

Federal Health Update

MARCH 20, 2014

Welcome to Federal Health Update. This newsletter is a compilation of the latest news in the federal health care sector.

Sponsored by:

SPECTRUM[®]
HEALTHCARE RESOURCES
www.spectrumhealth.com
800-325-3982

Additional Sponsorship Opportunities Available.

Please contact Kate Theroux if you are interested in supporting this service.

ktheroux@federalhealthcarenews.com

EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL NEWS

- **The House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony from Ryan Kules, national alumni director for Wounded Warrior Project.** During his testimony, Kules outlined WWP's four policy priorities for 2015, including expanded mental health care for wounded service members, economic empowerment, long-term rehabilitation and resolution of the issues surrounding the program for caregivers, and allowing injured service members access TRICARE for their care.

According to a survey of 21,000 injured veterans conducted by WWP:

- The most commonly experienced injuries and health problems reported were sleep problems (75 percent); PTSD (75 percent); back, neck, or shoulder problems (72 percent); depression (67 percent); and anxiety (64 percent).
 - More than one-third (35 percent) of respondents reported difficulty accessing mental health care, put off getting that care, or did not get the care they needed.
-
- **On March 18, 2015, President Barack Obama announced his intent to nominate: Dr. David J. Shulkin to be the next under secretary for health, Department of Veterans Affairs.** Shulkin is president of Morristown Medical Center, a position he has held since 2010. He has served concurrently as president of Atlantic Accountable Care Organization and as a vice president of Atlantic Health. From 2005 to 2009, Shulkin was president and CEO of Beth Israel Medical Center in New York, and from 2004 to 2005 he was chief medical Officer of Temple University Hospital. Shulkin served concurrently as Chief Medical Officer of the Medical College of Pennsylvania Hospital and Chief Quality Officer of the Drexel University School of Medicine from 2002 to 2004. Shulkin received a B.A. from Hampshire College and an M.D. from the

Medical College of Pennsylvania.

LaVerne Horton Council to be the next assistant secretary for information and technology, Department of Veterans Affairs. Council is the CEO of Council Advisory Services, a position she has held since 2012. She has also served as chair of the National Board of Trustees for the March of Dimes Foundation since 2011. From 2006 to 2011, Council served as corporate vice president and chief information officer at Johnson & Johnson. She worked at Dell in several roles as a vice president and global vice president from 2000 to 2006. Council received a B.B. from Western Illinois University and an M.B.A. from Illinois State University.

Juan Garcia to be the next assistant secretary of defense for manpower and reserve affairs, Department of Defense. Garcia is the assistant secretary of the navy for manpower and reserve affairs, a position he has held since 2009. In 2006, he was elected to the Texas House of Representatives, where he represented the 32nd District from 2007 to 2009. He also served as an attorney at Hartline, Dacus, Barger, Dreyer & Kern, L.L.P. in Corpus Christi, Texas from 2005 to 2009. After leaving active duty, Garcia commanded a unit of Flight Instructors in the U.S. Navy Reserve, and he continues to serve as a Reservist today. From 1992 to 2004, Mr. Garcia was a Naval Aviator in the U.S. Navy. From 1999 to 2000, he served as a White House Fellow at the Department of Education. Garcia received a B.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles, an M.P.P. from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and a J.D. from Harvard Law School.

- **On March 18, 2015, President Barack Obama announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to the National Commission on the Future of the Army:**

Army Gen. Larry R. Ellis (Ret.) has been president and CEO of VetConnex, LLC since 2013, a company that provides career opportunities for veterans. He was president and CEO of Point Blank Solutions, Inc. from 2005 to 2009. Ellis served in the U.S. Army from 1969 to 2004, where he achieved the rank of General in 2001. During his tenure in the Army, he served in a number of command and leadership positions in the United States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, South Korea, and Vietnam. Ellis was appointed to the American Battle Monuments Commission in 2014. Ellis received a B.S. from Morgan State University and an M.S. from Indiana University.

Dr. Kathleen H. Hicks is senior vice president, Kissinger Chair, and director of the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a position she has held since 2013. From 2012 to 2013, she was principal deputy under secretary of defense for policy, and from 2009 to 2012 she was deputy under secretary of defense for strategy, plans, and forces. Hicks received an A.B. from Mount Holyoke College, an M.P.A. from the University of Maryland, and a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Thomas R. Lamont is principal at LAMONT Consulting Services. Mr. Lamont served as assistant secretary of the army for manpower and reserve affairs from 2009 to 2013. Previously, Lamont was special counsel at the University of Illinois from 2005 to 2009 and executive director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education from 2004 to 2005. Lamont was appointed to the American Battle Monuments Commission in 2014 and has served as Chair of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees. After serving in the Illinois National Guard in various roles over 25 years, including most recently State Staff Judge Advocate General, he retired in 2007 as Colonel.

Army Reserve Lt. Gen. Jack C. Stultz (Ret.) currently serves on the Board of Directors of VSE Corporation, a position he has held since 2013. He was chief of the U.S. Army Reserve and commanding general of the United States Army Reserve Command from 2006 to 2012. Stultz served as deputy chief of the Army Reserve from 2005 to 2006 and as commander of the 143rd TRANSCOM from 2004 to 2005. Stultz served in the Army Reserve from 1979 to 2012 and as an active duty Army officer from 1974 to 1979. He worked at Procter and Gamble for 28 years and retired as an operations manager in 2007. Stultz received a B.A. from Davidson College.

MILITARY HEALTH CARE NEWS

- **New research shows a close link between concussions and sleep disorders. A recent study by the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) shows that sleep disturbances are common after a person sustains a mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), commonly known as a concussion.**

Insomnia is the most common sleep disorder experienced by people who get a concussion, with prevalence rates ranging between 20 and 90 percent. People who have suffered a concussion also have a hard time establishing a consistent pattern of sleep. Another issue may be frequent or loud snoring during sleep.

The research shows people who experience such symptoms should avoid caffeinated food or drinks, such as chocolate, energy drinks and sodas for at least six hours before bedtime.

Other measures or “stimulus controls” include sleeping in a quiet, dark place that is cool and comfortable. It is the importance of keeping a regular sleep schedule. “Go to bed at the same time every day, and get up at the same time, regardless of how much sleep you get.”

Taking a short-term sleep medication may also be necessary to reduce or eliminate these symptoms. The National Center for Telehealth and Technology smartphone apps like CBT-I (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia) Coach and interactive websites, such as afterdeployment.org, provide educational tools to help patients manage symptoms.

Additional information on how to treat people who suffer from a sleep disorder can be found at [DVBIC’s sleep disturbances management website](#).

VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWS

- **The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a device to alleviate pressure ulcers (commonly known as bed sores) has been developed through a joint project between the VA Center for Innovation and General Electric (GE) Global Research.**

A multi-disciplinary team of scientists have combined an array of sensing and analytical tools, including motion analysis, thermal profiling, image classification/segmentation, 3-D object reconstruction and vapor detection into a single medical sensing handheld probe to assess and monitor the progression of bed sores or pressure ulcers.

The device is currently in pilot testing at the [Augusta, Georgia, VA Medical Center Spinal Cord Injury Unit](#). The probe integrates multiple sensing capabilities with analytics and user support features to more acutely measure pressure ulcer formation and/or to determine if an ulcer is healing.

Individuals with spinal cord injuries with loss of sensation and mobility are particularly at risk for developing pressure ulcers. In U.S. hospitals alone, an estimated 2.5 million patients per year develop pressure ulcers, which require treatment.

For other notable innovative VA research initiatives visit <http://www.research.va.gov/>.

- **The Department of Veterans Affairs is updating the way it determines eligibility for VA health care, a change that will result in more veterans having access to the health care benefits they’ve earned and deserve.**

Effective 2015, VA eliminated the use of net worth as a determining factor for both health care programs and copayment responsibilities. This change makes VA health care benefits more accessible to lower-income veterans and brings VA policies in line with Secretary Robert A. McDonald's MyVA initiative, which reorients VA around veterans' needs.

Instead of combining the sum of veterans' income with their assets to determine eligibility for medical care and copayment obligations, VA will now only consider a veteran's gross household income and deductible expenses from the previous year. Elimination of the consideration of net worth for VA health care enrollment means that certain lower-income, non-service-connected veterans will have less out-of-pocket costs. Over a 5-year period, it is estimated that 190,000 veterans will become eligible for reduced costs of their health care services.

In March 2014, VA eliminated the annual requirement for updated financial information. VA now uses information from the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration to automatically match individual veterans' income information which reduces the burden on veterans to keep their health care eligibility up to date. That change better aligned VA's health care financial assessment program with other federal health care organizations.

GENERAL HEALTH CARE NEWS

- **The Departments of Health and Human Services and Justice announced that more than \$27.8 billion has been returned to the Medicare Trust Fund over the life of the Health Care Fraud and Abuse Control (HCFAC) Program.**

The government's health care fraud prevention and enforcement efforts recovered \$3.3 billion in taxpayer dollars in fiscal year (FY) 2014 from individuals and companies that attempted to defraud federal health programs, including programs serving seniors, persons with disabilities or those with low incomes. For every dollar spent on health care-related fraud and abuse investigations in the last three years, the administration recovered \$7.70. This is about \$2 higher than the average return on investment in the HCFAC program since it was created in 1997. It is also the third-highest return on investment in the life of the program.

The recoveries announced reflect a two-pronged strategy to combat fraud and abuse. Under new authorities granted by the Affordable Care Act, the administration continues to implement programs that move away from "pay and chase" efforts targeting fraudsters to preventing health care fraud and abuse in the first place. In addition, the Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team (HEAT), run jointly by the HHS Office of the Inspector General and DOJ, is changing how the federal government fights certain types of health care fraud. These cases are being investigated through real-time data analysis in lieu of a prolonged subpoena and account analyses, resulting in significantly shorter periods of time between fraud identification, arrest, and prosecution.

Another powerful tool in the effort to combat health care fraud is the federal False Claims Act. In 2014, the Civil Division of the Justice Department and the United States Attorneys' Offices obtained \$2.3 billion in settlements and judgments from civil cases involving fraud and false claims against federal health care programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. Since January 2009, the Justice Department has recovered more than \$15.2 billion in cases involving health care fraud. These amounts reflect federal losses only. In many of these cases, the department was instrumental in recovering additional billions of dollars for state health care programs. In FY 2014, DOJ continued its enforcement of the civil False Claims Act and the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, and opened 782 new civil health care fraud investigations.

The HCFAC annual report is available at www.oig.hhs.gov/publications/hcfac.asp

REPORTS/POLICIES

- **The Institutes of Medicine was published “The Future of Home Health Care: Workshop Summary” on March 18, 2015.** The report examines ways to improve understanding of the role of home health care (especially Medicare home health care) in supporting aging in place and in helping high-risk, chronically ill, and disabled Americans receive health care and other needed supports and services in their homes; the evolving role of home health care, including how to integrate home health care into new models for the delivery of care and the future health care marketplace; the key policy reforms and investments in workforces, technologies, and research needed to leverage the role of home health care; and research priorities that can help clarify the value of home health care. <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2015/Future-Home-Health-Care.aspx>

HILL HEARINGS

- The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a hearing on **March 24, 2015**, to examine the Veterans Choice Act, focusing on exploring the distance criteria.
- The Senate Appropriations: Subcommittee on Department of Defense will hold a hearing on **March 25, 2015**, to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2016 for the Defense Health Program.
- The House Armed Services Committee will hold a hearing on **March 25, 2015**, to examine stakeholder's views on the Military Compensation Retirement Modernization Commission.
- The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies will hold a budget hearing on **March 25, 2015**, to examine CDC budget for fiscal year 2016.
- The Senate Committee on Aging will hold a hearing on **March 25, 2015**, to examine the fight against Alzheimer's disease, focusing on a treatment by 2025.
- The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a hearing on **March 26, 2015**, to examine Veterans' Affairs opioid prescription policy, practice and procedures.

LEGISLATION

- **H.R.1356** (introduced March 13, 2015): Women Veterans Access to Quality Care Act of 2015 was referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Sponsor: Representative Mike Coffman [CO-6]
- **H.R.1369** (introduced March 16, 2015): Veterans Access to Extended Care Act of 2015 was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Education and the Workforce
Sponsor: Representative Jackie Walorski [IN-2]
- **H.R.1420** (introduced March 18, 2015): To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to establish a surveillance system regarding traumatic brain injury, and for other purposes was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.
Sponsor: Representative Bill Pascrell, Jr. [NJ-9]
- **S.739** (introduced March 16, 2015): A bill to modify the treatment of agreements entered into by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish nursing home care, adult day health care, or other

extended care services, and for other purposes was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Sponsor: Senator John Hoeven [ND]

- **S.746** (introduced March 16, 2015): A bill to provide for the establishment of a Commission to Accelerate the End of Breast Cancer was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Sponsor: Senator Chuck Grassley [IA]

- **S.761** (introduced March 17, 2015): A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to designate certain medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs as health professional shortage areas, and for other purposes was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Sponsor: Senator Amy Klobuchar [MN]

MEETINGS

- The 12th Annual World Health Care Congress will be held on **March 22-25, 2015**, in Washington DC. <http://www.worldcongress.com/events/HR15000/>
- The HIMSS Annual Conference and Exhibition will be held on **April 12-16, 2015**, in Chicago, Ill. <http://www.himssconference.org/>
- The 5th Annual Traumatic Brain Injury Conference will be held **April 15-16, 2015**, in Washington DC. <http://tbiconference.com/home/>
- The Heroes of Military Medicine Awards will be held on **May 7, 2015**, in Washington, DC. <http://www.hjfc3.org/heroes-dinner>
- 2015 AMSUS Annual Continuing Education Meeting - The Society Of The Federal Health Professionals will be held on **Dec. 1-4, 2015**, in San Antonio, Texas. <http://amsusmeetings.org/annual-meeting/>

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 katetheroux@federalhealthcarenews.com.