

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, July 6, 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

- 12:30 PM: Press Secretary Jen Psaki to deliver a Press Briefing
- 2:45 PM: The President delivers remarks on the COVID-19 response and the vaccination program

CONGRESS:

- Out of Session.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Rush Bill Would Kill Cost-Sharing for Insulin:** Rep. Bobby Rush (D-Ill.) on Friday unveiled a bill (H.R. 4158), cosponsored by more than three dozen House Democrats, to eliminate the cost-sharing requirement for insulin under the Medicare and Medicaid programs. The cost-sharing requirements Rush is seeking to eliminate include deductibles, according to a statement.
- **KHN: Rural Ambulance Services Are In Jeopardy As Volunteers Age And Expenses Mount:** Vern Greyn was standing in the raised bucket of a tractor, trimming dead branches off a tree, when he lost his balance. He fell 12 feet and struck his head on the concrete patio outside his house in this small farming town on the central Montana plains. Greyn, then 58, couldn't move. His wife called 911. A volunteer emergency medical technician showed up: his own daughter-in-law, Leigh. But there was a problem. Greyn was too large for her to move by herself, so she had to call in help from the ambulance crew in Power, the next town over.
- **Bloomberg Government: Small Biotech Carve-Out in Drug Pricing:** A lawmaker central to the debate on Capitol Hill over drug pricing reform has a major challenge ahead of him: how to promote research for new drugs, while tamping down unnecessarily high prices. Lowering drug prices is theoretically a bipartisan goal. Eight in ten Americans say current drug prices are "unreasonable," the Kaiser Family Foundation has found.
 - But a politically palatable drug plan must also encourage the drugmaking industry to pump out novel products. Squashing innovation is the leading complaint among Republicans over a Democrat-led push for direct government pricing negotiations.
 - Senate Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) acknowledged the need to "reward scientific innovation" in a drug-pricing policy outline released in June. His outline includes proposals generally hostile to the pharmaceutical industry such as Medicare

price negotiation and patient rebate requirements on drugs whose costs accelerate faster than inflation.

- **NPR: Wegovy's Promise As An Effective Treatment For Obesity Now Depends On Insurers:** When a promising new drug to treat obesity was approved by the Food and Drug Administration for sale in the U.S. last month, it was the first such treatment to gain approval since 2014. In clinical trials, weekly injections of semaglutide – or Wegovy, as it's been branded -- helped people drop an average of 15% of their body weight. That's an average of about 34 pounds over 16 months, before their weight plateaued, a far greater weight loss, obesity specialists say, than achieved with other drugs on the market. At least as important, Wegovy raised none of the alarm bells with the FDA or obesity doctors that it might trigger serious side effects of the sort experienced by some people taking fen-phen or some previous medical treatments for obesity.
- **Bloomberg Government: SCOTUS to Hear Medicare Drug Payment Case:** The U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear a case challenging cuts the Health and Human Services Department made to Medicare prescription-drug reimbursements for hospitals that serve low-income and underserved communities. Hospital groups filed the petition to the high court with various hospital and health systems.
 - Also from the courts, justices said they'll review a decision that clears a way for people with disabilities to sue drug benefit plan administrators for bias based on how their plans operate. CVS Pharmacy called on the top court to review a Ninth Circuit ruling that allowed HIV/AIDS patients to sue the company under Obamacare's discrimination provisions.
- **Bloomberg Government: Employers Get Upper Hand in Surprise Billing Rule:** Employer groups are happy with the first rule implementing a law aimed at protecting patients from large "surprise" bills from emergencies and hospital procedures. It appears to keep payment rates lower than what medical providers wanted. The interim rule lays out how payments from health plans to providers will be determined in emergencies and for care at facilities in patients' insurance networks from clinicians who aren't.