CALIFORNIA WATCH

California Healthline: State Program for HIV/AIDS Patients Faces Serious Funding Problem, Advocates Say
A Medi-Cal program designed to help HIV/AIDS patients avoid expensive hospital and nursing home stays is severely underfunded, restricting its capacity to offer in-home care, advocates and treatment providers say. Agencies that provide services for the $12 million-a-year program say the number of dollars earmarked for it has stagnated over the past decade and a half. And reimbursement rates for providers are less than in similar Medi-Cal programs. As a result, they say, many agencies have stopped or reduced their participation in the program. (Gorman, 5/23)

HEALTH LAW ISSUES AND IMPLEMENTATION

CBS News: Why Obamacare's "Cadillac Tax" is so Contentious
President Obama's signature health care law is called the Affordable Care Act, but just how affordable remains an open question even this long after its enactment. One of its provisions that aimed at chipping away health care's high costs is a tax that attempts to remove a hidden subsidy for the most expensive employer-paid health insurance plans. (Thoma, 5/23)

MEDICARE

Kaiser Health News: Doctors' House Calls Saving Money for Medicare
Looking for ways to save money and improve care, Medicare officials are returning to an old-fashioned idea: house calls. But the experiment, called Independence at Home, is more than a nostalgic throwback to the way medicine was practiced decades ago when the doctor arrived at the patient's door carrying a big black bag. Done right and paid right, house calls could prove to be a better way of treating very sick, elderly patients while they can still live at home. (Jaffe, 5/23)

PHARMACEUTICALS

STAT: It's Tasty and Easy to Take. And that’s Why a New ADHD Drug Alarms Some Psychiatrists
There’s a new, candy-flavored amphetamine on the market. Adzenys, as the chewable, fruity medication is called, packs the punch of Adderall and is geared toward children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The drug hit the market last week and is already stirring controversy: Some psychiatrists worry that Adzenys will accelerate a trend toward overmedicating kids — and could be yet another gateway into ADHD drug abuse. (Keshavan, 5/23)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

NPR: Penicillin Shortage Could be a Problem for People with Syphilis
Since it came onto the scene in 1943, penicillin has made syphilis a thing of the past – almost. Now, the sexually transmitted disease is making a comeback in the U.S. and there’s a shortage of the medication used to treat it. Pfizer, the company that supplies it, says it's experiencing "an unanticipated manufacturing delay," and in a letter to consumers wrote that it would be providing just one third of the usual monthly demand until July. The medication, called Bicillin L-A, is the recommended treatment for
people with syphilis. It's also the only one available for pregnant women who are infected with or exposed to syphilis, which is caused by the bacterium Treponema pallidum. But the antibiotic can be used against other bacteria, like the one that causes strep throat. (Bichell, 5/23)

The Washington Post: Donated Organs Kept ‘Alive’ May Ease the Transplant Shortage
Lloyd Matsumoto awoke from his liver transplant last month to find his surgeon more than pleased with the results. The new organ had begun producing bile almost immediately, a welcome signal that it had quickly started to function well. That may be partly because of the way Matsumoto’s liver traveled from Tufts Medical Center across Boston to Massachusetts General Hospital. Instead of being packed in ice for the 4½ hours it was outside the abdomens of donor and recipient, the liver was essentially kept alive in a device that maintains its temperature, perfuses it with oxygenated blood and monitors its critical activity. (Bernstein, 5/22)

The Baltimore Sun: Nerve Damage Found in Prediabetics
The pain shot across the tops of Michael Jackson's feet as if someone was pounding him with a sledgehammer, sometimes becoming so unbearable he couldn't sleep. ... Jackson suffered from significant nerve damage stemming from prediabetes — a condition in which people have high blood glucose levels but not enough to be classified as diabetes. Doctors have known for a while that those with prediabetes can experience mild weakness, numbness and pain from nerve damage, but a new Johns Hopkins study suggests that so-called neuropathy is much more significant than once thought. (McDaniels, 5/22)

USA Today: New Nutrition Facts Panel has Line for Added Sugar
The FDA says the rules better correspond with updated dietary guidelines and health research — for example, "calories from fat" will be eliminated because research shows the type of fat we're eating, such as trans-fat or saturated fat, is more important than how many calories come from fat. (Malcolm, 5/20)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

The Wall Street Journal: Will Health Insurance Premium Increases Related to Obamacare Sway Voters?
As candidates in both parties focus on the general election campaign, some Republicans wonder if large premium increases related to the Affordable Care Act could be an "October surprise" that helps propel them to victory in November. The causes of the approaching premium increases vary, but some are rooted in a 2013 Obama administration proposal. In reporting on premium increases by one Iowa insurer, the Des Moines Register noted that individuals who bought new plans that complied with Affordable Care Act regulations could face premium increases of 38% to 43% next year. "Another 90,000 Wellmark customers who hold older individual insurance plans are expected to face smaller increases, which will be announced in June," the paper said. (Chris Jacobs, 5/22)

"This … is the end … of my life." These would be my patient's only words — an economy of phrasing made necessary by an all-consuming air hunger. She had just arrived in the emergency room, Code 3 critical, after a lights-and-sirens ambulance transport from her nursing home. Awake, alert and intensely focused, every effort of her frail, 90-year-old body was concentrated on the simple act of breathing. Her
weak heart and failed kidneys had caused her lungs to fill with fluid, every breath becoming a mixture of water and air. The analogy to drowning is inevitable. As her physician, I was going to have to make some big decisions quickly, including this one: How much should I do to save her life? (Eric Snoey, 5/22)

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CALIFORNIA WATCH

California Healthline: Ballot Measure Seeks to Protect Use of Hospital Fees for Low-Income Health Coverage
A joint legislative committee Wednesday will hear pro and con arguments on a ballot measure intended to protect an important source of funding for low-income Californians. The measure, known as the Medi-Cal Funding and Accountability Act, would override the scheduled expiration of a fund used by the state to bring in matching dollars from the federal government for Medi-Cal, California’s version of the Medicaid health care program for low-income people. The fund — financed by hospitals — would become permanent. (Ibarra, 5/24)

Ventura County Star: Medi-Cal Commission Cites Possible Conflict, Rejects Pharmacy Bids
A Medi-Cal commission voted Monday to reject bids and back up the process of finding a company for the high-priced job of running a pharmacy benefits program that serves more than 200,000 Ventura County residents. Revolving around possible conflict-of-interest concerns, the decision came after impassioned presentations from two companies involved and a suggestion there may be more arguments to come. (Kisken, 5/23)

CAPITOL HILL WATCH

The Hill: GOP Mired in Zika Dispute
The House and Senate have both passed funding to combat the Zika virus, but there appears to be little chance Republicans will reach a deal before the Memorial Day recess. The bills passed by the House and Senate last week are vastly different in terms of size, timeline and offsets. One is broadly bipartisan; the other is facing a veto threat from the White House. (Ferris, 5/24)

USA Today: Senators Want to Know how Athletes will be protected from Zika
Led by Barbara Boxer and Patty Murray, a coalition of 11 Senators sent a letter to the U.S. Olympic Committee on Monday requesting information on how the committee will protect athletes from the Zika virus at the Rio Olympics in August. Signed by 10 Democrats and one independent senator, the letter to USOC chairman Larry Probst asks “what steps the USOC is taking to assist and protect our athletes against the spread of the Zika virus.” (Axon, 5/23)

HEALTH LAW ISSUES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Hill: GOP Duo Unveils Healthcare Bill Maintaining Parts of ObamaCare
Two Republican lawmakers are breaking with their party’s long-stated goal of repealing ObamaCare by putting forward a healthcare plan that leaves parts of the system in place. While the new bill from Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas) and Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) is a departure from the core Republican idea of full repeal, it could provide a roadmap for changes that could be enacted under a GOP president. (Sullivan, 5/23)
MARKETPLACE

KQED: Just Like Patients, Therapists also Battle Insurance Red Tape
Nearly half of therapists in California don’t take insurance, according to a recent survey from the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. The same is true of psychiatrists. (Dembosky, 5/24)

Bloomberg: Health Insurer Deals Face Market Review That Felled Past Tie-Ups
U.S. opposition to proposed mergers in the pay-TV, mobile-phone and airline industries suggests a tough battle ahead for two health insurer deals: Anthem Inc.’s takeover of Cigna Corp. and Aetna Inc.’s bid for Humana Inc. It’s the job of antitrust officials to make sure that deals don’t harm competition, and they commonly do that by evaluating local markets for conflicts. ...But antitrust enforcers with the Obama administration’s Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission have shown a willingness to change that playbook and take a wider look at competition. (McLaughlin, 5/23)

Marketplace: When Mergers Fail Because of Clashing Work Culture
The Wall Street Journal got a hold of correspondence Monday that suggests there may be some tension between insurance giants Anthem and Cigna, two companies that have proposed a $48 billion merger. (Gorenstein, 5/23)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Kaiser Health News: For Substance Abusers, Recovery-Oriented Care may show the Way to a Productive Life
Every movement needs a champion, and in the largely rural counties of western North Carolina, Richie Tannerhill is a champion of the recovery-oriented care movement for people with mental health and substance abuse issues. Recovery-oriented care is founded on the belief that people with behavioral health problems need guideposts to help them find their own routes back to a productive life -- that medication compliance and symptom control aren’t ultimate treatment goals. Advocates of this approach, which involves community-based supports to help people reintegrate into their communities, fear it could be undermined by the omnibus mental health bill sponsored in Congress by Rep. Tim Murphy, a Pennsylvania Republican and clinical child psychologist. (Sisk, 5/24)

Kaiser Health News: A Rocky Road to Recovery
Both of Richie Tannerhill’s parents had mental health and substance abuse disorders. His dad was sentenced to an extended prison term, and Tannerhill said he was “passed around from friend to friend, family member to family member.” By the age of 4, he’d lived in five states. His first arrest came when he was in third grade and got caught breaking into a school. He was dealing drugs at 12, and by 14 had sampled pills, mushrooms, cocaine and LSD. At 15, he landed in the behavioral health unit of a hospital in Kailua, Hawaii, and a year later, a Nebraska prison, charged with breaking into two restaurants. (Sisk, 5/24)

The Associated Press: Kicking the Habit: Adult Smoking Rate in US is Falling Fast
The nation seems to be kicking its smoking habit faster than ever before. The rate of smoking among adults in the U.S. fell to 15 percent last year thanks to the biggest one-year decline in more than 20 years, according to a new government report. The rate fell 2 percentage points from 2014, when about 17
percent of adults in a large national survey said they had recently smoked. The smoking rate has been falling for decades, but it usually drops only 1 point or less in a year. (Stobbe, 5/24)

**CNN Money: World’s Top Insurer Ditches $2 Billion Tobacco Investment**
The world’s largest insurer is ditching tobacco assets worth $2 billion, saying it can’t continue to invest in an industry that kills six million people per year. (Kottasova, 5/23)

**EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS**

**Stat: Cash Prizes for Pharma are needed to Fight Superbugs**
Drug-resistant superbugs account for an estimated 700,000 deaths worldwide today, but that number could rise to 10 million within the next few decades unless new antibiotics are developed. That’s according to a new report commissioned by the UK government, which is proposing a provocative solution to the problem: a 10-year, $40 billion global fund to provide incentives to develop new superbug-fighting drugs. (Ed Silverman, 5/24)

**The Wall Street Journal: Why Today’s Poll Numbers on Health Proposals are Bound to Change**
Gallup polling released last week showed majority support—58%—for replacing the Affordable Care Act with a federally funded health system. The same poll found 51% support for repealing the ACA. There is a basic point that often gets lost in reaction to poll findings like these: They measure the public’s initial response to ideas and words, and proposals such as single payer or ACA repeal that people associate with candidates—but they don’t tell us much about the likely level of support for a policy if there is a real debate about legislation before Congress, with winners and losers laid bare. (Drew Altman, 5/24)
CALIFORNIA WATCH

California Healthline: California's Glaring Shortage of School Nurses
California falls significantly short of a new recommendation by an influential group of pediatricians calling for every school in the United States to have at least one nurse on site. Fifty-seven percent of California's public school districts, with 1.2 million students, do not employ nurses, according to research from Sacramento State University’s School of Nursing. (Ibarra, 5/25)

Reuters: California Sues Johnson & Johnson over Marketing for Pelvic Mesh
California has accused Johnson & Johnson of failing to warn doctors and patients about the severity and frequency of complications associated with its pelvic mesh devices. According to the lawsuit filed by the state's attorney general on Tuesday, J&J and its Ethicon unit falsely marketed the devices as a safe and superior option to non-mesh treatments for pelvic floor disorders, when it was aware that they could cause pain, bleeding, loss of sexual function and other side effects. (Dye, 5/24)

CAPITOL HILL WATCH

The Associated Press: House Approves Bill to Regulate Toxic Chemicals
The House on Tuesday easily approved a bipartisan bill that would for the first time regulate tens of thousands of toxic chemicals in everyday products from household cleaners to clothing and furniture. Supporters said the bill would clear up a hodgepodge of state rules and update and improve a toxic-chemicals law that has remained unchanged for 40 years. (Daly, 5/24)

The Hill: House Votes to Loosen EPA Pesticide Rules to Fight Zika
The House voted along party lines Tuesday to approve a bill that would loosen pesticide regulations in the name of fighting the Zika virus. Democrats almost unanimously opposed the bill, which was recently retooled by House GOP leaders as an effort to prevent the spread of Zika. The final tally was 258-156, with all but 23 Democrats opposed to the bill. (Ferris, 5/24)

The Washington Post: FTC: Beware of Companies Peddling Products to Protect against Zika Mosquitos
That mint oil Mosquito Shield wristband you picked up last week to protect against Zika as mosquito season rolls into the United States? It's not going to cut it. The Federal Trade Commission on Tuesday issued a strong warning to consumers that some companies may be trying to unscrupulously capitalize on fears about the virus. The FTC announcement focused specifically on Viatek Consumer Products Group's Mosquito Shield Band, which is sold in stores and on the Home Shopping Network. (Cha, 5/24)

MEDICAID

Modern Healthcare: CMS Lambasted for Failing to Curb Medicaid, Medicare Fraud and Abuse
Lawmakers grilled a CMS administrator Tuesday as government watchdog groups release more damning reports on the federal agency's efforts at eliminating waste, fraud and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid. Rep. Chris Collins (R-N.Y.) said the CMS is part of his weekly stump speech and "not in a complimentary way." He said the agency's performance would not be tolerated in the private sector. (Muchmore, 5/24)
HEALTH LAW ISSUES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Los Angeles Times: Obamacare is Helping Millions Get Needed Healthcare, New Survey Finds
More than 60% of working-age Americans who signed up for Medicaid or a private health plan through the Affordable Care Act are getting healthcare they couldn’t previously get, a new nationwide survey indicates. And consumers are broadly satisfied with the new coverage, despite some cost challenges and an ongoing Republican campaign to discredit the law. Overall, 82% of American adults enrolled in private or government coverage through the health law said they were “somewhat” or “very” satisfied, according to the report from the nonprofit Commonwealth Fund. (Levey, 5/24)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Kaiser Health News: FDA Considering Pricey Implant as Treatment for Opioid Addiction
“Anything that might help people beat their opioid addiction is a good idea,” said Dr. Barbara Herbert, president of the Massachusetts Society of Addiction Medicine. But she said she also has reservations about this method of delivering treatment. The main one is price. The company says it will price the implants to be competitive with other injectable treatments used to battle opioid addiction, including a shot that costs about $1,000 a month. Buprenorphine pills, in comparison, typically cost $130 to $190 for a month’s supply. Herbert said a high price may force providers to turn patients away — or cut back on other services. “High profits in the middle of this epidemic are really unconscionable,” she said. (Bebinger, 5/25)

Stat: Kerry Urged to Pressure China to do More to Curb Sale of Deadly Fentanyl to U.S.
A US senator is calling on Secretary of State John Kerry to pressure the Chinese government to toughen its laws to stop the illicit export of the potent opioid fentanyl, which is now killing more Americans than heroin in many areas. Senator Patrick Toomey, a Pennsylvania Republican, urged Kerry in a letter to seek “international cooperation, especially from China” to halt the flow of fentanyl into the United States. (Armstrong, 5/24)

The Associated Press: Obesity Surgery is a Good Way to Treat Diabetes, Groups Agree
International diabetes organizations are calling for weight-loss surgery to become a more routine treatment option for diabetes, even for some patients who are only mildly obese. Obesity and Type 2 diabetes are a deadly pair, and numerous studies show stomach-shrinking operations can dramatically improve diabetes. (Neergard, 5/24)

Los Angeles Times: Antidepressants Aren’t Just for Depression Anymore, Study Finds
Antidepressants didn’t get to be the third-most commonly prescribed medication in the United States for nothing. In fact, says a new study, the medications taken by more than 10% of American adults may be so ubiquitous because they are used to do so much. Depression medication, a new study suggests, has become a “do something” drug for primary care physicians to offer when a patient’s complaints may only be vaguely related to depression. In a study reported in the Journal of the American Medical Assn. on Tuesday, researchers reported that close to three in 10 antidepressant prescriptions written between 2006 and 2015 by general practitioners in Quebec, Canada, were for conditions for which the medications have not been approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration. (Healy, 5/24)
The New York Times: More Men with Early Prostate Cancer are Choosing to Avoid Treatment

Seemingly overnight, treatment of men with early-stage prostate cancer has undergone a sea change. Five years ago, nearly all opted for surgery or radiation; now, nearly half are choosing no treatment at all. The approach is called active surveillance. It means their cancers are left alone but regularly monitored to be sure they are not growing. Just 10 percent to 15 percent of early-stage prostate cancer patients were being treated by active surveillance several years ago. Now, national data from three independent sources consistently finds that 40 percent to 50 percent of them are making that choice. (Kolata, 5/24)

MARKETPLACE

KPCC: Online Eye Exam Site Makes Waves in Eye Care Industry

All sorts of health information is now a few taps away on your smartphone, from how many steps you take — to how well you sleep at night. But what if you could use your phone and a computer to test your vision? A company is doing just that — and eye care professionals are upset. Some states have even banned it. (George, 5/25)

CNBC: Average Family Healthcare Costs Have Tripled Since 2001

The costs of providing health care to an average American family surpassed $25,000 for the first time in 2016 — even as the rate of health cost increases slowed to a record low, a new analysis revealed Tuesday. (Mangan, 5/24)

HEALTH IT

The Washington Post: Your Fitness Tracker May Be Accurately Tracking Steps, but Miscounting Calories

Your fitness tracker may be accurately counting your steps but not the correct number of calories burned, according to a new report by the Human Performance Laboratory at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind. The study, which will be published in Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise later this summer, found that FitBit and Jawbone are significantly over- and underestimating calories burned during certain physical activities. The group’s findings come at a particularly inopportune time for Fitbit, as the company is currently facing a class-action lawsuit alleging its product, specifically its heart rate technology, is faulty and inaccurate. (McDonough, 5/24)

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CALIFORNIA WATCH

KQED: It's Still Hard to Get Birth Control Pills in California without a Prescription
It has been more than 18 months since California's governor signed a law that allows pharmacists to distribute most types of hormonal birth control methods without a prescription. That means that while women in the state still have to see a doctor to get an IUD, or a contraceptive implant, they should be able to simply walk into their local pharmacy and easily buy contraceptive pills, the patch or the vaginal ring — much like getting a flu shot, or buying over-the-counter medicine to fight a cold. But good luck finding a pharmacy that will actually dispense birth control that way. (O'Mara, 5/26)

Los Angeles Times: Report on Increase in Mental Competency Cases Leaves Many Unanswered Questions
Misdemeanor cases filed by city attorneys are driving a surge in competency cases that is overwhelming Los Angeles County's mental health court, according to a preliminary report released Wednesday. The report suggests that the increase might be linked to the county's rising homeless population, to criminal justice reform measures that may have resulted in fewer people participating in mandated treatment programs, and to the scarcity of psychiatric hospital beds. (Sewell, 5/25)

HEALTH LAW ISSUES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Hill: IRS Doubted Legality of ObamaCare Payments, Former Official Says
The IRS raised concerns in early 2014 about the legality of certain ObamaCare payments that Republicans are now challenging in a lawsuit, according to a deposition from a former agency official. David Fisher, who was the IRS's chief risk officer, told the House Ways and Means Committee that agency officials questioned whether the Affordable Care Act provided the authority to make certain payments to insurers without an appropriation from Congress. (Sullivan, 5/25)

Reuters: Aetna-Humana Tie-Up is Anti-Competitive in Missouri: State Regulator
A tie-up of Aetna Inc and Humana Inc would be anti-competitive in Missouri for several types of insurance, including individual Medicare Advantage plans where the combined company would have more than a 50 percent market share, the Missouri Department of Insurance said. The department said in an order, dated May 24 and posted on its website, that if the proposed acquisition of Humana by Aetna were to go forward, the companies would need to stop selling individual insurance, small group and certain Medicare Advantage plans in its state. (Humer, 5/25)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

KQED: How Therapy Became a Hobby of the Wealthy — Rather than a Necessity for the Mentally Ill
There's something that really bothers Stanford psychiatry professor Keith Humphreys. When he thinks of all the years he spends training the next generation of psychiatrists, the enormous investment in medical school and residency, he wants them to devote that education to taking care of people with serious mental illness. But many of them instead set up a private practice, where they can charge $400 an hour in cash to help people who Humphreys calls "the worried well" — people who enjoy the self-exploration of therapy but do not necessarily have a mental health problem. (Dembosky, 5/26)
The Washington Post: 7 Things about Vaccines and Autism that the Movie ‘Vaxxed’ Won’t Tell You
On its surface, the movie “Vaxxed: From Cover-Up to Catastrophe” appears to be a slickly produced scientific documentary with lots of charts and data. The central premise of the film is that the country’s mandatory measles, mumps and rubella vaccine — when given to children under age 2 — may be leading to an epidemic of autism. It explains the findings of a study that confirms the link and unearths recordings from a former CDC scientist who purportedly claimed the government quashed findings of the connection. But what the movie doesn’t get into is as compelling as what it does present. (Cha, 5/25)

MARKETPLACE

Kaiser Health News: Inventing a Machine that Spits out Drugs in a Whole New Way
In a lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, all the work that happens in a vast pharmaceutical manufacturing plant happens in a device the size of your kitchen refrigerator. And it’s fast. This prototype machine produces 1,000 pills in 24 hours, faster than it can take to produce some batches in a factory. Allan Myerson, a professor of chemical engineering at MIT and a leader of the effort, says it could become eventually an option for anyone who makes medications, which typically require a lengthy and complex process of crystallization. (Bebinger, 5/26)

HEALTH IT

Bay Area News Group: New CPR Robot Helps Bay Area Firefighters Preserve a Life
Three days after the Contra Costa County Fire District rolled out a new CPR robot that does compressions, firefighters used it to save a 50-year-old man. (Gartrell, 5/26)

San Diego Union-Tribune: Qualcomm Teams with Medtronic on Glucose Monitors
Qualcomm and medical device maker Medtronic said Wednesday that they would work together to develop small, inexpensive, easy-to-use continuous glucose monitors targeting people with Type 2 diabetes. The San Diego company’s subsidiary, Qualcomm Life, will contribute communications technology expertise to the joint project with Medtronic, which is working on a new low-cost glucose monitoring technology that possibly could be disposable. (Freeman, 5/25)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Huffington Post: Theranos Teaches Silicon Valley a Hard Lesson about Accountability
The Theranos saga hit another low last week when the company informed regulators that it was voiding two years of tests from its Edison blood testing devices and sending of tens-of-thousands of revised tests results to doctors. This means that thousands of patients received incorrect results and were likely given the wrong treatments. Surely the doctors and the patient victims were not responsible for this misplaced trust. (Vivek Wadhwa and Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, 5/24)

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CALIFORNIA WATCH

California Healthline: Impact of ‘Millionaire Tax’ to Fund Mental Health Care Still Hard to Gauge
An 11-year-old statewide effort to expand mental health services with a tax on high incomes is helping many people, but there’s not enough hard data to measure the overall impact of the billions of dollars raised so far, members of an independent state watchdog agency said Thursday. More work is needed to overcome problems of communication, reporting and oversight in order to assemble a clear picture of how the money’s spent. That was the consensus reached at Thursday’s hearing before the Little Hoover Commission, most of whose members are appointed by the governor and the legislature. (Ibarra, 5/27)

CAPITOL HILL WATCH

The Hill: Biden Claims ‘Total Bipartisan Support’ for Cancer Funding
Vice President Biden on Thursday hinted that key GOP leaders are willing to support his billion-dollar request for cancer research funding this year. Biden declared Thursday “there’s total bipartisan support” on Capitol Hill for his ambitious moonshot campaign to accelerate cures for cancer. (Ferris, 5/26)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

The New York Times: Infection Raises Specter of Superbugs Resistant to All Antibiotics
American military researchers have identified the first patient in the United States to be infected with bacteria that are resistant to an antibiotic that was the last resort against drug-resistant germs. The patient is well now, but the case raises the specter of superbugs that could cause untreatable infections, because the bacteria can easily transmit their resistance to other germs that are already resistant to additional antibiotics. The resistance can spread because it arises from loose genetic material that bacteria typically share with one another. (Tavernise and Grady, 5/26)

The Washington Post: FDA Approves New Way to Treat Opioid Addiction – Under the Skin
The Food and Drug Administration on Thursday approved the first implantable drug to deliver long-lasting medication to people addicted to opioids such as OxyContin and heroin. "Opioid abuse and addiction have taken a devastating toll on American families," FDA Commissioner Robert M. Califf said in a news release. "Today's approval provides the first-ever implantable option to support patients' efforts to maintain treatment as part of their overall recovery program." The implant, which has four matchstick-size rods that are inserted under the skin of the upper arm, administers the anti-addiction drug buprenorphine in a continuous dose for six months. That medication is available now only as a daily pill or a thin film that dissolves under the tongue. The implant, called Probuphine, is intended for people who are already stable on low doses of the drug. (McGinley, 5/26)

The Hill: CDC Director: 'We're Losing Time with Zika'
The nation’s top disease official warned Thursday that he is running out of time to prevent a Zika outbreak — the same day Congress left town without approving more funds to fight the virus. “We have a narrow window of opportunity to scale up effective Zika prevention measures, and that window of opportunity is closing,” Dr. Tom Frieden, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), said during a speech at the National Press Club. (Ferris, 5/26)
MARKETPLACE

Kaiser Health News: Blue Shield ‘Lifts the Veil’ on Executive Pay
In its first detailed disclosure on executive pay, nonprofit Blue Shield of California said Chief Executive Paul Markovich made $3.5 million last year – a 40 percent increase since he took the top job in 2013. The San Francisco-based health insurer has faced criticism for years from consumer advocates about its lack of transparency on executive compensation, and the issue attracted even more scrutiny after a state audit raised questions about the insurer’s big pay increases and large financial reserves. Following that audit, in 2014, California revoked Blue Shield’s state tax exemption. (Terhune, 5/26)

KQED: Theranos: The Lawsuits are Here
And now, the lawsuits. On the heels of Theranos voiding or correcting tens of thousands of blood tests it performed at its California lab, two suits seeking class action status have been filed in Northern California. The first suit was filed Wednesday on behalf of an unidentified Arizona man. The suit accuses the blood-testing company of fraud. (Brooks, 5/26)

PHARMACEUTICALS

ProPublica: Most Drugs Aren’t Tested on Pregnant Women. This Anti-Nausea Cure Shows Why That’s a Problem
Fifty to 90 percent of women spend some part of their early pregnancies sick to their stomachs, and what begins as simple nausea can become dangerously debilitating. Some expectant women use ondansetron for only a few days; Smiley took it too or three times a week into her second trimester. ...But ondansetron, for years the most widely used drug to treat the most common complication of pregnancy, was never approved in the U.S. or anywhere for use in pregnancy. (Martin, 5/26)

Stat: Bernie Sanders Accuses US Trade Rep of Intimidating Colombia over Novartis
Bernie Sanders is the latest lawmaker to chastise United States Trade Representative Michael Froman for pressuring Colombia not to sidestep a patent on a Novartis drug. (Silverman, 5/26)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Huffington Post: Trump on Immigrants and Health Care Costs: Just Plain Wrong
Throughout the primary season, leading Republican presidential candidates vied over who could bash immigrants the hardest. And they were promising more than border walls. Donald Trump is the most extreme immigrant-blamer; according to his website, “Providing healthcare to illegal immigrants costs us some $11 billion annually.” As with many of Trump’s claims, this one is wrong. But unlike some of his other falsehoods, the media has left this one unchallenged. Trump’s $11 billion figure comes from an obviously biased study that’s based on outlandish assumptions. (Leah Zallman and Steffie Woolhandler, 5/26)

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