

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Monday, October 5, 2020

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

- President Trump has no public events scheduled. He remains hospitalized after being infected with Covid-19
- He has been tweeting this morning about stock market and elections
 - Trump on Saturday said he's starting to feel better. He could be discharged from the hospital as soon as today, one of his doctors said Sunday

CONGRESS

- House next meets Tuesday at 9am
 - Speaker Nancy Pelosi expressed optimism late last week that a bipartisan stimulus deal could still be done. She is under pressure from swing-district moderate members to get an agreement quickly
- Senate meets at 4:30pm; takes up nomination of Michael Newman to be U.S. district judge for the Southern District of Ohio
 - Senators are preparing for consideration later this month of Trump's nominee for the Supreme Court, Amy Coney Barrett
- Three Republican senators tested positive for coronavirus recently.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Kaiser Health News: Not Pandemic-Proof: Insulin Copay Caps Fall Short, Fueling Underground Exchanges:** D.j. Mattern had her Type 1 diabetes under control until COVID's economic upheaval cost her husband his hotel maintenance job and their health coverage. The 42-year-old Denver woman suddenly faced insulin's exorbitant list price – anywhere from \$125 to \$450 per vial – just as their household income shrank. She scrounged extra insulin from friends, and her doctor gave her a couple of samples. But as she rationed her supplies, her blood sugar rose so high her glucose monitor couldn't even register a number. In June, she was hospitalized.
- **Bloomberg Government: Covid 'Long Haulers' Raise Insurance Questions:** Millions of people will live with coronavirus effects long after the pandemic subsides. Even mild cases have caused lung, heart and kidney damage in otherwise healthy people. It's unclear what their future health-care needs will be, or how much their care will cost. As with HIV and opioid addiction crisis, the scope and newness of the pandemic presents many new questions about what treatments insurers will cover.
 - Group health plans and insurance companies are supposed to cover diagnostic testing for Covid-19 under federal laws passed in response to the pandemic. Plans shouldn't charge deductibles, co-payments or coinsurance for office, telehealth, urgent care or emergency-room visits where a Covid-19 test is given or ordered.

But no federal law requires insurers to pay for coronavirus treatment.

- **Bloomberg Government: Trump Presses for Stimulus Deal:** Trump over the weekend pressed for a deal on another round of pandemic aid to jolt the U.S. economic recovery, saying the country “wants and needs” fiscal stimulus. His tweet on Saturday departed from his health to focus on weeks of partisan deadlock over another stimulus bill.
 - Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said Friday that negotiations with the White House will press ahead and Trump’s Covid-19 diagnosis might change the tenor of the talks by underscoring the seriousness of the pandemic. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said Friday that the talks have “speeded up in the last few days,” though he didn’t make a prediction about the eventual outcome.
 - McConnell Saturday also said the fast-track schedule for confirming Trump’s Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett won’t be affected by Covid-19 diagnoses of the president and three Republican senators, despite rising concern about a wider spread of the virus in the government. McConnell said he plans to seek a two-week recess of the full Senate for all but brief pro-forma sessions, and confirmation hearings will continue. He is likely to get bipartisan consent for the plan today, according to a Senate aide.
 - Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said holding the hearings would endanger senators and staff, and he dismissed virtual hearings as insufficient for a lifetime appointment that he said could cast deciding votes on ending abortion rights, protections for pre-existing health conditions and more. Schumer also said McConnell has blocked a coronavirus testing plan for all senators and staff at the Capitol.
- **Bloomberg Government: Regeneron Virus Drug Thrust to Center Stage:** Regeneron Pharmaceuticals has found itself in the spotlight after Trump was treated with its experimental antibody treatment, just days after the unveiling of promising preliminary trial results. Monoclonal antibodies are seen as one of the most promising possible treatments for Covid-19, and Regeneron is one of the front-runners in testing them. They have the potential to be used both as a treatment and as a quick-acting prophylactic drug.
- **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Tops 1 Million Covid-19 Patients:** Traditional Medicare spent \$4.4 billion in 2020 to hospitalize over 178,000 beneficiaries with Covid-19, federal data show. Over 1 million Medicare beneficiaries have contracted the disease that continues to hit hardest among the elderly, minorities, and patients with kidney failure, new Medicare Covid data-19 show.