California Healthline: California Valley Fever Cases Highest on Record
The number of Valley Fever cases in California rose to a record level in 2016, with 5,372 reported — a jump of 71 percent from the previous year. Historically, about three-quarters of cases have been in the state’s heavily agricultural San Joaquin Valley. The fungal infection, known as coccidioidomycosis, or “cocci,” is most common in the southern part of the Valley and along the Central Coast. (Bartolone, 7/24)

Santa Rosa Press Democrat: Assemblyman Jim Wood, California Dental Lobby Opposed Changes after Boy’s Surgery Death
Jim Wood was first elected to the state Assembly three years ago as a former mayor of Healdsburg and a small town dentist. Holding a safe seat in a strongly Democratic district stretching from Santa Rosa to the Oregon border, Wood, 57, has transformed into a political campaign rainmaker, raising nearly $1 million in his successful re-election effort last year. In Sacramento, he serves as chairman of the Assembly’s Health Committee, overseeing the state’s giant $367 billion health care industry. Wood’s presence as the only dentist in the 120-member state Legislature coincides with the rising influence of the so-called “dental lobby,” which has ascended to the ranks of big spenders on state political campaigns, donating four times more money to candidates than it did two decades ago. (Kovner, 7/22)

Ventura County Star: Deadly Hantavirus Can Strike Down Californians
A Citrus Heights man has been fighting for his life in the hospital after contracting hantavirus. His family suspects Spencer Fry, 22, caught the rare disease while working at Bodie State Historic Park in the Eastern Sierra, although the Mono County health officer has cleared buildings at the park. (7/21)

ADMINISTRATION NEWS
When she was health commissioner of Georgia, the state with one of the highest rates of child obesity, Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald faced two enormous challenges: How to get children to slim down and how to pay for it. Her answer to the first was Power Up for 30, a program pushing schools to give children 30 minutes more exercise each day, part of a statewide initiative called Georgia Shape. The answer to the second was Coca-Cola, the soft drink company and philanthropic powerhouse, which has paid for almost the entire Power Up program. (Kapner, 7/22)

HEALTH LAW
Kaiser Health News: Opioid Treatment Funds in Senate Bill would Fall Far Short of Needs
At a lunch last week, President Trump tried to persuade some reluctant senators to endorse repealing the Affordable Care Act. During the meeting, he mentioned a provision in the Senate Republican proposal that allocates funding for opioid treatment, saying, “We’re committing $45 billion to help combat the opioid epidemic, and some states in particular like that.” But addiction treatment specialists warn that sum of money is far from enough to address a crisis that has escalated across the United States in recent years, killing tens of thousands of people. (Allen, 7/24)
Politico: Thune: Senate Won’t Give Up on Obamacare Repeal if Bill Fails this Week
If the Senate’s latest Obamacare repeal efforts collapse this week, Republicans will “go back to the drawing board” and try again, Senate GOP Conference chairman John Thune said. (Ehley, 7/23)

Kaiser Health News: Senate Parliamentarian Upends GOP Hopes for Health Bill
The official rules keeper in the Senate Friday tossed a bucket of cold water on the Senate Republican health bill by advising that major parts of the bill cannot be passed with a simple majority, but rather would require 60 votes. Republicans hold only 52 seats in the Senate. Senate Parliamentarian Elizabeth MacDonough said that a super-majority is needed for the temporary defunding of Planned Parenthood, abortion coverage restrictions to health plans purchased with tax credits and the requirement that people with breaks in coverage wait six months before they can purchase new plans. (Rovner, 7/21)

Los Angeles Times: 'I Don't Even Know What We're Proceeding to Next Week.' Obamacare Vote Nears with Key Details Still Missing
The uncertainty so close to a major vote is feeding a growing sense of chaos on Capitol Hill, where GOP senators are openly fretting about the lack of information about legislation that could leave anywhere from 22 million to 32 million more Americans without health insurance. (Levey, 7/21)

Politico: Former CBO Directors Hit Back at GOP Criticism of Agency
All eight former directors of the Congressional Budget Office fired back Friday at Republican attacks on the nonpartisan scorekeeping agency over its projections that Obamacare repeal would leave millions more uninsured. In a letter to congressional leaders, the former chiefs wrote that the CBO has a long track record of producing high-quality and nonpartisan reports. (Cancryn, 7/21)

The Associated Press: Doctors' Group Tells Senate to Fix, Not Repeal 'Obamacare'
The nation's largest doctors' group urged senators on Friday to stop trying to repeal or replace Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act and instead begin a bipartisan effort to stabilize the insurance marketplace. The American Medical Association said proposed Republican bills — one to repeal and replace the 2010 health law, the other to repeal only — would cause too many people to lose coverage. (Johnson, 7/21)

MARKETPLACE

Kaiser Health News: 5 Ways White House Can Use its Muscle to Undercut Obamacare
President Donald Trump has vowed to “let Obamacare fail,” after legislative efforts to undo the Affordable Care Act have stalled. He and congressional Republicans have repeatedly portrayed the Affordable Care Act insurance marketplaces, also known as exchanges, as being in a “death spiral.” But independent analyses have concluded that such spontaneous disintegration isn’t happening. (Luthra, 7/24)

USA Today: Trump to Speak Monday on Health Care
President Trump on Monday will speak to the press at the White House about health care, minutes after meeting with what he calls “victims of Obamacare.” The statement, announced late Sunday by the White House, comes nearly a week after Trump pressed Republican senators to agree to an alternative to the Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare, before taking an August recess. (Toppo, 7/23)
PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

KPCC: Study Shows Impact of Home Visits for New Moms, Babies Last Long
The analysis of the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), a national program that organizes nurse visits to the homes of families with young children, found that it improved child health, family environments, child cognition, socio-emotional development and educational achievement. (Neely, 7/24)

The Washington Post: New Hope for HIV Cure as Child Remains Virus-Free Years after Final Treatment
A South African boy, believed to have been infected with HIV around the time of his birth, has remained free of the virus for 8½ years after early treatment — renewing hope among scientists that such outliers may hold clues to help end the decades-old epidemic. (Cha, 7/24)

NPR: Concussions May Hit Female Brains Harder, Research Suggests
Thanks to research on boxers and football players, both athletes and the public are becoming more aware of the dangers of sports-related head injuries. Yet there is little data on participants like Mazany. That's because, unlike the vast majority of athletes studied, she is a woman. (Hamilton, 7/24)

PHARMACEUTICALS

Kaiser Health News: Follow The Money: Drugmakers Deploy Political Cash as Prices and Anger Mount
Two federal investigations — one examining opioid sales, another about a multiple sclerosis drug whose price had soared to $34,000 a vial — were only part of the troubles Mallinckrodt faced as the year began. The stock of the drugmaker, whose United States headquarters are in St. Louis, was tanking. Wall Street worried that Medicare might reduce the half-billion dollars it was spending yearly on a Mallinckrodt drug with limited evidence of effectiveness. (Hancock, Lucas and Lupkin, 7/24)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

The New York Times: Health Care Is Still in Danger
Will Senate Republicans try to destroy health care under cover of a constitutional crisis? That's a serious question, based in part on what happened in the House earlier this year. As you may remember, back in March attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act seemed dead after the Congressional Budget Office released a devastating assessment, concluding that the House Republican bill would lead to 23 million more uninsured Americans. Faced with intense media scrutiny and an outpouring of public opposition, House leaders pulled their bill, and the debate seemed over. (Paul Krugman, 7/24)

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CALIFORNIA WATCH                        JULY 25, 2017

Ventura County Star: Gold Coast Health Plan: Tools for Tobacco Prevention
For the past half century, following the U.S. Surgeon General's landmark 1964 report on the dangers of smoking, adults' use of tobacco has been on a steady decline. Currently, the overall prevalence of U.S. adult smoking is around 20 percent, less than half of what it was in 1964, according to “Fifty Years of Change: 1964-2014,” a report from the U.S. Surgeon General's office. And yet, despite “significant progress” since that 1964 study, "smoking remains the single largest cause of preventable disease and death in the United States," according to the report. (Nelson, 7/24)

The Mercury News: California Aims to Fight GOP Efforts to Destroy Obamacare
Among the strategies is a fallback plan in case the Trump administration eliminates the subsidies that help low-income Obamacare enrollees pay for out-of-pocket medical expenses. And should Trump use his executive powers to weaken the enforcement of a critical part of the law — the individual mandate requiring people to have health insurance or pay a steep tax penalty — California could impose its own. (Seipel, 7/24)

The Mercury News: Why California's Most Polluting Vehicles Aren't Required to Get Smog Checks
It's California’s dirty little emissions secret. As Gov. Jerry Brown and the mayors of Los Angeles and Long Beach promise an emissions-free future, some diesel fumes aren’t going anywhere. That's because, unlike your car, there’s no routine emissions-testing program for big rigs in California. And a provision in Senate Bill 1 – the $52 billion road-fixing law Brown signed amid much ballyhoo in the spring – exempts most diesel trucks from emissions-reduction requirements for many years ahead. Instead, the state will continue to rely on random inspections at weigh stations on the side of the road and at border crossings. (Uranga, 7/24)

HEALTH LAW

The Associated Press: McCain's Return Sets Stage for Big Senate Health Bill Vote
President Donald Trump urged Republicans to "step up to the plate" for Tuesday's crucial Senate vote on their bill eviscerating much of the Obama health care law. The stage was set for high drama, with Sen. John McCain returning to the Capitol to cast his first vote since being diagnosed with brain cancer. No stranger to heroic episodes, the Navy pilot who persevered through five years of captivity during the Vietnam War announced through his office that he would be back in Washington for the critical roll call on beginning debate on the legislation. (7/25)

The Washington Post: The GOP Plan to Protect Medicaid Recipients could Run Out of Money after 2 Years
The report, from the nonpartisan Urban Institute, estimates that $200 billion would cover additional benefits for this group for only a couple of years. After that, they would have to choose between buying costly private insurance with hefty deductibles or going without coverage. Republicans might have trouble coming up with more money to extend those benefits. (Ehrenfreund, 7/25)
Politico: Farenthold Blames 'Some Female Senators' for Obamacare Repeal Failure
Rep. Blake Farenthold on Monday blamed “some female senators from the Northeast” for hampering Republican efforts to repeal and replace Obamacare, telling a local radio station that he might challenge them to a duel if the allegedly obstructive lawmakers were men. The Texas Republican’s remark appeared to be a reference to Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), both of whom have expressed some degree of hesitancy toward Senate Republicans’ specific plans to repeal and replace former President Barack Obama’s signature health care legislation. (Nelson, 7/24)

MARKETPLACE

Reuters: Molina Healthcare to Cut about 1,400 Jobs: Memo
Molina Healthcare, a health insurer that specializes in the Obamacare and Medicaid healthcare programs for low-income and poor people, plans to cut about 1,400 jobs in the next few months, according to an internal company memo reviewed by Reuters. (Humer, 7/24)

Los Angeles Times: KKR’s Internet Brands Plans to Buy WebMD in a $2.8-Billion Deal
WebMD has found a remedy for its volatile business: A $2.8-billion sale to El Segundo online media company Internet Brands. The Internet’s leading destination for information about rashes, coughs and other ailments has gone through mergers and sales multiple times since its founding in the late 1990s. But investors made a fresh case for a deal earlier this year, contending that being at the cross-section of healthcare and the Internet should be more valuable than what traders were paying for WebMD shares on the stock market. (Dave, 7/24)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

California Healthline: Scope Maker Olympus Hit with $6.6 Million Verdict in Superbug Outbreak Case
In the first case of its kind in the U.S., the company was ordered to pay damages to the hospital where a patient died of an infection linked to a contaminated scope. But jurors also found the hospital negligent, and it was ordered to pay the patients’ family $1 million. (Terhune and Aleccia, 7/25)

Federal health officials are changing their testing recommendations for pregnant women who may be exposed to the Zika virus through travel or sex or because of where they live. In updated guidance released Monday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is no longer recommending routine testing for pregnant women without any Zika symptoms but who may have been put at risk because they have traveled to a region where Zika is circulating. (Sun, 7/24)

Los Angeles Times: Doctors and Drug Abuse: Why Addictions Can Be So Difficult
Experts say physicians become substance abusers at about the same rate as the general population. But they are often reluctant to seek treatment out of fear of losing their medical licenses and livelihoods. (Karlamangla, 7/24)
Bloomberg: Trump’s FDA Chief Takes Wide Aim at Opioid Addiction Crisis
The FDA, as part of a sweeping overhaul in how it regulates opioid painkillers, plans to look to some unusual allies to limit the flood of the addictive pills -- health insurers and companies that manage prescription drug benefits. FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb plans to meet with the benefit payers and insurance administrators, groups the FDA hasn’t typically worked with. The plan is to stem the tide of addiction to the pills by limiting the number of people exposed to them. (Edney, 7/24)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

The New York Times: How The Health Bill could Cost Senators in the Next Election
One of the health care bills under consideration by Republican leaders would take health insurance away from 32 million people over the next decade, creating a cohort of Americans who could be motivated to vote against senators who approved the measure. The Senate could vote as early as Tuesday, but it is not yet clear which of the two bills in contention that the majority leader, Mitch McConnell, intends to bring up. The plan that would leave 32 million without coverage would repeal some of the most important parts of the Affordable Care Act without any replacement. (Vickas Bajaj and Stuart A. Thompson, 7/24)
California Healthline: Rural Californians Want Price Relief from GOP Health Bill, but Unlikely to Get it
In far northern Lassen and Modoc counties, residents say Obamacare premiums are unaffordable. But under the proposed Senate bill, insurance premiums would increase even more. (Dembosky, 7/26)

KQED: California Decides All Drinking Water Must be Tested for a Toxin. But Who Pays?
The State Water Resources Control Board on July 18 adopted the strictest possible standard (5 parts per trillion or less) for the contaminant in public drinking water. ...Statewide, the tap water of about a million Californians is known to contain TCP at levels higher than that, according to data from the state water board. (O’Neill, 7/25)

HEALTH LAW

The New York Times: Senate Votes Down Broad Obamacare Repeal
The Senate voted narrowly on Tuesday to begin debate on a bill to repeal major provisions of the Affordable Care Act, but hours later, Republican leaders suffered a setback when their most comprehensive plan to replace President Barack Obama’s health law fell far short of the votes it needed. The Tuesday night tally needed to reach 60 votes to overcome a parliamentary objection. Instead, it fell 43-57. (Kaplan and Pear, 7/25)

Politico: How The GOP Brought Obamacare Repeal Back from the Dead
As Mitch McConnell strode to the Senate floor on Tuesday, with no votes to spare to keep the GOP’s Obamacare repeal campaign alive, he knew where everyone in his conference stood. Everyone, that is, except for Ron Johnson. (Everett, Kim and Haberkorn, 7/25)

Politico: What’s Next in the Senate Repeal Saga? Good Question
Once the Senate burns through its 20 hours of debate, split among Republicans and Democrats, it goes to a vote-a-rama, which looks like it will be late Thursday. Theoretically that allows for unlimited amendments as long as they are relevant. But probably a few dozen will be voted on. (Demko, 7/25)

The New York Times: ‘Skinny’ Obamacare Repeal would Clash with Republicans’ Health Care Promises
If the current options for overhauling the health care system can’t get a majority of Senate votes, the majority leader, Mitch McConnell, has a new backup plan, according to senators and lobbyists: a simple bill that eliminates three of Obamacare’s least popular provisions. The plan, which has been nicknamed “skinny repeal,” would eliminate the Affordable Care Act’s individual mandate, the employer mandate and a tax on medical devices, at least for a few years. (Sanger-Katz, 7/25)

The Washington Post: 1 Million Jobs on the Line as Senate Votes on Health Care
America could lose more than a million jobs if the Senate votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act on Tuesday. That’s according to a report from George Washington University’s Milken Institute School of Public Health and the Commonwealth Fund. (Long, 7/25)
MARKETPLACE

Bloomberg: One Insurer is Making Obamacare Work
Just hours before Senate Republicans are expected to take a crucial first vote on repealing Obamacare, one health insurer is saying that its big bet on the health insurance law has been paying off. Centene Corp. beat Wall Street’s earnings estimates for the second quarter, and said that much of its strength came from the company’s Affordable Care Act marketplace health plans, where the insurer has about 1.1 million of its 12.2 million customers. (Tracer, 7/25)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

The Washington Post: Sperm Concentration has Declined 50 Percent in 40 Years in Three Continents
The quality of sperm from men in North America, Europe and Australia has declined dramatically over the past 40 years, with a 52.4 percent drop in sperm concentration, according to a study published Tuesday. The research — the largest and most comprehensive look at the topic, involving data from 185 studies and 42,000 men around the world between 1973 and 2011 — appears to confirm fears that male reproductive health may be declining. (Cha, 7/25)

The New York Times: How to Boost Resilience in Midlife
Much of the scientific research on resilience — our ability to bounce back from adversity — has focused on how to build resilience in children. But what about the grown-ups? While resilience is an essential skill for healthy childhood development, science shows that adults also can take steps to boost resilience in middle age, which is often the time we need it most. (Parker-Pope, 7/25)

NPR: Young Athletes Who Specialize Too Soon Risk More Injuries
If you're involved in high school athletics, you know the scene. There's increasing pressure to specialize in a single sport and play it year-round. The upside? Focusing on one sport can help give kids the edge they need to compete on elite club teams — or travel teams. Many athletes hope to attract the attention of college recruiters, or be offered a sports scholarship. This emphasis on competitive success has become widespread throughout the U.S., according to a consensus statement from the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine. (Aubrey, 7/25)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Bloomberg: Zombie Trumpcare Still Threatens the Health Sector
Anyone who's attempted to read the tea leaves on this bill has long since smashed their cup against the wall. The Senate voted to debate a bill; we just don't know what will be in it. There's no full text. There's been no Congressional Budget Office score of a final proposal. There hasn't been a single public hearing. And there's no certainty Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell can get 50 votes together on anything other than a discussion of an intentionally amorphous bill. We're in the health-care twilight zone. (Max Nisen, 7/25)
Los Angeles Times: Yes, We Can Lower Sky-High Drug Prices — Other Countries Have Done it
Scott Gottlieb, head of the Food and Drug Administration, wasted no time in his opening remarks at a forum last week on high drug prices. “The fact is that too many people can’t afford the medicines that they need,” he declared. On that, I hope, we can all agree. (David Lazarus, 7/25)
Ventura County Star: Gold Coast Health Plan — World Hepatitis Day: The Fight to Eliminate Viral Hepatitis
The annual observance of World Hepatitis Day on July 28 is particularly important in 2017, as the need for early detection and steps to prevent viral hepatitis never has been more critical. From 2010 to 2015, the number of new hepatitis C virus infections — the most potentially deadly of the five forms of hepatitis — reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention nearly tripled, reaching a 15-year high. And because hepatitis C has few symptoms, nearly half of those living with the virus don't know they are infected, while most new infections go undiagnosed. (Nelson, 7/26)

Ventura County Star: Faster Response Focus of First-Responder Training in Ventura County
When a mass shooting or other disaster strikes, authorities call the area a hot zone immediately following the incident, "meaning it's not safe for paramedics to enter and treat the wounded," [Ventura County Fire Department Captain Scott] Quirarte said. Once the area has been secured, it becomes a cold zone. But increasingly law enforcement officers, paramedics and others are trying to establish "warm zones," places that have yet to be fully secured "but that are safe enough for our guys to go into and treat those who need help," he said. (Scheibe, 7/26)

Sacramento Bee: CA Latinos More Likely to Live in Polluted Communities
California has made great strides in scrubbing smog from its skies, yet pollution remains a problem in some parts of the state, with 44 percent of Latinos living in communities with poor air quality compared to about one-quarter of non-Latinos, according to a new state Senate report. (Miller and Luna, 7/26)

KQED: ‘You Don’t Just Quit’: California Hits Back at Trump’s Transgender Military Ban
President Donald Trump’s announcement early Wednesday that transgender people would no longer be allowed to serve was met with swift reaction and strong opposition among California’s transgender military community and congressional delegation. (Leitsinger, 7/26)

KQED: Yelp Adds C-Section Rates and Childbirth Data to Reviews of California Hospitals
The San Francisco-based review site is now adding clinical data on C-sections, episiotomies, and breastfeeding rates to consumer reviews of California hospitals, so women can make more informed decisions about where they deliver. (Dembosky, 7/26)

CAPITOL HILL WATCH

McClatchy: House Soundly Rejects Conservative Bid to Enviscerate Congressional Budget Office
Conservative House Republicans, enraged by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office’s findings that Obamacare’s repeal would leave millions without health care coverage, failed Wednesday in a bid to cut the agency’s budget and staff, a move that would have dramatically weakened its effectiveness. The House rejected, 309-116, an effort by four conservative Republicans, including Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., to eliminate the CBO’s Budget Analysis Division. (Siripurapu, 7/26)
ADMINISTRATION NEWS

The New York Times: Trump Says Transgender People Will Not Be Allowed in the Military

President Trump abruptly announced a ban on transgender people serving in the military on Wednesday, blindsiding his defense secretary and Republican congressional leaders with a snap decision that reversed a year-old policy reviled by social conservatives. Mr. Trump made the declaration on Twitter, saying that American forces could not afford the "tremendous medical costs and disruption" of transgender service members. He said he had consulted generals and military experts, but Jim Mattis, the defense secretary, was given only a day's notice about the decision. (Davis and Cooper, 7/26)

HEALTH LAW

Kaiser Health News: States Have Tried Versions of 'Skinny Repeal.' It Didn't Go Well.

Betting that thin is in — and might be the only way forward — Senate Republicans are eyeing a "skinny repeal" that rolls back an unpopular portion of the federal health law. But experts warn that the idea has been tried before, and with little success. Senators are reportedly considering a narrow bill that would eliminate the ACA's "individual mandate," which assesses a tax on Americans who don't have insurance, along with penalties for employers with 50 or more workers who fail to offer health coverage. (Appleby, 7/27)

Politico: 'Skinny' Obamacare Repeal Still Lacks Votes to Pass

Even a bare-bones repeal of Obamacare is no sure thing in the Senate. A handful of key Republican senators who had spurned earlier overtures from GOP leadership endorsed the latest plan to gut Obamacare's individual and employer coverage mandates and its medical device tax. But several centrists said they're undecided on the so-called skinny repeal, leaving the GOP in limbo through at least the end of the week. (Everett, Haberkorn and Kim, 7/26)

Politico: Dems to GOP: No Amendments Until You Show Us Your Bill

Senate Democrats are taking their ball and going home in the looming health care vote-a-rama — until Republicans finally cough up their actual Obamacare repeal plan. Fed up with the GOP's constant vacillations over how to dismantle Obamacare, Democrats say they will hold back on offering any more amendments in the health care floor fight until Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) shows what plan the GOP will ultimately coalesce around. (Kim, 7/26)

MEDICAID

Kaiser Health News: His Wife Runs Medicaid, but This Doctor's Practice Won't Accept it

Dr. Sanjay Mishra, the husband of CMS Administrator Seema Verma, is part of a group practice in Indiana that does not accept Medicaid payments. (Galewitz, 7/27)

Kaiser Health News: Medicaid Proves a Lifeline for Clients of Crisis Pregnancy Centers

For pregnant women in the United States, Medicaid is less a safety net than a building block of the maternity care system. (McCcammon, 7/27)
PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Stat: A Tiny Part of the Brain Appears to Orchestrate the Whole Body’s Aging
Why do we age? It’s a seemingly simple question that nonetheless scientists don’t have a great answer to. Some amount of aging seems to be controlled by our genetic makeup, while other evidence shows that our cells have an upper limit to how many times they can divide. But a new study points to a different player: a special population of cells in a tiny region of the brain. Middle-aged mice that got an infusion of stem cells to their hypothalamus — the hormone-releasing center of the brain — had less memory loss and longer lives than normal mice, indicating that the hypothalamus plays a role in whole-body aging. (Wosen, 7/26)

USA Today: Contaminants in Water are Legal but Still Pose Big Health Risks, Environmental Group Says
Contaminants detected in water samples throughout the country pose health risks but are perfectly legal under the Safe Drinking Water Act, according to data released Wednesday by an environmental advocacy group. “Most people turn on their tap water and think: It’s clear, I live in America, we have these laws, I’m being protected,” said Nneka Leiba, director of the Healthy Living Science Program for the Environmental Working Group (EWG). “What people don’t realize is that there have been no additions to the list of regulated chemicals for drinking water since 1996.” (Toy, 7/26)

HEALTH IT

NPR: Health Care Facilities Lag in Fending Off Hacking Attacks
In the neonatal intensive care unit of Cook Children's Hospital in Fort Worth, Texas, a father is rocking a baby attached to a heart monitor. While doctors roam the halls trying to prevent infections, Chief Information Officer Theresa Meadows is worried about another kind of virus. “The last thing anybody wants to happen in their organization is have all their heart monitors disabled or all of their IV pumps that provide medication to a patient disabled,” Meadows says. (Silverman, 7/26)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

The Washington Post: The Hefty Downsides of the ‘skinny’ Health-Care Proposal
After voting to move forward on repealing and replacing Obamacare — precipitously, and without any sense of where they would end up — Senate Republicans are trying to slap together a major health-care bill on the Senate floor. If their partisan power play works, the result would be the passage of bad legislation hiking deductibles and stripping insurance coverage from millions of people. If, on the other hand, they fail to bridge their disagreements, they may turn to what some are calling a “skinny repeal” and Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price has termed a “lowest common denominator.” It sounds bad, and it is. (7/26)

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Certain news organizations are protected via a paywall requiring the purchase of a subscription to view their content.
The Mercury News: High Blood Pressure Study: 7 of 9 Medi-Cal Plans Improved Rates
Teamwork across Medicaid health plans can — even with moderate resources — improve the quality of healthcare compared to efforts by individual health plans alone, a new study shows. A report released Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that a year-long collaboration between nine of California’s 23 Medi-Cal managed care plans helped increase the number of patients who controlled their high blood pressure rates. (Seipel, 7/27)

HEALTH LAW

Kaiser Health News: McCain Votes No, Derails ‘Skinny Repeal’ in Marathon Session
Budget reconciliation allows the measure to pass the Senate on a simple majority vote, but requires that all of its provisions pass muster with the Senate parliamentarian as budget-related. The text of the bill posted publicly at 10 p.m. The CBO report on it began circulating on Twitter around midnight and the vote finally closed around 1:45 a.m. Friday. (McAuliff, 7/28)

Kaiser Health News: Timeline: Obamacare’s History Littered with Near-Death Experiences
Few laws have defied as many existential threats as the ACA. A few hours ago, it survived again. In seven years, it has been to the brink of elimination nearly a dozen times, only to rally back from seemingly impossible odds. Here is a timeline of the ACA’s “near-death” experiences, which occurred before the bill passed, during its implementation and after benefits began to flow. (Rovner, 7/28)

The Washington Post: Female Senators are Increasingly on Receiving End of Insults from Male Officials
Republican female senators whose disapproval of the GOP health-care effort has at times endangered its progress are facing an increasingly pointed backlash from men in their party, including a handful of comments that invoked physical retaliation. In the past week, Sen. Susan Collins (Maine) has been challenged by a male lawmaker to a duel. She and Sen. Lisa Murkowski (Alaska) were told that they and others deserve a physical reprimand for their decisions not to support Republican health-care proposals. Murkowski, who voted with Collins against starting the health-care debate this week, was specifically called out by President Trump on Twitter and told by a Cabinet official that Alaska could suffer for her choice, according to a colleague. (Viebeck, 7/27)

Ever since the November election, when the fate of her family’s health coverage was suddenly up for grabs, Meghan Borland has been consumed by each twitch and turn of the political debate. She has gone to protests, met with her congressman, lost sleep, shed tears. “My emotions are like a Ping-Pong ball being bounced back and forth between the players,” said Mrs. Borland, who, with her husband, owns a karate school in Pleasant Valley, N.Y., and whose younger daughter, Amelia, 2, is receiving chemotherapy for leukemia. (Hoffman, 7/27)
Bloomberg: With or Without Obamacare, Health-Care Costs are Battering the Middle Class
Whatever happens to Obamacare in Washington, the rest of America will be left with a problem it’s had for decades: Health-care spending is growing at an unsustainable rate. Insurance and medical costs are draining the incomes of the middle class—tens of millions of people who earn too much to qualify for government-subsidized coverage, but not so much that they don’t feel the bite of medical bills—and nothing on Congress’s agenda is likely to fix that. (Tozzi, 7/27)

MARKETPLACE

Modern Healthcare: Aetna Slapped with Shareholder Lawsuit over ACA Exchange Exits
Aetna’s 2016 decision to drastically scale back its participation on the Affordable Care Act's insurance exchanges continues to haunt the insurer almost a year later. Hartford, Conn.-based Aetna was hit with a shareholder lawsuit this week that accuses its board of directors of breaching its fiduciary duties to the company and its shareholders by making false statements about the insurer’s reasons for pulling out of exchanges in 11 states. (Livingston, 7/27)

MEDICAID

Modern Healthcare: Billions in Federal Uncompensated Care Funds to be Cut Starting in October
Starting this October, the CMS could begin cutting billions in federal funds meant to help hospitals with uncompensated care costs. The Affordable Care Act mandated that Medicaid disproportionate-share hospital funds be cut by $43 billion between fiscal years 2018 and 2025. (Dickinson, 7/27)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Teenagers who were overweight at 17 were at significantly increased risk for developing colon cancer later in adulthood, and those who were obese were at increased risk for rectal cancer as well, according to a new report. (Rabin, 7/27)

CNN: Antibiotics: Researchers Question 'Complete the Course' Advice
The standing argument that failing to complete a course of antibiotics could fuel the rise of antibiotic resistance has little evidence, a group of United Kingdom researchers argue in a new paper. In an analysis published in the medical journal the BMJ on Thursday, they say that completing a course of antibiotics may instead increase the risk of resistance. (Rahim, 7/27)

The New York Times: Good News on Headphones and Hearing Loss
Young people continue to listen to loud music on their headphones. But a reassuring new analysis found that hearing impairment rates among teens have dropped since an alarming spike in hearing loss was reported a decade ago. (Rabin, 7/27)
NPR: Slug Slime Inspires Scientists to Invent Surgical Glue

Li had been combing the scientific literature for clues to how to make a better surgical adhesive, something that could repair a delicate organ without causing the damage of stitches or staples, or the risk of air or fluid leaks. As he and his colleagues report Thursday in the journal Science, this slug-slime-inspired material could help a lot. Usually there's a trade-off between flexibility and stickiness, Li says. Super Glue works well on dry surfaces, but it's rigid and toxic, so it would never work for patching a beating heart or a bleeding wound. Other materials are flexible but not very sticky. And then there's defensive slug slime. (Bichell, 7/27)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Sacramento Bee: Health Reform: Try Medicare for All

In the short term, Congress should shore up the Affordable Care Act with bipartisan, commonsense improvements, such as a reinsurance program to stabilize the market for high-risk policyholders, legislation to make cost-sharing reductions permanent, and government permission to negotiate for lower prescription drug prices. But in the longer term, the time is right to think about ways make access to health care truly universal and cover those who are still left behind. (John Garamendi, 7/27)

Orange County Register: California Performs Poorly on Food Stamp Program

Too often, the government has seen increases in the food stamp and other welfare programs as a success, rather than focusing on how many people do not need assistance. It is encouraging that the numbers have been dropping, as people’s economic prospects have improved, but we still have a long way to go to get back to prerecession levels. (7/27)