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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:jknutson@pophealth.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*, Wisconsin Technology Network and others.

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STATE NEWS

Milwaukee Evidence-Based Nursing Project Goes Live

The Wisconsin Technology Network is reporting that a partnership of Aurora Health Care, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee College of Nursing, and Cerner Corp. has reached the go-live phase of an evidence-based nursing initiative. This partnership with a medical software developer focuses on electronic medical records role in decision support for nurses. The objective is not only to improve health outcomes by reducing variation in nursing care, but make the nursing profession more attractive at a time of personnel shortages and possibly help Aurora respond to federal action to eliminate payments for avoidable health events.

New WI 800 Number for Health Care Facility Information

The WI Department of Health Services has sent up an 800 telephone number and web site to make it easier to get or report information regarding health care facilities in Wisconsin. A new toll-free information hotline will provide information on nursing homes, assisted living facilities and other health or hospice agencies. A new website allows users to submit concerns regarding regulated facilities in the state.

Statewide Color-Coded Alerts Standardization Effort Underway

The Wisconsin Hospital Association is leading an effort for Wisconsin hospitals to standardize patient color-coded alerts. Color-coded alerts are used by hospitals to help care providers quickly identify important information about patients. Colors are often used on wristbands, stickers or placards and are used to represent information such as fall risks or allergy warnings. Standardization is voluntary; however, the Wisconsin Hospital Association has set a goal to have all hospitals using the standardized color system by March 1, 2009.

Hospital Association and Medical Society Join Efforts in Medical Error Prevention

The Wisconsin Hospital Association and the Wisconsin Medical Society have joined together in an effort to eliminate nine serious medical errors that occur in hospitals. The two organizations

have both endorsed a new resolution that acknowledges the occurrence of serious errors and requests that hospitals refrain from requesting payment from both patients and insurers for the hospital care that results due to these events. The list of adverse events includes errors such as surgery on the wrong part of the body or the wrong patient, wrong surgical procedure, or retention of foreign object.

[Anthem BC/BS to Release Cost Estimates for 39 Common Procedures](#)

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield has announced plans to begin releasing estimated costs of treatments on its web site. Anthem plans to make this information available for 39 of the more frequent medical procedures and tests performed in southeastern Wisconsin. Individuals enrolled in Anthem's largest health plan will have access to this information. The estimates will be formulated using Anthem's negotiated rates and will include both physician fees and ancillary services.

[Health Care Cost for Large WI Employers Grow Slower than National Average](#)

According to recent estimates completed by Towers Perrin, a benefits consulting firm, health care costs are projected to increase around 3.7% for large employers in Wisconsin this year. The national average of medical inflation is roughly 4%. Despite these favorable results with respect to cost growth, Towers Perrin approximates that the health care costs for larger employers in Wisconsin are still roughly 7% above the national average. Historically, the growth in cost of health care in Wisconsin has not been less than medical inflation for the past decade.

[WI Medical Schools Consider Next 5-Year Spending Plan for \\$700M Endowment](#)

The Medical College of Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine & Public Health are putting together new five-year plans that will guide how they spend income from two endowments established in 2004 after the former Blue Cross & Blue Shield United of Wisconsin became a for-profit company. The investment income from that money is funding grants for medical education, research and public health throughout Wisconsin that total more than \$100 million so far.

[UW Partnership Fund for a Healthy Future](#)

[MCW Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program](#)

[MCW Now Leading National Community-Campus Partnership for Health \(CCPH\)](#)

Cheryl A. Maurana, Senior Associate Dean for Public and Community Health at the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) in Milwaukee, has been named Executive Director of the national Community-Campus Partnerships for Health organization. CCHP will now be housed at MCW. Community-Campus Partnerships for Health is a nonprofit membership organization that promotes health through partnerships between communities and higher educational institutions.

[New Dental Clinic Will Target Needy Fox Valley Children](#)

The Fox Cities Community Health Center will open a dental clinic in January to help meet the Fox Valley's growing demand for preventive dental care, primarily in low-income children. The center, which provides health care to underserved residents in Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago counties, most of them uninsured or underinsured, is a "medical home" for children, adults, the chronically ill and disabled.

[Obesity Rates Spike for Wisconsin's African Americans](#)

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control released its annual survey of weight measures, which show a slight improvement in Wisconsin overall. However, the obesity rate in Wisconsin's African-American population is now 42.7%, compared to 24.7% of the white population. In Wisconsin, blacks die at a significantly higher rate than whites from heart disease, cancer and strokes. The rate of hospitalization for blacks with diabetes, also linked to obesity, is three times the rate of hospitalization for whites in the state.

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

[Urban Institute Unveils New Health Policy Web Resource](#)

The Urban Institute has created a new website with health policy as the central focus. Resources available on the 'Health Policy Center' main page include links to resources on private insurance, uninsured, Medicaid & SCHIP, Medicare, disability and long-term care, vulnerable populations and healthcare reform. The page also highlights recent health policy news and recent health policy related research.

Multiple New Issue and Research Briefs Available from the Center for Studying Health System Change (HSC)

- The issue brief [Community Efforts to Expand Dental Services for Low-Income People](#), provides an overview of the current deficit in dental coverage and care for low income people, and elaborates on the role of communities and State Medicaid and SCHIP policies in access to and provision of care for this population. The issue brief also identifies gaps in the dental safety net and the overall implications of its findings.
- The issue brief [Health and Wellness: The Shift from Managing Illness to Promoting Health](#), analyzes the recent impetus behind health plans' efforts to promote health and wellness initiatives as a part of a plan package. The issue brief examines the types of activities that are often offered as a part of these health and wellness initiatives, enrollee engagement and the potential for return on investments.
- HSC's research brief [Getting What We Pay For: Innovations Lacking in Provider Payment Reform for Chronic Disease Care](#), provides an overview of the impact of chronic disease upon the health care system in the U.S., and highlights current challenges and improvement efforts underway regarding the payment for and financing of chronic disease care.

[AHRQ and AARP Release New Checklists for Adults Over 50](#)

Two new health maintenance and disease prevention checklists were released by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and AARP this past month. The checklists are geared towards men and women over the age of 50 and provide current evidence-based recommendations with respect to screening tests, preventive medicines and healthy lifestyle behaviors. The [Men: Stay Healthy at 50+, Your Checklists for Health](#) and [Women: Stay Healthy at 50+, Your Checklists for Health](#) are available in both English and Spanish.

[Commonwealth Fund Releases Report on State Medicaid Agency Use of External Quality Review Organizations](#)

The Commonwealth Fund recently released a new report that focuses on how state Medicaid agencies do and can better use external quality review organizations (EQROs) to assess and improve quality of care for young children. The report, *Monitoring and Assessing the Use of External Quality Review Organizations to Improve Services for Young Children: A Toolkit for State Medicaid Agencies*, provides an overview of the methods currently employed by states to utilize EQROs and provides also a set of recommendations for states.

[Commonwealth Fund Releases Updated Scorecard on US Health System Performance](#)

The Commonwealth Fund released a new report this past month entitled *Why Not the Best? Results from the National Scorecard on U.S. Health System Performance*. The fund report measures health care outcomes, quality, access, efficiency and equity in the United States. The first scorecard was released in 2006. The report's summary measure of system performance is based off of 37 core indicators of performance; in the 2008 report the U.S. achieved an overall score of 65 out of 100 across these 37 indicators. The measures compare national averages with benchmarks that are based upon top performance internationally and in the United States.

KFF Issue Briefs: Examining Tax Subsidies for Health Insurance and Medicare Advantage in 2008

The Kaiser Family Foundation recently released [Medicare Advantage in 2008](#), which provides an overview of the program along with information on relevant trends such as firm participation and transitions in beneficiary choice. KFF also released an issue brief focusing on [Tax Subsidies for Health Insurance](#); in particular, this issue brief highlights the current role of tax subsidies in the employer-based health insurance system and how this system differentially impacts population groups.

[Statehealthfacts.org Updates Multiple New Data Tools](#)

Updates are available for multiple topics under the following categories: Demographics and the Economy, Health Costs & Budgets, Health Status, HIV/AIDS, Managed Care & Health Insurance, Medicare, Providers & Service Use, and Women's Health.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

[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

[20th Annual Colloquium on Aging](#)

Understanding Healthy Aging: Contributions from MIDUS
September 16, 2008: 8:30 am. Monona Terrace, Madison
Information: (608) 262-1818; aging@ssc.wisc.edu; [Online registration](#)

2008 WHA Annual Convention: Health Care's New Playing Field

September 17-19, 2008

KI Convention Center, Green Bay, WI

<http://www.wha.org/education/pdf/2008annualconvention.pdf>

18th Annual Worksite Wellness Conference

September 30, 2008, Marriot Madison West, Middleton, WI

Seeking Higher Returns: Taking Your Program to the Next Level. .

<http://www.wellnesscouncilwi.org/docs/conf/FinalBrochure-4pg.pdf>

READING ROOM

CMS to Provide \$49 Million in Funds to States with High-Risk Insurance Pools

HSS Secretary Mike Leavitt announced that CMS plans to provide \$49 million in funds to 31 states for high-risk health insurance pools, which provide a method of accessing health insurance for individuals who cannot receive private coverage due to their medical status. The money will be allocated to the states on the basis of enrollment numbers in each pool. These types of insurance pools typically lose money through the provision of care, despite the fact that they charge very high premiums. The money is intended to be used to make up for some of these losses, as well as to support management programs and subsidization for less economically advantaged individuals in the pools.

E-Prescribing Adoption Project to Begin in 2009; Savings, Reductions in Errors Expected

A new electronic prescribing program will begin on January 1, 2009. The new program will provide incentive to physicians to utilize electronic technology by giving physicians who adopt e-prescribing in 2009 and 2010 a 2% bonus in their Medicare payments. Physicians who adopt the technology in 2011 and 2012 will receive a 1% bonus and physicians who adopt the technology in 2013 will receive a 0.5% bonus. In contrast, payments to physicians who do not adopt the technology will be reduced, although some physicians will be excluded from this requirement.

Dartmouth Atlas Project Highlights Disparities in Care

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation released a report this month, entitled [*Disparities in Health and Health Care among Medicare Beneficiaries: A Brief Report of the Dartmouth Atlas Project*](#). The focus of the report is to illustrate the differences in quality of health care that exist throughout the country and to demonstrate the importance of improving health care quality and reducing disparities across the United States.

American Medical Association Apologizes for Past Inequities

The American Medical Association (AMA) released an apology this past month for its past inequalities towards African-American physicians. The AMA is currently working to increase the ranks of minority physicians and also the participation of minority physicians in the American Medical Association. The apology was prompted by the completion of a report commissioned by the AMA to study past racial divisions in organized medicine.

American Medical Association Releases Guideline for Seeking Medical Care Abroad

The American Medical Association recently approved a set of guidelines for US residents who choose to leave the country to seek medical care. The guidelines also apply to employers who might cover care out of the country. Guidelines include seeking out accredited providers and understanding the legal rights that individuals do not have when receiving care in a foreign country. Among the remaining pertinent guidelines, the AMA also recommended that individuals seeking care outside of the U.S. bring their American medical records with them and that individuals return with a complete set of medical records.

CDC Begins New “Healthiest Nation Campaign;” Prevention and Promotion Key

The CDC initiated a new campaign this past month geared towards improving the health of U.S. residents. The “Healthiest Nation Campaign” will look to improve health through social policies. Efforts will be focused in all levels of government and all sectors. A major focus of the campaign will be to promote disease prevention and health promotion as opposed to focusing solely on disease treatment.