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Translating Research into Policy and Practice

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Population Health Institute

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*, Wispolitics.com, 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

WI H1N1 Cases Confirmed; Governor Declares Public Health Emergency

Gov. Doyle announced a public health emergency in response to the Swine Flu A (H1N1) presence in the state. The Executive Order will speed the delivery of anti-viral medications to the public. Wisconsin has [ranked among the best](#) nationally for preparedness in a national pandemic flu report. Recently, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services has entered discussions with the [Wisconsin Hospital Association](#) to assure that uninsured and undocumented persons can get appropriate H1N1 care and medications to treat the virus.

State Budget Committee Removes Some and Retains Other Non-Fiscal Policy Items

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau put together [a list of non-fiscal policy items](#) in the Governor's biennial budget proposal that is currently being debated by the Joint Finance Committee. The Joint Finance Committee has removed 45 of these non-fiscal policy items from the biennial budget bill. The committee did retain several policy provisions related to health insurance.

Among contentious issues, the committee [retained three changes to Wisconsin's tort system](#) intended to increase recoveries for plaintiffs. These changes related to contributory negligence, joint and several liability, and jury instructions.

State Might be First to Require Cochlear Implants Covered

The State Legislature has passed a bill that Governor Doyle has promised to sign into law. The bill requires private health insurance plans to cover cochlear implants, hearing aids and related treatment for people under age 18.

Medicaid Rate Reform Underway: DHS Seeking \$415M in Cuts

The Governor's budget would require the Dept. of Health Services (DHS) to find an additional \$415 million to cut from Medicaid and related parts of the DHS budget in 2009-11 – including roughly \$140 million in state GPR funds and \$275 million in federal matching funds. DHS recently launched an effort called the ForwardHealth Rate Reform Project, which will develop recommendations for how to achieve the cuts.

WI Receives \$1M Grant to Strengthen BadgerCare Plus Enrollment

Wisconsin has been awarded a \$1 million, four-year grant by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to improve enrollment and retention of eligible children in the BadgerCare Plus program. WI is one of 8 states awarded a grant under the new Maximizing Enrollment for Kids initiative, which provides both funding and technical assistance to the participating states.

New COBRA Subsidies in Effect for Wisconsin Employers; April 18 Deadline

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides a [65% premium subsidy for COBRA](#) health insurance coverage for up to nine months, for workers who are involuntarily terminated between Sept. 1, 2008, and Dec. 31, 2009 and whose annual incomes do not exceed \$125,000 for individuals or \$250,000 for families. [The U.S. Department of Labor has directed](#) that employers or their health plans have until April 18 to notify former employees (who lost their jobs after Sept. 1, 2008) of their right to pay reduced premiums for COBRA health insurance. The [WI Insurance Commissioner's Office](#) is working on model notice forms.

[WI BadgerCare Express Enrollment Moves Closer to Standard for Federal Bonus Funds](#)

The new federal SCHIP legislation, passed in February, includes provisions that, if met, extend bonus funding to states. As of April 1, Wisconsin moves closer to meeting these standards by expanding opportunities for Express Enrollment (EE), formerly referred to as “presumptive eligibility.” EE allows pregnant women and certain children to receive health care coverage under BadgerCare Plus while a full application is being processed by their local county or tribal agency. EE eligibility remains until the last day of the month following the month in which they applied. View a new [report from National Academy for State Health Policy on Express Enrollment](#).

[Assembly Democrats Pass Bill Addressing Pre-Existing Condition Limits](#)

AB 100, the Pre-Existing Condition Modification Bill, was passed and changes how insurance companies will cover pre-existing conditions.

[Cooperative Makes Health Care Available to Farmers](#)

Dr. Byron Crouse has partnered with the Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives (WFC) on a new program called the Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin. In its first year and a half of existence, the co-op has not only saved farmers money, but also improved their health coverage.

[Patient Satisfaction Scores Improved this Year at Madison's Hospitals](#)

This year's survey data, released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is from July 2007 to June 2008. Most scores improved this year at Madison's hospitals, especially at Meriter, which continued to score lower than St. Mary's and UW Hospital but moved above the national average.

[Consumer Group Rates Wisconsin 49th in Physician Discipline; Report Flawed](#)

[A report by Public Citizen](#), a Washington DC-based advocacy group, on the rate of disciplinary action against physicians relative to overall physician population, again ranks Wisconsin 49th out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. However, a team that includes UW Population Health researchers in 2006 reported its findings of serious flaws with the methods and validity of the Public Citizen data. These findings were [published in the Wisconsin Medical Journal](#).

[Specialty Hospitals in Milwaukee Rank Best in Area](#)

The rankings, available on Medicare's "[Hospital Compare](#)" Web site, are based on patient surveys required by the federal government. The surveys gauge how well doctors and nurses communicate, whether patients believe they received help as soon as they wanted, and whether they would recommend a hospital to others.

[Marshfield Clinic Plans New Dental School to Focus on Rural, Poor Areas](#)

The Marshfield Clinic and its affiliated Family Health Center have are working to start a second dental school in Wisconsin. The school would be one of very few located in rural areas around the country and would have the goal of training dentists interested in practicing in rural and other underserved areas – a need documented by the [Governor's Task Force to Improve Access to Oral Health](#).

["Counties brace for mental health budget shift"](#)

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reports that Governor Doyle's proposed biennial budget shifts \$14 million in costs to counties of committing some mental health patients to the two state mental health institutes. Doyle's budget eliminates the state's 40% share of paying for youth and elderly commitments to Mendota Mental Health Institute in Madison and Winnebago Mental Health Institute near Oshkosh. The federal government covers the remaining 60%.

[Study of Socioeconomic Disparities in Breast Cancer Death Rates Funded](#)

The Medical College of Wisconsin received a five-year, \$2.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health's National Cancer Institute to examine disparities in breast cancer death rates based on socioeconomic status.

[Lawmakers Propose Beer Tax](#)

Representative Terese Berceau (D. Madison) is proposing a bill to increase the beer tax from \$2 a barrel to \$10 a barrel, or about a 2.5 cent increase per bottle. Governor Doyle has not supported the proposal.

[Milwaukee Emissions Fall Disproportionately on Poor Neighborhoods](#)

A study by researchers at the University of Massachusetts correlates toxic emissions from factories with the ethnic and economic makeup of areas around them. Read the [full study](#).

[Insurance Commissioner Reports on Adverse Health Insurer Claim Decisions](#)

The Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI) recently issued its [annual summary](#) of requests by consumers of independent external review of adverse health insurer claim decisions.

[La Crosse County Aims for Number 1 in State Health Ranking](#)

A health committee has set a goal to make La Crosse County the healthiest in Wisconsin by 2015. The Population Health Committee of the La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium will sponsor a health summit April 24 as a first step toward that goal.

[WI Granted \\$6.7 Million for Lead Abatement and Healthy Homes Program](#)

The Healthy Homes initiative works to decrease environmental risk factors in homes, making them safer and healthier for those who live there. Trained staff will conduct healthy home assessments and help households develop and implement intervention plans to make homes safer and healthier. The Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control program provides grants to local communities to identify and control lead hazards in homes.

[Polls Find Overwhelming Support for Smoke-Free Laws](#)

A summary of new polls in three smoke-free Wisconsin communities released by a national pollster show overwhelming support for the communities' smoke-free workplace ordinances and that support increased after the new rules were put in place.

[Wisconsinites Live Longer Than Most Americans](#)

[The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's](#) new study "Building a Healthier America" analyzed health factors outside of medical care such as lifestyle, housing and education. Health Group Director James Marks says average life expectancy in Wisconsin is 77.9 years, a little better than the national average. The state's shortest average lifespan is in Milwaukee County at 75.7 years, the longest is in Calumet County at 80.1 years.

[Wisconsin Will Use Federal Stimulus Funds to Boost Children's Health](#)

Wisconsin health officials hope to expand their efforts to protect the state's children against preventable diseases with nearly \$4M in funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

[Remington Appointed New Associate Dean for Public Health](#)

Dr. Patrick Remington has been appointed the first associate dean for public health at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health.

[Lucey to lead MCW Consortium on Public and Community Health](#)

Paula Lucey, RN, MSN, former director of the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services, has been elected chairperson of The Medical College of Wisconsin's Consortium on Public and Community Health.

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS

[Medical Homes and Retail Clinics: Policy Considerations for Accountable Health Care](#)

New Issue Brief by the UW Population Health Institute. Also, materials from [recent legislative briefing](#) on the topic are available at the website of the UWPHI Evidence-Based Health Policy Project. The [Legislative Council Study Committee](#) has drafted a [bill to support Medical Homes projects](#) in Wisconsin.

[Wisconsin Local Data on Poverty Status and Health Insurance Coverage](#)

Data from the 2005-2007 Wisconsin Family Health Survey, by region and for most counties on health insurance coverage and poverty status, newly released by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

[Hospital Process Measures: Only One Piece of the Quality Improvement Puzzle](#)

This commentary discusses the performance measure of the process of health care delivery. The authors investigated whether the process measures used in CMS's Hospital Compare are predictive of hospitals' quality beyond the processes that are directly measured.

[Kaiser Health Tracking Poll- April 2009](#)

The latest poll finds that 6 out of 10 Americans say that they or a member of their household have delayed or skipped needed care in the past year.

[Consumer Health Information in Multiple Languages from NLM](#)

This new service, linked from the MedlinePlus homepage, benefits people who prefer to read consumer health information in their native language. It also helps the information professionals and health care providers who serve them. The new collection contains 2,500+ links to information in more than 40 languages and covers nearly 250 Health Topics.

[Trends in Medicaid Physician Fees: 2003-2008](#)

Medicaid physician fees rose below the rate of inflation, causing a reduction in real fees. Only Primary Care fees rose at the rate of inflation during this time period.

[New Performance Data Added to WhyNotTheBest.org](#)

The most recent quarterly data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have been added to WhyNotTheBest.org.

[The Challenge of Fetal Mortality](#)

This report examines fetal death data from the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS). Vital statistics fetal death data are generally presented for fetal deaths of 20 weeks of gestation or more.

[Maximizing Quality and Value in Medicaid: Using ROI Forecasting](#)

In a new Commonwealth Fund issue brief, researchers from the Center for Health Care Strategies illustrate how return on investment forecasting can help Medicaid programs allocate resources efficiently and identify ways to maximize value in health care purchasing.

[Beyond Parity: Primary Care Doctors' Perspectives on Mental Health Care Access](#)

A study in *Health Affairs* reports that two-thirds of primary care physicians could not get outpatient mental health services for their patients in 2004-2005. Shortages of mental health care providers, health plan barriers, and lack of coverage or inadequate coverage were all cited by PCPs as important barriers to mental health care access.

[Rehospitalizations among Patients in the Medicare Fee-for-Service Program](#)

A study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* shows that one of five Medicare beneficiaries discharged from the hospital are readmitted within 30 days, and half of patients admitted for reasons other than surgery are readmitted without having seen a doctor in follow-up. Watch a [webinar](#) by The Commonwealth Fund on rehospitalizations

[Key Health and Health Care Indicators by Race/Ethnicity and State](#)

The Kaiser Family Foundation issued an updated fact sheet showing variations across states and racial and ethnic groups for six key health and health care indicators.

GAO: [Many Underserved Areas Lack Health Center Site, Data Needed](#), [Highlights](#)

New updates available at Statehealthfacts.org

- [Demographics and the economy](#)
- [State Laws Addressing Childhood Obesity](#)
- [Occupational Fatalities and Suicide](#)
- [Colorectal Cancer](#)
- [Medicaid and CHIP updates](#)
- [Providers and Service Use updates](#)
- [HIV/AIDS updates](#)

National Guidance on New SCHIP Reauthorization

["CHIP Tips"](#) - Series of implementation briefs, jointly produced by the Kaiser Family Foundation's Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured and Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, examines new opportunities for covering children.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

[Childhood Obesity: Causes and Opportunities for Prevention](#)

Steve Gortmaker, Harvard School of Public Health
May 7, 2009, 7:30 a.m., 1345 Health Sciences Learning Center

[Bracing for Impact- Climate Change Adaptation in Wisconsin](#)

Auditorium Room 1111, Genetics-Biotechnology Center
Jonathon Patz and Steve Vavrus, May 7, 2009, 7:00- 8:15 p.m.
Karl Martin and Michael Meyer, May 14, 2009, 7:00-8:00 p.m.
David Mladenoff & Sara Hotchkiss June 4, 2009, 7:00-8:00 p.m.
Contact: 608-261-1503, mnotaro@wisc.edu

[Do Diabetes Quality Indicators Predict Better Patient-Centered Outcomes?](#)

Dr. James W. Mold, MD
Health Innovations Program Seminar
May 7, 2009, 3:00 p.m., 1309 Health Sciences Learning Center

[Spring 2009 Public Health Symposium](#)

May 8, 2009, 8:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Fluno Center

[Preventing Type II Diabetes Among High Risk Youth](#)

Margaret Grey, Yale University

May 8, 2009, 2:00 p.m., Health Sciences Learning Center

Contact: 608-263-5169; skriesch@wisc.edu

[“Teaching Outside the MPH: Public Health from K to College to Clinical”](#)

Richard Riegelman, George Washington U School of Public Health and Health Services

May 11, 2009, 12:00 p.m.- 1:00 p.m., 1309 Health Sciences Learning Center

[Addressing Alcohol Abuse through Public Policy: Finding Common Ground](#)

Thursday, May 14, 2009, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

University of Wisconsin Eau Claire

Davies Center, 105 Garfield Ave

Satellite Sites: broadcast via interactive video conference at 5 sites around the state:

UW-Green Bay, UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Stevens Point and UW-Superior

[Racial Disparity in Preterm Birth](#)

Jay Iams, Ohio State University Medical Center

May 14, 2009, 7:30 a.m., 1345 Health Sciences Learning Center

Contact: Barbara Anderson: 263-8542; banderson@pediatrics.wisc.edu

[Academy Health Annual Research Meeting](#)

June 28-30, 2009, Hilton Chicago, Chicago, IL

[Population Health Sciences 50th Anniversary Symposium](#)

August 27-28, 2009, including dinner, poster session, and featured speakers

Speakers include: Sharokh Javaheri, MD. Kay Dickersin, PhD. Dennis Fryback, PhD

Questions: pophealth50@doll.pophealth.wisc.edu

[READING ROOM](#)

[Institute of Medicine Releases Conflicts of Interest Report](#)

The Institute of Medicine calls for voluntary and regulatory measures to be taken to address conflict of interest issues between doctors and academic medical centers and their relationships to pharmaceutical companies and the medical technology industry. In a [related article](#), one doctor with ties to the pharmaceutical industry discusses strategies and barriers to adding more restrictions to pharmaceutical involvement in research and gifts to doctors.

[Diverse National Coalition Converges on Health Reform: Debates Remain](#)

The Health Reform Dialogue, a large and diverse coalition of national groups, has reached preliminary agreement on a proposal intended to half the number of uninsured Americans. The 18 signators to the recommendations include hospitals, insurers, employers, physicians, drug makers and consumers. The report they released calls for creating an "individual mandate" that would require every American to have some type of health coverage. Anyone who cannot afford insurance would be eligible for subsidies or expanded government programs such as Medicaid. [The Washington Post](#) and the [Commonwealth Fund](#)

discuss the debates on how to fund the program, and whether to include a public program as one coverage option. [The New York Times has opined its support for a new Public Plan for Health Insurance.](#)

Other Views:

[NEJM Perspective on Health Reform Legislation](#)

[Richard Gephardt NYT Op-Ed: Health Care Cautions](#)

[AJPH author on State Reform Preceding Federal Reform](#) (subscription required)

[Washington Post Columnist on Five Barriers and Potential Solutions](#)

[New GAO Report on Crowd-Out in State Children's Health Insurance Program](#)

“CMS Should Improve Efforts to Assess whether SCHIP Is Substituting for Private Insurance”
Government Accountability Office, February 20, 2009.

[Increasing Access to Dental Care in Medicaid: Targeted Programs for Four Populations](#)

The National Academy for State Health Policy describes strategies that several states have used to better address the oral health needs of underserved groups by: enhancing the training of dental professionals, broadening service delivery sites, enhancing state contracts, and using existing safety net pathways.

[The Public Health Response to Diabetes- Two Steps Forward, One Step Back](#) (subscription required)

This *JAMA* commentary discusses national surveillance trends from 1990 to 2005 and analyzes the consequences of public health efforts towards the diabetes epidemic in the country.

[Crave Man: Former FDS Commissioner Explores Food Cravings](#)

David Kessler, former commissioner of the FDA, explores in the *Washington Post* the question of why he cannot resist certain foods. His theory has implications for the increasing number of Americans struggling with obesity as well as for policymakers and health providers.

[Believing in Treatments that Don't Work](#)

As Washington debates health care reform, emergency room physician Dr. David H. Newman explores how medical ideology often gets in the way of evidence-based medicine.

[Doctors are Opting out of Medicare](#)

Many people, just as they become eligible for Medicare, discover that the insurance rug has been pulled out from under them.

[NCHS: Increase in Teen Birth Rate for the Second Year in a Row](#)

The National Center for Health Statistics reports that the US teen birth rate increased by 1% in 2007. The new data finds that birth rates decreased by 2% among Hispanic teens, while rising by 1% for non-Hispanic black teens. The report also shows that birth rates for unmarried women rose to unprecedented levels in 2007.