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HEALTH CARE REFORM UPDATE

June 25, 2012

Leading the News

The Supreme Court announced its decisions for the month of June this morning without its ruling on the constitutionality of the ACA. The Court later announced that it would be releasing its final decisions of the month this Thursday, June 28th. The health care ruling is widely expected to be announced then.

Implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)

On June 18th HHS released a notice in the Federal Register soliciting ways to measure consumer experience and customer satisfaction on the health insurance exchanges. The notice can be found [here](#).

On June 19th Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee respectively, sent a letter to United States Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, urging the Court to consider televising its pending ruling on the ACA. The letter can be viewed [here](#).

On June 20th HHS announced the awarding of several grants to support community health centers. HHS states that the grants will support 219 communities, serve an additional 1.25 million patients, and create over 5,000 jobs funded by the health reform law. The announcement can be found [here](#).

On June 21st HHS announced that 12.8 million Americans would benefit from \$1.1 billion in insurance company rebates this summer due to the ACA's 80/20 medical-loss ratio (MLR) rule, which requires that at least 80 percent of premium dollars go toward paying health care-related costs rather than administrative expenses. The announcement can be found [here](#).

On June 21st CMS released a notice requesting public input on two potential methodologies for converting current State Medicaid and CHIP income eligibility standards to equivalent federal Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) standards as required by the ACA. The notice can be viewed [here](#).

On June 22nd HHS awarded \$58.8 million in loans to the Kentucky Health Care Cooperative and \$33.8 million to the Vermont Health CO-OP. The Kentucky group is described as a “coalition of business leaders, providers and community organizations,” and the Vermont group as state residents “with extensive experience in health insurance and regulation, state health reform efforts, health care delivery, and successful corporate start-ups.” More information on the CO-OP awards can be found [here](#).

On June 22nd CMS announced a new opportunity for participation in the Advance Payment Model for certain Accountable Care Organizations participating in the Medicare Shared Savings Program scheduled to begin in January 2013. The announcement can be found [here](#).

Other HHS and Federal Regulatory Initiatives

On June 18th the HHS announced that it had established three new centers to develop and manufacture medical countermeasures such vaccines and medicines to be used in the event of health emergencies. The press release can be seen [here](#).

On June 18th The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) announced 50 research funding awards, totaling \$30 million over two years, through its Pilot Projects Program. The awards will help develop a range of tools and techniques aimed at improving patient-centered care and decision-making; create new patient-centered care measures; and improve delivery of patient-centered counseling and care in various health care settings. The announcement can be found [here](#).

On June 19th HHS announced that more than 100,000 health care providers are using electronic health records that meet federal standards and have benefitted from the Medicare and Medicaid Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Programs. Over \$5.7 billion in EHR Incentive Program payments were made as of May 2012, and approximately 48 percent of all eligible hospitals and critical access hospitals in the U.S. have received an incentive payment for adopting, implementing, upgrading, or meaningfully using an EHR. The announcement can be found [here](#).

On June 21st The White House commended an initiative by HHS’s Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) to reducing prescription drug abuse. The initiative will be tested in Indiana and Ohio. The White House’s press release can be found [here](#).

On June 21st the Veterans Affairs Department said it has set a goal of conducting more than 200,000 "telemental health" consultations during fiscal year 2012. The VA notes that this follows an announcement earlier in the year that it would no longer charge veterans a copayment when they receive care in their homes from VA health professionals using video conferencing. The press release can be seen [here](#).

On June 22nd HHS announced a new Innovation Fellows Program designed to seek out experts in their fields to assist HHS in tackling some of its most complicated issues. The announcement along with the issue areas that the Fellows program is targeting can be found [here](#).

Other Congressional and State Initiatives

On June 18th the House Energy & Commerce Committee released its updated text of the FDA User Fee bill, which can be seen [here](#). The bill passed via voice vote on June 20th and was sent the Senate for final approval. Senate action is expected to take place this week and then the bill will be sent to President Obama.

Other Health Care News

On June 19th the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism released a report describing news coverage of the ACA both prior to and since its passage in 2010. The report finds that coverage generally gave more emphasis to politics than to the substance of the ACA, and that it emphasized opponents' positions more frequently than supporters' positions. The report can be found [here](#).

On June 19th the American Enterprise Institute released a paper authored by Scott Gottlieb, former deputy commissioner at the FDA. Gottlieb argues that the FDA is too risk-adverse, letting concerns over safety get in the way of bringing innovative treatments to market. The paper can be found [here](#).

Hearings & Mark-ups Scheduled

Senate

There are no relevant hearings scheduled in the Senate.

House of Representatives

There are no relevant hearings scheduled in the House of Representatives.