promising Practices for Patient-Centered Communication with Vulnerable Populations: Examples from Eight Hospitals*, identifies eight hospitals from across the country that have demonstrated a commitment to providing patient-centered communication with vulnerable patient populations. The promising practices include: having passionate champions to advocate for communication programs; collecting information on patient needs; engaging communities; developing a diverse and skilled workforce; involving patients; spreading awareness of cultural diversity; providing effective language assistance services; addressing low health literacy; and tracking performance over time.

http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=397067&#doc397067

EPA Pesticide Registration

The Food Quality Protection Act mandated a new pesticide registration review program. All pesticides distributed and sold in the United States must be registered by EPA, based on scientific data showing that they will not cause unreasonable risks to human health, workers, or the environment when used as directed on product labeling. The new registration review program makes sure that, as the ability to assess risk evolves and as policies and practices change, all registered pesticides continue to meet the statutory standard of no unreasonable adverse effects. <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/regulating/registering/index.htm>

Income, Poverty & Health Insurance Coverage in the US

The US Census Bureau has released *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005* from the Current Population Survey and *Income, Earnings and Poverty in the United States: 2005* from the American Community Survey.

http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/news_conferences/007338.html

Medicaid Policy Changes in the Deficit Reduction Act

A Kaiser Family Foundation policy brief, *The Nuts and Bolts of Making Medicaid Policy Changes: An Overview and a Look at the Deficit Reduction Act*, outlines the roles of Congress, CMS and the states in implementing Medicaid policy changes and highlights some of the changes included in the DRA. The brief also examines how the forms and timing of guidance can affect the transparency of the public policy process as well as lead time for state implementation of new policies.

<http://www.kff.org/medicaid/7550.cfm>

"Nursing Homes: Business As Usual"

For its investigative report, "Nursing Homes: Business As Usual," *Consumer Reports* analyzed the three most recent state inspection reports for some 16,000 nursing homes across the U.S. and examined staffing levels and quality indicators, such as how many residents develop pressure sores when they have no risk factors for them. This resource features a state-by-state database of homes to avoid and homes to consider, called the Nursing Home Quality Monitor. The report also helps consumers increase the odds of choosing a good nursing home with step-by-step shopping advice. For example, *Consumer Reports's* analysis found that not-for-profit homes generally provide better care than for-profit homes, and that independently run nursing homes appear to provide better care than those that are owned by chains.

http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/health-fitness/nursing-home-guide/0608_nursing-home-guide.htm

Private Health Insurance 101

A new slide tutorial from KaiserEDU.org provides an overview of the private health insurance system. It covers basic concepts important to understanding private health insurance and how it works, such as risk spreading/risk selection, pluralism, costs, coverage, and regulation. <http://www.kaiseredu.org/tutorials/privateinsurance/player.html>

State Behavioral Health Innovations: Disseminating Promising Practices

A new Commonwealth Fund report identifies promising innovations in behavioral health care. Experts in the field of mental health and substance abuse were interviewed. Based on their suggestions, the authors of the report selected and described 17 practices—all related to purchasing and quality improvement—being implemented by states in behavioral health care. Many of the projects result from the increasing demands placed on state agencies to meet needs with a reduced budget, leaving states with little choice but to increase efficiency and effectiveness. The innovations fall into six categories: enhancing consumer-centered care, criminal justice/mental health collaboration, system integration, the use of performance incentives, quality improvement, and other promising practices.

http://www.cmf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=392669&#doc392669

Employer-Based Health Premiums

Statehealthfacts.org has recently added new data on a number of topics including updated data on employer-based health insurance premiums from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, available by state and region. The 2004 premium contribution levels for both employees and employers are available for all coverage types for all states and the nation.

<http://cme.kff.org/Key=11277.FF.J.C.HSmrVQ>

“Healthy States Initiative: State Official's Guide to Wellness”

The Council of State Governments provides a snapshot of the current state of health in America, what the states are doing to achieve wellness and who is involved in the initiatives to promote healthy behaviors. The guide also provides a framework for understanding the major policy issues surrounding wellness.

<http://www.healthystates.csg.org/Publications/>

Wisconsin Public Health Profiles, 2004

The Wisconsin DHFS Bureau of Health Information and Policy has recently released this report, which is now available at: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/localdata/pubhlthprofiles.htm>

All the local data products for a particular county, including that county's 2004 profile are available at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/localdata/bycounty/bycounty.htm>

EVENTS

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](tel:1244), 9 a.m.-noon. Information: 262-7456, tmduello@wisc.edu.

Population Health Sciences Monday Seminar on Shared Decision Making: Sept. 11

Henry Young, PhD, Assistant Professor, School of Pharmacy, University of Wisconsin-Madison will present “Physicians' shared decision making behavior: Influences and outcomes” in room 1309 of the Health Sciences Learning Center from 12:00-1:00.

<http://www.pophealth.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

Map: <http://www.ci.oconomowoc.wi.us/location.htm>

Contact Alison Bergum at ahbergum@wisc.edu

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](mailto:Elaine.Barrett).

Caution: You are Entering A Construction Zone: The Adolescent Brain: Oct. 4

This one day training focuses on the teen brain, and the influences that may shape it, beginning with prenatal development. Also included will be the outcomes of neglect, a discussion regarding sleep, and neurotransmitters. The training day will conclude with the reward system and alcohol and other substances

and the adolescent brain. Wednesday October 4, 2006 at the Howard Johnson Plaza in Madison. Cost for this one day training is \$85.00 and includes lunch, refreshments breaks and all training materials (CD-ROM of training presentation, handouts and supporting research articles). For more details, training information and registration brochure email Jeanne Erickson at jerickson@wccf.org or call at 608-284-0580 ext 301

Annual Colloquium on Aging: Oct. 18

Sponsored by the Institute on Aging. Talks include: "Visions for an Aging Society," "How Older Adults Prepare for Health Care at End of Life," "New Vaccines and Developments in Immunization," "The Body's Ability to Self-Heal." Preregistration required. **Monona Terrace**, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Information: 261-1493, aging@ssc.wisc.edu.

READING ROOM

Bush Signs Order on Transparency in Health Care

On August 22, President Bush signed an Executive Order to promote federally led efforts to implement more transparent and high-quality health care. The purpose of this Executive Order is to ensure that health care programs administered or sponsored by the Federal Government promote quality and efficient delivery of health care through the use of health information technology, transparency regarding health care quality and price, and better incentives for program beneficiaries, enrollees, and providers. The purpose of this Executive Order is to make relevant information available to beneficiaries, enrollees, and providers in a readily useable manner and in collaboration with similar initiatives in the private sector and non-Federal public sector. Measures of quality at the provider and health plan level will be developed from private and government sources and will not involve developing or releasing data at the individual patient level. Consumers will be able to access information from a variety of potential sources, including insurance companies, employers, and Medicare-sponsored Web sites. Select to read the **Executive Order**: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/08/20060822-2.html>

HHS Issues Regs, Safe Harbors, for Donating Health IT, Services

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced Tuesday final regulations meant to support physician adoption of electronic prescribing and electronic health records technology. The rules create new exceptions and safe harbors from two key federal fraud and abuse laws governing the donation of electronic health information technology and services, HHS said in a news release.

Under current anti-kickback law, known as "Stark laws," physicians are prohibited from referring Medicare patients for certain designated services to entities, such as hospitals, with which the physician has a financial relationship. Such practices could be seen as illegally inducing referrals of patients or recruitment of enrollees.

The exceptions and safe harbors establish conditions under which hospitals and other certain groups can donate to physicians items such as interoperable electronic health records software, hardware, training for electronic prescribing, and other duties.

DHHS News Release: <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2006pres/20060801.html>

5% Cut in Medicare Reimbursement Rate Planned

Doctors will see a 5.1 percent cut in their reimbursement rates for Medicare patients next year, according to proposed federal rules. Hospitals will gain a 3 percent increase in their reimbursement rates for outpatient care, but they will get the full increase only if they submit data to the government indicating they're following guidelines that improve patient care. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services also said it will fine specialty hospitals as much as \$10,000 a day if they fail to timely disclose financial arrangements with physicians.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/08/AR2006080801067.html>

U.S. Health Care System in Need of Change, Report Says

The U.S. health care system lags behind other industrialized nations despite providing some of the best health care in the world, but implementing policies to increase quality and access to care could reverse the trend, according to a new report by The Commonwealth Fund.

http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=387153

Doctors Taking Fewer Medicaid Patients

According to a report by the Center for Studying Health System Change, Medicaid's reimbursement rate is the biggest reason that it is getting more difficult to locate doctors who take new patients under the program. On average, reimbursements are 69 percent of what Medicare pays and even lower compared with what private insurers pay. Overall, the percentage of physicians not accepting new Medicaid patients has risen from about 19.5 in the mid-1990s to about 21 over the past few years.

<http://www.newsday.com/news/health/wire/sns-ap-medicaid-doctors,0,3723360.story>

Report: <http://hschange.org/CONTENT/866/?topic=topic02>

Rate and Number of Uninsured Increases

The percent of Americans without health insurance hit 15.9%, or roughly 46.6 million people, in 2005, up from 15.6% of the population in 2004, or about 45.3 million people, according to the Census Bureau. All surveys, despite differing methods, show rising numbers of uninsured. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's State Health Access Data Assistance Center has created an issue brief that examines differences in various federal surveys that attempt to quantify the uninsured. While various government surveys of the uninsured use differing methodologies, all show an increase in the number of uninsured people in America.

Issue Brief Comparing Federal Government Surveys that Count Uninsured People in America: http://www.rwjf.org/files/publications/other/SHADAC_RWJ.pdf

Study Finds U.S. Health Care Good Value Despite Costs

The dramatic increase in health-care spending in the United States since 1960 is a major reason that Americans are living longer, making the world's most expensive health-care system a good value despite its high costs, according to a study published by Harvard economist David Cutler and colleagues in this month's *New England Journal of Medicine*. The Value of Medical Spending in the United States, 1960-2000

notes that a baby born in 2000 can expect to live for 76.9 years, compared

with 69.9 years for a newborn in 1960. While some of the gain is because of declines in rates of smoking and fatal accidents, it is reasonable to attribute at least half of it to more and better health care.

<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/reprint/355/9/920.pdf?>

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F.D.A. Approves Broader Access to Emergency Contraception

The Food and Drug Administration approved over-the-counter sales of the morning-after contraceptive pill to women 18 and older. Nationwide over-the-counter sales of the drug, Plan B, are expected to start by the end of the year. It will be sold in pharmacies and health clinics only, and buyers must show proof of age. Anyone under age 18 will still need a prescription. Men may also buy Plan B for a partner.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/25/health/25fda.html?>

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Panel Recommends Prisoners for Drug Trials

A federal panel of medical advisers has recommended that the government loosen regulations that limit the testing of pharmaceuticals on prison inmates. Under current regulations, passed in 1978, prisoners can participate in federally financed biomedical research if the experiment poses no more than “minimal” risks to the subjects. A report presented to federal officials by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences advised that experiments with greater risks be permitted if they had the potential to benefit prisoners. As an added precaution, the report suggested that all studies be subject to an independent review.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/13/us/13inmates.html?th&emc=th>

IOM Report: <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3740/24594/35792.aspx>

‘Gradient of Disability’ Linked to Household Income

Low-income Americans ages 55 to 84 are far more likely than their wealthier peers to feel limited in doing basic physical activities such as climbing stairs and lifting objects, according to a new study. The research, published *The New England Journal of Medicine*, shows that people ages 55 to 64 who are living below the poverty line are six times more likely than the wealthiest group to say they have functional limitations.

<http://www.nih.gov/news/pr/aug2006/nia-16.htm>

Study: <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/355/7/695?>

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[2Bdesc&excludeflag=TWEEK_element&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT](http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/355/7/695?hits=20&where=fulltext&andorexactfulltext=and&searchterm=Gradient+of+Disability&sortspec=Score%2Bdesc%2BPUBDATE_SORTDATE%2Bdesc&excludeflag=TWEEK_element&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT)

Nurse-Led Care Improves Functioning in Heart Failure Patients in Minority Communities

Patients with heart failure whose care is directed by nurse managers can perform everyday activities better and have fewer hospitalizations than patients who manage their own care, according to an AHRQ-funded study. Researchers enrolled 406 heart failure patients, about one-half of whom were African American and one-third of whom were Hispanic, from ambulatory practices. The patients were randomly assigned to a nurse-management group or a usual-care group. By 9 months, nurse-managed patients reported only slight

limitations in their physical functioning, while self-managed patients reported marked limitations. This difference persisted through the 12-month intervention period. Also, the nurse-managed patients had fewer hospitalizations at 12 months: 143, as opposed to 180 for the self-managed patients.

<http://www.annals.org/cgi/content/full/145/4/273>

Self-Monitoring of Blood Glucose Not Associated with Better Glycemic Control for Type 2 Diabetic Patients

The Fremantle Diabetes Study was undertaken to determine whether self-monitoring of blood glucose (SMBG) is associated with better glycemic control in type 2 diabetes. Researchers concluded that neither SMBG testing nor its frequency was associated with glycemic benefit in type 2 diabetic patients regardless of treatment. However, they suggested that SMBG may be still of value in the identification and prevention of hypoglycemia and in dose adjustment in insulin-treated patients.

<http://care.diabetesjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/29/8/1764>

Policy Brief on Interventions for Depression in Reproductive Age Women

Considering Interventions for Depression in Reproductive Age Women in Family Planning Programs, a policy brief from the Women's and Children's Health Policy Center at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, explores family planning programs as possible sites for incorporating interventions related to depression in women of reproductive age. Topics include an overview of different types of depression, the prevalence of depression among women in the US, selected consequences of depression at different points in the life-course, commonly used depression-screening tools, and the potential for integrating primary care services into family planning programs.

<http://www.jhsph.edu/wchpc/publications/>

Inclusion of Non-Leisure Time Activities Reduces Disparities in Physical Activity Levels

In a study of more than 55,000 Californians, researchers asked people about their leisure-time and non-leisure-time physical activity. The study found that 48.8% of white Californians met physical activity recommendations of at least 30 minutes of exercise at least five days a week, compared with 30.6% of Hispanic Californians, when counting leisure-time activity alone. That difference shrank to 7 percent (56.4% compared with 49.5%) when biking and walking for transportation were considered. Likewise, when examining leisure activity alone, the study found that 51.6% of people with incomes at least four times the poverty level met the recommendations compared with 26.8% of those living below the poverty level. That gap narrowed to 11 percent (58.5% versus 47.5%) when biking and walking for transportation were added to the mix.

<http://www.ajpm-online.net/article/PIIS0749379706001966/fulltext>

<http://www.nwanews.com/adg/Style/163529/>

New Limits Set Over Marketing for Cigarettes

A federal judge ordered new limitations on tobacco marketing. Judge Kessler ordered the companies to stop labeling cigarettes as “low tar” or “light” or “natural” and also ordered the companies to begin an advertising campaign in newspapers and on television networks on “the adverse health effects of smoking.” However, she rejected a government proposal that the industry be forced to underwrite a multibillion-dollar program to help smokers quit and to educate young people about the hazards of tobacco.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/18/washington/18tobacco.html?th&emc=th>

Seroprevalence of Herpes Simplex Virus Types 1 and 2 on the Decline

A new study examined the trends in HSV-1 and HSV-2 seroprevalence in the United States in 1999-2004 compared with 1988-1994. These data show declines in HSV-2 seroprevalence, suggesting that the trajectory of increasing HSV-2 seroprevalence in the United States has been reversed. Seroprevalence of HSV-1 decreased but the incidence of genital herpes caused by HSV-1 may be increasing.

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/296/8/964>

Health Benefits of Coffee

Researchers have found strong evidence that coffee reduces the risk of several serious ailments, including diabetes, heart disease and cirrhosis of the liver. Researchers found that a typical serving of coffee contains more antioxidants than typical servings of grape juice, blueberries, raspberries and oranges.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/15/health/nutrition/15coff.html?ref=health>

Coffee consumption is associated with a lower risk of Type 2 Diabetes: <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/294/1/97>

Some studies show that cardiovascular risk also decreases with coffee consumption. <http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/83/5/1039>

Two New York Times Magazine Features Focus on the Obesity Epidemic

Fat Factors highlights current research on the link between microorganisms and obesity.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/13/magazine/13obesity.html?th&emc=th>

The School-Lunch Test looks a new school lunch program being tested in Florida.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/20/magazine/20lunches.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin