

Federal Health Update

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

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EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL NEWS

- **The Senate and House are in recess until Nov. 12 and 14, 2016, respectively.**

MILITARY HEALTH CARE NEWS

- **The Defense Health Agency highlighted a new treatment military doctors are using to fight against cancer.**

Interventional oncology brings a minimally-invasive, imaging-guided, tumor-focused option to cancer care. The procedure is often shorter (approximately 1-2 hours), resulting in shorter recovery times (often hours to days), less patient complications and adverse reactions compared to more traditional surgical and chemotherapy options.

One method, ablation, uses a small probe inserted through the skin and into the tumor to destroy tissues using thermal or other energy. Another method, embolization, uses the patients' own blood vessels to deposit small particles into tumors in order to starve them of blood and other nutrients, thus, killing the tumor.

At Brooke Army Medical Center, a more technical hybrid procedure, radioembolization, delivers

radioactive isotopes into tumors through a patients' blood vessels. It's currently used just in the treatment of liver cancers, such as hepatocellular carcinomas, cholangiocarcinomas and others. It is an accepted and growing method to augment more mainstream therapies.

Due to the nature of the treatment (the nuclear medicine element, the large investment in resources of time, money and expertise for this treatment, and a needed large population eligible for this procedure, among other factors), BAMC is the only facility in the Department of Defense currently performing the procedure. It's available to all beneficiaries who meet the medical requirements. DoD believes these newer treatment options are promising complements to conventional cancer therapies, such as surgery or chemotherapy.

Experts say an individual could receive the newer treatments and traditional surgery and chemotherapy in combination, depending on the patient's overall health status and disease course.

Interventional oncology is part of the Military Health System's (MHS) larger commitment to the White House-led initiative known as the Cancer Moonshot. That effort looks to make 10 years of progress against cancer in just five years by bringing together resources from the government and private sectors.

The fight against cancer is a priority for the MHS. More than 1,000 active-duty service members are diagnosed with cancer each year, in addition to the many retirees and family members affected. The information MHS handles on the disease could one day help find cures to many forms of cancers.

VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWS

- **The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is taking a major step toward system improvement in the processes used to purchase medical and surgical supplies.**

VA announced it is replacing its current system with the Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor - Next Generation (MSPV-NG) program.

MSPV-NG purchasing capability greatly improves VA's supply chain and aligns directly with VA Secretary Robert McDonald's [12 Breakthrough Priorities designed to transform VA](#) into a Veteran-centric organization of excellence.

By standardizing processes, VA's MSPV-NG program reduces excess inventories and leverages VA's purchasing power. The program increases the involvement of clinicians in sourcing products, giving them direct input in selecting supplies that can be used across VA medical centers and clinics. Medical, surgical, dental, and select prosthetic and laboratory supplies will now be available at nationally negotiated rates. This benefit, along with flexible delivery options, positions VA to address critical medical and surgical supply needs, ultimately improving the quality of care for the Veterans we serve. The MSPV-NG program launches across all VA facilities Dec. 1, 2016.

MSPV-NG will streamline VA's purchases by working through four Prime Vendors. Contracts have been awarded to: American Medical Depot, Cardinal Health, Kreisers, and Medline. These vendors will align across [VA's five regions](#) for more flexible delivery options and will have the ability to make multiple deliveries per delivery location.

The new program streamlines ordering, tracking, and procurement methods of medical and surgical supplies by providing an efficient, cost-effective, just-in-time distribution process. In 2016 to date, VA's supply chain transformation initiatives have saved \$91.8 million. This figure is projected to increase significantly by the end of the calendar year.

- **The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) chiropractic residency programs are the first in the United States to be awarded accreditation from the Council of Chiropractic**

Education.

In 2014, VA launched its chiropractic residency program as a three-year pilot project at five VA facilities located in West Haven, Conn.; Buffalo NY; Canandaigua, NY; St. Louis, Mo. and Los Angeles, Calif. The programs provide postgraduate clinical training in integrated chiropractic practice, focused on team-based care and inter-professional education.

As part of the program, residents provide clinical care mentored by senior VA chiropractors, participate in clinical rotations in relevant specialties such as rehabilitation, primary care, and pain medicine, and participate in inter-professional scholarly activities. This advanced training gives chiropractic residents vital experience and the competencies needed to serve patients in VA facilities, other integrated healthcare settings, and/or academia.

For more information about the VA chiropractic residency program, visit http://www.rehab.va.gov/chiro/Residency_Programs.asp

GENERAL HEALTH CARE NEWS

- **Ahead of the fourth Open Enrollment period, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a commitment from seventeen companies to support enrollment in the Health Insurance Marketplace.**

These companies will connect freelance professionals, entrepreneurs, and customers with information and resources to encourage enrollment in affordable coverage throughout the Open Enrollment period beginning Nov. 1 and ending on Jan. 31.

During Open Enrollment, HHS will collaborate with innovation economy companies as well as companies supporting freelance workers, entrepreneurs, and start-ups. These companies have committed to providing information about Marketplace coverage options during open enrollment. Through this collaboration, HHS will reach more individuals who are likely to qualify for Marketplace coverage and can shop for health insurance on a transparent, user-friendly website where they can compare plans and see financial assistance that lowers the cost of coverage.

Commitments from companies include:

Care.com: Care.com is an online marketplace connecting families and caregivers. The company will use its Care.com Benefits platform to promote Open Enrollment to caregivers on its site and share information about enrollment deadlines.

DoorDash: DoorDash facilitates door-to-door delivery by partnering with Dashers, who pick up and drop off items from local restaurants, merchants, and other businesses. DoorDash is committing to share information with Dashers in more than 250 cities about the Affordable Care Act, Open Enrollment, and enrollment deadlines through email, newsletters and its blog.

Fiverr: Fiverr is a global marketplace of creative and digital services for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Fiverr is launching an effort to educate the millions in its buyer and seller community about the Affordable Care Act, Open Enrollment, and enrollment deadlines.

FlexJobs: FlexJobs is an online service for professionals seeking telecommuting, flexible schedule, part-time, and freelance jobs. Flexible workers are more likely than full-time, in-office employees to lack workplace coverage. FlexJobs will promote the importance of health insurance coverage and share information about the Open Enrollment timeline through its blog, social media channels, and newsletter, and will also host a webinar for its members.

Freelancers Union: Freelancers Union, an advocacy organization for independent workers, will

offer its 300,000 members resources, education, and a portable benefits platform to help them find and select health plans that best meet their needs. Freelancers Union will leverage its blog, social media, and email channels to keep members informed of key Open Enrollment deadlines, and provide information about the Affordable Care Act.

GLAMSQUAD: GLAMSQUAD connects clients with on-demand in-home beauty services. GLAMSQUAD will educate professionals in New York, Miami and Los Angeles about Open Enrollment via email and newsletter.

Handy: Handy connects clients with on-demand home services. This year, Handy will launch a digital educational effort to increase professionals' awareness of Open Enrollment. The outreach campaign will connect professionals with informative and accessible resources about health insurance options in the 15 states that Handy services. More than 90% of professionals using the Handy platform are women and more than 60% care for dependents. Handy will also provide tailored communications with guidance and assistance on issues facing women, mothers, and families.

Intuit QuickBooks Self-Employed: Intuit QuickBooks Self-Employed helps self-employed and freelance professionals get paid, manage their cash flow, and pay taxes. Users will be able to access HealthCare.gov from within the QuickBooks Self-Employed product, allowing them to find a healthcare plan that best suits their unique needs. Intuit is also providing ongoing educational resources through the QuickBooks Self-Employed Center and in person at this year's QuickBooks Connect Conference to help self-employed people make the most of the Affordable Care Act.

Lyft: Lyft, a ridesharing company, will share important information about the Affordable Care Act and amplify enrollment deadlines for hundreds of thousands of drivers across the country. In addition, Lyft will provide discounted rides for new riders who need a ride to Open Enrollment events across the nation.

MATTER: MATTER, a healthcare technology incubator that works with healthcare technology startups, health systems and health care companies, will spread the word about Open Enrollment through its digital channels to healthcare innovators throughout their community.

Rock Health: Rock Health is a venture fund dedicated to digital health. In line with its commitment to supporting entrepreneurs and creating an affordable, accessible healthcare system, Rock Health will promote informative Open Enrollment resources and posts through its social media channels with a reach of over 67,000.

Stride Health: Stride Health is a portable benefits platform providing coverage options to independent workers. Stride Health will assist more than 5 million self-employed workers from on-demand and service marketplaces who rely on its benefits platform to select and enroll in affordable coverage, during Open Enrollment. Additionally, Stride Health is committed to ensuring that all independent workers that use its platform have year-round guidance for accessing preventive services, utilizing affordable care in their plans and navigating advance premium tax credits given their often fluctuating incomes.

TaskRabbit: TaskRabbit, a freelance labor platform, will continue to encourage Taskers to enroll in Marketplace coverage, and will share alerts about the start of Open Enrollment as well as each of its key deadlines.

Thumbtack: Thumbtack is a local services marketplace where small business professionals can find customers. Thumbtack will be using its blog to inform the more than 250,000 small business professionals who use its service about this year's Open Enrollment period, including key deadlines.

Uber: This year Uber, a ridesharing start-up, will once again match drivers with Affordable Care Act enrollment assistance, as well as use email to provide drivers with additional options and information to improve their well-being.

Upwork: Upwork, a freelancing marketplace focusing on skilled knowledge work, will share

information about Open Enrollment with millions of U.S. users. Earlier this year, Upwork launched a Business Resources center informing users about HealthCare.gov. Upwork has committed to promoting open enrollment through digital channels, including publishing an article on its Hiring Headquarters blog.

WeWork: WeWork, which provides space, services, and community at more than 100 locations worldwide, will provide information about Open Enrollment to US-based members of its community of over 75,000 freelancers, start-ups, and other entrepreneurs. WeWork members will receive alerts via the WeWork Member Network and social media handles, as well as a feature in Creator (the WeWork in-house magazine). Additionally, WeWork will communicate about Open Enrollment to its members through their building newsletters and other digital displays.

- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is announcing the availability of about \$70 million in supplemental funding to states, cities, and territories to support continued efforts to protect Americans from Zika virus.**

The funding, distributed through CDC's [Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Infectious Diseases \(ELC\) Cooperative Agreement](#), will further support activities to protect the health of Americans, especially pregnant women, including epidemiologic surveillance and investigation, improving mosquito control and monitoring, and strengthening laboratory capacity. Funding also will support participation in the [US Zika Pregnancy Registry](#) to monitor pregnant women with Zika and their infants.

States were notified of the funding opportunity announcement Oct. 19, 2016. All ELC applicants can request funds. The distribution of funds will be determined based on factors such as Zika disease burden, current laboratory and mosquito surveillance and control capacity, the presence of the Zika virus vector (*Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes), and local Zika virus transmission. CDC continues to work with states and territories to provide emergency resources for critical needs while the agency completes the necessary reviews and approvals of all applications.

The deadline for applications is 11:59 p.m. ET on Nov. 20. For more information on CDC's ELC Cooperative Agreement, visit the ELC webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dpei/epidemiology-laboratory-capacity.html>.

REPORTS/POLICIES

- **The GAO published “VA Health Care: Processes to Evaluate, Implement, and Monitor Organizational Structure Changes Needed,” (GAO-16-803) on Oct. 27, 2016.** This report examines the extent to which VHA has a process for evaluating recommended organizational structure changes to determine actions needed and implementing them as appropriate; and VHA monitored and provided guidance for implementing the VISN realignment. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/690/680054.pdf>

HILL HEARINGS

- There are no hearings scheduled next week.

LEGISLATION

- There was no legislation introduced this week.

MEETINGS

- 2016 AMSUS Annual Continuing Education Meeting will be held on **Nov. 29- Dec. 2, 2016**, at the Gaylord National Harbor, Md. <http://www.amsusmeetings.org/>
 - The Society of Military Orthopaedic Surgeons 58th Annual Meeting 2016 will be held **Dec. 12-16, 2016**, in Olympic Valley, Calif. <http://www.somos.org/>
 - HIMSS 2017 Annual Conference will be held on **Feb. 19-23, 2017**, in Orlando, Fla. <http://www.himssconference.org/>
 - The 7th Annual Traumatic Brain Injury Conference will be held **May 24-25, 2017**, in Washington DC. <http://tbiconference.com/home/>
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