

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Friday, June 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 this morning from Rehoboth Beach, Del., at 10:15 a.m. on the May jobs report, which will be released at 8:30 a.m.
  - After his remarks, Biden will depart Delaware and is due to return to the White House at 12:20 p.m.

### CONGRESS:

- The House and Senate are out this week.

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Stat: For First Time, Keytruda After Surgery Shows Benefit In Early Kidney Cancer:** Merck said Thursday that giving its drug Keytruda immediately after surgery significantly reduced the risk of relapse of kidney cancer in patients who had their tumors removed. The new clinical trial results make Keytruda the first immunotherapy to show a benefit for this early stage of kidney cancer treatment called the adjuvant setting. Currently, the class of drugs called checkpoint inhibitors are used for patients with more advanced kidney cancer – after it has recurred and spread to other parts of the body.
- **Bloomberg Government: Becerra to Testify on Biden HHS Budget:** Senate Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) announced that the panel will consider Biden's fiscal 2022 Health and Human Services Department budget next Thursday. Secretary Xavier Becerra will testify. Biden requested \$133.7 billion for HHS, which amounts to a 23% increase from the fiscal 2021 enacted level of \$108.6 billion.
  - About a quarter of the \$25 billion increase, \$6.5 billion, would build the Advanced Research Projects Agency, a new effort under the National Institutes of Health to speed up the availability of medical innovations. The administration also wants to work on drug pricing and strengthening the Affordable Care Act.
- **Modern Healthcare: Judge Won't Force CMS To Use 2021 Quality Ratings Data:** Three Medicare Advantage plans lost their fight to require CMS to collect data on patient care and satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a federal judge ruling that the agency did not need to ask Congress before deciding to suspend collection. The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on Tuesday granted HHS' motion for summary judgment. The case stems from an April 2020 interim final rule that said CMS would rely on 2020 information with regard to the Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set, or HEDIS, and the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems, or CAHPS, when calculating Star ratings

for the plans. The rule was made "because data collection was unsafe and would divert resources from patients" during the pandemic, according to the opinion.

- **Bloomberg Government: Drug Tracing Systems Should Be Able to Trade Data, FDA Says:** Data systems used by different companies to track drugs to cut down on fake products should be able to easily exchange information with tracing mechanisms used by officials, the FDA advised in a draft advice document released yesterday. Ensuring different trade partners' systems can trade information efficiently is among the suggestions the Food and Drug Administration made in its outline for how tracing technology should run.
- **Modern Healthcare: CMMI Exploring More Mandatory Models, Fowler Says:** CMS' Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation could mandate more participation in its models, CMMI Director Liz Fowler said during a Health Affairs event on Thursday. The agency wants to ensure that its experiments prioritize patients' needs and support the transformation of the healthcare delivery system – objectives consistent with the Biden administration's greater emphasis on improving health equity and quality. But they also signal that CMMI will fight against the entrenched interests of a healthcare industry under increasing pressure to change the way it does business.
- **Modern Healthcare: Post-Acute Care Programs Close Over Staffing Concerns:** Throughout the pandemic, long-term care facilities have struggled to find staff. The American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), which represents more than 14,000 long-term care providers, now calls the workforce shortage "a legitimate crisis." The problem is a nuanced one: Workers have left an industry that was hit hard by COVID-19 cases and deaths during the pandemic, seeking out higher paying and potentially less dangerous jobs. And employers have struggled to remain operational as volumes fell and costs rose, strapped by what they characterize as inadequate Medicaid reimbursement rates. Nursing homes lost nearly 19,000 jobs in April, the biggest loss in the healthcare sector, according to figures from the the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- **Fox News: Eating Fresh Fruit Lowers Risk Of Type 2 Diabetes, Study Claims:** Slipping two servings of fresh fruit into your daily diet can lower your risk of developing type 2 diabetes by over one-third, a new study suggests. But, in this study, not all fruit is created equal as the benefits of eating whole fruit were not seen for those who drank fruit juice. The study, conducted by Edith Cowan University (ECU) and published in the Journal of Clinical and Endocrinology and Metabolism, found that people who ate at least two servings of fruit per day had higher measures of insulin sensitivity than those who ate less than half of a serving, according to a news release posted on EurekAlert.org.