

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, October 12, 2021

The following information comes from directly from news sources including Bloomberg Government, Kaiser Health News, and other news sources.

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- The president will meet with virtually at 8:45 a.m. with G20 leaders to discuss close coordination on Afghanistan.

CONGRESS:

- The House is scheduled to vote today on a measure to raise to U.S. debt ceiling until early December.
- The Senate meets for a pro forma session.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Biomedical Agency's Future is Complicated:** President Joe Biden's proposed new biomedical research agency may fall short of funding or approval from Congress this year after Senate Democrats signaled they've booted the initiative from their pending social spending and tax package.
 - House leaders proposed earmarking \$3 billion for what the White House calls the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, or ARPA-H, modeled on similar research initiatives at the Pentagon and the Department of Energy. Biden has said he hopes the new agency would be housed within the National Institutes of Health to speed up game-changing biomedical discoveries.
 - A Senate Democratic aide confirmed Friday the money is now unlikely to be included in a sweeping domestic policy package being debated by Democrats. Senate rules would prohibit such a move under the budget procedure Democrats plan to use to pass the package with a simple majority vote, Politico reported earlier.
 - A bipartisan duo in the House announced Friday they expect to include authorizing language in legislation they will soon introduce to update a biomedical innovation law. "Finding new cures and treatments to save the lives of millions of Americans should be a bipartisan endeavor," Reps. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) and Fred Upton (R-Mich.) said in a joint statement. "Once it's introduced, we hope our colleagues in both the House and Senate will support our efforts to move Cures 2.0 quickly through both chambers so we can get this important new agency up and running as soon as possible."
- **NPR: Poll: Financial Distress Worsens For Americans During Delta Surge:** Americans have fallen way behind. The rent's overdue and evictions are looming. Two-thirds of parents say their kids have fallen behind in school. And one in five households say someone in the home

has been unable to get medical care for a serious condition. These are some of the main takeaways from a new national poll by NPR, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

- **Bloomberg Government: Merck's Covid-19 Pill Faces Risk:** Merck's experimental pill for Covid-19 should be accompanied by other treatments as soon as they're available to cut the risk of drug resistance that would limit its effectiveness, Wellcome foundation director Jeremy Farrar said. While yet to be cleared by regulators, Merck's molnupiravir has been hailed as a potential breakthrough, as it could be relatively cheap and easy to make, doesn't require infusion and has shown it reduces the risk of hospitalization in a trial.
 - Yet it may need to be combined with other drugs to head off resistance, Farrar said. Resistance occurs when viruses and bacteria evolve to blunt or defeat drugs' mechanism of attack. It's a constant concern for antivirals and antibiotics and has already been seen with Covid-19 treatments such as Eli Lilly's antibody therapy.
- **KHN: The Public Backs Medicare Rx Price Negotiation Even After Hearing Both Sides' Views:** As Congress debates cutting prescription drug costs, a poll released Tuesday found the vast majority of adults — regardless of their political party or age — support letting the federal government negotiate drug prices for Medicare beneficiaries and those in private health insurance plans. The argument that pharmaceutical companies need to charge high prices to invest in research and develop new drugs does little to change that sentiment, according to the new KFF poll. Most respondents agreed the negotiation strategy is needed because Americans pay more than people in other countries and because companies' profits are too high.
- **The New York Times: Boosters Are Complicating Efforts To Persuade The Unvaccinated To Get Shots:** Vaccinated people have been burning up the phone lines at the community health center in rural Franklin, La., clamoring for the newly authorized Covid booster shot. But only a trickle of people have been coming in for their initial doses, even though the rate of full vaccination in the area is still scarcely 39 percent.
- **KHN: 6 Months To Live Or Die: How Long Should An Alcoholic Liver Disease Patient Wait For A Transplant?:** The night before Brian Gorzney planned to check into rehab for alcohol use, he began vomiting blood. First at 2 a.m. Then 5. And again at 11. When he arrived at the rehab facility in North Kansas City, Missouri, they sent him directly to the adjoining hospital. There, Gorzney, then 50, and his family learned he had severe alcoholic hepatitis, an inflammation of the liver typically associated with excessive alcohol use. Gorzney had been drinking heavily on and off for years and, by February 2020, was having as many as a dozen drinks a day. His only chance of survival was a liver transplant, doctors said.
- **USA Today: New Treatments Offer Hope With Vaccines For 'Interlocking Benefits' Against COVID-19:** Several new COVID-19 treatments are likely to become available within the next few months. Each drug fills a slightly different role, but together they could change the course of the illness, at least in the United States. Both an experimental antiviral from Merck and a monoclonal antibody from AstraZeneca, along with a handful of other drugs making their way through the development process, could make COVID-19 a much less fearsome disease.