



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Population Health Institute

Translating Research into Policy and Practice

eNEWS – January 2009

VOL. 9, NO. 1

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:jknutson@pophealth.wisc.edu) with the word "subscribe" or "unsubscribe" in the subject line.

eNews 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

[Wisconsin Earns Perfect Score on National Preparedness Report](#)

Wisconsin is one of only five states that scored a perfect 10 out of 10 on the indicators for preparedness in the report *Ready or Not?*, which is published by the Trust for America's Health. The median score for all states in 2008 was 7.

Wisconsin Ranks 17th, down from 12th, in Annual America's Health Rankings

Wisconsin has dropped from a ranking of 12 in last year's report to a ranking of 17 in the 2008 version of the [America's Health Rankings](#) report. The decline reflects a larger downward trend in many of the indicators apparent since 1990. Disparities in health care, public health concerns in Milwaukee, and the prevalence of obesity and binge drinking represent some of the factors in the state likely to have lowered the aggregate measure.

Judge Approves Transfer From Patient Compensation Fund

A recent ruling determines that Wisconsin is able to use \$200 million of Wisconsin's medical malpractice fund in order to balance the budget. The fund, created to minimize the effects insurance costs caused by lawsuits have on the health care system, uses no taxpayers' dollars. The Wisconsin Medical Society has released a [statement of disapproval](#) following the [Court's decision](#) regarding the Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund transfer case. The statement reiterates WMS's position that the legislated transfer of \$200 million represented an improper use of the funds.

Wisconsin Puts Up Roadblock to Sobriety Checkpoints

Sobriety checkpoints can be used in 38 states and many researchers have concluded that they can reduce drinking-related crashes. However, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's tracker of legislators reports that 11 supported the roadblocks while 26 opposed them.

Prosecutors Call for Raising Alcohol Tax

Wisconsin's prosecutors called on the legislature to raise the tax on alcohol to pay for additional prosecutors and raise salaries to slow turnover among assistant district attorneys. The head of the state District Attorney's association says about 70 percent of crime in the state is related to alcohol.

Some Childless Adults Gain BadgerCare Coverage

BadgerCare Plus, as of January 1, provides a basic ["core" benefit plan for childless adults](#) who were previously enrolled in the General Assistance Medical Program (GAMP). Although the 2007-09 budget bill authorized covering childless adults, it did not include any new funding. The conversion of GAMP enrollees, most of whom are in Milwaukee County, can proceed because nearly all of that cost will be financed with current state, federal and local funding streams. However, new funding will be needed to expand the coverage of childless adults statewide. Until then, ceases to exist but new childless adult coverage is closed to new enrollment.

WI developing BadgerChoice plan for small business coverage

The BadgerChoice Program, first proposed last year by Governor Doyle, is being developed to pool firms with 50 or fewer workers for health insurance purchasing. The program will connect small business owners and their employees to buy private health insurance as one large group in order to qualify for lower premiums. [The Business Journal of Milwaukee](#) reports that the state has not yet decided whether businesses would be required to participate or whether individuals would be required to buy the health benefits. However, DHS Secretary Karen Timberlake, "said it is her preference that the program be mandatory of small businesses with 50 or fewer workers."

UW Scientist James Thomson Awarded 2008 Massry Prize

University of Wisconsin-Madison research scientist James Thomson has been awarded the prestigious Massry Prize along with two other stem cell researchers. In receiving the award, Thomson was recognized for “his isolation of human embryonic stem cells and his role in developing a possible alternative, the reprogrammed human cells.” Eight of the 21 former Massry prize winners received the Nobel Prize in later years.

Doyle Provides D.C. with List for Federal Stimulus Package Funding

Governor Jim Doyle has submitted a list to Washington officials of projects that could be started across the state with the help of funds from an additional federal stimulus package. Included in Doyle’s list are multiple provisions impacting health, including \$600 million for PCB cleanup in the Fox Valley, \$236.8 million for health care projects, and \$28 million for improvement of water safety in municipal systems. Doyle’s list of projects was formulated in response to a request from president-elect Obama for such lists from state governors.

WI Tobacco Quit Line Responds to Record-breaking Number of Calls

Wisconsin’s Tobacco Quit Line received an all time high of 39,000 calls throughout 2008; in sum the quit line has taken 122,000 in the seven years it has been operating. Wisconsin DHS Secretary Karen Timberlake attributed the record-breaking number of calls to multiple factors including the cigarette tax increase, the increasing influence of smoke-free places, and extended services available via the Tobacco Quit Line. Extended services (as of January 1, 2008) included access to a “free two-week starter kit of quit smoking-medications” after calling the line.

Audit Bureau Evaluates Wisconsin’s Medical Assistance Program

Wisconsin’s Legislative Audit Bureau has released findings of its evaluation of Medicaid, in both [full report](#) format and in a [report highlights](#) format. The report evaluates the integrity of Wisconsin’s Assistance program on the basis of measurements for the following indicators: “certifying that providers meet licensing and other program requirements, and decertifying those that do not; auditing provider claims to identify overpayments and payments for services that are not allowed under program rules; and recovering unallowable payments.”

Milwaukee County Overloaded with Applicants for Coverage

Milwaukee County's public assistance call center has been unable to meet the need and demand for service by applicants for BadgerCare, food stamps and other benefits. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reports that, according to one study, only about 100,000 out of 1 million callers each month get through to a case worker. A federal lawsuit says clients in need aren't getting the benefits they deserve.

Wisconsin Hospitals Affected by the Economic Recession

The Wisconsin Hospital Association released data comparing 2008 to 2007 showing for state hospitals a 73.5% decline in total margins, a 19.1% increase in charity care, a 19.6 percent increase in bad debt, an 80 percent decrease in “days cash on hand,” and challenges seeking capital for almost one-third of hospitals. Almost two-thirds of surveyed hospitals intend to cancel or cut back on capital projects.

[BadgerCare Plus Corrects Coverage for Continuously Eligible Newborns](#)

Under old policy conditions, children in Wisconsin who were born to “non-qualifying immigrant women” covered under the BadgerCare Plus Prenatal Program, did not meet the eligibility criteria for Continuously Eligible Newborn (CEN) coverage under the BadgerCare Plus program. As of January 1, 2009 this policy changed, allowing these children to qualify for CEN status. Certain exceptions will apply, including the case of an incarcerated mother or “pregnant minors with family income over 300% FPL who were eligible for BC+.”

[EPA Adds Dane County to the Pollution Violation List](#)

For the first time, Dane County is listed by the federal Environmental Protection Agency as being in violation of fine-particle pollution standards. City officials believe that Dane County could be back in compliance by April 2009. Although in order to stay in the safe zone, the Dane County Clean Air Coalition will need to continue to take steps to reduce emissions that lead to fine-particle pollution.

[Weston Village Board Passes Smoke Free Ordinance](#)

Weston follows an increasing number of communities to pass local smoke free air legislation. Other communities to pass ordinances recently include: Marshfield, Eau Claire, Fond du Lac, Middleton, Monona, and the unincorporated areas of Dane County.

[WI Medical Society Begins Radio-based Patient Education Campaign](#)

The Wisconsin Medical Society has initiated radio campaign messages to help patients learn about important health care issues such as stress management, preventive medicine, health communication, and physician staffing. The radio campaign is scheduled to run through 2009, starting with two 30 second messages.

[ThedaCare's 'No Layoffs' Practice May Improve Firm](#)

The ThedaCare system in the Fox Valley has adopted a goal of no company layoffs. Instead they are relying on techniques developed by Toyota Motor Corp. to find ways for employees to do their jobs more efficiently. This can save money in the long run because of the high costs of hiring and firing people.

[RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS](#)

[New NCSL Autism Legislation Database](#)

The National Conference of State Legislatures has released its own Autism Legislation Database. Starting with the 2008 session, and updated through the present, the resource presents a searchable network of data.

[Women's Health USA 2008 Available Online](#)

The Health Resources and Services Administration, housed under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently released the seventh edition of this data resource. Data includes information on population characteristics, health status, and health services utilization.

New Health Care Quality Improvement Resource: www.WhyNotTheBest.org

The Commonwealth Fund launched a new resource that allows health care providers and consumers to easily compare 4,500 hospitals, track changes over time against different benchmarks and download health care improvement tools.

Recent GAO Reports and Testimonies

- Medicare Advantage: Characteristics, Financial Risks, and Disenrollment Rates of Beneficiaries in Private Fee-for-Service Plans. Available in [Summary](#), [Highlights](#) and [Full Report](#) format.
- Medicare Part D: Opportunities Exist for Improving Information Sent to Enrollees and Scheduling the Annual Election Period. Available in [Summary](#), [Highlights](#) and [Full Report](#) format.
- Medicare Advantage Organizations: Actual Expenses and Profits Compared to Projections for 2006. Available in [Summary](#) and [Full Report](#) format.

Recent CBO Publications and Reports

- [Key Issues in Analyzing Major Health Insurance Proposals](#), December 2008: includes pdf, charts and blog.
- [Budget Options, Volume 1: Health Care](#), December 2008: includes pdf, charts and blog.

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

- [Living on the Edge: Health Care Expenses Strain Family Budgets](#)
- [Word of Mouth and Physician Referrals Still Drive Health Care Provider Choice](#)

Select KFF Issue Briefs, Policy Briefs and Fact Sheets

- [Short Term Options for Medicaid in a Recession](#)
- [Medicaid: A Primer, 2008](#)
- [Medicare: A Primer](#)
- [Women's health insurance coverage](#) and also see [previous report](#).

[New Resources and Updates Available at Statehealthfacts.org](#)

- Housing Foreclosures and Changes in Unemployment and Food Stamp Participation
- Percentage of Adult Population Aged 21-64 Years Who Reported a Disability, 2007
- Federal Matching Rate (FMAP) for SCHIP, FY2010
- Federal Matching Rate (FMAP) for Medicaid and Multiplier, FY 2010
- SCHIP Allotments and Projected Federal SCHIP Financing, FY2009
- Monthly Number of Persons Participating in the Food Stamp Program
- Unemployment Rate (November), 2007-2008
- Teen Death Rate, 2005

[New Resource Page for Care and Coverage of the Nation's Children](#)

The Kaiser Family Foundation has several resources that help explain the state of children's health and coverage including state level data on children's coverage and overviews of SCHIP and Medicaid.

[Spatial Patterns of Natural Hazards Mortality in the United States](#)

The study plotted natural hazard mortality data in spatial form. The researchers found that in areas in the South people were more likely to die from natural hazards compared to the rest of the country. Most deaths occurred from severe chronic winter and summer weather. [Click here for the full study.](#)

[New Model Estimates Emergency Evacuation Needs for Health Care Facilities](#)

AHRQ's web based *Mass Evacuation Transportation Planning Model* will help federal, state, and local emergency planners estimate the vehicles, drivers, road capacity and other resources needed to evacuate health care facilities in disaster areas.

[Federal Five-Star System and Comparison Tool for U.S. Nursing Home Quality](#)

A new rating system for nursing home quality is now available for public viewing on Medicare's Web site under [Nursing Home Compare](#). The five star quality rating system represents a summary measure of the data collected through the latest staffing report, as well as data collected through state health inspection surveys, which specifically measure nursing home quality via 10 indicator measures of quality over the latest nine months. In Wisconsin about 15% of the 388 nursing homes received the top-notch five star rating.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

UW CWHR Women's Health Forum

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

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

[MS in Clinical Investigation Degree Program- Brown Bag Information Session](#)

Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (ICTR)

January 21, 2009, 12:00 -1:00 p.m., 1258 Health Science Learning Center

Contact Information: Debora Treu: dltreu@wisc.edu or 262-3768

Unpacking Economism and Remapping the Terrain of Global Health

Matthew Sparke, University of Washington

Jan. 30, 2009: 3:30 p.m., 180 Science Health, UW-Madison

["Wisconsin and the World: Working Together for Sustainable Health"](#)

UW-Madison Center for Global Health

Tony Goldberg, PhD, DVM, MS, Professor of Epidemiology at the UW-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine

February 4, 2009, 5:00-9:00 p.m., 1306 Health Science Learning Center

Contact Information: Betsy Teigland: teigland@wisc.edu, (608) 262-4801

Population Health Sciences Seminars

Sejal Patel, PhD, February 9, 2009, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Eugene L. Lengerich, VMD, MS, February 16, 2009, 12:00-1:00 p.m.,

Tiffany Green, PhD February 23, 2009, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Tasha E. Fingerlin, PhD, January 26, 2009, 12:00- 1:00 p.m.,

1309 Health Learning Science Center

Information: Patty Grubb: pagrubb@wisc.edu, (608) 265-0516

READING ROOM

"Making Medical Homes Work: Moving from Concept to Practice"

A new report from the Center for Studying Health System Change examines practical considerations in implementing the medical homes. It discusses four critical operational issues for a successful program: (1) how to qualify physician practices as medical homes; (2) how to match patients to their medical homes; (3) how to engage patients and other providers to work with medical homes in care coordination; and (4) how to pay practices that serve as medical homes.

New Rule Protects Health Workers Who Refuse Care as "Morally Objectionable"

A Bush administration new rule will allow health workers to refrain from the provision of health care that they find to be morally objectionable. The new regulation links compliance with the provision of federal funds to "any state or local government, hospital, health plan, clinic or other entity."

CMS Promotes More State Autonomy in Medicaid Program Design

A new CMS rule provides four "benchmark" plans for states to use for Medicaid coverage design. States also gain the ability to pay a percentage of an employee premium—effectively allowing states to subsidize worker participation in employer coverage that might otherwise be unaffordable. The new Medicaid rule is structured to give states more autonomy in the decision-making process of determining the structure of Medicaid-based plan design.

First Government Sponsored Summit on Minority Health and Health Disparities

The National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities organized the first ever summit on minority health and health disparities sponsored by the government this past month. The "Science of Eliminating Health Disparities" summit lasted over a period of three days.

Race a Factor in Receiving Transplant Treatment for Bone Marrow Cancer

A study conducted at The Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Center Milwaukee found that African Americans were only half as likely as Whites to receive a bone-marrow transplant. Survival rates for Whites and African Americans who receive the transplants are identical.

Racial Gap Widens as Colorectal Cancer Death Rate Drops

A new American Cancer Society report, *Colorectal Cancer Facts and Figures 2008-2010*, shows that although the overall mortality rates for colorectal cancer are decreasing, mortality rates for African-American men and women were 48% higher than white men and women in 2005. Part

of the reason for the disparity is due to less screening of African Americans leading to a later diagnosis of the disease.

[Interruptions in Medicaid Coverage and Risk for Hospitalization](#)

A new study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that adult California Medicaid beneficiaries who had interruptions in their benefits had a higher risk of hospitalization for ambulatory care-sensitive conditions than did patients with continuous coverage. The authors suggest implementation of policies that reduce frequency of coverage interruptions as a possible solution.

[Health Care That Puts a Computer on the Team](#)

Marshfield Clinic is highlighted in this *New York Times* article examining the role of computerized patient records and health information technology. Marshfield Clinic demonstrates how computerized records can improve the quality and efficiency of health care and add to overall knowledge of evidence-based medical practice.

[Geography Has Role in Medicare Cancer Coverage](#)

The *New York Times* explores variations in Medicare coverage for new treatments and technologies. While many Medicare claims are paid routinely across all states, discrepancies arise when new treatments and technologies. Thousands of these types of coverage issues have been decided region by region instead of on a national level.

[Health Coverage in A Recession](#)

This Urban Institute brief examines how Medicaid and SCHIP programs respond to a recession. Using 14 years of state-level data, one finding was that for every increase of 1 percent in the national unemployment rate, Medicaid and SCHIP enrollment increase by 1 million people.

[U.S. Supreme Court Ruling Allows Light Cigarette Lawsuits](#)

The ruling allows states to use state consumer protection laws to sue manufacturers of light cigarettes for false claims made in their marketing of cigarettes. This ruling clears the way for at least 40 lawsuits in 20 states to proceed.

Massachusetts Health Care Reform – Two Reports

The Urban Institute has published two reports on this topic. "[The Impact of Health Reform on Underinsurance in Massachusetts: Do the Insured Have Adequate Protection?](#)" finds that the program both provides new coverage for previously uninsured and improves the quality of coverage for those with insurance coverage. "[Who Gained the Most under Health Reform in Massachusetts?](#)" shows that the greatest gains in insurance coverage were reported by subgroups that started out with higher levels of uninsurance -- lower-income adults, younger adults and those in minority groups.