

**E-NEWS – June/July 2008****VOL. 8, NO. 6****Department of Population Health Sciences****University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health**

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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*, Wisconsin Technology Network and others.

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STATE NEWS

[Madison to Host, "Lab on the Lake" Will Kick Off World Stem Cell Summit](#)

Premier Researchers, Advocates and Investors Will Embark Upon Madison Sept. 21-23
The World Stem Cell Summit will kick off with a free one-day public forum and festival September 21. "Lab on the Lake" will feature a career and education fair, stem cell movies and expert panels as part of the World Stem Cell Summit organized by the Genetics Policy Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison Stem Cell & Regenerative Medicine Center and WiCell.

[Wisconsin Adult Smoking Rates Reach a Record Low](#)

The new adult smoking prevalence rate in Wisconsin of 19.6 percent marks the first time the number has ever been below 20 percent. The new figures come from the 2007 Wisconsin Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey, a telephone survey of state residents age 18 and older. The survey measures smoking prevalence by education, age, ethnicity, gender and income. The new adult prevalence rate of 19.6 percent is down from 24 percent in 2000. Currently, the national adult smoking rate is 20 percent.

[Wisconsin Named CMS Demo Site for EMR Adoption](#)

Wisconsin is one of 12 sites were selected by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to participate in a national Medicare demonstration project that provides incentive

payments to physicians for using certified electronic health records (EHR) to improve the quality of patient care. The five-year, first-of-its-kind project is intended to improve the quality of care provided to an estimated 3.6 million Americans. Wisconsin was selected through a competitive process from a field of more than 30 applicants. The Wisconsin Medical Society led a partnership with the WI Collaborative for Healthcare Quality and MetaStar, and demonstrated active collaboration among stakeholders a broad range of stakeholders.

In related news, Ministry Health Care announced that it is adopting the electronic health record (EHR) software suite developed by Marshfield Clinic - CattailsMD™ - for the majority of its hospitals and Ministry Medical Group, creating the largest patient database in Wisconsin. More than 1,000 providers will share access to 2.5 million patient records ([more information](#)).

Wisconsin Provider Spotlighted for Practicing Patient-Centered

The first edition of a podcast series by the Commonwealth Fund spotlights the Wheaton Franciscan Medical Group in Racine, Wisconsin for its staff dedication to exceptional patient service and superior clinical quality.

BadgerCare Plus Enrollment Surges; Most new enrollees at lowest income levels

Nearly 72,000 families have signed up for BadgerCare Plus health insurance coverage since the program was launched on February 1. About two-thirds of new enrollees are children, with one-third including parents or caretakers and pregnant women. This enrollment is triple the number of new patients that state officials expected to sign up for the coverage by June 2009. More than 80% the persons who have signed up for BadgerCare Plus were needy enough that they already qualified for Medicaid coverage even before this new state program expanded access to higher-income residents. [Statewide and county-by-county enrollment figures](#).

BC+ Medication Coverage Modified for Children with Chronic Conditions

With the onset of BC+, some children moved from regular Medicaid/BadgerCare or Health Insurance Risk-Sharing Plan (HIRSP) coverage into the more limited Benchmark Plan, which covers a more narrow range of prescription drugs. This presented a significant hardship for families of children with chronic health care conditions that require expensive non-generic medication. In response, DHFS issued an [operations memo](#) that aims to help the adversely affected children by grandfathering them into Standard Plan coverage for their medications.

Gov. Doyle Plans Renewed Hospital Tax Proposal

Governor Doyle announced during a speech to Wisconsin Hospital Association members that he intends to renew his proposal for a hospital tax. Doyle intends for this tax to leverage hundreds of millions in federal Medicaid matching dollars that will be returned to state hospitals in the form of higher payment rates. The hospital tax would also provide the state government with an additional \$125 million. The hospital tax was a highly contested, and ultimately dropped, portion of the now settled budget repair negotiations.

Prescription Purchasing Collaborative Expected to Save State Millions

Wisconsin is expected to save approximately \$63 million over the next 17 months due to the decision to participate in a cooperative that will increase the purchasing power of the state when it buys prescription drugs. The cooperative consists of multiple states including Pennsylvania

and Maryland. Wisconsin will use its membership in the cooperative to indirectly purchase the prescription drugs for individuals participating in state health programs. Previously, Wisconsin paid HMOs a pre-specified amount each month for the cost of prescription drugs. More than half of the participants in the BadgerCare Plus program receive their healthcare through these HMOs.

[Seventeen Health Insurers Pledge to Provide Out-of-Pocket Cost Estimates](#)

Seventeen members of the Wisconsin Association of Health Plans have [announced](#) that they will provide estimates of individuals' potential out-of-pocket costs under plan policies. The plans are expected to start implementing the new measure by first of September. Thirteen of the seventeen members who have agreed to the pledge are among the state's 20 largest health insurers, including Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, Humana and UnitedHealthcare of Wisconsin. Under the change, most individuals will be able to know the cost of a procedure or test prior to receiving it. Insurers, however, will only be able to provide rough estimates for individuals who seek care outside of the respective health plan's network.

[Commonwealth Fund Features WCHO Quality Measurement and Reporting](#)

The Commonwealth Fund has released a report that highlights Wisconsin's leadership in the arena of health care quality measurement and reporting. The new Commonwealth Fund case study, *Embracing Accountability: Physician Leadership, Public Reporting, and Teamwork in the Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality*, describes how a voluntary consortium of health care organizations in Wisconsin has used public reporting of performance data as a tool to jumpstart the learning and quality improvement process.

[WI State Supports WHIO to Collect and Report Provider Quality, Costs](#)

A new collaborative effort is underway between the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, the Department of Employee Trust Funds and the Wisconsin Health Information Organization (WHIO) to create a comprehensive warehouse for the collection of administrative health claims data. The overarching goal of the warehouse is to create a central resource to produce public reports on health care cost and quality across episodes of care. WHIO founders include purchasers, providers and payers in the health care arena.

[Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel article on WHIO progress](#)

[Wisconsin Ranks High Nationally in Health System Performance for Children](#)

The Commonwealth Fund report, ["U.S. Variations in Child Health System Performance: A State Scorecard,"](#) ranks Wisconsin eleventh overall for performance. The report analyzes 13 measures pertaining to access, quality, costs, equity and healthy outcomes.

Wisconsin's highest ranking was 5th - in the category of the percentage of kids who were uninsured. However, WI ranked 24th in infant mortality, 25th in percent of children who received all recommended doses of 5 vaccines, 26th in percentage of young children at risk of developmental delay, and 36th in personal health care spending per capita.

[Merck & Co. Vioxx Settlement Reached; WI to Receive ~\\$1.5 Million](#)

Pharmaceutical company Merck & Co. recently agreed to a \$58 million settlement payment regarding its marketing of the anti-inflammatory drug Vioxx. Wisconsin is one of 29 states, along with the District of Columbia that will receive money from the settlement. Wisconsin is expected to receive over \$1.5 million from the settlement. Merck is now required to receive approval on its direct-to-consumer advertisements from the Federal Drug Administration prior to

airing them. Merck voluntarily took Vioxx off the market in 2004 after it was connected to several thousand heart attacks and strokes.

WI Experts Behind New National Tobacco-Treatment Guidelines

New national guidelines to aid in smoking cessation were released this past month in the [“Clinical Practice Guideline 2008 Update: *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence.*”](#) Dr. Michael Fiore, director of the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI), chaired the Guideline Update panel. The collaborative reviewed over 8,700 articles published in the most recent 17 years to inform recommendations.

Initiative Advancing Public Health Agency Accreditation & Quality Improvement

Wisconsin is among of a group of sixteen states that have been selected to participate in a national effort to advance accreditation activities and improvement strategies in public health departments. The program is managed by the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) and the Public Health Leadership Society (PHLS) and is called [Lead States in Public Health Quality Improvement: A Multistate Learning Collaborative](#). Participating states will work towards achieving measurable gains in areas such as immunization rates, physical activity participation by adults, and creating standard procedures for effective communication in disaster and health emergency circumstances. Participating states will receive up to \$150,000 per year for a three year period to aid in the implementation of projects.

Healthy Wisconsin Critics Publish New Opposition Report

The Wisconsin Policy Research Institute – self-described as “Wisconsin’s free market think tank,” has released a [new report](#) detailing how Healthy Wisconsin would turn every aspect of the health care system over to state government. Along with this, Rep. Leah Vukmir moderated a [forum](#) sponsored by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce in which speakers addressed their concerns that Healthy Wisconsin's \$15.2 billion price tag, financed by payroll taxes, would make Wisconsin a less desirable state in which to do business.

WI DHFS Becomes Department of Health Services (DHS)

The former WI DHFS has been renamed the Department of Health Services. According to DHS, "The new agency will be able to focus specifically on making health care more affordable and accessible as well as promoting the health and safety of all the people of Wisconsin." Several functions that had been in the Departments of Workforce Development (DWD) and Health and Family Services (DHFS) have been consolidated in Wisconsin’s new Department of Children and Families. The new department includes the following functions: child care (subsidies and regulation), W-2, child support, child welfare, adoption, foster care, and the home visiting program.

New DHS website: <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/>

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

Wisconsin eHealth HIT/HIE Summit

Materials from the June 12 Summit of the Governor’s eHealth Care Quality and Patient Safety Board are now available online.

[Interactive Chart Compares State Health Care Access Indicators](#)

RWJF-supported State Health Access Profiles have been developed into an interactive chartbook, presenting a broad set of health care access measures for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, allowing users to compare the results of one state with up to two others.

[Dialogue on Priorities for Population Health Research](#)

The UW Population Health Institute's 2007 conference: Improving Wisconsin's Health: Prevention, Policy and Priorities for Research included an opportunity for conference participants to highlight areas they believed deserved more attention in public health research. A summary of this dialogue is now available.

[Survey of the Health of Wisconsin: Videos](#)

Videos of the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin Research Symposium are now available for viewing online.

[How Race and Ethnicity Influence Medical Encounters](#)

In this UW Video from a recent seminar, Richard Street, PhD, explains the role race and ethnicity play in the relationship between patient and physician.

[New Badger Poll: Wisconsin Residents' Opinions on Health Care Reform](#)

The recently released Badger Poll conducted by the UW Survey Center reports that 48% of Wisconsin individuals have mixed feelings about the state's health care system, 29% are dissatisfied and 21% are satisfied. Further results along with detailed tables comparing April 2008 results to December 2007 results are included in this resource.

[Hospital Compare: New DHHS Tools](#)

This resource includes hospital process of care measures, outcome of care measures, survey of patients' hospital experiences and Medicare payment and volume information. The tool is directed towards adults, including individuals covered under Medicare. Hospital compare was created by collaboration between the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Department of Health and Human Services, and other members of the Hospital Quality Alliance.

[Reinsurance Institute Issues Final Report: WI Lessons](#)

A new report highlights the lessons learned during State Coverage Initiative's Reinsurance Institute and provides analysis on reinsurance modeling and lessons learned from state-specific work with Washington, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin.

[Racial and Ethnic Disparities: States and Feds to the Rescue?](#)

The Alliance for Health Reform and the Commonwealth Fund address how policy makers on the state and federal level can combat the problem of racial and ethnic disparities in health care quality. The briefing detail page for the event includes transcript and podcast along with other useful resources.

Congressional Budget Office Health-Focused Reports: The Congressional Budget Office released a handful of health related reports and resources in the past month, including a useful a

report entitled [Evidence on the Costs and Benefits of Health Information Technology](#). The CBO also released an economic and budget issue brief on the projected costs of Medicare and Medicaid entitled: [Accounting for Sources of Projected Growth in Federal Spending on Medicare and Medicaid](#).

Government Accountability Office Health-Focused Reports: The Government Accountability Office also released a handful of reports relating to health and health care this past month. Of particular note among these reports was a report detailing participation in [Health Savings Accounts](#) since 2004 and a report which focused on federal monitoring surveys of [Nursing Homes](#) and CMS oversight of the survey program.

Kaiser Family Foundation Resource Updates

KaiserEDU Tutorial: [Measuring Health Care Quality](#)

Snapshots—Health Care Costs: [Offer Rates for Smaller Establishments by Business Age](#)

Fact Sheet: [Black Americans and HIV/AIDS](#)

Fact Sheet: [Women and HIV/AIDS in the United States](#)

Facts, Slides and Online Tools: [New Fast Facts Website](#)

New Commonwealth Fund Reports: The Commonwealth Fund released multiple reports this past month on the topics of electronic health records and health reform.

[Performance Measures Using Electronic Health Records: Five Case Studies](#)

[Achieving Universal Coverage with Private and Public Group Health Insurance](#)

[Achieving Universal Coverage and Health System Savings](#)

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Summer 2008 Public Health Institute

Sponsored by the Office of Continuing Professional Development at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, the Department of Population Health Sciences, and UW-Madison Continuing Education in Nursing. Courses run July 14, 2008 through August 22, 2008

Courses Include:

[Survey Methods for Public Health Professionals](#)

[Communicating Public Health Effectively](#)

[Global Environmental Public Health](#)

[Issues in Tobacco Use and Control](#)

[Writing for Scholarly Publication](#)

[Survey of Public Health Disaster Management](#)

[Leadership Principles and Public Health Practice](#)

[Introduction to Social Marketing in Public Health](#)

[Health Insurance Coverage and State Health Reform](#)

[Update in Emerging Infectious Disease Affecting Public Health](#)

Step Forward Together: 2008 Public Health Partners Conference

July 22-24, 2008: Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center Madison, WI

Presented by the National Association of Local Boards of Health, Wisconsin Public Health Association and Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards

Wednesday Nite at the Lab: A Quarter-Century of HIV/AIDS

Presenter: Pete Cohen; August 27, 2008: 7:00pm

1111 Genetics-Biotechnology Center Building

Information: (608) 265-2420; zinnen@biotech.wisc.edu

READING ROOM

Drug Labels to Better Inform Pregnant and Nursing Women

The Food and Drug Administration recently proposed a change to its labeling schematic for both prescription and over-the-counter drugs. The labeling change would provide more safety-related information for women who are pregnant and breastfeeding.

FDA to Enhance Monitoring of Drugs Following Approval

Federal health officials announced this past month that the Food and Drug Administration will begin utilizing information on Medicare claims to monitor the risk associated with drugs that have already been approved for market sale. The new approach is being called the Sentinel Initiative

Safety-Net Hospitals Likely to Receive Smaller Pay-for-Performance Bonuses

A recent study published in [JAMA](#) indicates that pay-for-performance bonus payments might disadvantage safety-net hospitals. According to the report, U.S. safety-net hospitals often provide care for disproportionate share of uninsured and government-insured patients, have fewer resources to focus on quality improvement and therefore receive the smallest performance bonuses.

U.S. District Judge Rules Against Medicaid \$5 Billion Cut in Hospital Payments

U.S. District Judge James Robertson has ruled against a change to Medicaid regulations that would have resulted in a reduction of approximately \$5 billion over five years in payments to hospitals. The regulations would have been the product of efforts initiated by the executive branch, while Congress had made clear its disapproval of the regulations.

Former HHS Secretaries Thompson and Shalala Speak at Hearing

The Senate Finance Committee held the first of eight hearings to discuss an overhaul of the U.S. health care system. At the hearing, former Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson voiced his convictions that efforts should first be geared towards fixing Medicare. Former HHS Secretary Donna Shalala did not support an initial approach focused solely on Medicare in her testimony but did signify that Medicare should play an integral role in health system reform.

CMS Releases Letter Discussing August 17 SCHIP Directive

In response to criticism of the August 17 directive on SCHIP coverage, CMS has [asserted](#) that the requirement under the directive is not overly difficult for states to meet. The directive requires several conditions, including that states first demonstrate that they have covered 95 percent of children from families with incomes below 200 percent of the poverty level before expanding SCHIP to higher income levels. CMS indicates that states can also replace public health care coverage with private sector insurance, or states can propose other methods to prevent crowd-out. The SCHIP directive has been critiqued by two nonpartisan congressional advisory agencies: Georgetown University Health Policy Institute ([analysis](#)) and GAO ([report](#)).

Rules Proposed to Limit Medicare Advantage Plan Marketing Techniques

The Bush administration has put forth [new marketing rules](#) for comprehensive coverage and drug plans under Medicare Advantage. The new rules are intended to mitigate some of the more “aggressive sales tactics” currently employed by some plans.