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Best Wishes for a Happy Labor Day!

EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL NEWS


MILITARY HEALTH CARE NEWS


  The transition goes into effect Jan. 1, 2018.

  The rule implements TRICARE Select -- the new preferred provider organization-style benefit established by congress that incorporates TRICARE standard and TRICARE extra. Beneficiaries in Prime will automatically be enrolled in Prime or automatically be enrolled in Select if they are enrolled in Standard or Extra," she said.
The agency will establish an annual open season enrollment period that beneficiaries can participate in each year to choose their health care plans. The open season will run much like the Federal Employee Health Benefit program works and will be held at the same time.

The rule also outlines the rules for qualifying “life events” that allow beneficiaries to make changes that need to occur outside the open season. Qualifying life events trigger a 90-day opportunity to enroll in or change TRICARE purchased care coverage for the rest of the calendar year. These include changes to marital status, births, adoptions, changes in service status, and so on.

Effective Jan. 1, 2018, the DoD’s health care plan will be administered on a calendar year basis to streamline the combined changes mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act and the new contracts for beneficiaries.

Included in the rule for TRICARE Prime beneficiaries are new requirements for timely appointments and new access to care. For Select beneficiaries seeking care within the broader network, it offers access to no cost preventive services now available to Prime enrollees. Instead of paying percentage of the bill as a cost share, the new rule will set a fixed dollar amount.

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**VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWS**

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has selected Delta Dental of California and MetLife to once again offer private dental insurance plans as part of the VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP).

  The program was extended until Dec. 31, 2021, by the VA Dental Insurance Reauthorization Act of 2016.

  Veterans enrolled in the VA health-care system and beneficiaries of the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the VA (CHAMPVA) can enroll in the program beginning Nov. 15, 2017, for coverage to start Dec. 1, 2017.

  VADIP offers eligible individuals the opportunity to purchase discounted dental insurance coverage, including diagnostic services, preventive services, endodontic and other restorative services, surgical services and emergency services.

  Individuals who enroll in one of the dental insurance plans will pay the entire premium in addition to the full cost of any copayments. Enrollment is voluntary and does not affect eligibility for VA outpatient dental services and treatment.

  The plans are available to eligible individuals in the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

  Delta Dental and MetLife previously offered insurance plans as part of the three-year VADIP pilot program. Coverage under the VADIP pilot began Jan. 1, 2013, and more than 115,000 Veterans and CHAMPVA beneficiaries enrolled in the program before it expired in January 2017.

  Individuals who enrolled in a plan during the pilot period must select and enroll in one of the new plans offered by Delta Dental or MetLife. While the insurance providers will remain the same, plan options, fees and other factors may have changed from those offered during the pilot.

For more information, visit [www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vadip/](http://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vadip/) or call 877-222-VETS (8387).
The Association of VA Hematology and Oncology (AVAHO) and the National Association of Veterans' Research and Education Foundations (NAVREF) have formed an alliance to help promote VA sites and clinicians to the clinical trials industry while creating a more efficient process from identification of appropriate study sites to smoother study implementation.

AVAHO is a nonprofit organization with the mission of providing a forum for interaction with Hematology/Oncology professionals who are dedicated to caring for our nation’s veterans.

Formed in 1992, the National Association of Veterans' Research and Education Foundations (NAVREF) is the 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization of research and education foundations affiliated with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is awarding up to $8 million in grants for adaptive sports programs that will benefit disabled veterans as well as disabled members of the armed forces.

Grant recipients may use the funds for planning, developing, managing and implementing adaptive sports programs.

VA is awarding the grants to national governing bodies, which prepare high-level athletes for Paralympic competition; veterans service organizations; city and regional municipalities; and other community groups to provide a wide range of adaptive sports opportunities for eligible veterans and service members. The grants will support activities ranging from kayaking, sailing, cycling, skiing, equine therapy and equestrian sports, among other activities.

VA will distribute the grants to 96 national, regional and community programs serving all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Approximately 10,000 Veterans and service members are expected to benefit.

Information about the awardees and details of the program may be found at www.va.gov/adaptivesports.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that Rory A. Cooper, founder and director of the Human Engineering Research Laboratories, a collaboration between the VA’s Pittsburgh Health Care System and the University of Pittsburgh, received a Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal at a ceremony Washington, D.C.

The awards — known as the Sammies — are given by the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service to recognize the accomplishments of federal civil servants. Cooper is the recipient of the Science and Environment Medal.

Cooper is being honored for his work designing innovative wheelchairs and other assistive technologies, which have markedly improved the mobility and quality of life for hundreds of thousands of Veterans and other people with disabilities. He led innovations that include a wheelchair with robotic arms and hands that can grasp, personal vehicles enabling people to access terrain that could not be handled by normal wheelchairs, and manual wheelchairs with more comfortable and adjustable seats.

Cooper, an Army veteran injured while serving, has dedicated his career to improving the mobility and quality of life for people with disabilities. Cooper and his team are credited with 25 patents that have advanced wheelchair technology.

A selection committee that included leaders from government, business, the nonprofit community, academia, and the entertainment and news media selected Cooper and six other winners, from 26 finalists and more than 440 nominees.
The awards ceremony will be streamed live this evening beginning at 6:30 p.m. (EST) and can be viewed on the Partnership for Public Service’s Facebook page.

GENERAL HEALTH CARE NEWS

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced seven new members to serve on the Advisory Council on Alzheimer’s Research, Care, and Services.

The council, established in 2011, convenes quarterly to advise the Secretary on federal programs that affect people with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, and continue development and progress on the National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease by HHS, Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, and the National Science Foundation. The new members will serve four-year terms and replace the members whose terms expire in September. Secretary Price addressed the six outgoing members of the council at their last meeting in July, thanking them for their service and dedication.

Dr. Laura N. Gitlin, who joined the council in 2015, will be the next chair of the council, replacing Dr. Ronald Petersen. Gitlin is an applied research sociologist, is the Isabel Hampton Robb Distinguished Professor within the School of Nursing with joint appointments in the Department of Psychiatry and Division of Geriatric Medicine within the School of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University. Starting Feb. 1, 2018, she will be the Distinguished Professor and Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Drexel University.

The new members are as follows:

- Cynthia Huling Hummel (Patient Advocate – Person Living with Dementia)
  Reverend Dr. Hummel was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in early 2016. She has participated in numerous presentations and speeches about her disease and is actively helping plan the upcoming National Research Summit on Care, Services and Supports for Persons with Dementia and Their Caregivers.

- Debra Cherry (Patient Advocate)
  Dr. Cherry is currently the executive vice president of Alzheimer’s Greater Los Angeles. For more than 25 years, she has been an effective advocate for persons with dementia and their families. She has led numerous initiatives to develop and evaluate programs to improve quality of care for people living with dementia and advocated at the local, state, and national level to increase access to services. She has expertise across a number of areas as a provider in geriatric psychology, advocate, and leader of an association.

- Katie Brandt (Caregiver)
  Ms. Brandt is director of Caregiver Support Services in the Frontotemporal dementia unit at Massachusetts General Hospital. She came as a member of the public to an advisory council meeting in July 2014, where she told her moving personal story of losing her young husband to frontotemporal dementia and caring for her father who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease at the same time.

- Allan Levey (Healthcare Provider)
  Dr. Levey is the director of Emory University’s Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center and Chairman of the Department of Neurology. He is widely respected among providers and researchers in this field. Dr. Levey is a practicing neurologist in addition to his work on neurodegenerative research and will bring an important dually-informed perspective to the council.

- Bradley Hyman (Researcher)
  Dr. Hyman is a world renowned neurologist, neuropathologist and neuroscientist with extensive experience in basic and translational neurosciences of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. Dr. Hyman has served at NACA, as chairman, and as an
Patient-reported outcomes (PROs) are essential for evaluating the effectiveness of treatments and interventions in neurological disorders. PROs encompass a wide range of domains, including symptoms, health-related quality of life, and functional outcomes. They are obtained directly from patients and reflect their perception of these outcomes. In the context of neurological disorders, PROs can provide insights into the impact of the condition on patients' lives, which can complement clinical assessments.

Several factors contribute to the utility of PROs in neurological disorders. Firstly, PROs can help elucidate the subjective experiences of patients, which might not be entirely captured by objective clinical measures. Secondly, they can assess the quality of life and well-being, which are crucial aspects of healthcare outcomes. Additionally, PROs can be particularly valuable in chronic conditions, where patient feedback can provide valuable insights into the progression and management of the disorder.

However, the implementation of PROs in neurological disorders faces several challenges. One major challenge is the development of valid and reliable measures that are specific to the condition and sensitive enough to detect meaningful changes. Another challenge is the integration of PRO data into clinical practice, which requires collaboration between healthcare providers and patients to ensure that PRO assessments are conducted appropriately.

In conclusion, patient-reported outcomes are integral to the assessment of neurological disorders. They provide a comprehensive perspective on the impact of these conditions on patients' lives and offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of treatments and interventions. Despite the challenges, ongoing research and collaboration between healthcare providers, patients, and researchers are essential to further advance the use of PROs in neurological disorders.
about 5-7 percent die from it. Adults with asthma who get pneumococcal pneumonia are at risk for additional complications including asthma exacerbation and invasive pneumococcal disease. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends a pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccination for all adults 19 through 64 years old with asthma.

Pneumococcal disease is an infection caused by Streptococcus pneumoniae, which can cause many types of illnesses including ear infections, meningitis, and pneumonia. Vaccination is the safest, most effective way to protect yourself from getting pneumococcal disease. Pneumococcal vaccines help protect against some of the more than 90 types of pneumococcal bacteria.

For more information on pneumococcal disease including risk factors, symptoms, prevention, and more information about vaccines, visit the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov/pneumococcal/). To learn more about work-related asthma, including its triggers and causes and how to prevent it, visit the [NIOSH website](https://www.cdc.gov/NIOSH/).

**REPORTS/POLICIES**

- The GAO published “Veterans Health Care: Additional Actions Could Further Improve Policy Management,” (GAO-17-748) on Sept. 22, 2017. In this report, the GAO examines the extent to which VHA has implemented its new definitions for national policy and guidance documents and ensures that national policy and guidance documents are accessible to VISNs and VAMCs. It also studies how VHA collects information on local challenges with implementing national policy, including the exemptions granted when policy requirements cannot be met; and local policies are developed and maintained by VISNs and VAMCs, and whether they are aligned with national policies. [http://www.gao.gov/assets/690/687305.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/690/687305.pdf)

- The Congressional Budget Office released its analysis of H.R. 1628, the Graham-Cassidy bill, designed to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. In its report, the CBO said the legislation would reduce the on-budget deficit by at least $133 billion and reduce the number of people with comprehensive health insurance that covers high-cost medical events would be reduced by millions compared with the baseline projections for each year during the 2017-2026 period. For more details, please visit: [https://www.cbo.gov/publication/53126](https://www.cbo.gov/publication/53126)

**HILL HEARINGS**

- The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a hearing on Oct. 4, 2017, to examine the following nominations: Melissa Sue Glynn to be an assistant secretary (Enterprise Integration); Cheryl L. Mason to be chair of the Board of Veterans’ Appeals; and Randy Reeves to be under secretary for Memorial Affairs, all of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**LEGISLATION**


- **H.R.1222** (introduced Sept. 26, 2017): Congenital Heart Futures Reauthorization Act of 2017 was
placed on the Union Calendar. Sponsor: Representative Gus. M. Bilirakis [R-FL-12]:

- **S.1859** (introduced Sept. 26, 2017): A bill to extend the moratorium on the annual fee on health insurance providers was referred to the Committee on Finance. Sponsor: Senator Cory Gardner [R-CO]

- **S.1850** (introduced Sept. 25, 2017): A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to protect the confidentiality of substance use disorder patient records was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. Sponsor: Senator Joe Manchin, III [D-WV]

- **H.R.3820** (introduced Sept. 26, 2017): Medicare Home Health Flexibility Act of 2017 was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce. Sponsor: Representative Patrick. Meehan [R-PA-7]


- **S.1028** (introduced Sept. 26, 2017): RAISE Family Caregivers Act was referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. Sponsor: Senator Susan M. Collins [R-ME]

### MEETINGS


- The 2017 AMSUS Annual Continuing Education Meeting will be held on **Nov. 27- Dec. 1, 2017**, at the Gaylord National Harbor, Md. [http://www.amsus.org/annual-meeting/](http://www.amsus.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.