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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.

In This Issue

STATE NEWS

- Health Care Coalition Forms to Toughen WI Alcohol Laws
- Physician Shortage Deepens, Threatens Access to Care
- WI Budget Projects Growth in BadgerCare Enrollment, Deficits
- Smoking ban, autism mandate, hospital tax among Dems' top state priorities
- State Senate Democrats Want to Revive Universal Healthcare Bill
- Milwaukee Unsuccessful in Lead Paint Lawsuit Against Paint Manufacturer
- Wisconsin Legislatures Request Permanent SeniorCare Extension
- 2009 DHS eHealth Plans: Further Simplify of Privacy Laws
- New DHS ForwardHealth Program Set to Improve Health and Promote Efficiency
- State Returns Nearly \$350,000 to Federal Government Following Medicaid Audit
- Farmers' Health Cooperative of WI Yielding Gains in Quality, Costs
- Stakeholder Groups Addressing Pharma Industry-Physician Relationship
- \$8.6 Million Granted to Wisconsin for Cancer Communication Research
- \$1.5M Newborn Screening Grant Awarded to State Lab of Hygiene
- Governor Doyle Signs Global Climate Solutions Declaration

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

- UW-PHI Releases 2008 Wisconsin County Health Rankings

- Updated Wisconsin Mortality Data and Public Health Profiles from DHS
- GAO: Rising Health Care Costs Drive Long-term and Immediate Pressures
- RWJ—The 1998 State Tobacco Settlement Ten Years Later
- Urban Institute—State Buy-In Programs: Prospects and Challenges
- New Resources from the Center for Studying Health System Change (HSC)
- Select KFF Issue Briefs, Policy Briefs and Fact Sheets
- Updates Available at Statehealthfacts.org

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Career Strategies for Women in Academic Medicine, Dec. 16
- Watch What You Eat! Foodborne Outbreak Response, December 18
- Rx for RNs: Addressing the Nursing Shortage, January 8
- UW CWHR Women's Health Forum, Jan. 20
- Out of Reach: Place, Poverty, and the New American Welfare State, Jan. 29

READING ROOM

- Tom Daschle Named Nominated as Secretary of U.S. DHHS
- U.S. community hospitals achieve record profits in 2007
- CMS New Regulations, Incentives for E-Prescribing Technology Adoption
- States Gain Expanded Ability to Determine Medicaid Premiums, Co-Payments
- One in Every Nine U.S. Children Lacked Health Coverage in 2007
- Declines in Cancer Mortality Rates, Long-Term Cancer Incidence

STATE NEWS

[Health Care Coalition Forms to Toughen WI Alcohol Laws](#)

A group of health care providers have joined together to advance changes in state law to combat problems of excessive drinking. The members hope new legislation will fight drunken driving, compel insurers to cover injuries caused by drunken driving, and decrease underage drinking. The group, named All-Wisconsin Alcohol Risk Education - or AWARE, is spearheaded by UW-Health and aims to build a multi-sector coalition.

Physician Shortage Deepens, Threatens Access to Care

A report released by the Wisconsin Council on Medical Education and Workforce (WCMEW), titled "[Who Will Care For Our Patients?](#)", demonstrates deepening maldistribution of physicians with shortages in rural and central city areas. Wisconsin is short nearly 374 primary care physicians across 31 counties. Milwaukee alone currently needs 20 additional primary care physicians to meet inner city demands. Experts say this shortage can create a bottleneck in the health care system.

WI Budget Projects Growth in BadgerCare Enrollment, Deficits

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau has released its analysis of the budget requests by each of the state agencies. Their [analysis](#) shows WI Department of Health Services projections that the average monthly BadgerCare enrollment will increase from 802,700 in 2007-08 to 865,700 (7.8%) in

2008-09, to 907,200 (4.8%) in 2009-10, and to 936,700 (3.3%) in 2010-11. The enrollment figures for childless adults reflect DHS projections that the childless adult program will begin enrolling individuals currently participating in Milwaukee County's general assistance medical program (GAMP) beginning in January, 2009, and individuals from other counties beginning in April, 2009.

Meanwhile, Wisconsin faces a \$5.4 billion budget deficit and, with other States, is seeking federal help. Wisconsin would receive an extra \$568.4 million in federal Medicaid insurance money if the new economic package used a funding formula similar to one in a recent Senate bill, according to a newly released [report](#) by Families USA and [budget numbers](#) from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

[Smoking ban, autism mandate, hospital tax among Dems' top state priorities](#)

While the Governor and Democrat-controlled legislature work to address a \$5.4 billion budget deficit, they have expressed intent to advance several key issues. Among these, items that failed in the last legislative session: Statewide smoking ban in restaurants and bars; Mandated health insurance coverage for children with autism; Domestic partner health care benefits for UW employees. Tax/assessment on hospital services, designed to draw more than \$418 million in federal matching funds to the state, to be used for increased payments to providers and to help the state balance its budget.

[State Senate Democrats Want to Revive Universal Healthcare Bill](#)

Some Senate Democrats say they'll try to revive their Healthy Wisconsin universal health care proposal, now that their party controls both houses of the legislature. Governor Doyle continues to oppose this plan, which failed to pass in last year's budget deliberations. Governor Doyle said Wisconsin should wait for President-elect Obama and Democratic leaders of Congress to reform the nation's health care system.

[Milwaukee Unsuccessful in Lead Paint Lawsuit Against Manufacturer](#)

An appeals court has ruled that NL Industries Inc. will not be held responsible for the costs of removing lead paint hazard from inner-city Milwaukee homes. Milwaukee had its appeal rejected by the District 1 Court of Appeals, which upheld the original ruling that the manufacturer was not liable. In 1998, Milwaukee found that approximately one in five children in the city had blood lead levels that were at or above the federally established poisoning indicator level.

[2009 DHS eHealth Plans: Further Simplify Privacy Laws](#)

The Department of Health Services (DHS) announced at its December 10 meeting of the eHealth [Care Quality and Patient Safety Board](#), that advancing a comprehensive rewrite of Wisconsin's general health care information statutes be a policy priority for 2009. The proposed rewrite is substantially based on the work of a work group convened by the Wisconsin Hospital Association of 19 attorneys, privacy officers, and health information managers whose goal was to simplify Wisconsin's general health care information statutes, Wis. Stats §§146.81-146.84 and make Wisconsin law more similar to the Federal HIPAA privacy laws. DHS also proposed developing additional regulatory and statutory changes relating to mental health records in 2009.

Wisconsin Legislatures Request Permanent SeniorCare Extension

A group of Wisconsin legislatures have rallied behind an effort to request permanent waiver renewal for Wisconsin's SeniorCare program. A [letter](#) supported by two Democratic senators, five Democratic House members and three Republican House members was sent to President-elect Obama requesting both federal subsidy and waiver renewal for the program, which currently only has approval through December 31, 2009. SeniorCare is a state-based alternative to the federally offered Medicare Part D option.

New DHS ForwardHealth Program Set to Improve Health and Promote Efficiency

Wisconsin's Department of Health Services announced the start of the ForwardHealth branded program, which brings together the services of BadgerCare Plus; SeniorCare; FoodShare; Forward Health Elderly, Blind or Disabled; Wisconsin Chronic Disease Program; the Family Planning Waiver; Family Care; additional long-term care programs and the Wisconsin Well Women Medicaid Program. Each of the unique programs will keep their names, operating under the ForwardHealth banner.

State Returns Nearly \$350,000 to Federal Government Following Medicaid Audit

Wisconsin has returned almost \$350,000 to the federal government after an audit found that Milwaukee County Medicaid participants had charged Medicaid for taxi rides on days that they did not seek medical care. Oversight of the program has been moved from the county to the state since 2005; the program allows Medicaid beneficiaries to use cabs in order to attend appointments and get prescriptions.

Farmers' Health Cooperative of WI Yielding Gains in Quality, Costs

New survey results from members of the Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin (FHCW) indicate that the cooperative has helped to improve both the quality and cost of health insurance purchased by farmers and agribusinesses. According to the survey, two-thirds of cooperative members reported improvement in the benefits available to them. Additionally, 51.3 percent indicated that their insurance premiums had decreased; premiums remained steady for 30.4 percent. FHCW was first created in 2007; the cooperative currently has roughly 2,500 members.

WI Stakeholder Groups Addressing Pharma Industry-Physician Relationship

The Wisconsin Medical Society's Board of Directors approved [changes to Society policy regarding physician gifts](#), with new language that states:

“Physicians shall accept no gifts from any provider of products that they prescribe to their patients such as personal items, office supplies, food, travel and time costs, or payment for participation in on-line CME. A complete ban eases the burdens of compliance, biased decision making, and patient distrust.”

At the same time, a broad group of stakeholders in Wisconsin have begun meeting to consider advancing a prescription drug “academic detailing” proposal and other measures to curb the strength of the pharmaceutical industry influence on prescribers' decisions. This activity is being spearheaded by the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, in collaboration with [Senator Herb Kohl's office](#).

[\\$8.6 Million Granted to Wisconsin for Cancer Communication Research](#)

Wisconsin's Center for Health Enhancement Systems Studies (CHESS) has received a second grant from the National Cancer Institute. The grant will extend over a period of five-years and provides a total of \$8.6 million in funding. The money will fund research through the Center of Excellence in Cancer Communication Research II. Specifically, the research will fund three studies, all focusing on elements of cancer communication: Effectiveness of the CHESS E-Health Cancer Support Intervention in Population-based Care; Interactive Cancer Communication Systems (ICCS) in Lung Cancer: Survival Benefits; and ICCS Directed Physical Activity Enhancement for Colon Cancer Survivors.

[\\$1.5M Newborn Screening Grant Awarded to State Lab of Hygiene](#)

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have awarded a \$1.5 million grant to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) for a pilot study to implement Severe Combined Immune Deficiency (SCID) newborn screening in state public health laboratories. Babies born with SCID, sometimes known as "Bubble Boy Disease," have a defect in both T-cell and B-cell production. The disorder is severe and usually fatal without early diagnosis and treatment. The study will build on an earlier collaboration that led to Wisconsin becoming the first state to screen all newborns for SCID.

[Governor Doyle Signs Global Climate Solutions Declaration](#)

Governor Doyle recently signed the [Global Climate Solutions Declaration](#), which signifies an agreement to work collaboratively towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and to promote the development and growth of green economies. Along with Governor Schwarzenegger, Governor Doyle co-hosted the Governors' Global Climate Summit this past month.

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

UW- PHI Releases 2008 Wisconsin County Health Rankings

The [2008 Wisconsin County Health Rankings](#) are now available online; the report ranks counties in Wisconsin on various measures of population health yielding summary measures for health determinants and health outcomes. The purpose of the *Rankings* is to contrast measures of population health and its determinants, and to stimulate and engage discussion with the Wisconsin health policy and public health communities. Individual [County Snapshots](#) and other background information can also be viewed [online](#).

Updated Wisconsin Mortality Data and Public Health Profiles from DHS

The Mortality module in WISH, the interactive data query system from the Department of Health Services, has been updated with 2007 data on Wisconsin resident deaths. The updated module contains statewide and local data for the years 1989-2007 based on resident death records for Wisconsin. [WISH](#) (Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health) is available at on the DHS Web site. Updated [Wisconsin Public Health Profiles, 2006](#) are also now available.

GAO: Rising Health Care Costs Drive Long-term and Immediate Pressures

This GAO study highlights the impact of projected health care cost trends while accounting for the current state of the economy; it specifically focuses on long-term effects for state and local governments. The report is accessible in [Highlights](#) and [Full Report](#) format.

[RWJ—The 1998 State Tobacco Settlement Ten Years Later](#)

This RWJ report focuses on states' use of funding received from the settlement, current level of tobacco prevention program funding and current marketing practices of the tobacco industry.

[Urban Institute—State Buy-In Programs: Prospects and Challenges](#)

This Urban Institute resource examines the growing use by states of SCHIP buy-in measures to fill coverage gaps for children not otherwise qualifying for public programs.

New Resources from the Center for Studying Health System Change (HSC)

This new HSC issue brief—[Rising Rates of Chronic Conditions: What Can be Done?](#)—highlights the current growth of chronic health conditions in the U.S. and examines potential solutions for offsetting the trend.

Select KFF Issue Briefs, Policy Briefs and Fact Sheets

[Updated: Medicare at a Glance](#)

[Updated: The Medicaid Program at a Glance](#)

[State Fiscal Conditions and Medicaid](#)

[Updated: Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan Availability in 2009](#)

[President-Elect Obama's Campaign Position on Health Reform and Other Health Care Issues](#)

[Updates Available at Statehealthfacts.org](#)

Cost of Living Variation; Measures of State Economic Distress: Housing Foreclosures and Changes in Unemployment and Food Stamp Participation; State Budget Shortfalls; Diabetes Incidence Rate per 1,000, 2005-2007; Total Ryan White Program Funding; Total HIV/AIDS Federal Funding; Number of Medicare Advantage Contracts; and Number of Medicare Prescription Drug Plans.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

[“Watch What You Eat! Foodborne Outbreak Response”](#)

Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) Scientific Seminar

Dr. Dave Warshauer, Chief Bacteriologist and Deputy Director, WSLH

December 18: Noon – 1 PM

Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene, 465 Henry Mall

“Rx for RNs: Addressing the Nursing Shortage”

An [Evidence-Based Health Policy Project](#) briefing on initiatives to recruit, retain and advance nurses.

January 8, 2009, 9-10:30 am, State Capitol, 300 SE

Speakers: Dr. Janet Allan, Dean of the University of Maryland School of Nursing

Judy Warmuth, VP for Workforce Development, Wisconsin Hospital Association.

RSVP by January 5 to cerijenkins@wisc.edu or 262-2318.

UW CWHR Women's Health Forum

Jan. 20, 2008: 8-9:00 a.m., Meriter Hospital, 2nd Fl Atrium

Community Health Education Center

Contact Information: (608) 263-9770, judeebell@cwhr.wisc.edu

Out of Reach: Place, Poverty, and the New American Welfare State

Jan. 29, 2009: 12:15-1:30 p.m., 8417 Social Science Building

Scott W. Allard, Associate Professor, School of Social Services Administration, Univ. of Chicago

READING ROOM

Tom Daschle Nominated as Secretary of U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services

President-elect Barack Obama has named Tom Daschle as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. Mr. Daschle will also lead the White House Office of Health Reform. Tom Daschle previously served as Senate Majority Leader for 18 months during the 107th Congress.

CMS New Regulations, Incentives for E-Prescribing Technology Adoption

CMS will begin a new electronic prescribing incentive program starting January 1, 2009. The program aims to promote the uptake of electronic prescribing, by rewarding physicians using this technology with a potential 2% increase in the Medicare payments. This increase would be added to the 1.1% payment increase that will occur in 2009. Additionally, physicians who participate in CMS's Physician Quality Reporting Initiative could receive another 2% increase, making a total of a 5.1% increase in Medicare payments possible for some physicians in 2009. CMS also plans to increase outpatient department payments by 3.6% in 2009, and an increase in payments to ambulatory surgery centers is also expected; payment levels for both, however, are tied to ascertainment of certain quality indicators.

States Gain Expanded Ability to Determine Medicaid Premiums, Co-Payments

A change in federal policy will give states control over setting premiums and co-payments charged to Medicaid beneficiaries. The rule will also give states the ability in some instances to refuse care or coverage to beneficiaries who fail to pay premiums or make co-payments for certain items or services.

One in Every Nine U.S. Children Lacked Health Coverage in 2007

Families USA reports that approximately one in nine children (11%) in the US had no health coverage in 2007. The level of uninsured children in the U.S, however, did decrease by 6% in the previous year, probably due to increased eligibility for public programs. Texas had the lowest rate of child health coverage, while Washington, D.C. had the highest rate.

Declines Reported in Cancer Mortality Rates, Long-Term Cancer Incidence

Recent data indicates that the incidence of cancer in the United States has started to decline in recent years and death rates from cancer have also maintained a downward trend. This represents the first time that both the incidence and mortality rates for cancer have declined at the same time. Researchers found that cancer incidence began declining in 1999, and that a long-term decline could be identified after the analysis of the 2005 data.