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HEALTH CARE REFORM UPDATE June 10th, 2013

Leading the News

On June 3rd, the House of Representatives [passed](#), by voice vote, the Safeguarding America's Pharmaceuticals Act ([H.R. 1919](#)), a bill to increase security in the prescription drug supply chain and limit the prevalence of counterfeit medicines. While the bill passed, House Democrats have criticized the legislation for not incorporating an "an electronic, interoperable unit-level tracking system." Progress on "track and trace" now moves to the Senate, where the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee passed its version of the legislation on May 22nd. Unlike the House bill, the Senate version would move to unit-level traceability within 10 years.

On June 4th, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius [testified](#) before the House Education and the Workforce Committee to provide information on her department's budget proposal for FY 2014. However, during the hearing lawmakers primarily focused on Sebelius' outreach to three companies regulated by HHS to urge them to promote Enroll America, a nonprofit group promoting implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Sebelius told lawmakers that her discussions with regulated health-care companies and other organizations are permissible under the Public Health Act, which allows the Secretary to support and encourage others to support nonprofits engaged in providing health information of carrying out public health priorities.

Over the past week, several states announced insurance companies that will offer plans on the ACA exchanges:

- The Arkansas Insurance Department [said](#) it received letters from four companies that intend to offer insurance on the state's federal exchange.
- Alaska [announced](#) that Moda Health and Premera Blue Cross filed for the state's ACA exchange.
- Four insurance companies offered [proposed rates](#) for insurance on the Washington, D.C. exchange.
- Fourteen insurers have expressed interest in offering plans on the [Ohio](#) and [Michigan](#) exchanges.

Implementation of the Affordable Care Act

On June 3rd, the RAND Corporation released a [study](#) on the financial impact for states that choose to reject the ACA's Medicaid expansion.

On June 4th, the Washington, D.C., city council [voted unanimously](#) to require that small-business owners purchase employee insurance through a government exchange.

On June 5th, Rep. Tom Price (R-GA) [said](#) he will continue efforts to replace the ACA with a patient-centered model that uses tax breaks to offer easier coverage access without imposing mandates.

On June 5th, Avalere Health [suggested](#) tax subsidies provided through the ACA will help millions of Americans pay for coverage, even if premiums rise..

On June 5th, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) sent a [letter](#) to HHS Secretary Sebelius with concerns about the rising cost projections of subsidies provided through the ACA.

On June 5th, an [op-ed](#) by Rep. Diane Black (R-TN) suggested the ACA places personal information at risk through the Federal Data Services Hub.

On June 6th, *Health Affairs* and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) released a [policy brief](#) that notes using premium assistance methods to expand medical coverage to low-income Americans may not be as effective as providing increased coverage through Medicaid expansion.

Other HHS and Federal Regulatory Initiatives

On June 3rd, CMS Administrator Marilyn Tavenner sent a [letter](#) to Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX) that explains the 2% cut to Medicare provider payments under sequestration.

On June 5th, the U.S. 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals [agreed to allow a stay](#), pending appeal, on a ruling that would allow any woman, regardless of age, to purchase single-pill emergency contraception.

On June 6th, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced a [new design](#) of the Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) that beneficiaries receive on a quarterly basis. The new format, which includes clearer language and a snapshot of claims, is intended to reduce fraud.

On June 7th, CMS released an [informational bulletin](#) for state Medicaid agencies on the treatment of claims for Medicare cost sharing for Qualified Medicare Beneficiaries (QMBs).

On June 10th, the Organ Procurement Transplantation Network (OPTN) meets to [consider changing policies](#) regarding pediatric lung transplantation. The meeting was prompted by the recent case of Sarah Murnaghan, a 10-year-old girl who has been ineligible for an adult lung transplant. The OPTN is not expected to recommend changes.

Other Congressional and State Initiatives

On June 5th, Rep. Raúl Labrador (R-ID) [said](#) he will leave the House “Gang of Eight” immigration group over disagreements on how undocumented immigrants would pay for medical care.

On June 6th, Rep. Jim Matheson (D-UT) [reintroduced](#) a bill to help the federal government combat antimicrobial drug resistance.

Other Health Care News

On June 3rd, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) released a [factsheet](#) on sequestration’s impact on medical research.

On June 4th, [70 organizations](#) worldwide announced a partnership to more easily share genetic data. Researchers and doctors hope the increasing availability of human genetic information will provide insight into medical histories and responses to various treatments.

On June 5th, Community Catalyst announced the launch of [Voices for Better Health](#), a project to influence how dual eligible demonstrations within the ACA are constructed.

On June 5th, the Institute of Medicine provided the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with a [research agenda](#) on the characteristics of gun violence, strategies to reduce violence, the impact of gun safety technology, and the influence of video games and other media.

On June 6th, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield CEO Chet Burrell [said](#) his organization saved \$98 million in 2012 through an effort to organize 3,600 care providers into patient-centered medical homes (PCMHs) that focus on team-based care.

Hearings and Mark-Ups Scheduled

On June 12th the Senate Indian Affairs Committee will hold a [confirmation hearing](#) on the nomination of Yvette Roubideaux to be Indian Health Service director at the Health and Human Services Department.

On June 12th the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee will hold a [hearing](#) titled “The Need for Medicaid Reform: A State Perspective.”

On June 14th the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee will hold a [hearing](#) titled “Examining the Federal Government’s Response to the Prescription Drug Abuse Crisis.”

On June 14th the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee will a [hearing](#) titled “Proposal Review to Overhaul Post-Acute Care Payments Under Medicare.”