This Week in Health Reform…

• Medicare Part D Coverage Gap
• The Economic Case for Health Reform
• Retail Health Clinics
Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid announced this week that the final version of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will include provisions to permanently close the Medicare Part D coverage gap.

The NMA was part of a diverse group of signatory organizations that urged Senator Reid to eliminate the prescription drug coverage gap in Medicare.

- The House bill, H.R. 3962, includes provisions to close the ‘donut hole’ permanently by 2019.
- Currently Medicare Part D covers prescriptions for seniors up to $2,700 a year – then drops coverage until prescriptions costs reach $6,100. More than 3 million people fall into the ‘donut’ hole each year.
- Seniors who fall into the ‘donut hole’ for their prescription drugs are more likely to skip doses or stop taking their medications, which can lead to further health complications and higher long-term costs.
On Monday, the White House Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) released their latest report in a series that looks at the economic case for health care reform. The report finds that:

- Medicare and Medicaid provisions in the Senate’s *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* will reduce the annual growth rate of federal spending by 1% by 2019. Federal spending on Medicare and Medicaid will initially increase (as Medicaid eligibility expands) but by 2019 total federal spending on these two programs will be less than would have been absent reform.

- Lowering the growth rate of health care costs by 1% will lower the federal budget deficit and increase GDP.

Read the report, *The Economic Case for Health Care Reform: Update*
Retail Health Clinics

Retail clinics have proliferated rapidly in the past several years and have attracted much attention. The need for retail clinics is projected to grow dramatically with the growing shortage of primary care physicians. NMA continues to monitor this important trend and the implications for the primary care workforce.

Characteristics of retail health clinics:
- Staffed by nurse practitioners and physician assistants;
- Open seven days a week with extended weekday hours and no appointments necessary;
- Located in drugstore chains or shopping plazas.

Issues to consider:
- Quality of care;
- Ability to connect patients with other health care providers;
- Impact on number of ER visits

Figure 1. Growth Projections for Retail Clinics

What You Can Do

• Urge your senator to keep health reform moving forward. The House of Representatives passed their health care legislation - now is the time for the Senate to act.

  • Find contact information for your U.S. senator here.

• Share your ideas with the NMA Health Policy Team. Contact us at healthpolicy@nmanet.org.

For the latest health policy news and information visit our page NMA Health Policy Updates.
Work Cited


