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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.

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STATE NEWS

State Budget Complete: Includes Extensive Health Provisions

The State Legislature passed the FY07-09 state budget, nearly four months overdue and the second most delayed budget in state history. The new budget included several heavily debated health related items: an added \$1 of tax per pack of cigarettes and a \$200 million transfer from the state fund designated for the payment of malpractice claims.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=678235>

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families has prepared an overview of the health provisions included in the FY07-09 budget, including the following:

- BadgerCare Plus expansion and simplification to cover all citizen kids, more pregnant women, and more farmers.
- BadgerCare Plus coverage for childless adults below 200% of the federal poverty level, beginning in 2009.
- Expand Family Care and fully fund aging and disability resource centers.
- Almost \$6 million (all funds) to fund new and innovative ways of providing dental care to low-income families;
- \$3 million/year increased funding for community health centers, starting in 2008-09.
- Increase cigarette tax by \$1 per pack, with the revenue earmarked for MA/BC+.
- Increase funding for tobacco use control grants is increase by \$5,000,000 GPR annually.
- Expand income tax deduction for health insurance premiums, on phased-in basis, beginning in tax year 2008.
- Notably, the budget does not include the proposed hospital assessment designed to leverage increased Medicaid funding for hospital payments, despite support for the tax by the Wisconsin Hospital Association. Nor does it include the state income tax exemption for Health Savings Accounts.

http://www.wccf.org/pdf/budget_compromiseoverview_102407.pdf

Medical Society Files Lawsuit against Patient Comp Fund Transfer

The state budget does include a \$200 million transfer from the Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund to support some of the above health provisions. The Wisconsin Medical Society filed a lawsuit against the State of Wisconsin, seeking to stop the transfer. Some legislators, including the new Senate Majority Leader Russ Decker, have expressed interest in removing this transfer from the budget and, in its place, reinstating the proposed hospital assessment.

<http://www.madison.com/wsj/home/local/index.php?ntid=253867&ntpid=2>

<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2007/10/22/daily32.html?surround=1fn>

<http://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org>

Milwaukee School of Public Health Gains Funding

The recently approved state budget includes \$200,000 for the planning of a school of public health on the UWM campus. The cost of the new school is estimated at \$143 million. The school would aid in training the next generation of the public health workers and also help promote health research relevant to Milwaukee. The UW System's Board of Regents endorsed

the creation of the school in December 2006. Specific plans for creating the school are expected to be presented to the Board of Regents in the spring of 2008.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=678163>

Joseph Zilber announced a \$10 million gift to the proposed School of Public Health at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as part of his \$50 million New Potential for Milwaukee Initiative.

<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2007/09/10/daily9.html?surround=lfm>

Wisconsin Identified as Promoting Healthy Behaviors in its Public Programs

The Commonwealth Fund identified Wisconsin as one of a number of states actively developing programs to motivate health promoting behaviors. Wisconsin is using this approach in the structuring of its upcoming expansion of BadgerCare, the BadgerCare Plus program. The new program will include individual incentive programs, alongside the option of a voluntary member pledge, allowing for families to affirm their intentions to practice healthy behaviors in light of promises from health plans to support families in doing so. The state is also adopting the Ask-Me-3 health literacy campaign.

http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=541022&#incentives

Five Wisconsin Hospitals in U.S. News & World Report's Top Hospitals

U.S. News & World Report's annual survey examined 5,462 U.S. hospitals, ranking them on the basis of service quality in 16 medical specialties. Surveys were also sent to 850,000 U.S. doctors, asking them to rank the top five hospitals in their specialty for difficult cases, regardless of location or expense. The University of Wisconsin Hospital ranked 20th in cancer treatment.

<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2007/09/10/daily16.html?surround=lfm>

Wisconsin Medicaid Nursing Home Reimbursement Ranks Near Bottom

An independent analysis of the nation's nursing home Medicaid payment systems found that Wisconsin ranked third worst in the nation. The report compared Medicaid payments to nursing home resident care costs in 39 states and the District of Columbia. Illinois and New Jersey ranked lower than Wisconsin. Two years ago Wisconsin was found to be sixth from the bottom.

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/Oct07/oct4/1004whcama.pdf>

WI Health Plans Rank High in U.S. News and World Report

In *US News & World Report's* "Best Health Plans" rankings released this past month, Wisconsin had one commercial plan ranked among the top 10 plans in the country, four plans among the top 50 and eight plans among the top 100. Wisconsin also had one Medicare plan among the top 10 in the United States and four among the top 100. The annual rankings are based upon scores from consumer satisfaction surveys and performance measures, and also upon whether the plan is accredited by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/Oct07/oct26/1026healthplanrank.pdf>

Wisconsin Highest in Nation for Alcohol Abuse: UW Report

In a report entitled *Impact of Alcohol and Illicit Drug Use in Wisconsin*, the UW Population Health Institute published findings this past month that Wisconsin has the highest rates in the nation for multiple indicators of alcohol abuse. Wisconsin is below or at the national average for

almost all measures of illicit drug use. The report received considerable coverage throughout the state of Wisconsin.

For the original publication, see:

http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/research/chppe/seow_profile.pdf

For an overview of select news coverage, see:

<http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/news.htm>

Overall AIDS Incidence in Milwaukee Decrease, Disparities Increase

According to a study published in the *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, the AIDS incidence in Milwaukee dropped from 7.6 per 100,000 to 6.4 per 100,000 from 1990 to 2000. This overall change from 1990 to 2000 totaled a 15% decline in Milwaukee's AIDS incidence. Despite the overall decline, from 1990 to 2000 the AIDS incidence increased by 51.1% for non-Hispanic African Americans. The disparity in incidence rates between African Americans and non-Hispanic whites increased by 136% for young adult males and 428% for young adult females.

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/Oct07/oct26/1026medmilaims.pdf>

\$14.5 Million Grant for Substance Abuse Treatment in WI

The state will receive a \$14.5 million Access to Recovery grant—including \$4.8 million that is dedicated to the first 12 months of the grant's life which is from September 2007 through August 2010. The grant will build on the WISER Choice Program in Milwaukee County and will be used to improve access to treatment by providing clients with a choice of treatment agencies, using a voucher system to pay for services.

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/Sept07/sept21/0921doylegrant.pdf>

Suicide Prevention Tool Kits for WI Schools

State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster and the Department of Health and Family Services Secretary Kevin R. Hayden announced plans to distribute 100 new "Middle-School Signs of Suicide" prevention tool kits this fall as part of ongoing efforts to prevent youth suicide.

Moreover, the Department of Public Instruction will receive \$30,000 this year from the Department of Health and Family Services through the Mental Health Block Grant to support school-based youth suicide prevention efforts.

<http://www.wispolitics.com/index.iml?Article=104746>

Concordia University to Open Pharmacy School

After approval of funding by the board of regents and a unanimous recommendation from the task force from the area health care community, Concordia University plans to open the second pharmacy school in the state of Wisconsin. Concordia is planning to accept 50 to 75 students per class; admission requirements and tuition rates are yet to be finalized. Concordia University plans to enroll students starting with the 2009-2010 academic year.

<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2007/09/10/daily1.html?surround=lfm>

NIH Grants \$41M for UW's Institute for Clinical and Translational Research

The University of Wisconsin-Madison's new Institute for Clinical and Translational Research will receive \$41 million over five years from the National Institutes of Health to advance biomedical and health sciences discoveries at the university. The primary aim of the funding is to find ways of better moving biomedical and health sciences discoveries into practical use in

health care providers' offices, clinics and hospitals, where the new knowledge can be used most rapidly and effectively to improve peoples' health.

<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2007/09/17/daily16.html?surround=lfm>

<http://www.ictr.wisc.edu>

Medical College of Wisconsin Receives Grant to Test Diabetes Treatment Device

The Medical College of Wisconsin announced this past month that it has received a \$1.14 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The grant intended for a three year period, and will enable the Medical College to test an automated self-management monitor, which reminds patients to check blood glucose levels and take medication. The automated self-management monitor is intended to help improve the treatment and management of patients with poorly controlled diabetes.

<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2007/10/01/daily10.html?surround=lfm>

UW-Madison Receives \$7.2 Million NIH Grant to study Lou Gehrig's Disease

UW-Madison stem-cell scientists have received a \$7.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to study rats with Lou Gehrig's disease. The five-year grant will enable three groups of scientists to inject stem cells into the brains of rats with the disease. The researchers will assess whether the implanted cells improve muscle control and breathing.

<http://www.madison.com/wsj/home/local/index.php?ntid=247030&ntpid=2>

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

Experts Identify Ways to Spur Consumer Engagement in Health Care

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Academy Health have issued a series of papers about the role consumers play in improving the quality of health care. The papers consider how to ensure that they have the tools and information they need to play the role that is being asked of them. The briefing papers are the products of a colloquium that RWJF and AcademyHealth held in February 2007 at which a select group of health policy experts discussed key aspects of the consumer engagement issue.

<http://www.rwjf.org/pr/product.jsp?id=23077&catid=18&c=EMC-CA142>

Evaluation of Consumer Decision Support Tools

The Pacific Business Group of Health issued this June 2007 report that assesses the effectiveness of tools in assisting consumer decision-making relative to treatment options, hospital selection, and medical cost management.

http://www.pbgh.org/documents/ConsumerToolsReport_08-2007_002.pdf

Updated Materials from Evidence-Based Health Policy Project

The UW Population Health Institute, in collaboration with the La Follette School of Public Affairs and the Wisconsin Legislative Council, continues to update its website of events and materials from the project. New material has been posted from recent symposia on health care decision-making and purchasing by consumers and businesses.

<http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/publications/forums/events.htm>

Statehealthfacts.org Updates Multiple Research Tools

Distribution of Total Population by FPL, states has been updated, as has *Total Residents*.

<http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparecat.jsp?cat=1>

Percentage Point Change among Nonelderly 0-64 by Coverage Type has been updated, alongside the sections: *Health Insurance Coverage of Nonelderly 0-64*, *Health Insurance Coverage of Children 0-18 Living near Poverty (100-199% FPL)* and *Health Insurance Coverage of the Total Population*.

<http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparecat.jsp?cat=3>

Potential Loss of SCHIP Coverage, FY 2008 has been added, alongside updates to the sections: *Currently Monthly Enrollment, June 2006* and *Federal Matching Rate (FMAP) for Medicaid and Multiplier*.

<http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparecat.jsp?cat=4>

Updated Kaiser Issue Modules and Reference Library

U.S. Health Care Costs: This issue module examines how the U.S. health care dollar is spent, the influences behind health care costs and major proposals to contain costs.

http://www.kaiseredu.org/topics_im.asp?imID=1&parentID=61&id=358

Prescription Drug Costs: This issue module examines topics such as insurance coverage and policy options for making drugs more affordable.

http://www.kaiseredu.org/topics_im.asp?id=352&parentID=68&imID=1

Immigrants: Coverage and Access to Care-This reference library includes key data, policy research, fact sheets, webcasts, presentations and listings of key organizations.

http://www.kaiseredu.org/topics_reflib.asp?id=442&rID=1&parentid=67

2008 Presidential Health Care Proposals: Side by Side Summary

This side-by-side comparison of candidates' positions on health care was prepared by the Kaiser Family Foundation with the assistance of Health Policy, Inc. It is based on information appearing on the candidates' websites as supplemented by information from candidate speeches, the campaign debates and news reports. The comparison highlights information on candidates' positions related to access to health care coverage, cost containment, and improving the quality of care and financing.

<http://www.health08.org/sidebyside.cfm>

AHRQ Statistics on Hospital-Based Care in the US, 2005

HCUP released a new report this past month entitled "Statistics on Hospital-Based Care in the United States, 2005." The report presents information gathered from the 2005 HCUP Nationwide Inpatient Sample (NIS) with trend information from as early as 1993. The report also includes information from the most recent database containing discharge records for all patients treated in a sample of roughly 1,000 hospitals in 2005. Report sections include overview statistics for hospitals and inpatient hospital stays, hospital inpatient stays by diagnosis, hospital inpatient stays by procedure, spending for hospital inpatient stays and a special topic section.

http://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/factsandfigures/HAR_2005.pdf

Trends in Hospital Risk-Adjusted Mortality for Selected Diagnoses and Procedures

This HCUP brief presents data from the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project on changes in the rates of mortality during inpatient care. The AHRQ's Inpatient Quality Indicators are used to develop in-hospital risk-adjusted death rates among adults for select diagnoses and surgical procedures for which variations in mortality between hospitals may be associated with deficiencies in the quality of care. Mortality rates are evaluated over an 11-year period from 1994 to 2004.

<http://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb38.pdf>

October 2007 KaiserEdu.org Health Policy Picks

Health Policy Picks is a monthly selection of recent publications, such as technical reports, conference proceedings, and other material produced by organizations and government agencies that conduct health care policy analysis and research. Health Policy Picks is a partnership between KaiserEDU.org and the New York Academy of Medicine Library's Grey Literature Collection. Health Policy Picks includes separate sections for health systems, Medicare, prescription drugs, HIV/AIDS, and Medicaid/SCHIP.

http://www.kaiseredu.org/picks/health_policy_picks.aspx

KFF Updates Issue Brief Regarding Medicaid's Role in Family Planning

This updated issue brief by the Guttmacher Institute and the Kaiser Family Foundation reviews Medicaid's part in financing and providing access to family planning services for low-income women across the nation.

<http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/7064.cfm>

CMS Launches New Version of the Medicare Drug Plan Finder Website

This past month CMS launched a revised version of its Medicare Drug Plan Finder Website, which is meant to help beneficiaries sort plans offered in their communities. According to CMS officials, the revision should address difficulties that some Medicare beneficiaries have had with navigation of the Website (Lipman, *Palm Beach Post*, 10/12).

For original article, see:

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48155

For updated website, see:

<http://www.medicare.gov/MPDPF/Public/Include/DataSection/Questions/MPDPFIntro.asp?version=default&browser=IE%7C6%7CWinXP&language=English&defaultstatus=0&pagelist=Home&ViewType=Public&PDPYear=2008&MAPDYear=2008&MPDPF%5FMPPF%5FIntegrate=N>

Medicare Part D Plan Characteristics, by State, 2008-Updated

This fact sheet provided by the Kaiser Family Foundation contains 2008 state-specific summary information about Medicare drug benefit options, premium ranges, the number of stand-alone plans with gap coverage in the "doughnut hole," and the number of plans available at no cost to qualifying beneficiaries.

<http://www.kff.org/medicare/7426.cfm>

Summary Sheet: Benefit Improvements for Low-Income Medicare Beneficiaries

This summary sheet provides a side-by-side comparison of provisions for low-income Medicare beneficiaries in current law and the House-passed Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act. Comparison topics include the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB) Program, the

Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB) Program, the Qualified Individual (QI) Program, and the Part D Low-Income Subsidy Program.

<http://www.kff.org/medicare/upload/7695.pdf>

AHRQ Releases New Statistical Brief on the Long-Term Uninsured

The AHRQ has released a new statistical brief entitled: “The Long-Term Uninsured in America, 2002-2005: Estimates for the U.S. Population under Age 65.” The brief reports that 17.4 million people, roughly 6.8 percent of the population under age 65, were uninsured for the entire period from 2002 to 2005. Adults between the ages of 18 and 24 were the most likely to be uninsured for at least one month during the 2004 to 2005 time period, and children under the age of 18 were the least likely to be uninsured for the entire 2002-2005 period.

http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data_files/publications/st183/stat183.pdf

The Uninsured: Kaiser Family Foundation Primer-Updated

This primer has been updated with 2006 data. It reviews the basic profile of the uninsured population, how they receive care, the latest trends in health insurance coverage, and what the options are for increasing coverage.

<http://www.kff.org/uninsured/7451.cfm>

AHRQ Publishes Consumer Guide to Common Questions about Health Insurance

AHRQ has published a consumer guide to common questions about health insurance and answers to these questions. The guide provides descriptions of various kinds of health insurance plans and a glossary of health insurance terms, along with other related resources.

<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/insuranceqa/>

Trends in the Insurance Coverage of Children and Adults, 2006

This issue brief entitled, “What Happened to the Insurance Coverage of Children and Adults in 2006?” examines the changes in health insurance coverage between 2005 and 2006 by age and income. The issue brief provides a discussion and analysis of recent trends.

<http://www.kff.org/uninsured/upload/7694.pdf>

Trends in Insurance Coverage: A Decade of SCHIP Lessons

This issue brief is based on Mathematica’s national evaluation of SCHIP conducted for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The analysis highlights states’ progress in conducting outreach, averting substitution, improving access, and reducing the number of uninsured low-income children.

<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/SCHIPdecadeissbr.pdf>

RWJF Synthesis Project Report on Crowd-Out

The RWJ Foundation has released a report entitled “Revisiting Crowd-Out” as an update to its previous Synthesis Report. Key findings of the report included that some level of crowd-out will always occur with public program expansions and that some anti-crowd-out measures discourage both the uninsured and the privately insured from enrolling in health care programs. The report also highlights other approaches to limiting crowd-out.

<http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/revisitingcrowdout.pdf>

The Burden of Out-of-Pocket Health Spending, 1998-2003

This issue brief compared the ratio of out-of-pocket health care spending to income for Americans under the age of 65 to the spending ratio of Americans age 65 and above. The analysis found that Americans above 65 are spending a larger proportion of their income on out-of-pocket health expenditures in comparison to the group below the age of 65.

<http://www.kff.org/medicare/upload/7686.pdf>

Updated: Globalhealthfacts.org

This resource provides access to the latest information on global health issues such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. More than 50 indicators across a wide range of topics have recently been updated.

<http://www.globalhealthfacts.org/index.jsp>

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Can I Take This Spectrophotometer as Carry On?

Bernie Micke, The Wisconsin Medical Project

Global Health Seminar Series

Monday, November 12, 2007: 5:00-6:00 p.m.

1309 Health Sciences Learning Center

Information: 262-3862, mcoons@wisc.edu

Alzheimer's Disease: The Complete Picture

Sanjay Asthana, School of Medicine and Public Health &

Jody Curley, South Central Wisconsin Chapter of Alzheimer's Association

Thursday, November 15, 2007: 5:00-8:00 p.m.

Marriott Madison West, 1313 John Q Hammons Dr., Middleton

Information: 256-1901, njl@medicine.wisc.edu

Satellite Broadcast and Webcast: Current Challenges and Successes in HIV Prevention with Hispanics/Latinos

November 15, 2007

CDC and the Public Health Training Network will present the 2-hour satellite broadcast and live webcast at 1:00 p.m. EST.

<http://www.cdcnpin-broadcast.org>

The Reciprocal Relationship Between the Underground Economy and Family's Health

Daphne Hernandez, Pennsylvania State University and IRP Visiting Scholar

Institute for Research on Poverty Seminar

Thursday, November 29, 2007: 12:15-1:30 p.m.

8417 Sewell Social Science

Information: 262-6175, cwilliam@ssc.wisc.edu

UWPHI Biennial Conference Improving Wisconsin's Health: Prevention Policy Priorities for Research

November 29-30, 2007

Country Springs Conference Center, 2810 Golf Road, Pewaukee, WI

<http://pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/education/conferences.htm>

[Online Registration](#)

READING ROOM

AHRQ Reports Significant Decrease in Hospital Deaths from 1994 to 2004

Hospital deaths from heart attacks and other serious conditions decreased significantly from 1994 to 2004, according to a report released by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Hospital deaths from heart attacks decreased by 43 per 1,000 patients from 1994 to 2004, and deaths from congestive heart failure, pneumonia and stroke each decreased by about 30 per 1,000 patients over the same period.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48158

Study Released by the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation Recommends Increased Use of Health Care Information Technology

A new report prepared by the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation recommends that Congress take several steps to help increase the use of health care information technology among health care providers and their patients. The study, recommends that Congress pass legislation to promote the use of electronic health records and national health data standards, alongside creating a legal framework for health record data banks.

http://www.commonwealthfund.org/healthpolicyweek/healthpolicyweek_show.htm?doc_id=566863&#doc566867

HHS Pilot Project to Promote Adoption of Electronic Health Records

HHS announced that it is recruiting 1,200 physicians across the U.S. to participate in a pilot project that will provide higher Medicare reimbursements to physicians who use electronic health records. Under the program, physicians will receive additional Medicare payments for completing certain tasks online, such as ordering prescriptions and recording laboratory test results. Physicians who use the electronic system most often for major tasks and obtain the best scores in an annual evaluation will receive the highest payments.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48524

Recent Appearance of Virulent Strain of Staph Bacteria in Schools

A virulent strain of staph bacteria has caught a fair amount of public attention this past month due to multiple reports of the bacteria turning up at schools. Millions of Americans routinely carry staph bacteria, either on their skin or in their nasal passages; however, most of these infections are generally mild. Public attention has recently been focused on the methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus strain, which is resistant to antibiotics.

<http://www.bcbs.com/news/national/as-cases-arise-schools-act-to-ward-off-virulent-staph.html>

New National Effort to Measure and Report on Quality and Cost-Effectiveness

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation announced this past month that it will provide nearly \$16 million in grants to develop and test a single national approach to bring consistency to efforts to measure and report information on the quality and cost of care that patients receive. The new project will combine data from many different national health plans to provide a broader picture of physicians' care across their entire practices. It will work with Medicare to aggregate data across the public sector and the private sector.

<http://www.rwjf.org/newsroom/newsreleasesdetail.jsp?productid=22371&typeid=160>

Medicaid Enrollment Drops for the First Time in Almost a Decade

Enrollment in Medicaid declined for the first time in nearly a decade, according to a new survey released this past month by the Kaiser Family Foundation's Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured (KCMU). The survey reports a 0.5 percent enrollment decline in fiscal year (FY) 2007 driven primarily by two factors. States reported that the new documentation requirements were causing significant delays in processing applications, affecting mostly individuals already eligible for the program. State officials also cited the good economy and lower unemployment for reducing enrollment.

<http://www.kff.org/medicaid/kcmu101007nr.cfm>

AHRQ Awards \$41.6 Million for Expansion of its CERTs Program

AHRQ announced this past month that it will be awarding \$41.6 million over the next four years for a new coordinating center and ten research centers as a part of its Centers for Education and Research on Therapeutics (CERTs) program. Four new centers are also being added to the CERTs program. The newly funded coordinating center is Kaiser Permanente's Center for Health Research in Portland, Oregon. The center will assume infrastructure and leadership support for the CERTs National Steering Committee and research centers, and will also expand the program's ability to translate research findings through collaborations with other research networks.

<http://www.ahrq.gov/news/press/pr2007/certsexpr.htm>

Health Insurance Companies Offering Medicare Advantage Plans Will Fix Errors

In the past months health insurance companies offering Medicare Advantage plans were found by CMS audits to have violated marketing standards. This past month, health insurance companies offering Medicare Advantage plans announced that they were working to fix the problems, and that they would provide better services, the *New York Time* reported.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/10/washington/10medicare.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48101

Life Expectancy for U.S. Residents Reaches Record High of 77.9 Years

Life expectancy for U.S. residents in 2005 reached a record high of 77.9 years, an increase from the previous record high of 77.8 years in 2004. Life expectancy for black residents increased to 73.2 years in 2005 from 73.1 years in 2004, and life expectancy for white residents remained about the same at 78.3 years. The report found that mortality rates among all residents for heart disease, cancer and stroke decreased in 2005. In addition, deaths from HIV decreased to 12,456 in 2005 from 13,063 in 2004.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=47486

Investigators from the GAO Cite Overpaid Medicare Insurers

Investigators from the Government Accountability Office reported that private insurance companies participating in Medicare have been allowed to keep tens of millions of dollars due to improper auditing and failure to recover the money paid in error.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/health/policy/10medicare.html?_r=2&adxnml=1&oref=slogin&ref=us&adxnmlx=1191013582-8XH79SxQu/QvGO0Dfuc0YA

Medicare Part D Progress Report

According to study findings, fewer than 10 percent of seniors lacked prescription coverage in the fall of 2006, compared with one-third who said they had no drug coverage in 2005. Seniors without any prescription coverage at all reported higher out-of-pocket spending, with cost-related "nonadherence"—forgoing or delaying the filling of or refilling prescriptions—being more common among this group than among seniors who either are in Part D plans or have other sources of private or public coverage.

http://www.commonwealthfund.org/funddigest/funddigest_show.htm?issue_id=3652&doc_id=522677&#doc522677

Health Insurance Premiums Rise 6.1% in 2007, Slower Than in Recent Years

Premiums for employer-sponsored health insurance rose an average of 6.1 percent in 2007, less than the 7.7 percent increase reported last year but still higher than the increase in workers' wages (3.7 percent) or the overall inflation rate (2.6 percent), according to the *2007 Employer Health Benefits Survey* released by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Health Research and Educational Trust.

<http://www.kff.org/insurance/ehbs091107nr.cfm>

Study Finds Disparities in the Quality of Nursing Home Care

A study published in the September/October issue of *Health Affairs* reported that black U.S. residents are more likely to receive lower-quality nursing home care than white U.S. residents. The study examined data from 2000 on 7,196 nursing homes that have more than 800,000 residents in 147 metropolitan areas nationwide. According to the study, Milwaukee, Wisconsin had the largest disparity in quality of care for black U.S. residents and white U.S. residents in nursing homes, and 10 of the 20 facilities with the largest disparities were located in Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=47454

Also see "Separate and Unequal: Racial Segregation and Disparities in Quality Across U.S. Nursing Homes,"

http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=521746&#doc521746

Inflation in Drug Costs at Lowest Rate in Three Decades

The New York Times reported that annual inflation in drug costs is at the lowest rate in the three decades since the Labor Department began using its current method of tracking prescription prices. The rate over the last 12 months is 1 percent, according to the government's latest data.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/21/business/21generic.html?_r=1&ref=policy&oref=slogin

Study Examines Preventive Health Benefits of Routine Physical Exams

A study conducted by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh and RAND reports that many patients did not receive important tests during annual exams or received unnecessary tests. The study analyzed data from physician office and outpatient hospital visits from 2002 to 2004. The study also looked at the percentage of certain preventive medical services were conducted outside of annual exams.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=47737

GAO Preliminary Report Finds Staff Shortages for Veterans' Care

A preliminary report released by the Government Accountability Office found that Army “warrior transition units”—units set up at 32 military hospitals across the nation to help wounded troops—lack adequate nurses and social workers. GAO reported that over half of the units had staff vacancy rates of more than 50% as of mid-September.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=47813