

Federal Health Update

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EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL NEWS

- **The House and Senate will be in recess Feb. 18-25, 2017.**

MILITARY HEALTH CARE NEWS

- **The Defense Health Agency has awarded Humana Military, the government business unit for Humana, a one-year, \$3.80 billion “bridge” contract to extend the company’s health care delivery services under the *Tricare Health Benefits* program through March 31, 2018.**

Humana Military will continue to support health benefits management functions and provide managed care services to nearly 3 million TRICARE program beneficiaries in the southern U.S. The company helps the Military Health System adjudicate more than 240 million medical claims each year with automated claims processing technology.

The contract extension will ensure uninterrupted care delivery throughout the South region until DHA implements the follow-on T-2017 Tricare managed support contracts.

Last year, DHA awarded contracts worth up to \$58 billion for Humana and Health Net to respectively provide TRICARE support services in the East and West regions.

- **Home Medical Equipment News reports that Health Net Federal Services, the TRICARE contractor for the north region, agreed that a provision in the 21st Century Cures Act impacts its payments for home medical equipment.**

The American Association for Homecare has asked the three current TRICARE contractors to reprocess six months of claims for home medical equipment, since its reimbursement rates are pegged to Medicare reimbursement rates by law and by current network agreements. The provision in the Cures Act rolls back Medicare reimbursement cuts for home medical equipment in rural areas from July 1, 2016, to Jan. 1, 2017.

Health Net said it will need a directive issued by the Defense Health Agency to be able to reprocess these claims.

VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWS

- **The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is providing up to \$8 million in grants to fund adaptive-sports programs that offer activities for disabled Veterans and members of the armed forces who have disabilities, VA announced Feb. 22.**

The application period for the fiscal 2018 Adaptive Sports Grant begins Feb. 21, 2017, and will close at 11:59 p.m. (EST) on April 21, 2017.

Previous VA grants included eligible nonprofits, veterans' groups, universities and municipalities, which plan, develop, manage and implement adaptive sports activities. Funding may be used for training, program development, coaching, sports equipment, supplies, program evaluation and other activities related to adaptive-sports program implementation and operation.

In fiscal 2016, VA awarded \$7.8 million in adaptive-sports grants to 90 programs providing services nationwide. The Grant Notice of Funding Availability is published on the Grants.gov website (www.grants.gov) under opportunity number VA-ASG-2018-01, linked through <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=adaptive%20sports>.

For more information about VA's Adaptive Sports Program, go to http://www.va.gov/adaptivesports/va_grant_program.asp.

- **The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) is urging veterans with smokeless tobacco habits to participate in the "Great American Spit Out" on Feb. 23.**

Sponsored by the Department of Defense, the annual nationwide observance challenges smokeless tobacco users to quit for good by committing to a "quit date."

Veterans who use smokeless tobacco must deal with the heavy economic burdens that come with dipping or chewing. According to the American Cancer Society, a one-can-a-day habit can cost more than \$1,400 a year.

Research shows smoking is one of the most preventable causes of premature death. Yet smokeless tobacco, such as dip and chew, is dangerous and often overlooked. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), smokeless tobacco products contain 2,000 chemical compounds, including 30 cancer-causing chemicals, such as arsenic, nickel, lead and formaldehyde. These substances can increase a user's risk of death from heart disease and stroke; cause cancer of the mouth, esophagus and pancreas; and result in painful, chronic dental problems, such as mouth sores and tooth loss, HHS reported.

The National Cancer Institute's Smokefree.gov initiative noted dip and chew tobacco contained more nicotine than cigarettes, which may cause an even stronger addiction than smoking.

To observe this year's Spit Out, VA is partnering with other federal agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office of Smoking and Health, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the National Cancer Institute's Smokefree.gov Initiative and the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Tobacco Products.

Veterans interested in becoming tobacco-free can access VA resources, including:

Tobacco Quitline (855-QUIT-VET; (855-784-8838)): This VA hotline connects Veterans with a trained counselor who can help them develop a quit plan, provide individualized counseling and identify strategies to prevent relapse.

SmokefreeVET: By texting "VET" to 47848, Veterans can sign up for VA's text-message support program, which offers 24/7 encouragement, advice and tips to help tobacco users quit for good.

Smokefree.gov Quit Plan: Veterans can use the resources developed alongside Smokefree.gov to build a plan that prepares them for quitting smokeless tobacco and increases their likelihood of staying tobacco-free.

To learn more about tobacco cessation, visit: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/smoking/index.asp>

GENERAL HEALTH CARE NEWS

- **The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) announced the Phase 2 winners of the Move Health Data Forward Challenge.**

Winning submissions will now move on to the challenge's last phase to develop applications that will allow individuals to share their personal health information safely and securely with their health care providers, family members or other caregivers.

Phase 1 of the Move Health Data Forward Challenge required applicants to submit their plans describing how they would develop solutions to help with the flow of health information. The ten Phase 1 winners were awarded \$5,000 each and moved on to Phase 2, which required participants to demonstrate a viable solution to achieve those goals by allowing for the safe and secure exchange of consumer or provider health records.

Each Phase 2 winner below will receive a \$20,000 award:

CedarBridge Group LLC: CareApprove™ is a smart phone app that allows patients to grant—and revoke—permission for providers to access, send, or receive health information electronically. Providers can use the CareApprove software plugin with their electronic health record (EHR) system to stay connected with their patients through the CareApprove mobile app and to communicate with one another through a secure messaging system.

EMR Direct: The HealthToGo™ solution facilitates the deployment of applications capable of leveraging multiple data sources in consumer mediated health data exchange. This minimizes the number of identities to maintain and grant data to store, allowing consumers to easily manage health data sharing, and improving the accessibility of patient health data while maintaining its privacy and security.

Foxhall Wythe LLC: Docket™ is a secure system for users to seamlessly store and share data with trusted care professionals, eliminating the need for tedious paper-based patient intake processes. This solution promotes HIPAA compliance through a User-managed Access approach and end-to-end encryption for all records as well as interoperability through industry-standard FHIR® messages. Authorization is accomplished via Quick Response (QR) code scan and an explicit OAuth 2.0 handshake.

Live and Leave Well, LLC: Live and Leave Well™ is a complete solution that provides both a consumer mediated exchange of end of life plans; and creates a transportable package of data

about that person's end of life plans that can be scored for goodness and shared with multiple systems using a combination open APIs and direct integration.

Lush Group, Inc.: The HealthyMePHR system empowers patients by giving them the ability to share, and authorize access to, their electronic health records. With a resource server providing HEART-enabled data, an authorization server to support patient policy, and a client to allow authorized users to view a patient's records, HealthyMePHR addresses several key challenges facing patients and providers today. Additional planned features will continue to accelerate patient clinical data sharing, improving health and reducing the cost of healthcare.

The five Phase 2 winners now move to Phase 3, which will award \$50,000 for up to two winners based on the participant's ability to implement their solution through the development of a mobile or web-based application.

The Move Health Data Forward Challenge builds on ONC's work with [the Health Relationship Trust \(HEART\) Workgroup's](#) security, privacy and health information technology stakeholders. These stakeholders are collaborating on the development of a set of privacy and security specifications enabling individuals to control the authorization of access to their health data. These efforts are part of a larger community-driven movement toward helping individuals and clinicians benefit from the full potential of health information technology.

REPORTS/POLICIES

- There were no health care reports published this week.

HILL HEARINGS

- The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a hearing will hold a hearing on **Feb. 28, 2017**, to examine the legislative presentation of the Disabled American Veterans.
- The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a hearing will hold a hearing on **March 1, 2017**, to examine the legislative presentation of the American Legion.
- The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a hearing will hold a hearing on **March 1, 2017**, to examine the legislative presentation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.
- The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a hearing will hold a hearing on **March 9 and 22, 2017**, to examine the legislative presentation of multiple veterans service organizations.

LEGISLATION

- There was no legislation proposed this week.

MEETINGS

- The Heroes of Military Medicine Awards will be held on **May 4, 2017**, in Washington, DC. <http://www.hjfc3.org>
- The 7th Annual Traumatic Brain Injury Conference will be held **May 24-25, 2017**, in

Washington DC. <http://tbiconference.com/home/>

If you need further information on any item in the *Federal Health Update*, please contact Kate Theroux at (703) 447-3257 or by e-mail at katheroux@federalhealthcarenews.com.