

**E-NEWS – APRIL 2007  
VOL. 7, NO. 4**

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



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Population Health Institute

*Translating Research into Policy and Practice*

---

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**

- Insurance Industry Opposes Mandated Autism and Other Funding
- Proposed Biennial Budget Undergoing Consideration in Legislature
- WI Fights to Keep SeniorCare
- BadgerCare Plus Projections Refined
- Hospitals Oppose Proposed Tax; May Cost Hospitals Millions
- Madison Named "Most Walkable" City
- Patient Records Easier to Access
- An Assessment of Emergency Preparedness in Western Wisconsin
- Federal Funding Secured for Waukesha Youth Health Study
- Debate over Cervical Cancer HPV Vaccine Mandate Heats Up in Wisconsin
- Drink Limit Lawsuit Heads to WI Supreme Court

**RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS**

- Evidence-Based Health Policy Project Resources
- *2007 Medical Cost Reference Guide*
- Adolescent Sexual Behavior Survey
- Check-up Checklists for Men and Women
- Child Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey
- Design and Development of P4P Strategies
- 2007 Wisconsin Women's Health Guide
- *Improving Children's Health: A Chartbook about the Roles of Medicaid and SCHIP*
- HBO Addiction Project
- Measuring Performance of Programs for Adolescents
- Medicare and Medicaid Primers
- Snapshots: Health Care Costs
- Unintentional Injury and Violence among Youth

## EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Nursing Research Lecture: April 25
- Health Wisconsin Leadership Institute Events: Spring 2007
- "Health Disparities: Cultural Considerations for African American Women": May 2
- "A New Health Care Model for Africa": May 9
- "Translating Research into Policy and Practice": Nov. 29-30

## READING ROOM

- Pay-for-Performance and Health Care Disparities
- *The State Children's Health Insurance Program: Past, Present and Future*
- *Cost-sharing and Premiums in Medicaid: What Rules Apply?*
- Food is the Top Product Seen Advertised by Children
- Childhood Obesity Triggers Early Puberty
- Depression Hits U.S. Blacks Harder Than Whites
- Patient Illiteracy Threatens Health Care
- WellPoint to Tie Pay to Members' Health
- Gift Cards Proposed as Health Incentive

## STATE NEWS

---

### **Insurance Industry Opposes Mandated Autism and Other Funding**

Governor Doyle's biennial budget proposal contains health insurance mandates to increase coverage limits for treatment of mental health and AODA problems and mandate coverage for autism spectrum disorders. The Administration points out that autism diagnoses in children attending Wisconsin public schools have increased from 400 in 1992 to 5,000 in 2005. Medicaid covers treatment for those eligible, and public schools pay costs for needed education-related services. Seventeen states mandate some kind of autism coverage, according to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, Washington, D.C.

However, a coalition of businesses, payers, and purchasers, is calling for removing health insurance mandates from the state budget proposal. The group points out that these mandates are non-fiscal policy proposal that they believe should be addressed outside of the budget process through standing legislative committees.

Studies have shown that most mandates are limited in scope and individually add little to the overall cost of premiums, with the most expensive mandate (mental health) adding less than 5%. However, the industry views the combined effect of the 24 existing mandates as onerous. The association argues that mandates makes basic coverage less affordable, which increases the number of people who can't afford any insurance at all. As well, the industry says too much government regulation and too many mandates lead large employers to turn to self-funded insurance plans, which are not subject to state-level mandates.

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/Apr07/apr9/0409healthcaremandates.pdf>

<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2007/03/19/story8.html>

### **Proposed Biennial Budget Undergoing Consideration in Legislature**

The Administrations proposed biennial budget is currently being considered within the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee, before revised versions are considered in the Assembly and the Senate and a final

budget finally sent for Governor's signature this summer. In the meantime, the following resources are available:

The Department of Administration "Budget in Brief" and agency budget summaries:  
<http://www.doa.state.wi.us/debf/execbudget.asp>

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau's 624-page summary:

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Governor/tableofcontents.htm>

The WI Council on Children and Families has prepared an analysis of the biennial budget bill, with an emphasis on issues important for children and families. It is in a grid format is being updated at each stage of the budget process:

[http://www.wccf.org/pdf/budget20072009\\_wccfsummary.pdf](http://www.wccf.org/pdf/budget20072009_wccfsummary.pdf)

### **Wisconsin Fights to Keep SeniorCare**

SeniorCare needs the approval of top federal officials to continue past June 30. Wisconsin was given permission to run SeniorCare before the federal government adopted its own prescription drug plan, Medicare Part D. Despite support from all of Wisconsin's congressional delegation, Gov. Jim Doyle and most legislators, the federal government might shut down SeniorCare now that Part D is available.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=572807>

### **BadgerCare Plus Projections Refined**

WI Council on Children and Families has prepared a brief document summarizing the new or expanded groups of people who would be covered by BadgerCare Plus, with DHFS estimates of the number of people in each group who could potentially benefit. The first page is the form of a matrix that borrows from and updates a similar grid prepared by DHFS. The second page takes a more careful look at the number of people who might benefit.

[http://www.wccf.org/pdf/badgercareplus\\_matrix\\_031607.pdf](http://www.wccf.org/pdf/badgercareplus_matrix_031607.pdf)

Updated January 2007 Information Paper on Medicaid and BadgerCare from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau:

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/Informationalpapers/44.pdf>

### **Wisconsin Fights to Keep SeniorCare**

SeniorCare needs the approval of top federal officials to continue past June 30. Wisconsin was given permission to run SeniorCare before the federal government adopted its own prescription drug plan, Medicare Part D. Despite support from all of Wisconsin's congressional delegation, Gov. Jim Doyle and most legislators, the federal government might shut down SeniorCare now that Part D is available.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=572807>

### **Hospitals Oppose Proposed Tax; Report that it May Cost Hospitals Millions**

An analysis by the Wisconsin Hospital Association reports that hospitals would lose at least \$132 million in the next two years if a proposed hospital tax is approved, contrary to Governor Doyle's budget indicating a net hospital gain of \$283 million. The 1 percent tax on hospital gross revenues is a key part of Doyle's \$57.7 billion budget before the Legislature. The Governor says the tax would allow the state to leverage more federal money for Medicaid, the state-federal health plan for the poor, resulting in higher Medicaid payments to hospitals. The WHA analysis states that the figures incorrectly assume that certain federal restrictions can be lifted and rely on health maintenance organizations to pass through the Medicaid increases to hospitals. The hospital association also says the tax eventually will be used to balance the budget, not to garner federal money for hospitals.

[http://www.wha.org/governmentRelations/hospitaltax\\_2007.aspx](http://www.wha.org/governmentRelations/hospitaltax_2007.aspx)

<http://www.madison.com/wsj/mad/top/index.php?ntid=122012&ntpid=2>

### **Madison Named "Most Walkable" City**

Prevention magazine named Madison as the most walkable of the country's 100 most populated cities. The list was commissioned by the American Podiatric Medical Association based on certain criteria. Madison beat out the likes of Austin, Texas (No. 2), San Francisco (No. 3) and Miami, which barely cracked the list at No. 98. Factors contributing to the ranking were air quality, the percentage of people who walk to work, access to parks, number of athletic shoes sold, and weather.

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070308/ap\\_on\\_he\\_me/fitness\\_walkable\\_city;\\_ylt=ArNehVuYO68xuOINXWnVsi\\_VJRIF](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070308/ap_on_he_me/fitness_walkable_city;_ylt=ArNehVuYO68xuOINXWnVsi_VJRIF)

### **Patient Records Easier to Access**

Although people are told their medical records belong to them, getting a look at them can be difficult. Local facilities are working to make it easier. Since becoming available in November 2004, My Marshfield, the Marshfield Clinic system's medical records Web site has increased the amount of medical records online. Beginning with posting immunization and appointment records, it now lists many laboratory test results and graphs patient vitals such as blood pressure and weight. The plan is to continually increase the kinds of personal medical information available online. Parents can view their minor children's records, but married couples cannot view each other's records.

<http://www.marshfieldnewsherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070304/CWS0101/703040567/1980>

### **An Assessment of Emergency Preparedness in Western Wisconsin**

To determine the emergency preparedness knowledge, training, and resource needs of community-based professionals in Western Wisconsin, an assessment was conducted during 2004-2005. Researchers used questionnaires, observation, and interviews to gather data. The target population was comprised of 10 professional cohorts: physicians, nurses, public health and mental health professionals, health educators, veterinarians, pharmacists, dental professionals, law enforcement, and emergency/fire personnel. Training needs existed across all cohorts, with the most acute training needs being decontamination procedures and communication. On-site coordination and communication systems were the weakest aspects of coordinated community response.

<http://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org/uploads/wmj/Gilmore.pdf>

### **Federal funding secured for Waukesha youth health project**

Federal funding has been secured for a landmark study on children's health in Waukesha County. The National Children's Study, a \$2.7 billion initiative, is an effort to track children's health development over 25 years. New funding for the program is included in a 2007 budget resolution.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=580322>

### **Debate over Cervical Cancer HPV Vaccine Mandate Heats Up in Wisconsin**

Wisconsin Sen. Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) has been working on legislation that would require the cervical cancer-prevention HPV vaccine for all young girls. A mandate requiring the vaccine for school enrollment isn't expected to pass during this legislative session, although it has stirred debate. Some argue that vaccine is too new and needs more time to be tested, and also point out several financial and logistic concerns with such a mandate.

Lawmakers in at least 39 states have introduced measures to require the HPV vaccine, provide funding for it or educate residents about its availability, while 23 are considering bills specifically to mandate the vaccine for school entry, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=591294>

“Controversial vaccine plan deserves honest debate” *Racine Journal Times* op-ed:

<http://www.journaltimes.com/articles/2007/03/13/opinion/21875709.txt>

Legislative briefing ppt slides from Dr. Jon Temte, UW School of Medicine & Public Health:

<http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/publications/forums/TemtePresentation.pdf>

### **Drink Limit Lawsuit Heads to WI Supreme Court**

Numerous campus-area bars, which two UW-Madison students claimed voluntarily succumbed to pressure by city officials to limit drink specials, have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars fighting a 2002 antitrust lawsuit. The case is headed to the Wisconsin Supreme Court because the decision that a price-fixing conspiracy occurred was upheld in the court of appeals. Chancellor John Wiley is being sued on the federal level for the university's involvement in limiting drink specials.

<http://www.dailycardinal.com/news/drink-limit-lawsuit-drowns-bar-profits.html>

## **RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS**

---

### **Evidence-Based Health Policy Project Resources**

The Evidence-Based Health Policy Project (EBHP), a collaboration of the UW Population Health Institute, the UW LaFollette School of Public Affairs, and the Wisconsin Legislative Council, continually posts material from its events on its website. Materials from recent events include briefings by Dr. Elliot Fisher on the relationship between costs and outcomes, by Alan Weil on the California Health Care Reform Plan and by Paul Fronstin on President Bush's Health Proposals, and by Dr. Jon Temte on the HPV Vaccine. <http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/publications/forums/events.htm>

### **2007 Medical Cost Reference Guide**

Now in its fifth publication, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association guide is a collection of data available from government, academic, and business sources, as well as from BCBSA. It covers topics such as health spending, utilization, chronic disease and obesity, as well as trends in hospitals and among physicians, consumers, and the uninsured.

<http://www.bcbs.com/betterknowledge/mcrg/>

### **Adolescent Sexual Behavior Survey**

*With One Voice 2007: America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy* assesses public opinion on adolescent pregnancy. The survey is the fifth in a series of nationally representative surveys conducted by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy that have asked adolescents (ages 12-19) and adults (ages 20 and older) a consistent, core set of questions about adolescent pregnancy and related issues. Data are presented in charts and, where available, results from previous surveys (2001-2006) are included.

<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/data/polling.asp>

### **Check-up Checklists for Men and Women**

AHRQ announced two new evidence-based checklists designed to help men and women understand which medical checkup tests they need to stay healthy at any age. The men's and women's versions of *Your Checklist for Health* show at a glance what the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends regarding screening tests, preventive medicine, and other healthy lifestyle behaviors.

For men: <http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthymen.htm>

For women: <http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthywom.htm>

### **Child Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey**

The Shaping America's Youth (SAY) Survey collects information about populations, methods, funding, and outcomes from organizations and programs working in areas related to childhood overweight. The online survey is part of the SAY national cross-sector initiative directed at improving nutrition and exercise in America's children. Survey information is made available in a searchable national program registry on the SAY Web site. <http://www.shapingamericasyouth.org/Default.aspx>

### **Design and Development of P4P Strategies**

Physician Pay-for-Performance in Medicaid: A Guide for States, offers lessons from a variety of pay-for-performance (P4P) programs to help states develop successful Medicaid P4P strategies at the physician level. The guide, published by the Center for Health Care Strategies with support from the Commonwealth Fund and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is based on a 50-state survey to identify innovative practices in the reimbursement of high-quality health care in the public sector; interviews with Medicaid agency officials from across the country, representatives from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and other experts in health care financing; and a review of recent findings on various P4P initiatives in the public and private sectors. [http://www.chcs.org/usr\\_doc/Physician\\_P4P\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.chcs.org/usr_doc/Physician_P4P_Guide.pdf).

### **2007 Wisconsin Women's Health Guide**

The Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation and the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health recently released this comprehensive, 222 page guide, which includes information on a variety of women's health topics and a list of health services and resources for each of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

<http://www.wiawh.org/resourcecenter/wisconsinwomenshealthguide/wisconsinwomenshealthguide.aspx>

### ***Improving Children's Health: A Chartbook about the Roles of Medicaid and SCHIP***

This new CBPP resource guide compiles data showing how the children's health insurance programs have boosted insurance coverage for kids, increased their access to health care services and improved their health. Includes charts and detailed references to the sources of information.

<http://www.cbpp.org/schip-chartbook.htm>

### **HBO Addiction Project**

HBO has partnered with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) to produce a multi-media campaign to educate the public about addiction. The project will include the HBO main service, multiplex channels, HBO On Demand, podcasts, web streams, and DVD sales to support a campaign that includes a 14-part documentary series, a book published by Rodale Press, four independent addiction-themed films, a robust website and a national community grassroots outreach campaign funded by RWJF.

<http://www.hbo.com/addiction/>

### **Measuring Performance of Programs for Adolescents**

The Forum for Youth Investment has released two new reports to help community organizations and organizations serving adolescents assess the impact of their work and improve its quality:

- *Measuring Youth Program Quality: A Guide to Assessment Tools* examines nine program-observation and quality-improvement tools and explains their purpose, history, structure, methodology, and technical properties. [http://www.forumfyi.org/Files//Measuring\\_Youth\\_Program\\_Quality.pdf](http://www.forumfyi.org/Files//Measuring_Youth_Program_Quality.pdf)
- *Building Quality Improvement Systems: Lessons from Three Emerging Efforts in the Youth-Serving Sector* looks at assessment and improvement efforts under way in three networks and provides a preliminary framework for thinking about key questions when planning any work designed to improve program quality. [http://www.forumfyi.org/Files//building\\_quality\\_full.pdf](http://www.forumfyi.org/Files//building_quality_full.pdf)

### **Medicare and Medicaid Primers**

To help explain the Medicare and Medicaid programs, the Kaiser Family Foundation issued a new primer on the Medicare program and an updated version of its primer on the Medicaid program. The primers provide an overview of the programs, who they serve, how the programs work, and how they are financed. <http://www.kff.org/medicare/med031907pkg.cfm>

### **Snapshots: Health Care Costs**

This Kaiser series uses charts, data and analysis to provide insight into the political and policy debates about the cost of health care in the United States. The publications are designed to encourage an informed

policy discussion as leaders in Washington and across the country weigh strategies for controlling the rising cost of health care for people, businesses and government alike. *How Changes in Medical Technology Affect Health Care Costs* is available at:  
<http://www.kff.org/insurance/snapshot/index.cfm>

### **Unintentional Injury and Violence among Youth**

The National Adolescent Health Information Center (NAHIC) has released two updated fact sheets containing the most recent available data on unintentional injury and violence among adolescents and young adults (ages 10-24). The 2007 fact sheets, produced with support from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, highlight key findings and present data by age, gender, type, and race and ethnicity.  
[http://nahic.ucsf.edu/index.php/data/article/briefs\\_fact\\_sheets/](http://nahic.ucsf.edu/index.php/data/article/briefs_fact_sheets/)

## **EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

---

### **Nursing Research Lecture: April 25**

"Nurses Do Research? How Nursing's Public Image Obscures Nursing Science." This lecture is presented by Katharyn May, dean of the School of Nursing, following the second annual nursing research poster fair. A reception precedes the lecture. [Health Sciences Learning Center](#), 4-5 p.m. Information: 265-2936, [lsimonds@wisc.edu](mailto:lsimonds@wisc.edu).

### **Health Wisconsin Leadership Institute Events: Spring 2007**

Advanced Leadership Skills Enhancement Series: Developing Future Leaders: *Who's Growing in Your Garden?*

*Supporting Growth in Others* Webinar: April 26, 12:30-1:30

*Developing Future Leaders: Tools for Success* Workshop: May 22, 1:00-5:00 at the Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton, WI

Registration is required. For more information, contact Peggy Ore at [pore@wisc.edu](mailto:pore@wisc.edu) or 608-265-8625.

### **"Health Disparities: Cultural Considerations for African American Women": May 2**

This presentation will explore the cultural context of physical activity, body image and body weight among African American women when tailoring healthy lifestyle messages or designing programs that address health disparities. [1335 Health Sciences Learning Center](#), noon-1 p.m. Information: 265-5996, [cdh@hslc.wisc.edu](mailto:cdh@hslc.wisc.edu).

### **"A New Health Care Model for Africa": May 9**

Presenter Ernest Darkoh is the founder and chairman of Broadreach Healthcare, a company dedicated to expanding access to health care across the globe. A reception will follow in the building's atrium. Darkoh will receive the UW-Madison Distinguished Alumni Award on May 10. [1325 Health Sciences Learning Center](#), 5 p.m. Information: 262-3862, [teigland@wisc.edu](mailto:teigland@wisc.edu).

### **"Translating Research into Policy and Practice": Nov. 29-30, 2007**

The UW Population Health Institute conference—Monona Terrace in Madison, WI.  
Check [www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi](http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi) for updates.

## **READING ROOM**

---

### **Pay-for-Performance and Health Care Disparities**

An article in *Health Affairs* April 10 online issue addresses the question "Will Pay for Performance and Quality Reporting Affect Health Care Disparities?" Authors Casalino and Elster find that P4P and public quality-reporting programs can increase the quality of health care

for the services being measured, but programs may have unintended consequences of increasing racial and ethnic disparities. The paper also suggests ways in which programs might be designed to avoid this effect, or possibly to reduce disparities.

<http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/content/abstract/hlthaff.26.3.w405>

### ***The State Children's Health Insurance Program: Past, Present and Future***

This Commonwealth Fund report (by Jeanne Lambrew, at George Washington University) examines policy options Congress might consider while it debates SCHIP reauthorization. It discusses possible changes to SCHIP eligibility, benefits and financing, and the political implications of such changes.

[http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=449518&](http://www.cmwf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=449518&)

### ***Cost-sharing and Premiums in Medicaid: What Rules Apply?***

Rules that govern cost-sharing and premiums in Medicaid after the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 and amendments to the DRA in the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006.

<http://www.cbpp.org/2-28-07health.htm>.

### **Food is the Top Product Seen Advertised by Children**

*Food for Thought: Television Food Advertising to Children in the United States* combines content analysis of TV ads with detailed data about children's viewing habits, to provide an estimate of the number and type of TV ads seen by children of various ages. The study found that tweens ages 8-12 see the most food ads on TV, an average of 21 ads a day, or more than 7,600 a year. Teenagers see slightly fewer ads, at 17 a day, for a total of more than 6,000 a year. Children ages 2-7 see the least number of food ads, at 12 food ads a day, or 4,400 a year.

<http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia032807pkg.cfm>

### **Childhood Obesity Triggers Early Puberty**

Childhood obesity in the United States appears to be causing girls to reach puberty at an earlier age. The report from the University of Michigan's Mott Children's Hospital said a multiyear study following a group of 354 girls found that those who were fatter at age 3 and who gained weight during the next three years reached puberty, as defined by breast development, by age 9.

Earlier onset of puberty has been associated with psychiatric disorders and deficits in psychosocial functioning, earlier initiation of alcohol use, sexual intercourse and teenage pregnancy and increased rates of adult obesity and reproductive cancers.

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20070305/hl\\_nm/weight\\_puberty\\_dc](http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20070305/hl_nm/weight_puberty_dc)

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/119/3/E624>

### **Depression Hits U.S. Blacks Harder Than Whites**

Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health analyzed data on 6,082 people who took part in a national survey conducted between 2001 and 2003. Among those who reported depression at some point in their lives, rates of depression in the 12 months before they were surveyed were 56.5 percent for blacks of African descent; 56 percent for Caribbean blacks; and 38.6 percent for whites. Furthermore, African Americans and Caribbean blacks were less likely to have received any form of major depressive disorder therapy.

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/hsn/20070308/hl\\_hsn/depressionhitsusblacksharderthanwhites;\\_ylt=ArbpNbW9aqQGKjRB6XQd2X63j7AB](http://news.yahoo.com/s/hsn/20070308/hl_hsn/depressionhitsusblacksharderthanwhites;_ylt=ArbpNbW9aqQGKjRB6XQd2X63j7AB)

### **Patient Illiteracy Threatens Health Care**

Miscommunications between patients and health care providers are increasing the chances that people who need medical care will be hurt or killed in the process, according to a report from a health care

accreditation group. The Joint Commission recommendations include specific advice for educating and training health care professionals; using well-trained medical interpreters for patients with English comprehension difficulties; and encouraging a culture of easy-to-understand communication in all facets of medical care.

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2007-03-25-patient-illiteracy\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2007-03-25-patient-illiteracy_N.htm)

<http://www.jointcommissionreport.org/>

### **WellPoint to Tie Pay to Members' Health**

WellPoint Inc. said its employees would receive larger bonuses if health plan members increased their use of preventive practices such as immunizations, cancer screenings and diabetes-management tools. If successful, the plan could reduce healthcare costs and possibly increase WellPoint's profit in the long run. The central component of WellPoint's program is a "member health index" — a complex formula that measures and tracks patients' overall health levels, including how often they ended up in emergency rooms, how often they received preventive care and whether they were taking needed medications, such as cholesterol-lowering drugs. Skeptics warn the program could be used to identify the sickest patients so that their premiums could be raised or their coverage canceled.

<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-healthpay4apr04,0,3273401.story?coll=la-home-headlines>

### **Gift Cards Proposed as Health Incentive**

Democrats in the Minnesota state Senate have proposed giving publicly insured patients \$20 gift cards to stores such as Target as an incentive for diabetics to control their blood sugar and smokers to quit. Gov. Tim Pawlenty last year established the QCare program, which offers bonuses to health plans and providers that score well on treating costly chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease. The proposal would apply to patients covered by subsidized programs including MinnesotaCare.

[http://customwire.ap.org/dynamic/stories/H/HEALTH\\_CARE\\_GIFT\\_CARDS?SITE=CTNHR&SECTION=HEALTH&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2007-03-29-00-03-20](http://customwire.ap.org/dynamic/stories/H/HEALTH_CARE_GIFT_CARDS?SITE=CTNHR&SECTION=HEALTH&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2007-03-29-00-03-20)