CALIFORNIA WATCH

California Healthline: California Lawmakers Mull Improvements to Troubled Dental Program

California lawmakers are considering several bills to improve and expand access to Denti-Cal, the state’s troubled dental program for low-income people — including ones that would draw from the state’s new tobacco tax to boost dentists’ pay. Assembly Bill 753, introduced by Assemblywoman Anna Caballero (D-Salinas), would direct money from the state’s new tobacco tax to broaden access to Denti-Cal, which for years has been faulted in state and federal reports. The bill will be heard in the Assembly Committee on Health on Tuesday. (Ibarra, 4/17)

Sacramento Bee: Can California’s ‘Right to Try’ Law Help Save Terminal Patients?

[Shelly] Hoover, an educator and former administrator, plans to take advantage of California’s “right to try” law – a 2017 policy that allows patients with terminal illnesses to request experimental drugs that haven’t finished the Food and Drug Administration’s required trials. Critics say the California law, along with 33 similar laws nationwide, offers patients false hope and undermines the drug-approval process. Still, new federal legislation seeks to bolster the state policies. (Caiola, 4/15)

ADMINISTRATION NEWS

Modern Healthcare: Lawmakers Reach Bipartisan Deal to Extend FDA User Fees

Legislators reached a tentative deal Friday to reauthorize the FDA's authority to collect user fees, extending funding to maintain and streamline the agency's product approval process. The bipartisan leaders of the Senate's and U.S. House of Representatives' health committees released a draft of the bipartisan Food and Drug Administration Reauthorization Act Friday. The act would reauthorize the FDA's four user fee agreements that renew the FDA's authority to collect user fees from the makers of prescription brand drugs, medical devices, generic drugs and biosimilars, and several crucial programs at the FDA. The fees would incrementally increase year over year. (Kacik, 4/14)

HEALTH LAW

Kaiser Health News: Tax Day is Zero Hour for Health Insurance, Too

Your federal income taxes are due April 18 and, likely for several million people, so is a fine for failing to get health insurance. Despite a lengthy debate, Congress has not yet acted on a bill to repeal portions of the Affordable Care Act. That means the law and almost all of its regulations remain in force, for now. For the majority of tax filers, who had insurance through an employer or government program for 2016, all they have to do is check the box on Form 1040 that says they were covered for a full year. That’s it. (Rovner, 4/17)

The Washington Post: Two Republican Lawmakers Face Anger, From Their Own Voters, on Health Care

Inside a government building here, far-right Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.) scolded his party’s leaders for rolling out an “ill-advised” health-care bill and blamed House Speaker Paul D. Ryan for the ensuing debacle. The next evening on a college campus nestled in the Rocky Mountains, moderate Rep. Mike Coffman (R-Colo.) held the House Freedom Caucus — to which Yoho belongs — culpable for the legislation’s defeat. (Sullivan and Snell, 4/15)
The Associated Press: How Trump Insurance Changes Could Affect Coverage Next Year
A much tighter sign-up deadline and coverage delays will be waiting for some health insurance customers now that President Donald Trump's administration has finished a plan designed to stabilize shaky insurance markets. Shoppers will have a shorter time period to choose a 2018 plan and a harder time enrolling outside that window if they lose a job or have some other special circumstance that affects their coverage. (Murphy, 4/14)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

The Associated Press: Overcoming Opioids: The Quest for Less Addictive Drugs
Tummy tucks really hurt. Doctors carve from hip to hip, slicing off skin, tightening muscles, tugging at innards. Patients often need strong painkillers for days or even weeks, but Mary Hernandez went home on just over-the-counter ibuprofen. The reason may be the yellowish goo smeared on her 18-inch wound as she lay on the operating table. The Houston woman was helping test a novel medicine aimed at avoiding opioids, potent pain relievers fueling an epidemic of overuse and addiction. (Marchione, 4/17)

The Washington Post: Stroke Rates Appear to be Rising Steadily in Young Adults
The rate of stroke among young people has apparently been rising steadily since 1995, according to a study published this week. Hospitalization rates for stroke increased for women between the ages of 18 and 44, and nearly doubled for men in that age range from 1995 through 2012. (Naqvi, 4/15)

Dallas Morning News: Are Heartburn Medicines Linked to a Serious Gut Infection?
The pills you take to control heartburn and suppress stomach acid may be linked to increased risk of a serious gut infection. A study published late last month in JAMA Internal Medicine reports that people who take commonly used prescription and over-the-counter indigestion medicines such as Prilosec and Zantac are at risk of repeat infection with the bacteria Clostridium difficile. (Yasmin, 4/15)

Los Angeles Times: You Know CPR. Now Firefighters Want You to Treat Shooting and Bombing Victims
For the last year, Rancho Cucamonga’s fire and law enforcement officials have teamed up to teach civilians how to triage and tie tourniquets on shooting victims, in the same way CPR is taught in case of emergencies. They believe that people armed with these skills can save lives because they’re often the first ones at a crime scene. Many of those injured in the Boston Marathon bombing survived in part because bystanders started creating makeshift dressings and tourniquets before paramedics showed up, experts say. (Karlamangla, 4/15)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

The Washington Post: Does Trump Want to be the President Who Broke Health Care?
"Obamacare is dead next month if it doesn’t get that money,” President Trump told the Wall Street Journal on Wednesday in a barely veiled threat to defund a crucial part of the Affordable Care Act. The president delivered this threat even though he has no viable replacement plan. Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), the president said, “should be calling me and begging me to help him save Obamacare.” No. Mr. Trump should be working to preserve the Affordable Care Act, which is delivering health insurance to millions of Americans. (4/16)
The New York Times: You Draw It: Just How Bad is the Drug Overdose Epidemic?
How does the surge in drug overdoses compare with other causes of death in the U.S.? ... Since 1990, the number of Americans who have died every year from drug overdoses has increased by more than 500 percent. In 2015, more Americans died from drug overdoses than from car accidents and gun homicides combined. It’s the worst drug overdose epidemic in American history (Josh Katz, 4/14)

Los Angeles Times: California's Vaccination Rates are Up. Let's Keep it That Way
The controversial 2015 law doing away with an exemption that had allowed public school students to skip vaccinations based on their “personal beliefs” appears to have worked. California state officials reported this week that 95.6% of kindergartners are fully vaccinated. That’s the highest rate recorded at least since 1998, when a now-debunked study purported to show a link between vaccinations and autism. (4/14)
California Healthline: California Hospitals Lose Ground in Quality of Care, Report Card Shows

Nearly half of California hospitals received a grade of C or lower for patient safety on a national report card aimed at prodding medical centers to do more to prevent injuries and deaths. The Leapfrog Group, an employer-backed nonprofit group focused on health care quality, issued its latest scores last week. The report card is part of an effort to make consumers and employers aware of how their hospitals perform on key quality measures, so they can make better-informed health care decisions. The scores are updated twice a year, in spring and fall. (Terhune, 4/18)

Los Angeles Times: An In-Home Care Program for California’s Elderly and Disabled is Constantly at the Heart of Budget Battles. Here’s Why

California’s program to provide in-home care for its low-income elderly and disabled residents finds itself once again at the heart of a state budget standoff. It is familiar territory for the workers, advocates and administrators of the In-Home Supportive Services program. The current flare-up — between the state and county governments over how to divvy up IHSS costs — is the latest example of how California’s signature program, meant to keep people in their communities and out of nursing homes, has continually been the source of budget friction in recent years. (Mason, 4/18)

Ventura County Star: Food Stamp Outreach Program Canceled

A program that has helped thousands of needy people sign up for food stamps will stop in July, county officials said. Human Services Agency officials are ending a 12-month, $680,000 contract with the FOOD Share organization because of state budget reductions. The county has been contracting with the Oxnard-based food bank since 2011 to inform needy county residents and help them apply for the benefit. (Wilson, 4/17)

Ventura County Star: Nonprofit That Helps Homeless Population Names New CEO

Community Action of Ventura County, an Oxnard-based nonprofit that provides services to the region’s low-income and homeless populations, has named Cynder Sinclair its new CEO. Sinclair will begin leading the nonprofit Tuesday and plans to focus on creating relationships with other organizations and securing additional funding. Her appointment fills a leadership gap in the organization, which has been without a CEO since Tim Hockett retired last September. (Hersko, 4/17)

San Jose Mercury News: California: Breast Cancer Rates Increasing among Asian-Americans

While breast cancer rates have plateaued or declined in some racial groups, they have been steadily rising among Asian-Americans since 1988. The new findings, released last week by the Fremont-based Cancer Prevention Institute of California, show the largest increase in breast cancer rates in the Golden State is occurring among Koreans and Southeast Asians. (Seipel, 4/17)

Los Angeles Times: L.A. County Seeks to Strengthen the Safety Net for its Neediest Residents with Funding for the Homeless, Social Workers and Healthcare

Los Angeles County pressed forward with an effort to strengthen the safety net for its most vulnerable residents Monday with a budget plan that carves out significant allotments for social services, healthcare and other support for the poor. The proposed budget is a slight increase from last year, and officials said they are trying to channel some of that money toward helping those who rely on county government for critical services. (Agrawal, 4/17)
**HEALTH LAW**

**The Associated Press: Trump Group's Ads Bolstering GOP Obamacare Repeal Drive**
A pro-Trump group is airing ads in a dozen Republican-held House districts aimed at drumming up support for the White House's wounded drive to repeal President Barack Obama's health care law. The $3 million campaign comes during a two-week congressional recess in which GOP lawmakers' town hall meetings have been rocked by liberal supporters of Obama's 2010 statute. Underscoring the challenges Republicans face, one poll showed Monday that the public trusts Democrats over the GOP on health care by their biggest margin in nearly a decade. (4/17)

**Bloomberg: Obamacare's Insurers Struggle for Stability Amid Trump Threats**
Obamacare is stuck in limbo, and insurers and state regulators are struggling to set their plans for what's increasingly shaping up as a chaotic year for the health-care program. After the failure of Republicans’ first attempt to repeal and replace the ACA and President Donald Trump's subsequent threats to let the program “explode,” more health insurers are threatening to pull out next year, while others may sharply raise the premiums they charge. (Tracer and Edney, 4/17)

**MARKETPLACE**

**San Francisco Chronicle: Theranos Agrees Not to Operate Labs for Two Years**
It is unclear whether the settlement has any bearing on investigations into the company by the Department of Justice and U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. The company faces lawsuits from investors and Walgreens, its ex-partner that had been using Theranos blood-testing technology in dozens of stores before terminating the relationship. (Ho, 4/17)

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION**

**Kaiser Health News: Kids with Hepatitis C Get New Drugs and Coverage May Prove Easier than for Adults**
With the approval this month of two drugs to treat hepatitis C in children, these often overlooked victims of the opioid epidemic have a better chance at a cure. Kids may have an easier time than adults getting treatment approved, some experts say. Medicaid programs and private insurers have often balked at paying for the pricey drugs for adults, but stricter Medicaid guidelines for kids may make coverage more routine. (Andrews, 4/18)

**Kaiser Health News: A New Worry for Smokers' Families: ‘Thirdhand Smoke’**
Michael Miller, 44, does what most smokers do to protect his sons and daughter from the fumes of his Marlboro Ultra Lights. He takes it outside. After his 7 a.m. coffee, he walks out of his home in Cincinnati to smoke his first cigarette of the day. Then, as a branch manager of a road safety construction company, he smokes dozens more on street curbs. (Heredia Rodriguez, 4/18)

At the time of Prince’s death, his Paisley Park home and recording compound in Minnesota were strewn with “a sizable amount” of narcotic painkillers for which he did not have prescriptions, including some hidden in over-the-counter vitamin and aspirin bottles and others issued in the name of a close aide, according to newly released court documents related to the investigation into the accidental opioid overdose that killed Prince last year. (Coscarelli and Kovaleski, 4/17)
The Associated Press: Poll: Marijuana Safer than Opioids, but Moms Shouldn’t Use
Americans think it’s safer to use marijuana than opioids to relieve pain, but they were less comfortable with children and pregnant women using pot to treat medical conditions, according to a new Yahoo/Marist poll released Monday. Two-thirds of the respondents in the telephone survey said opioid drugs such as Vicodin or OxyContin are “riskier” to use than pot, even when the pain pills are prescribed by a doctor. (Wyatt, 4/17)

The Washington Post: Why it’s a Bad Idea to Space Out Your Child’s Vaccination Shots
With so many vaccines being required for young children today, some parents are asking their doctors whether they can space out or delay the vaccine schedule. They’re concerned that too many vaccines might overwhelm their child’s immune system. Parents also worry that getting more than one shot at a time increases the pain and stress. (Sun, 4/17)

WOMEN’S HEALTH

The Hill: Vulnerable GOP Senator: ‘No Problems' with Planned Parenthood Funding
Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.) said Monday during a combative town hall that he supports federal funding for Planned Parenthood. "I have no problems with federal funding for Planned Parenthood,” Heller said when asked about his support for the health organization. The GOP senator was booed when he initially appeared to hedge his answer on whether or not he supports federal funding for Planned Parenthood. (Carney, 4/17)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

The Washington Post: Sorry, Republicans, but Most People Support Single-Payer Health Care
Despite the rise of the tea party and unified Republican control of government, one decidedly anti-free-market idea appears ascendant: single-payer health care. And it’s no wonder, given that a record-high share of the population receives government-provided health insurance. As a country, we’ve long since acquiesced to the idea that Uncle Sam should give insurance to the elderly, veterans, people with disabilities, poor adults, poor kids, pregnant women and the lower middle class. (Catherine Rampell, 4/17)

DHNR is a daily compilation of news stories from GCHP's Communications Department.

Certain news organizations are protected via a paywall requiring the purchase of a subscription to view their content.
CALIFORNIA WATCH

**Ventura County Star: Knight Town Hall Brings Out Big, Loud Crowd in Simi Valley**
In a Rancho Santa Susana Community Center packed to capacity, people shouted out questions and opinions about the environment, Trump's tax returns, gun control and, more than anything else, health care … [Steve] Knight, R-Lancaster, said he wanted to keep Medicare strong. He said one of his concerns about the failed proposal to replace the ACA was the possibility of increased costs for people ages 50 to 64, not yet qualified for Medicare. During many of his answers to questions about his opposition to the ACA and other hot-button issues, the crowd hooted. Some people heckled him. (Kisken and Harris, 4/18)

**California Healthline: California Hospitals Lose Ground in Quality of Care, Report Card Shows**
Nearly half of California hospitals received a grade of C or lower for patient safety on a national report card aimed at prodding medical centers to do more to prevent injuries and deaths. The Leapfrog Group, an employer-backed nonprofit group focused on health care quality, issued its latest scores. The report card is part of an effort to make consumers and employers aware of how their hospitals perform on key quality measures, so they can make better-informed health care decisions. (Terhune, 4/18)

**California Healthline: As California Weighs Soda Warning Labels, Tax in Berkeley Shown to Dilute Sales**
A new study of the soda tax in Berkeley shows that residents are doing what public health experts had hoped — they're ditching sugary drinks for healthier beverages. The study, the largest to date of Berkeley's soda tax, comes as California lawmakers this week again consider legislation to put a warning label on sweetened beverages — a bill that died in committee three times in three years. (Ibarra, 4/18)

**Sacramento Bee: Disabled Placards for Thousands of Dead Californians Part of Program Abuse**
California’s Department of Motor Vehicles needs to significantly beef up efforts to prevent fraud and abuse in the state’s disabled person placard program, a new state audit recommends, noting that officials accept applications lacking required medical documentation, issue too many duplicates, and fail to cancel the placards of people who have died. Almost 3 million people had disabled placards or special license plates as of June 2016, according to Tuesday’s Bureau of State Audits report. (Miller, 4/18)

**Ventura County Star: Gold Coast Health Plan, Beacon Collaborate to Offer Mental Health Services for Medi-Cal Members**
Call it “mental illness” or a “behavioral health matter.” Either way, it affects nearly 44 million, or 25 percent of adults in the United States and almost 5 million adults in California, according to a 2016 study from the National Institute of Mental Health. (Nelson, 4/17)

**ADMINISTRATION NEWS**

**The Associated Press: Feds Practice Ebola Evacuations Despite Past Trump Criticism**
Donald Trump railed against President Barack Obama's decision to bring patients with Ebola to the U.S. for treatment in 2014. Now that Trump is president, his administration is preparing for similar, and possibly larger-scale, evacuations. The State Department and Department of Health and Human Services said Tuesday they led an unprecedented inter-agency drill last week to test their preparedness to deal with a new outbreak of Ebola or another deadly, highly infectious disease. (Lee, 4/18)
HEALTH LAW

The New York Times: Health Insurers Make Case for Subsidies, but Get Little Assurance from Administration
Health insurers pressed Trump administration officials on Tuesday to continue billions of dollars in subsidies for low-income people buying plans under the federal health care law, but left with nothing that would dissipate the fog of uncertainty hanging over the industry. (Abelson, 4/18)

Politico: Trump Issues Bold New Promises on Health Care, Tax, Infrastructure
Trump promised big wins in the next stretch of his administration, glossing past the reality that the political newcomer will celebrate his first 100 days without a major legislative victory. In a speech that could be seen as a messaging test for that milestone, Trump hailed the opening days of his administration as a wild success and pledged to quickly deliver on health care, tax reform and infrastructure. (McCaskill, 4/18)

The Associated Press: UnitedHealth 1Q Profit Soars as ACA Business Shrinks
UnitedHealth's first-quarter profit soared 35 percent as the nation's biggest health insurer slashed participation in ACA exchanges but grew just about every other part of its business. The insurer hiked its 2017 earnings forecast and company shares started climbing shortly after it detailed results. (4/18)

MEDICARE / MEDICAID

Modern Healthcare: Dual-Eligibles: The Next Target in Hospital Readmissions Penalties
The CMS is proposing to adjust penalties in its Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program according to a hospital's proportion of dual-eligible patients, garnering praise from industry stakeholders even though they say the move is an incremental change. The proposed rule would take effect in fiscal 2019. ... The change stems from the 21st Century Cures Act. The law required Medicare to take patient background into account when calculating payment reductions to hospitals under the Hospital Readmission Reduction Program, and to adjust those penalties based on the proportion of patients who were dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. Such patients are disproportionately expensive for hospitals. (Whitman, 4/18)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Stat: How Drug Use Changes the Brain — and Makes Relapse All Too Common
The opioid epidemic ravaging the U.S. has brought new impetus to understanding how addiction hijacks the brain. More and more, scientists are shifting their focus to what's going on in the brain after people like Mooney go off drugs. Their quest has unveiled a troubling picture: Repeated drug use leads to long-term changes to the brain. Some of those changes, new research suggests, might be hard to reverse and might even intensify right after withdrawal, explaining why it is so hard to stay off drugs. (Wesphal, 4/19)

Chicago Tribune: New Drug Provides Long-Awaited Breakthrough for Parkinson's Psychosis
Most people recognize Parkinson's patients through tremors, slow body movements and other motor problems. Yet up to half of patients develop psychosis at some time during the disease's course, often in the later stages and sometimes as a side effect from drugs prescribed to help motor skills. Tackling the psychosis has proved difficult, in part because doctors struggled for decades to address the motor problems. (McGuire, 4/18)
PHARMACEUTICALS

Kaiser Health News: Nonprofit Linked to PhRMA Rolls Out Campaign to Block Drug Imports
A nonprofit organization that has orchestrated a wide-reaching campaign against foreign drug imports has deep ties to the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, or PhRMA, the powerhouse lobbying group that includes Eli Lilly, Pfizer and Bayer. A PhRMA senior vice president, Scott LaGanga, for 10 years led the Partnership for Safe Medicines, a nonprofit that has recently emerged as a leading voice against Senate bills that would allow drug importation from Canada. (Kopp and Bluth, 4/19)

QUALITY

ProPublica: Secret Hospital Inspections May Become Public at Last
The public could soon get a look at confidential reports about errors, mishaps and mix-ups in the nation’s hospitals that put patients’ health and safety at risk, under a groundbreaking proposal from federal health officials. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services wants to require that private health care accreditors publicly detail problems they find during inspections of hospitals and other medical facilities, as well as the steps being taken to fix them. Nearly nine in 10 hospitals are directly overseen by those accreditors, not the government. (Ornstein, 4/18)

The Washington Post: A Simple Checklist Prevents Deaths after Surgery, a Large New Study Suggests
Surgery checklists save lives, a study released Monday found. Hospitals in South Carolina that completed a voluntary, statewide program to implement the World Health Organization’s Surgical Safety Checklist had a 22 percent reduction in post-surgical deaths. The study, set to publish in the August 2017 issue of Annals of Surgery, is one of the first to show a large-scale impact of the checklist on the general population. (Naqvi, 4/18)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

The New York Times: Big Tobacco Attacks Sensible F.D.A. Rules on Vaping
As smokers turned to electronic cigarettes to reduce the health risks of smoking, big tobacco companies started buying e-cigarette makers and producing and selling their own. Now those companies are lobbying Congress to prevent the Food and Drug Administration from regulating electronic cigarettes and cigars, as it does conventional cigarettes. If they succeed, they will be able to sell and market addictive nicotine products to young people with few restrictions. (4/19)

DHNR is a daily compilation of news stories from GCHP's Communications Department.

Certain news organizations are protected via a paywall requiring the purchase of a subscription to view their content.
Sacramento Bee: Transgender Patient Sues Dignity Health for Discrimination over Hysterectomy Denial
More than seven months after a Dignity Health hospital refused a hysterectomy to a Sacramento-area transgender patient, the ACLU filed a lawsuit on his behalf. The lawsuit, filed in San Francisco Superior Court, alleges that Dignity discriminated against Evan Minton, 35, a former state Capitol legislative aide, when he sought a hysterectomy as part of his transition from female to male. (Buck and Caiola, 4/20)

California Healthline: California Lawmakers Consider Mandatory Labels on Salon Products to Protect Workers
Beauty salon workers who paint the nails and treat the hair of millions of Californians are regularly exposed to toxic chemicals — and they may not know it, advocates say. The advocates are asking California lawmakers to approve legislation requiring cosmetic companies to list the ingredients of beauty products used in professional salons. The bill, which passed the Assembly health committee Tuesday, will next be heard by the environmental safety committee. (Bartolone, 4/20)

Capital Public Radio: Bill Requiring UCs and CSUs to Provide Abortion Pills Advances
A measure by Democratic Senator Connie Leyva would require the systems to provide abortion pills at their student health centers. Leyva introduced the bill after UC Berkeley declined student petitions to provide the medication at its on-campus health center. (Bradford, 4/19)

Ventura County Star: A Year Later, Veterans Wait Less at Oxnard Clinic
Patients wait far less for appointments at an Oxnard Veterans Affairs clinic that a year ago struggled with staffing shortages and was considered among the worst in the nation for wait times, according to new VA records. In February, veterans who were returning patients at the clinic waited an average of six days past the date they requested for primary-care appointments, according to a new online wait time tracker that VA officials cite as a sign of change for the oft-criticized national health system. (Kisken, 4/19)

Ventura County Star: Gold Coast Health Plan’s Community Health Investment Program Addresses the Social Determinants of Health
Gold Coast Health Plan has launched a Community Health Investment Program to address the social determinants of health in Ventura County. Established in 2016 as part of its Alternative Resources for Community Health initiative, the Community Health Investment Program provides monetary grants to locally qualified external organizations addressing the social determinants affecting the health and well-being of the Plan’s members. (Lalich, 4/18)

ADMINISTRATION NEWS

Kaiser Health News: With Drug Costs in Crosshairs, Health Firms Gave Generously to Trump’s Inauguration
Drugmaker Pfizer gave $1 million to help finance the inauguration, according to documents filed with the Federal Election Commission. Amgen, another pharmaceutical company, donated $500,000. Health insurers Anthem, Centene and Aetna all gave six-figure contributions. They joined a surge of corporate donors from multiple industries to break inauguration-finance records even as then-President-elect Donald Trump promised to “drain the swamp” of Washington influence-peddling. (Hancock, Lupkin and Lucas, 4/19)
HEALTH LAW

The Washington Post: Trump Must Decide Whether to Support or Undermine Obamacare
President Trump is pressuring Congress to sink parts of the Affordable Care Act. But now that the first attempt at a GOP health-care overhaul has failed, he must decide whether to throw the law a line. The White House and Republican lawmakers are facing key decisions that could either improve the insurance marketplaces established by the ACA next year or prompt insurers to further hike rates or withdraw from those marketplaces entirely. Republicans had hoped to protect those with marketplace coverage while lawmakers replaced Obamacare. (Winfield Cunningham, 4/19)

MARKETPLACE

Modern Healthcare: Stricter Chargemaster Regulations Needed to Rein in Healthcare Costs
After a three-hour visit to the emergency room, a young girl left with a headache and a $4,875 bill. A Southern California hospital charged the girl and her family three times the fair and customary price for a CT scan — about $2,000 — to see if the girl's fall caused head trauma, according to Lisa Berry Blackstock, a patient advocate the family hired to negotiate a lower fee. The family's high-deductible health plan meant they had to cover the entire cost. (Kacik, 4/19)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Kaiser Health News: How to Help Alzheimer’s Patients Enjoy Life, Not Just ‘Fade Away’
Alzheimer’s disease has an unusual distinction: It’s the illness that Americans fear most — more than cancer, stroke or heart disease. The rhetoric surrounding Alzheimer’s reflects this. People “fade away” and are tragically “robbed of their identities” as this incurable condition progresses, we’re told time and again. (Graham, 4/20)

NPR: Blood from Human Umbilical Cords Helps Aging Mice Remember
From the beginning, the findings were exciting, complex and, sometimes, contradictory. For example, scientists have shown that young blood can restore cell activity in the muscles and livers of aging mice. They've also found that linking old mice to young ones helped reverse heart muscle thickening. On the other hand, researchers weren't able to replicate some of the most eye-catching findings and another study concluded that, in mice that swapped blood without being connected surgically, the negative effects of being exposed to old blood outweighed the benefits of getting young blood. (Bichell, 4/19)

The Washington Post: Antidepressants Not as Harmful During Pregnancy as Previously Thought, a New Study Shows
Women who take antidepressants early in pregnancy are not at a higher risk of having children who develop autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), contrary to earlier reports, a study published Tuesday found. The new study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, found only a slight increase in the risk of premature birth for infants of mothers who used antidepressants during the first trimester of their pregnancy. But the researchers found no increase in the risk of autism, ADHD or reduced fetal growth among children exposed to antidepressants during fetal development. (Naqvi, 4/19)
HEALTH IT

Bloomberg: Google’s Health Moonshot Comes Back to Earth
Opening on April 19, the study is called Baseline, as in a starting point for what healthy biometric data should look like. It’s the first serious public test for Verily Life Sciences, formerly Google Life Sciences. While Verily has separated from Google’s internet business within the Alphabet Inc. holding company, it’s taking a page from the playbook of its former parent, which aims to collect and organize information online. Verily wants to collect data from our bodies, using it to guide better health decisions. While that sounds ambitious, it’s much more modest than the missions Verily promoted when it was officially part of Google. Years ago, the biotech division promised projects such as glucose-monitoring contact lenses and all-in-one medical scanners; those remain in the lab. (Chen and Bergen, 4/19)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

The New York Times: Donald Trump Threatens to Sabotage Obamacare
After Republican leaders in Congress failed to destroy the Affordable Care Act last month, President Trump tweeted that the law would “explode.” Now he seems determined to deliver on that prediction through presidential sabotage. Mr. Trump is threatening to kill a program in the A.C.A. that pays health insurers to offer plans with lower deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses to about seven million lower-income and middle-class people. The president thinks that this will get Democrats to negotiate changes to the 2010 health law. This is cruel and incredibly shortsighted. (4/19)
CALIFORNIA WATCH

California Healthline: Hospital Ratings Sites Give Consumers Something to Go On
One in 25 patients develop an infection while in the hospital, according to federal estimates. Many of those infections and other medical mistakes are preventable. Nationally, an estimated 440,000 people die each year from hospital errors, injuries and infections. A recent report card from the nonprofit Leapfrog Group showed there’s plenty of room for improvement by California hospitals on a wide range of patient safety measures. Nearly half of the 271 California hospitals that were reviewed received a grade of C or lower. (4/21)

Sacramento Bee: Could California Become the Next Canada for Health Care?
While Republicans in Washington are seeking to resurrect their plan to dismantle Obamacare and replace it with a market-based approach, a pair of Democratic California lawmakers are plotting to go in the opposite direction. Lara, of Bell Gardens, and Sen. Toni Atkins of San Diego, with backing from National Nurses United and the Bernie Sanders wing of the Democratic Party, are working to create a universal, government-run health care system. (Hart, 4/21)

KQED: Judge Threatens to Fine California Prisons for Delayed Mental Health Treatment
California prison officials could face hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines a day if they can’t comply with a federal court order to eliminate delays in treatment for the most severely mentally ill inmates. U.S. District Judge Kimberly Mueller this week threatened to fine prison officials to get them to meet the terms of a 1995 settlement of a decades-old class-action lawsuit. (Pickoff-White and Small, 4/20)

ADMINISTRATION NEWS

Modern Healthcare: Tougher Immigration Enforcement is Taking a Toll on Healthcare
The Trump administration’s more aggressive policy of detaining and deporting undocumented immigrants is posing new challenges for healthcare providers who serve immigrant communities. While there is no definitive proof yet, leaders of community health centers and hospital emergency physicians say they see anecdotal evidence that immigrant patients are making fewer appointments and not coming in for follow-up care. They worry chronic conditions will worsen and infectious diseases will go untreated. (Meyer, 4/21)

The New York Times: F.D.A. Strengthens Warnings for Painkillers in Children
The Food and Drug Administration announced on Thursday that any child younger than 12 should not take the opioid codeine and that those 18 and younger should not take tramadol, another painkiller, after certain types of surgery. In addition, nursing mothers should avoid both opioids because they pose dangers to breast-feeding babies, the agency said. (Saint Louis, 4/20)

HEALTH LAW

Kaiser Health News: Conservatives’ Goal to Relax Mandatory Health Benefits Unlikely to Tame Premiums
As House Republicans try to find common cause on a bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, they may be ready to let states make the ultimate decision about whether to keep a key consumer provision in the federal health law that conservatives say is raising insurance costs. (Rovner, 4/21)
The New York Times: White House Officials, Craving Progress, Push Revised Health Bill
White House officials, desperate to demonstrate progress on President Trump's promise to repeal the Affordable Care Act, are pushing to resurrect a Republican health care bill before his 100th day in office next week. Some members of the president’s team have grown consumed by that deadline, worrying that appraisals of the president’s tenure will be brutal and hoping that a last push on health care might bring a measure of salvation. (Flegenheimer and Abelson, 4/20)

MEDICAID

The Associated Press: Lawmakers Revisiting Requiring Those on Medicaid to Work
A simple question — should adults who are able to work be required to do so to get taxpayer-provided health insurance? — could lead to major changes in the social safety net. The federal-state Medicaid program for low-income and disabled people covers more than 70 million U.S. residents — about 1 in 5 — including an increasing number of working-age adults. In a break from past federal policy, the Health and Human Services Department under Secretary Tom Price has already notified governors it stands ready to approve state waivers for "meritorious" programs that encourage work. (Alonso-Zaldivar, 4/21)

Modern Healthcare: States May End Coverage for Kids as Federal Funds Dry Up
Several states may soon have to suspend programs that provide healthcare coverage for children unless Congress reauthorizes funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program, according to a government agency. Arizona, California, Minnesota, North Carolina and the District of Columbia will run out of CHIP funding by December 2017 unless Congress approves additional funds for the program, according to a report by the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) discussed during a Thursday panel meeting. By March 2018, more than half of states are projected to exhaust their federal CHIP funds. (Dickson, 4/20)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Kaiser Health News: What Doesn't Kill You Can Maim: Unexpected Injuries from Opioids
The trouble started for Lisa when she took a blood pressure pill and one to control seizures, along with methadone, a drug used to help wean patients off heroin. "I inadvertently did the methadone cocktail and I went to sleep for like 48 hours," Lisa said, rolling her eyes and coughing out a laugh. "It kicked my butt. It really kicked my butt." (Bebinger, 4/21)

Los Angeles Times: Venture Capitalists Look Beyond Tech to the Dietary Supplements Market
How do you stay sharp and fit despite fatigue and age? By consuming substances extracted from blueberries, flowers and algae, say the makers of a new group of unregulated and unproven health pills. Trusting natural chemicals to solve inevitable ailments is familiar to anyone who has visited a GNC store or contributed to the $30 billion spent annually in the U.S. on dietary supplements. (Dave, 4/21)

CNN: Diet Sodas May Be Tied to Stroke, Dementia Risk
Gulping down an artificially sweetened beverage not only may be associated with health risks for your body, but also possibly your brain, a new study suggests. Artificially sweetened drinks, such as diet sodas, were tied to a higher risk of stroke and dementia in the study, which published in the American Heart Association's journal Stroke on Thursday. (Howard, 4/20)
NPR: Clues to Failing Memory Found in Brain Stimulation Study
"When memory was predicted to be poor," he explains, "brain stimulation enhanced memory, and when it was predicted to be good, brain stimulation impaired memory." In other words, on a bad memory day, stimulation helped. On a good day, it hurt. When stimulation was delivered to the right place at the right time, the researchers found, it could improve memory performance among the patients by as much as 50 percent. (Hamilton, 4/20)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

The Washington Post: Trumpcare 2.0 Won’t Go Anywhere, Either
The GOP 2.0 version of the American Health Care Act has about as much appeal as the original AHCA, or maybe less. It’s still a big tax cut for the rich, a hit to pocketbooks of older and more rural voters, and less generous than what recipients had received under Obamacare. Would a moderate in a district Hillary Clinton carried overwhelmingly go for this? It’d be a high-risk proposition. (Jennifer Rubin, 4/20)