POLICY BEAT
Weekly Digest
May 24-28, 2010

This Week in Health Policy…
- Medicaid Expansion
- JNMA: Risk Intervention Study
- Tax Extenders Bill
- NMA’s Survey on EMR

Office of Health Policy and Government Relations
Medicaid Expansion – What it Means for States

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act expands Medicaid to include individuals with incomes up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level. However, since the passage of the health reform law, some state governments have criticized and protested the Medicaid expansion, claiming the expansion will exacerbate the existing budget crisis in many states. The significant question then becomes, what will expansion of Medicaid really mean for states?

A comprehensive study released this week by the Kaiser Family Foundation Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured details state-by-state estimates of coverage gains and costs of Medicaid expansion. The analysis shows that:

- Medicaid expansion will significantly boost Medicaid enrollment and reduce the number of uninsured. It is projected that nearly 15.9 million people would be added to the safety net program by 2019.
- The federal government will bear a majority of the costs for new Medicaid spending in all states. 95 percent of all new spending would be covered by the federal government.
- Increases in state spending are small compared to the resulting increases in coverage.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation
In an article published in the May issue of the *Journal of the National Medical Association*, researchers evaluated a new risk counseling intervention designed to enhance participants’ understanding about risk factors for cancer and cardiovascular disease. The authors analyzed data from adult African Americans and concluded that integrated risk counseling interventions have the potential to benefit African American communities. Read the full text of this article.

The study is particularly relevant given the heavy economic burden of chronic disease, and the disproportionate impact cancer and cardiovascular diseases exact on the African American community.

Congress is expected to vote on legislation that would stop a scheduled June 1st payment cut for physicians who accept Medicare patients. Commonly known as the “tax extenders bill,” the American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act would also include an extension of COBRA subsidies to recently laid-off workers and would extend higher Medicaid payments to states.

**Health care provisions in the tax extenders bill:**

- **The “Doc Fix”:** Physicians treating Medicare patients face a 21 percent pay cut on June 1st. The current proposal in Congress is a short term fix that would stop the payment cuts for 3 years.

- **Medicaid Funding for States:** The federal government’s share of Medicaid costs increased to between 61 and 84 percent of all Medicaid spending after the passage of the federal stimulus bill. The higher matching rate is set to expire shortly. The pending tax extenders bill would extend the higher rates paid to states until June 2011.

- **COBRA Subsidies:** Federal COBRA laws require that laid-off workers have an option to keep the health coverage provided through their employer for up to 18 months. With the federal stimulus package, Congress voted to subsidize 65 percent of the coverage costs for laid-off workers, however the subsidy expires on June 1. The tax extenders bill would provide an extension allowing for laid off workers to continue receiving the COBRA subsidies.
Take the NMA's Survey:

In an effort to better understand and address physician concerns with health information technology, the NMA is conducting a brief survey examining NMA member experience with establishing an electronic medical record (EMR) system in their practice. A few survey respondents will be asked to share their EMR experiences during the Annual Convention & Scientific Assembly in Orlando, FL. Participate in the survey.

Register for Convention

Don’t forget to register to attend the 2010 National Medical Association Annual Convention & Scientific Assembly in Orlando, Florida, July 31 – August 4, 2010. Make plans to arrive in Orlando by the morning of July 31st in order to attend this year’s Mazique Symposium.

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Resources


