

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, May 4, 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 the White House at 2:30 p.m. on the Covid-19 response and vaccination program.

CONGRESS:

- The House and Senate have no floor work scheduled this week, but the House will be conducting committee work.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Organ Donation Rule Hearing Today:** Organ transplant patients and advocates are ramping up pressure on Congress to speed an overhaul of the transplant system rather than phasing in changes as federal health officials propose. "We really need to see this start to go into effect right now," Donna Cryer, president and chief executive officer of the Global Liver Institute, said yesterday. "There are 107,000 people waiting right now, so it can't be better soon enough."
 - Cryer will make her case today before the House Oversight and Reform Committee as the Biden administration is moving forward with a plan to require more stringent quality and data reporting from the groups that connect organ donors with recipients. Key Democrats and patient groups are pushing the changes against opposition from organ procurement organizations, which contend the new standards put some of the groups at risk of failure and want the new rules revised.
- **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Could Safely Trim Nursing Home Rehab Costs, Study Finds:** Medicare could likely cut spending – without adverse health outcomes – for beneficiaries rehabilitating in nursing homes following a hospital stay, according to research published Monday in Health Affairs journal. Researchers found "no clear evidence" that patient safety was "significantly compromised" by earlier discharge from a nursing facility before increased patient cost-sharing kicked in after the 20th day. In fact, large reductions of more than a week in nursing home stays "were not associated with clear evidence of compromised patient safety as measured by death, hospitalization for fall-related injuries, or all-cause hospitalization," the report said. The finding "really supports the idea of exploring more ways to shift rehab care to home sooner," said Brian E. McGarry, a study co-author and assistant professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Rochester. "That doesn't just mean sending patients home sooner with nothing. But finding ways to continue their rehabilitative therapies and nursing services outside of the very restrictive, pretty expensive setting of inpatient nursing homes." Medicare covers short-term nursing home stays for beneficiaries who require additional

care and treatment after discharge from an acute care hospital. In 2019, traditional Medicare spent \$27.8 billion on roughly 2 million nursing home stays for 1.5 million beneficiaries, according to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission.

- **AP: FDA Expected to OK Pfizer Vaccine for Teens within Week:** The FDA action will be followed by a meeting of a federal vaccine advisory committee to discuss whether to recommend the shot for 12- to 15-year-olds. Shots could begin after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention adopts the committee's recommendation. Those steps could be completed in a matter of days.
- **The Wall Street Journal: Blue Health Insurers Drop Revenue Rule That Limited Competition:** The Blue Cross Blue Shield Association said it dropped a rule that limited competition among its member insurers, moving to implement a key aspect of an antitrust settlement the companies reached last year with customers. The settlement hasn't won final approval from the federal judge presiding over the litigation, so it isn't being fully implemented. But last Tuesday the group of insurers formally lifted a cap on the share of the members' revenue that could come from business not under a Blue Cross Blue Shield brand, one of the moves it had promised under the settlement.
- **Reuters: Big Three Drug Distributors Blame Doctors, Regulators In Trial Over Opioid Epidemic:** The three largest U.S. drug distributors, facing their first trial over claims that they fueled the opioid crisis, said responsibility for ballooning painkiller sales lies with doctors, drugmakers and regulators. AmerisourceBergen Corp (ABC.N), McKesson Corp (MCK.N) and Cardinal Health Inc (CAH.N) are defending themselves against a lawsuit brought by the city of Huntington and Cabell County in West Virginia.
- **Stat: Biden's Medicaid Pressure Tactics Could Put His Team At Odds With Hospitals:** The Biden administration is pressuring states to expand Medicaid – and it's setting up a tussle with the hospital industry, too. The Biden team is running out of options to ensure coverage for low-income people in states that have chosen not to expand coverage under the Affordable Care Act. An early overture in Texas reveals one of its strategies: There, the administration is forcing state officials to renegotiate an agreement that gives hospitals money for uninsured patients, and hospitals are nervous that their funding could be cut in the process.