



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Population Health Institute

Translating Research into Policy and Practice

**eNEWS – October 2009**

**VOL. 9, NO. 8**

**UW Population Health Institute**

**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

### BadgerCare Plus Core Plan Enrollment Suspended

On Friday, October 9, the State suspended enrollment in the new BadgerCare Plus Core Plan for adults without dependent children. Everyone who applies after Friday will be added to a waiting list. The program can afford to cover approximately 54,000 individuals and nearly 60,000 applications have been received so far. The Department of Health Services (DHS) began taking applications for the plan on June 15, 2009. Governor Doyle also directed DHS to design a proposal to offer some basic level of coverage for those on the Core Plan waiting list. The plan would be self-funded and not include any taxpayer funding, but would offer some form of coverage while individuals waited to be enrolled in the Core Plan.

### **DHS finalizes ForwardHealth Rate Reform Plan**

DHS has developed a plan to save \$205 million GPR in the current biennium. The revised plan retains the Evidence Based Health Care Initiative, but reduces the projected savings by \$7 million.

### **State Health Officials Urge Wisconsinites to Get Seasonal Flu Vaccine**

State health officials are encouraging individuals to get immunized against seasonal influenza now, before the coming winter season. There is plenty of seasonal influenza vaccine on hand, and health care providers and local health departments should be able to immunize all who wish to be vaccinated.

### **Bill Passes: WI Women Allowed to Breast-Feed in Any Public or Private Location**

AB 57 passed on September 22, 2009 permitting mothers to breast-feed in any public or private location where she is otherwise authorized to be. The goal is to protect women who breast-feed in malls, restaurants and other places from harassment. Violators could face fines of up to \$200.

### **Milwaukee County Struggles to Address Mental Health Needs for BC Enrollees**

With the rollout of the BadgerCare Plus Core Plan for Childless Adults, Milwaukee county has had trouble meeting the demand for mental health services due to a dearth of providers willing to take BadgerCare Plus in the area.

### **City of Milwaukee to Offer Prescription Drug Discount Cards**

The City of Milwaukee has begun offering free discount cards that can reduce the retail price of prescription drugs by as much as 20%. There is no enrollment form required to get a card, no membership fee, and city residents and their family members can use the card any time their prescriptions are not covered by insurance.

### **Grants to Improve Health Birth Outcomes, Reduce Disparities in Four WI Counties**

The Wisconsin Partnership Program (WPP) — Oversight and Advisory Committee (OAC) announced the availability of Community Action Planning Grants through the [Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families \(LIHF\)](#). The WPP will award up to four Community Action Planning Grants to targeted Wisconsin communities to create plans for improving healthy birth outcomes and reduce African American infant health disparities. These communities are Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha and Beloit.

### **New Census Data: WI Leads on Health Care Coverage, Disparities**

New data released by the U.S. Census Bureau shows that Wisconsin remains a national leader in making health insurance available to residents. 9.1% of residents went without health insurance for all or part of 2008, placing fifth best in the nation. However, among other on-going problems, Wisconsin continues to have one of the nation's largest income disparities between White and African American Households.

### **DHHS: WI Uninsured Increases 37% Since 2001**

U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius released a new state by state analysis of last week's U.S. Census numbers regarding the uninsured. Among the findings: The number of uninsured in Wisconsin has increased from 390,000 in 2001 to 535,000 in 2008. The percent of non-elderly adults without insurance increased from 9.9% to 13%. And this number

only considers people who are uninsured for an entire year – it does not include people in Wisconsin who have lost coverage more recently through the recession, or who had shorter gaps in their coverage. The percentage of people with employer-based coverage decreased from 81.7% of the population in 2001 to 74.3% in 2008. And the proportion of workers from Wisconsin without insurance has increased, from 9.1% in 2001 to 12.3% in 2008.

### **Premiums Outpace Paychecks in Wisconsin**

Since 2000, health insurance premiums paid by Wisconsin employers for family and individual health coverage rose 4.6 times faster than earnings, according to a new report released by Families USA. "Costly Coverage: Premiums Outpace Paychecks In Wisconsin" reports that, for a family health insurance policy, average employees' share of premiums have increased 141 percent, or 6.9 times faster than wages.

### **Wisconsin Business Featured Nationally for Employee Wellness Initiative**

A new Commonwealth Fund Case Study focuses on Wisconsin printing company Quad/Graphics. "Transforming Employer-Sponsored Health Care Through Workplace Primary Care and Wellness Programs," the report concludes that worksite health clinics that focus on comprehensive primary care and wellness have helped lower costs and improve care for employees. This approach transforms the role of employers from mere purchasers of health insurance to investors in employee health and productivity.

### **Rural Jackson County Receives \$20,000 to Improve Health and Safety**

Jackson County was awarded a \$20,000 grant from the Rural Hospital Flexibility Program of Wisconsin Office of Rural Health to improve the public health and safety of the residents. The county is ranked 66<sup>th</sup> out of 72 counties in the state according to the Population Health Institute's [Wisconsin County Health Rankings](#).

### **La Crosse County Receives \$333,000 to Combat Childhood Obesity**

La Crosse County is receiving a \$333,000 grant from the Department of Health and Human Services National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion program. The grant will be used for the county's *Heal Obesity* program, an effort to prevent childhood obesity.

### **UW-Extension Receives Award for Evidence-Based Interventions**

The University of Wisconsin-Extension was named one of 27 organizations to receive the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) 2009 Science and Service Award. These awards recognize exemplary implementation of evidence-based interventions that have been shown to prevent and/or treat mental illnesses and substance abuse.

### **La Crosse Cited as "Unwitting Birthplace Of 'Death Panel' Myth"**

*The Washington Post* reports on La Crosse, WI, a town of 52,000 where nearly everyone of a certain age has an advance-care directive. La Crosse became a pioneer in addressing end-of-life questions in the mid-1980s, with Gundersen Lutheran hospital leading efforts to ensure that the care provided to patients in their final months complies with their wishes. The hospital recently took the lead in seeking to have Medicare compensate physicians for advising patients on end-of-life planning. House Democrats inserted that provision into their health-care reform bill, but later dropped the provision when it became subject to widespread distortion.

### **Wisconsin Hospitals Continue to Invest in Health Information Technology**

A new [report](#) from the Wisconsin Hospital Association documents the degree to which Wisconsin hospitals are investing in health information technology, in spite of the heavy start-up and operating costs. By the end of Fiscal Year 2008, 50 percent of Wisconsin hospitals were classified as “high” users of health information technology.

### **RESEARCH AND PROGRAM TOOLS**

#### **Wisconsin Ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in Updated Commonwealth Fund Scorecard**

The Commonwealth Fund's State Scorecard on Health System Performance assesses states' performance on health care relative to achievable benchmarks for 38 indicators of access, quality, costs, and health outcomes.

#### **RWJF Highlights BadgerCare Lessons for Reformers**

A newly released RWJF SHARE report, Lab Report #1: Evaluating State Efforts To Improve Access To Health Care, highlights lessons for reformers on what strategies work and don't work for reforming our nation's health care system. One of the reports focuses on the evaluation of Wisconsin's BadgerCare Plus program.

#### **New and Updated Resources from the Commonwealth Fund:**

- [Small Business Owners and Employees Would See Lower Costs, More Comprehensive Health Coverage from Health Reform Proposals](#)
- New tools related to long-term health care are now available in the [Innovations](#) section of [commonwealthfund.org](http://commonwealthfund.org).

#### **New and Updated Resources from the Kaiser Family Foundation:**

- [Strategies for Reining In Medicare Spending Through Delivery-System Reforms](#)
- [Medicaid and State-Funded Coverage Eligibility Levels for Low-Income Adults](#)
- [What is Comparative Effectiveness Research?](#)
- [50-State Database Provides Comprehensive Source on Medicaid Benefits](#)
- [Data Spotlight Analyzes Medicare Part D Drug Plans For 2010](#)
- [Brief Profiles the Health Coverage and Status of American Indians and Alaska Natives](#)
- [KaiserFdu.org's Health Policy Picks](#)
- [Resources for Understanding the National Health Reform Debate](#)
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#### **Census Bureau Estimates May Undercount Medicaid Recipients, Over-count Uninsured**

New findings reveal that estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau likely overstate the number of uninsured people and understate the number of people with Medicaid coverage because of an inability of people to recall their insurance status accurately from the previous year.

#### **Rural Health Reform Advocacy Toolkit**

The National Rural Health Association maintains a Health Reform Toolkit to provide information about how the health reform debate is addressing issues relating to rural health.

### **Health Premiums Rise 5%, Beating Inflation Again**

The average cost of health insurance provided by employers crossed another threshold this year, topping \$13,000 for family coverage for the first time, according to the annual survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Health Research & Educational Trust, an affiliate of the American Hospital Association.

### **The Cost of Failure to Enact Health Reform Implications for States**

Researchers from the Urban Institute used their Health Insurance Policy Simulation Model to estimate how coverage and cost trends would change between now and 2019 if the health system is not reformed. The report provides a state-by-state analysis with best, middle, and worst case scenarios. Note: It is not clear if findings for Wisconsin account for recent expansions of BadgerCare coverage, as baseline assumptions for the simulations appear to have been set at 2007 eligibility levels.

## **EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Wisconsin Quality & Safety Forum**

October 19-20, 2009, Glacier Canyon Resort, Wisconsin Dells

### **Quality Week 2009**

Events on-going during October 19-22, 2009

### **Global Health Seminar Series: Presentation by Dr. Denis Nansera**

October 28, 2009, 5pm-6pm, 1335 HSLC

### **Monday Seminar Series**

Mondays, 12:00-1:00 PM, Health Sciences Learning Center, Room 1309

## **READING ROOM**

### **Tax on Soft-Drinks Could Increase Revenue and Reduce Obesity in U.S.**

A penny-per-ounce tax on soda and other sugary drinks would raise about \$150 billion over a decade and encourage people to cut back on soft drinks thereby reducing their daily caloric intake by at least 10 percent.

### **Overeating, Alcohol Abuse, Depression Heavily Intertwined for Women**

Researchers found that alcohol use and obesity predicted later depression in some groups of women. The study found that women who had alcohol use disorders at age 24 were more than three times as likely to be obese at age 27, compared to women who did not. Also, women who were obese at age 27 were more than twice as likely to be depressed at age 30, and women who were depressed at age 27 had an increased risk of alcohol disorders at age 30. For young men, the disorders did not appear to have similar connections over time.

### **Mistrust Among Patients, Providers and Insurers Could Harm**

A study recently published in *Health Services Research* online found that persons who were more mistrustful of the health care system were more likely to delay needed care or postpone receiving care, even when they perceived they needed it.

### **Need to Contain Costs and Improve Care for Children in Medicaid and CHIP**

Spending in Medicaid and CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) is highest among children with chronic health problems: 10 percent of all those enrolled account for 72 percent of the spending. Among these high-spending children, two-thirds have chronic health care problems. In contrast, 30 percent of those children enrolled rarely used the programs.

### **Less Alcohol Use is a Long-Term Benefit to Higher Minimum Legal Drinking Age**

A new study finds that adults who were legally able to purchase alcohol in their states before the age of 21 are more likely than others to be alcoholics or drug addicts.

### **Significant Shortage in Services for People Suffering from Domestic Violence**

A study in *Health Affairs* found that federally funded programs targeting domestic violence victims are lacking resources. About 10% of demand for services like emergency shelter, transitional housing, counseling, legal services and more went unmet due to a lack of resource availability.

### **Smoking Bans Can Result in a One-Third Reduction in Heart Attack Rates**

An article appearing *Circulation* found that smoking bans in public places can reduce the number of heart attacks by as much as 36 percent.

### **Antidepressants during Pregnancy May Increase Risk of Health Defects**

Evidence from a population-based study published in *British Medical Journal* found that women who take certain antidepressants during the first three months of pregnancy may have a slightly increased risk of giving birth to babies with heart defects.

### **Alcohol May Protect the Brain during an Accident**

Findings recently published in *Archives of Surgery* suggest that alcohol exposure is associated with decreased mortality in patients with moderate to severe traumatic brain injury.

### **HIV Vaccine Study is the First to Show Effectiveness at Preventing HIV**

A U.S.-funded study involving more than 16,000 volunteers in Thailand found that a combination of vaccine injections cut infections by 31.2 percent in the people who received it compared with those on a placebo.

### **Middle-Age Heart Risk Factors Shorten Men's Lives**

Smoking, hypertension, and high cholesterol reduce life expectancy in men by 10 years, study finds.

### **Study Shows that a Virus Might be One Cause of Prostate Cancer**

A virus known to cause leukemia and tumors in animals can be found in some prostate tumors and might be one cause of prostate cancer. Researchers found xenotropic murine leukemia virus-related virus or XMRV in 27 percent of the human prostate tumors they looked at, especially aggressive tumors.