

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Friday, August 14, 2020

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

- 2pm: President Trump departs White House for Bedminster, N.J.
- 5pm: Trump delivers remarks to the City of New York Police Benevolent Association in Bedminster

CONGRESS

- House, Senate out
- NOTE: House holds pro forma session at 2pm
- NOON: Congressional Black Caucus holds virtual town hall on rental housing

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Nursing Home Virus Cases Soar:** Coronavirus infections at the nation's nursing homes are once again exploding as a national resurgence of Covid-19 in the greater community is wreaking havoc on elderly and disabled residents of the facilities. After falling to roughly 6,319 reported cases at nursing homes at the end of June, the industry reported about 12,000 cases in July, Medicare Administrator Seema Verma told nursing home officials during a conference call yesterday.
- **Stat: Large Study Suggests Blood Plasma Can Help Treat Covid-19, With Caveats:** Infusing hospitalized Covid-19 patients with blood plasma from people who recovered from the disease appeared to show a benefit in a nationwide study, but the study's lack of a placebo group left several experts struggling to interpret the data. The study, which enrolled more than 35,000 patients, found that quickly administering so-called convalescent plasma had a marked effect on mortality for patients with severe cases of Covid-19. Those who received transfusions within three days of diagnosis had a seven-day death rate of 8.7%, while patients who got plasma after four or more days had a mortality rate of 11.9%. The difference met the standard for statistical significance.
- **Bloomberg Government: Telehealth's Post-Virus Power in Doubt:** Virtual doctor's visits this month were half of what they were during their April peak, a sign the pandemic might not be the turning point for internet health without sweeping changes. Telehealth visits are still more common now than they were pre-coronavirus. But it's only half of the virtual visit peak in April when weekly telehealth visits were 14% higher than they were before the pandemic, research from the Commonwealth Fund shows.
- **Bloomberg Government: Services Cost 112% of Medicare Rates:** The average cost of

health services in the U.S. was, on average, 112% of Medicare rates, according to a study of 2017 claims data released by the Healthcare Cost Institute, showcasing the effect of tying prices of medical services to what public insurance might pay. “There are multiple national and state policy proposals aimed at reducing health costs or addressing surprise billing that use Medicare rates as a benchmark,” said Niall Brennan, president and CEO of HCCI, in a statement.

- **Becker’s Hospital Review: Only 8% of US emergency physicians practice in rural areas, study shows:** In the U.S., only 3,927 emergency physicians (8 percent) practice in rural areas, a new analysis reveals. Published in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, the study includes an analysis of the 2020 American Medical Association Physician Masterfile data set. Researchers included all physicians who designated emergency medicine as their primary or secondary specialty in the analysis.
- **Becker’s Hospital Review: Healthcare groups update guidance on elective surgeries:** The American Hospital Association, American College of Surgeons, American Society of Anesthesiologists and Association of periOperative Registered Nurses first shared their roadmap for resuming elective surgeries in April. The document included recommendations for when and how to resume elective surgeries after the initial surge in COVID-19 cases this spring.