



RAM

RICHMOND ACADEMY OF MEDICINE

Patient's Advocate • Physician's Ally • Community's Partner

The Leg.Up

Local, state and national news of interest to the physician community

May 1, 2019

[Email the Editor](#)

Saturday: Physicians Got Fashion To Benefit Access Now



Join us for the RAM Alliance Foundation's 6th Annual **Physicians Got Fashion** show to benefit Access Now.

This year's show will take place this Saturday, **May 4, from 7 - 10 p.m. at the Hippodrome.**

The evening kicks off with a cocktail reception and silent auction, followed by a premier live auction and the main event fashion show. Auction items include trips to Los Cabos and the Italian countryside and other memorable experiences.

CLICK HERE for more information (including a list of this year's models) and to purchase tickets.



CDC: Many Patients May Need Another Measles Vaccine

Patients will be asking about this: [Reuters reports](#) that **adults in the U.S. who were vaccinated against measles decades ago may need a new dose** depending on when they received the shot and their exposure risk, according to the CDC.

Up to 10 percent of the 695 confirmed measles cases in the current outbreak occurred in people who received one or two doses of the vaccine, according to the agency.

Brady Bunch Episode Fuels Campaigns Against Vaccines

As the number of measles cases nationwide rises to levels not seen since before the virus was declared eliminated in 2000, [NPR reports](#) that some people who oppose vaccines cite an **odd cultural reference** as evidence that the concern about measles is overblown: a **1969 episode of The Brady Bunch**.



The episode "Is There a Doctor in the House?" features the whole family sick with measles. First, Peter gets sent home from school. Mother Carol Brady describes his symptoms as "a slight temperature, a lot of dots and a great big smile," because he gets to stay home from school for a few days.

"**If you have to get sick, sure can't beat the measles,**" sister Marcia says, as the older Bradys sit around a Monopoly board on one of the kid's beds. All the kids are thankful they don't have to take any medicine or, worse, get shots, the thought of which causes Jan to groan.

Some former Brady Bunch cast members aren't happy about the episode being used to promote the anti-vaxxer agenda. Maureen McCormick (Marcia) [spoke out](#) this week.

Speaking of reasons to avoid vaccines, [The New York Times reports](#) that **faith leaders are encouraging people to stop using religion as a reason not to get immunized**.

7 Common Mistakes Physicians Make When Signing a Physician Employment Contract (and How to Avoid Them)



Smart physicians are not immune from making highly regrettable mistakes when it comes to employment contracts. And unlike in medicine, you don't get the option of trying a new treatment plan if the first one doesn't work.

Physicians are educated, and intellectually sophisticated. This means that, even though you weren't trained to read legal contracts in medical school, courts expect that you have read and fully understand the terms of the contracts you sign.

That means that, both during and even after your employment, you're stuck with the contract you sign, so make sure you avoid these common pitfalls.

Tomorrow: Save Big at Brooks Brothers



Still looking for something to wear to Physicians Got Fashion?

As a Brooks Brothers Corporate Member, RAM members receive 15 percent savings on regular price merchandise every day.

And tomorrow, May 2, Brooks Brothers is offering **25 percent off** full-price merchandise to RAM members.

Call RAM at **(804) 643-6631** to learn how you can sign up to take advantage of this RAM member benefit.

Happy Shopping!

It's a Secret: Blood Test Could Be \$11 or \$1,000

It's one of the most common tests in medicine, and it is performed millions of times a year around the country, [says The New York Times](#). Should a **metabolic blood panel** test cost \$11 or \$952? Both of these are real, negotiated prices, paid by health insurance companies to laboratories in Mississippi and Texas in 2016.

New data, analyzing the health insurance claims of 34 million Americans covered by large commercial insurance companies, shows that **enormous swings in price for identical services** are common in health care. In just one market — Tampa, Fla. — the most expensive blood test costs 40 times as much as the least expensive one.

Insurance's 'Dirty Money' Killed Her Son, Mom Says

Jennifer Alba's son, Joseph Hockett II, was addicted to drugs, in and out of trouble for years, [reports CNN](#). On one of those nights, he was treated for a broken jaw at a hospital that was out-of-network for his Blue Cross Blue Shield insurance plan. But instead of paying the hospital directly, as is common, Blue Cross Blue Shield sent a check for the total due — a whopping \$33,000 — directly to Hockett. Days after depositing the money, he was found dead of an overdose.



Alba calls the payoff "**dirty money**" and says it's what can happen when **insurance companies put the patient in the middle**, a tactic critics say is a way to pressure hospitals into joining their networks and accepting lower payments. It has forced some providers to sue patients to recover the money.

The insurance industry says the policy is designed to protect patients from **surprise bills** and exorbitant charges from out-of-network doctors and hospitals.

Three-quarters of the public — including a majority of Republicans — want the federal government to protect patients from being stuck with surprise medical invoices after they are unwittingly treated by doctors or medical facilities that are out of their insurance network, a new poll found. [Kaiser Health News has the report](#).

NIH Prohibits Doctors From Speaking to Investigators

Are doctors being silenced? [The Wall Street Journal reports](#) that the NIH is refusing to allow two of its doctors to respond to government investigators looking into the quality of a continuing clinical trial of new blood-infection treatments on thousands of patients, according to NIH documents and multiple interviews. The resulting tensions within the NIH have pitted the office of the agency's director, Francis Collins, against an internal NIH committee of 24 scientists, who are raising questions over the freedom researchers are afforded to critique the work of colleagues.

Will This Help Patients Remember to Take Their Meds?

Innovative medical technology is trying to solve the problem of **getting people to take their medicine**, but its cost and its unfamiliarity has blocked widespread use, [the Washington Post reports](#).

When the FDA approved a schizophrenia pill that sends a signal to a patient's doctor when ingested, it was seen not only as a major step forward for the disease but as a new frontier of Internet-connected medicine. But it may instead frighten off the very patients it's supposed to help.

Join Us for RAM's Next Networking Social

Join your RAM colleagues for our next **Member Networking Social** on Thursday, May 16 at the **Branch Museum of Architecture and Design** (that beautiful building on Monument Avenue that you always wanted to explore). Mingle with your RAM friends and colleagues while enjoying food and beverages in this stately Richmond landmark. Docent tours will be

available at 6:30, 7 and 7:30 p.m.

[Details and registration can be found here.](#) RSVP early, as space is limited.



People Are Clamoring to Buy Old Insulin Pumps. Why?

The Atlantic reports that an obsolete medical device with a security flaw became a must-have for some patients with type 1 diabetes.

In 2014, a few hackers realized that **the security flaw in certain Medtronic pumps could be exploited for a DIY revolution.** The hackers realized they could use it to override old Medtronic pumps with their own algorithm that automatically calculates insulin doses based on real-time glucose data. It closed the feedback loop.

CDC: Doctors Were Too Cautious About Prescribing Opioids



Doctors are misusing 2016 opioid pain medication guidelines, federal officials said last week, a clear response to increasing complaints from chronic pain patients who say they are the victims of an overreaction to the opioid crisis. USA Today reports that the CDC, in new guidance for opioid prescribing, said many physicians were guilty of a "misapplication" of 2016 guidelines that clamped down on the use of opioids. The new guidelines, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, was the

latest federal acknowledgement that many physicians' responses to the opioid crisis went too far.

Also last week, President Trump vowed to keep fighting opioids "until our job is done," reports The New York Times. "My administration is deploying every resource at our disposal to empower you, to support you and to fight right by your side," Trump said. "We will not solve this epidemic overnight but we will stop. ... There's just nothing going to stop us, no matter how you cut it."

And yesterday, The Virginia Mercury reported that **opioid deaths are down for the first time in six years.** However, there was a spike in meth and cocaine fatalities.

Here Are the CDC's Recommendations

While the CDC warned doctors against too much caution when prescribing opioids, last week's report also **underscored the need for several safeguards.** It recommended doctors:

- Avoid prescribing opioid pain medication and benzodiazepines – such as Xanax – together whenever possible.
- Expand the use of non-opioid treatments.
- Review risks of continuing on high-dose opioids – with empathy
- Work with patients who agree to taper to individualize, minimize withdrawal.
- Monitor patients on high-dose opioids to prevent overdose.



Batter Up!

RAM FAMILY NIGHT AT THE DIAMOND
JUNE 15, 2019 | 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. picnic; 6:05 p.m. game time



Spring is here and it's time to play ball! Make plans to join us for our **RAM Family Night** at The Diamond on **June 15** as the Richmond Flying Squirrels take on the New Hampshire Fisher Cats.

We'll have a private area reserved in the ballpark for our group to enjoy a picnic dinner and refreshments prior to and after the 6:05 p.m. opening pitch. In addition to dinner and the game, enjoy a visit from Nutzy and Nutasha, balloon creations and fireworks at the conclusion of the game.

No cost to members and their families but tickets are limited, so please reserve yours early so you don't strike out!



Exciting Fireworks!



Enjoy the game!



Meet Nutzy & Nutasha!

RESERVE YOUR TICKETS TODAY!

At Lively Drug Pricing Debate, Experts Suggest Nixing Copays

It was billed as a debate on sky-high prescription drug prices — but once again, middlemen known as pharmacy benefit managers took center stage, [reports Stat](#). A panel of policy experts and biotech veterans who gathered at Harvard last week focused much of their ire on the role of insurance.

Though they disagreed on plenty — like who is ultimately responsible for high drug prices — all concluded that **people would probably be better off if the health care system killed copays**, which some argue gives patients “skin in the game” that can keep them from using health services or drugs they don’t need.

Virginians Warned of Uptick in Hep A Cases

Multiple states across the country are experiencing **hepatitis A** virus outbreaks. Since these outbreaks were first identified in 2016, more than 15,000 cases and 8,500 hospitalizations have been reported in the United States.

The Virginia Department of Health reported a **132 percent increase** in cases of HAV between January 1 and April 19, 2019 compared to the same time period in 2018. There have been 45 cases reported in Virginia as of April 22.

Here's a List of Richmond's 'Top Docs'

Richmond Magazine has (finally) published online its

2019 Top Docs online. [Here's the complete list.](#)



Tovia Martirosian Smith with her father, Edward Martirosian (Photo: Richmond Magazine)

Also, find profiles of several RAM members, including **Tovia Smith, MD**, **Johnny Wong, MD**, **Nicole Karjane, MD**, and **Leo Dunn, MD**.

Physicians Generate About \$2.4 Million Per Year, Per Hospital

While physicians are key providers of medical care at the nation's hospitals, [a new survey](#) confirms they also are **major drivers of hospital revenue**.

According to the survey, **physicians generate an average \$2,378,727 per year** in net revenue on behalf of their affiliated hospitals. Conducted by Merritt Hawkins, the survey asked hospital chief financial officers to quantify how much revenue physicians in 18 specialties generated for their hospitals in the previous 12 months. This includes both net inpatient and outpatient revenue derived from patient hospital admissions, tests, treatments, prescriptions, and procedures performed or ordered by physicians.



Photo: CNN

Video Game Detects Alzheimer's Better Than Medical Test



Just a few minutes of playing a certain video game could help **identify the earliest stages of Alzheimer's** in ways existing medical tests can't, researchers have found.

[CNN reports](#) that a new study used a smartphone app called [Sea Hero Quest](#) to monitor how gamers with and without a genetic predisposition to Alzheimer's navigate the virtual world, using their

thumbs to move a little boat through a series of maritime mazes.

This type of test was key because "spatial navigation is emerging as a critical factor in identifying preclinical Alzheimer's disease," authors of the study, just published in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#), said.

Players with a high genetic risk for Alzheimer's took less efficient routes to reach checkpoints in the game, researchers found. What's more, the movement patterns were identified among players in the genetic risk pool who had not yet displayed any other memory problems, they said.

Thanks for Reading The Leg.Up!

I will see many of you Saturday at Physicians Got Fashion (I will be the unfashionable one). If you're not attending, consider making a donation to **Access Now**; it's a very worthy cause.

Feel free to contact me with your ideas, suggestions and concerns (or complaints). You can reach me by [email](#) or at (804) 622-8136.

Click [here](#) for past editions of The Leg.Up.

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