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Population Health Institute

Translating Research into Policy and Practice

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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/news.htm>. To subscribe or unsubscribe, reply to [Judy Knutson](mailto:judy.knutson@wisc.edu) 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

BadgerCare Plus Implementation set for February 1, 2008

Federal officials have approved the state plan amendments needed to implement Wisconsin's BadgerCare Plus program. The program expands eligible health insurance coverage to most children, pregnant women up to 300% FPL, low income parents, and more self-employed and farm families.

http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/journal_media_detail.asp?locid=19&prid=3040

Website detailing the new BadgerCare Plus: <http://www.badgercareplus.org/>

Wisconsin Council on Children & Families summary and color-coded chart:

http://www.wccf.org/pdf/badgercareplus_law_111007.pdf

Governor Doyle Renews call for Autism Coverage and Statewide Smoking Ban

Governor Doyle urged the legislature to enact smokefree legislation that bans smoking in all public buildings, workplaces, restaurants, and taverns. This follows recently enacted statewide bans in Minnesota and Illinois. The Governor also continued to push the legislature to mandate insurance coverage for treatment of autism services. This item was removed from the biennial budget during legislative deliberations, with Senate Democrats reviving the effort in separate legislation.

http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/journal_media_detail.asp?locid=19&prid=3047

History of Senate Bill 178, mandating coverage for autism treatment:

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2007/data/SB178hst.html>

Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel article: "The Ashtray of the Midwest?"

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=691282>

Employer Costs of Health Benefit Provision Rise 6.4% in Wisconsin

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reports new data from Mercer, which finds that the annual costs for large Wisconsin employers of providing health benefits for active employees rose by 6.4% this year. This increase puts the average cost of health benefit provision at \$10,097 per employee. Nationally, for employers with 500 or more employees, benefits increased 5.1% to an average of \$8,229 for each employee. Furthermore, the cost of health benefits has roughly doubled since 2000. The Mercer survey is based on almost 3,000 employers, including 45 in Wisconsin.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=688195>

Bill Proposal Would Require Greater Transparency of Health Costs

Sen. Jim Sullivan and Rep. Steve Wiecek introduced a bill requiring health care providers and insurance companies to make available information about the cost of procedures or services to patients who ask for it. The bill would require health care providers to make available cost information about their 50 most commonly performed services. This information would have to be presented at three levels: the usual and customary charge for the service; the rate paid by government programs; and the average rate for health plans.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=689435>

Governor Doyle Signs Midwestern Regional Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord

Governor Jim Doyle, alongside nine other Midwestern leaders, signed the Midwestern Regional Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord this past month. The Accord will establish greenhouse gas reduction targets and timeframes, develop a market-based and multi-sector cap-and-trade mechanism to help achieve the reduction targets, establish a system to aid in tracking, management and crediting for entities that reduce emissions, and develop and implement additional steps when appropriate to help achieve reduction targets.

<http://www.wispolitics.com/index.iml?Article=110610>

Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene Awarded \$750,000 FDA Grant

The Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene, the State's public and environmental health laboratory is one of three laboratories across the nation to receive a \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to enhance food screening capabilities and detect radioactive

material in food. The grant will span a three year period, awarding \$250,000 per year in order to support funding for supplies, personnel, minor facility upgrades and training.

<http://www.wispolitics.com/index.iml?Article=111159>

Inviragen Receives \$600,000 NIH Grant for Avian Influenza Vaccine Research

Inviragen Inc., a Colorado developer of vaccines with an office in Mount Horeb, has received a two-year \$600,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health for the development of a safe and effective avian influenza vaccine. The grant will fund the construction and testing of new vaccines designed to protect against the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza virus, and support collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2007/11/19/daily18.html?surround=lfm>

Wisconsin Health Insurance Coverage, 2006 Report Released

The Wisconsin Health Insurance Coverage, 2006 report was released this past month by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. It includes Wisconsin specific data regarding health insurance coverage over the past year, current health insurance coverage and household population characteristics. It also includes a summary of key findings.

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/stats/pdf/fhs06ins.pdf>

UW Population Health Institute Releases Fifth Annual Wisconsin County Health Rankings

The *Rankings* summarize the overall health of Wisconsin's 72 counties and the City of Milwaukee using a health outcomes summary measure and a health determinants summary measure. A broad range of indicators—representative of health care, health behaviors, socioeconomic factors and the physical environment—are incorporated into the health determinants summary measure. The health outcomes measure is based upon mortality and general health status in each place. The Full Report, County Health Snapshots, press releases and more in-depth information can be found at the following link:

http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/research/rankings_2007/rankings_2007.htm

UW Researchers Program Human Cells to State Identical to that of Embryonic Stem Cells

A Madison team of researchers led by James Thomson, and a Kyoto University-based team in Japan have successfully used four genes to program human cells to have all the characteristics of embryonic stem cells. This is the first time this feat has been completed without the use of eggs or embryos. This new accomplishment holds the potential to significantly impact the ethical debate surrounding embryonic stem cell research.

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=688533>

For related articles, see:

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/22/science/22stem.html?_r=1&em&ex=1195966800&en=3d24427925954325&ei=5087%0A&oref=slogin

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB119556606750999184.html?mod=health_home_stories

<http://www.news.wisc.edu/14474>

Researchers Led by UW Professor Highlight Ethics of Climate Change

A report published this past month by a team of researchers led by Jonathan Patz of UW-Madison reports that the health burden of climate change will rest disproportionately on the world's poor. The report directly addresses the ethical dimension of the global climate change

by measuring per capita carbon emissions and comparing this value with climate related disease burden for the most affected regions of the world. The research highlights a strong contrast between the populations causing global warming and those suffering from its impact.

<http://www.news.wisc.edu/14413>

Overall Smoking Rate in Wisconsin Declines: Rates among Some Groups Increase

A new report on state smoking trends, released by the UW Paul P. Carbone Comprehensive Cancer Center, shows that state smoking rates declined from 25% to 21% from 1990 through 2006; however, smoking rates among some groups have increased. Notably, the smoking rate among those with less than a high school degree increased from 29% to 32%, and the smoking rate of 25-29 year-old increased from 27% to 31% during this timeframe.

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/Nov07/nov8/1108uwsmlkingrates.pdf>

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

New MyPyramid Launched for Pregnant and Nursing Mothers

The USDA has launched a new MyPyramid web site designed specifically for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. The new interactive tool provides unique, individualized nutrition guidance to meet the needs of expectant mothers and new mothers.

http://www.mypyramid.gov/global_nav/media_moms_press_release.html

Health Reform Toolkit on the Uninsured

This new toolkit released by the Alliance for Health Reform provides links to resources central to understanding the demographics of who lacks health coverage in the United States and the consequences of being uninsured. Toolkit links include proposals for change, websites that track presidential candidates' plans, public opinion polls and updates on state-level reform.

http://www.allhealth.org/publications/Uninsured/uninsured_toolkit_74.asp

Health Reform Toolkit on Medicaid

This new toolkit covers the following areas: who is covered by the Medicaid program, how Medicaid is financed, how Medicaid differs from Medicare, how states can alter Medicaid through federal waivers, and the future of the Medicaid program.

http://www.allhealth.org/publications/Medicaid/Medicaid_Toolkit_75.asp

New from KaiserEdu.org: Health Policy Communications Tutorial

This new KaiserEdu.org tutorial focuses on topics relevant to health policy communications, including interview basics, different types of interviews including radio and television, and briefing reporters and policymakers. The tutorial also includes links to valuable resources.

<http://www.kaiseredu.org/tutorials/media/player.html>

New Employer's Toolkit: Investing in Maternal and Child Health

This Employer's Toolkit made available by the National Business Group on Health focuses on investments in maternal and child health. The toolkit highlights how both employers and families can benefit from an effective maternal and child health plan model, both the challenges and opportunities employers may face, and the importance of communication and engagement.

The toolkit includes health education materials for beneficiaries and resources for employers.
http://www.businessgrouphealth.org/healthtopics/maternalchild/investing/docs/mch_toolkit.pdf

Issue Brief Focusing on Medicaid's Role for Women Released

The Kaiser Family Foundation released a new Issue Brief focusing on the role of Medicaid for Women. The issue brief describes the wide range of health services that Medicaid covers for women throughout their life spans, including primary and preventive care, pregnancy care, reproductive health care and more. Notably, 69% of adult Medicaid beneficiaries are female.
<http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/7213.cfm>

Updated Fact Sheet: State Fiscal Conditions and Medicaid

This Kaiser Commission on the Uninsured Fact Sheet has been updated to include information from the recent survey of state Medicaid directors. It summarizes the relationship of Medicaid with state budgets and updates the current fiscal situation in the states and the corresponding impacts upon Medicaid programs.
<http://www.kff.org/medicaid/7580.cfm>

New Online Tool Released by CMS to Compare Medicare Prescription Drug Plans

This new online tool launched by CMS allows users to enter the list of medications that Medicare beneficiaries currently take in order to determine the amount that each prescription drug plan charges for premiums, copayments and deductibles.
http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48886

Medicare Part D 2008 Data Spotlights: Premiums and the Coverage Gap

Kaiser Family Foundation provides an analysis of key aspects of the drug plans that will be available to Medicare beneficiaries in 2008. The spotlights also examine relevant trends since the initiation of the Medicare drug benefit plan.
<http://www.kff.org/medicare/med102507pkg.cfm>

New and Updated Data Available on Statehealthfacts.org

Statehealthfacts.org recently added new and updated data on SCHIP, demographics and the economy; Medicare; health status; and HIV/AIDS. Data on cancer incidence and mortality rates have been updated.
http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=49149

HealthCast Resources: Health Affairs 2007 Health Policy Summit

This resource provides links to both video and transcript of the Health Affairs 2007 Health Policy Summit. The meeting focused on new proposals for reform, and examples of innovation and collaborative efforts to achieve improvements in the health system.
http://www.kaisernetwork.org/health_cast/hcast_index.cfm?display=detail&hc=2424

HealthCast Resources: American Public Health Association 2007 Annual Meeting

This resource provides links to video, podcast and transcript of the 2007 APHA Annual Meeting. The meeting program addresses current and emerging health science, policy, and practice issues, with a focus on disease prevention and health promotion.
http://www.kaisernetwork.org/health_cast/hcast_index.cfm?display=detail&hc=2433

HealthCast: Medicare Part D Event

This resource provides video, podcast and transcript of the Medicare Part D: What Now, What Next? event sponsored by the Alliance for Health Reform and the Commonwealth Fund. It features panelist examinations of topics such as the doughnut hole, out of pocket spending, access of rural populations and dual eligibles.

http://www.kaisernet.org/health_cast/hcast_index.cfm?display=detail&hc=2431

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prospects for Health Reform in Wisconsin

David R. Riemer, JD, Director, Wisconsin Health Project, former State Budget Director and originator of the Wisconsin Health Plan

Monday Seminar Series, Department of Population Health Sciences

Monday, December 10, 2007: 12:00-1:00 p.m.

1309 Health Sciences Learning Center

Global Health and Human Rights

Fourth Annual Global Health Symposium

Wednesday, February 6, 2008: 5:00-9:00 p.m.

1306 Health Sciences Learning Center

READING ROOM

America's Health Rankings: 2007 Version Released

The United Health Foundation released the 2007 version of *America's Health Rankings* this past month. The *Health Rankings* combines individual measures of determinants—representing the areas of personal behaviors, community environment, public & health policy and clinical care—with health outcomes in order to provide an overview of the health of each state.

<http://www.unitedhealthfoundation.org/ahr2007/index.html>

Survey Compares U.S. Health System Performance with Six Other Countries

A new Commonwealth Fund survey provides a cross national comparison of various elements related to the performance of a health system including access to care, care coordination, the role of the medical homes, medical error rates, and the impact of costs on skipping care. U.S. adults are most likely to go without health care because of the cost and more likely to say that the health care system needs to be rebuilt completely.

http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=568237&#doc568237

Health Care Spending Greater for Older than 65; Growing Faster for < 65

Although the cost of health care in the U.S. for people age 65 and above is more than three times that for younger people, a CMS report notes that health care costs for seniors are growing at a slower rate than they are for younger individuals. According to the report, health care spending

grew from \$868 in 1987 to \$2,650 in 2004 for individuals age 18 and younger, from \$1,521 to \$4,511 for individuals ages 19 to 64, and from \$5,282 to \$14,797 for individuals 65 and above.
http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48679

WellPoint Plans to Make Available New Physician Survey Tool

Zagat Survey and WellPoint have partnered in order to make it possible for consumers to rank physicians. Within the next several months, WellPoint plans to release an online physician ranking guide based on the input from over one million patient members. The physician ratings will be on a 30 point scale, based on trust, communication, availability and office environment.
http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48682

UnitedHealth, Others to Work with NY Attorney General on Physician Ranking

UnitedHealth, alongside Group Health and Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York have followed Aetna and Blue Cross Blue Shield in agreeing to use New York Attorney General Cuomo's rules on how to rank doctors. The agreements require that the insurers tell consumers how ratings are created, including the weight placed on cost.

<http://blogs.wsj.com/health/2007/11/20/unitedhealth-agrees-to-cuomos-report-card-for-doctors/>

For related articles on agreements reached earlier this past month, see:

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48887;

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48854

Decrease in Employer-Sponsored Health Coverage Noted

According to a study released by the Economic Policy Institute, the amount of U.S. residents under the age of 65 who had insurance through an employer decreased for the time period between 2005 and 2006 (63.2%) as compared to between 2000 and 2001 (67.7%). The primary reason cited for the decrease is rising health care costs, which have resulted in cutbacks.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48636

GAO Conducts Audit of Medicaid Providers in Seven States

According to the Government Accountability Office, over 30,000 Medicaid providers from seven different states owe the federal government more than \$1 billion in federal taxes that were not paid for the 2006 fiscal year. The audit was conducted on Medicaid providers from the states of California, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania and Texas. Most of the unpaid taxes are the product of payroll taxes that were never received by the federal government, despite being withheld from employees' wages.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48858

FDA Panel Recommends Changes to Influenza Drug Label

A panel of experts for the FDA has recommended a change in the warning label for Tamiflu. The drug first entered the market in 1999 and has been used by 48 million patients since its introduction. The drug label already notes reports of both delirium and self-injury, primarily among children from Japan; however, the fact that some patients have died as a result of these behaviors has led the panel to recommend that the warning language be changed to note this. The panel agreed that stronger warnings are needed; however, it noted that it is not clear whether the problems were caused by the flu or the medication.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/28/health/policy/28fda.html?_r=1&ref=health&oref=slogin

Tool Used to Estimate Breast Cancer Risk to be Revised

The National Cancer Institute's online risk calculator for breast cancer is being updated to better reflect the risks of breast cancer for black women. The tool uses information including current age, age when first child was born, and family history of breast cancer to create an odds estimate of contracting breast cancer in the next five years.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/28/health/28cancer.html?ref=health>

VEBA Deals Could Give UAW Strength to Impact Health Care System

When the United Auto Workers assumes responsibility for the health care benefits of 540,000 automaker retirees and spouses in 2010, the UAW will have enough clout and bulk purchasing power to affect health care costs. The establishment of a VEBA by United Auto Workers was the end result of UAW contract negotiations with General Motors, Ford Motor and Chrysler Group. UAW will take responsibility for health care liabilities in exchange for funding levels of between 56% and 62% of liabilities.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=49145