

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Monday, May 10, 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 will speak at 10:30 a.m. with NATO's eastern flank allies, who will be meeting in a virtual summit of the Bucharest Nine, and will push for closer cooperation in Central Europe and the Baltic and Black Sea regions, according to the White House daily schedule.
- Biden also plans to speak about the economy from the White House at 1:15 p.m.

### CONGRESS:

- The Senate returns today to consider the nomination of Andrea Joan Palm to be deputy secretary of Health and Human Services. The House isn't in session until tomorrow.

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg: Congressional Hearings This Week:**
  - HHS Budget: The House Energy and Commerce Committee will meet on Wednesday with Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra to discuss the department's fiscal year 2022 budget request.
  - Covid-19 Response: The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee scheduled a hearing tomorrow on the federal response to Covid-19. Witnesses include National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci and Center for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky.
  - Mental Health: The House Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee will examine crisis response for mental health emergencies at a hearing Thursday.
  - Mental Health: The Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health plans a hearing Wednesday to examine mental health and addiction services amid of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Bloomberg: Hospitals Sue HHS Over Payments for Treating Low-Income Patients:**

Hospitals in states that refused to expand Medicaid are suing Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra for allegedly short-changing them on federal dollars they get for treating a higher percentage of low-income patients. Becerra has refused to count patients made "eligible for Medicaid" under the Affordable Care Act based on low income when calculating Medicare Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) supplements, Conway Medical Center in South Carolina and 30 other hospitals across nine states said in a complaint May 6. A DSH supplement increases in proportion to the percentage of a hospital's low-income patients, which is determined by the number of its patients who are "eligible for Medicaid." "The Secretary's approach not only understates the true volume of low-income patients to which Plaintiffs furnish care based on a technicality but denies

Plaintiffs equal protection under the law by compensating them less under Medicare than similarly situated hospitals treating equivalent volumes of low-income patients,” the hospitals argue.

- **Bloomberg: Cancer Screenings Make Comeback After Pandemic Slump, Cigna Says:** Health insurer Cigna Corp. said the amount of preventive care received by its members during the first quarter rose to match levels seen before the pandemic began. Cigna said it worked to drive up use of preventive services, which the company said remain suppressed nationally. Preventive care like mammographies, colonoscopies, childhood vaccinations, and cervical cancer screenings all rebounded, Cigna Chief Executive Officer David Cordani said in a call with analysts. “That’s a tremendous result,” he said. The early months of the pandemic led to widespread shutdowns of planned surgeries and routine care in the U.S. a year ago. The rebound in services like childhood immunizations and cancer screenings suggests that disruptions to health-care delivery triggered by the coronavirus are abating.
- **The Washington Post: CDC Acknowledges Airborne Transmission:** Federal health officials revised coronavirus guidance on Friday to acknowledge that people can get infected by inhaling very fine, aerosolized particles carrying the virus, following warnings from health experts since last year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised that airborne transmission is one of several ways the virus can spread, adding that people more than six feet away from others indoors can become infected, according to the agency’s website.
- **CIDRAP: Obesity Tied To Higher COVID-19 Death Rates In Men:** Hospitalized men with COVID-19 had higher in-hospital death rates if they were in obesity classes 2 and 3 (body mass index [BMI] of 35 to 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, respectively) compared with men in a normal-weight group, according to a study yesterday in the European Journal of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases.
- **Modern Healthcare: Walmart To Acquire Telehealth Provider MeMD:** Walmart on Thursday announced it plans to acquire MeMD, a multispecialty telehealth provider, in a move that will allow the company to grow its virtual care delivery nationwide. MeMD has provided medical and mental health services to consumers online since 2010. The company will serve as a feature of Walmart Health centers nationwide, in addition to in-person care. As a result, Walmart Health will be able to include urgent, behavioral and primary care to its list of virtual services.
- **Stat: HHS Plans To Open Up Billions In Hospital Covid-19 Grants:** The Biden administration plans to open applications for billions of dollars in grants for hospitals and other health care providers before the end of May after months of delay, according to three people familiar with the plans. Hospitals have pleaded with administration officials to release more funds, which Congress in December directed them to disburse. Currently, providers have only been reimbursed for a portion of their losses through June 2020.
- **Modern Healthcare: CMS Warns Hospitals Not Following Price Transparency Rules:** CMS is sending warning letters to hospitals breaking new federal rules requiring them to make public the prices they negotiate with insurers, a CMS spokesperson confirmed. The regulation took effect on Jan. 1 and forces hospitals to publish a machine-readable file online containing their payer-negotiated rates. It also requires them to make available a

consumer-friendly display of at least 300 shoppable services, including 70 specified by CMS. But hospitals don't need to post a list of shoppable services if they allow consumers to use a price estimator tool to calculate their out-of-pocket costs for all shoppable services.