

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Wednesday, April 21, 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

- President Biden delivers remarks on COVID-19 vaccinations at 1:15pm.

CONGRESS:

- The House is scheduled to vote on legislation to limit future travel ban authority and provide legal support for immigrants.
- Senators plan to vote on Biden's nominees to the Justice and Defense departments.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **CNN: CDC Vaccine Advisers Will Meet Friday To Discuss The J&J Vaccine. Here's What Could Happen Next:** Vaccine advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention meet Friday to make recommendations for use of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine after it was put on hold to investigate a potential link to serious blood clots. The CDC and US Food and Drug Administration recommended a pause on use of the J&J coronavirus vaccine last week following six reported US cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot.
- **Bloomberg Government: Novel Health Plan Fight Threatens ACA Protections:** A case before a federal appeals court challenging a new type of employee health plan has insurers and state regulators concerned about its potential to create an end-run around Obamacare and state insurance regulations. The Labor Department is fighting back against a decision from a federal judge in Texas that allowed two companies to offer health plans to individuals who agree to have their internet activity tracked and sold.
 - If upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, opponents say the decision may open the door for "junk" health plans that undermine the Affordable Care Act, evade state insurance regulations, and drive up the cost of premiums by pulling the healthiest people away from the federal marketplace.
- **Stat: Top Senate Republican Holds Up CMS Nominee Over Medicaid Waiver:** A top Senate Republican is holding up the confirmation of President Biden's nominee to lead Medicare and Medicaid, he told STAT. In a brief interview, Sen. John Cornyn (Texas) said he had placed a hold on the confirmation of Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, the pending administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, using a phrase that refers to a senators' ability to temporarily block a nomination from advancing to a vote. His opposition, he said, stems from the Biden administration's recent rejection of Texas' request to extend its Medicaid waiver, which the Trump administration had previously approved.

- **Stat: Syndax Pharma Drug Shows Remissions In Leukemia Patients:** Syndax Pharmaceuticals said Tuesday that its genetically targeted cancer drug induced complete remissions in patients with advanced leukemia, although questions may linger about a heart-related side effect that limited dosing. The Syndax drug, a once-daily pill called SNDX-5613, belongs to an emerging class of so-called menin inhibitors that have the potential to become effective treatments for certain types of genetically defined leukemia that do not respond well to currently approved medicines. These drugs work by blocking the interaction of two proteins that prevents bone marrow cells from developing or differentiating into healthy cells.
- **Stat: Beam Unveils New CRISPR Base Editing Tool To Target Sickle Cell:** Right now, trillions of donut-shaped red blood cells are whizzing through your arteries, ferrying oxygen from your lungs to the tips of your fingers and toes and everywhere in between. But if you're one of the millions of people around the world who have sickle cell disease, this constant shuttle is constantly getting disrupted.
- **Modern Healthcare: Additional Downstream Care Mutes Telehealth Cost Gains, Study Finds:** Patients who used telehealth for upper respiratory infections were more likely to receive more follow-up care than those who sought in-person care, a new study found. More than 10% of the telehealth users had an in-person visit the next week, compared with 5.9% of patients who went to a clinic, according to an analysis of around 86,000 Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan claims from 2016 to 2019. While the study didn't quantify the value of the follow-up care, University of Michigan researchers found that the telemedicine cohort had fewer (0.5% versus 0.6%) emergency department visits but more subsequent office, urgent care and telemedicine visits.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden HHS Mulling New Drug Fight Panelists:** The White House is moving to designate new panelists to a long-awaited forum for resolving drug discount battles after it nixed Trump-era appointees earlier this year, a step that had effectively halted the dispute process. The Health and Human Services Department is weighing "recommended new appointments" to "correct for shortcomings in the prior slate of appointments" made by Trump, a court document filed by the government says,