

FEDERAL HEALTH UPDATE

November 10, 2006

Produced by Kate Connelly Theroux in collaboration with the U.S. Medicine Institute for Health Studies

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“On behalf of the Joint Chiefs, I join our fellow Americans in deepest gratitude to those who serve and those who have served. To all Veterans, and to your families, thank you for your courage and your commitment.” -
-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Peter Pace, USMC.

Congressional Schedule

- The House and Senate resumed on November 9.
- On Nov. 3, 2006, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs issued an action report on Congressional efforts on behalf of veterans. This report covers the past two years of the 109th session of Congress.
<http://veterans.senate.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Newsroom.PressReleases&month=11&year=2006&id=829>
- Congressional leaders are working on an agreement to pass a continuing resolution to keep the government running until December 8. The current one expires November 17.

Military Health Care News

- Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld resigned on November 8, following the mid-term elections in which Democrats won control of both the House of Representative and the Senate. Rumsfeld will remain in the position until the Senate confirms nominee Dr. Robert M. Gates.

Dr. Gates was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Air Force in 1967 and served in the Strategic Air Command. He served as Deputy Director of Central Intelligence from 1986-89 and as Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser from Jan. 20, 1989, until Nov. 6, 1991, for President George H.W. Bush. Dr. Gates began his career at the CIA as an entry-level employee and eventually rose through the ranks to become Director of Central Intelligence. He served as DCI from 1991-93.

- TRICARE launches its new Web site on November 10. The Web site, www.TRICARE.mil, combines information now available at www.tricare.osd.mil and www.tricareonline.com.
- The Military Health System (MHS) developed [Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety \(TeamSTEPPS\)](#) to improve the culture of patient safety in hospitals and other health care settings. Now the MHS is teaming up with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), a part of HHS, to release the program to civilian healthcare providers. TeamSTEPPS is a research-based system that presents tools for team training, coaching and change management to effectively improve communication, reduce medical errors, and create a culture of safety within the MHS.
- TeamSTEPPS uses a multimedia format to present tools to help a medical organization plan, conduct, and evaluate its own team training program tailored to their own needs. The MHS and AHRQ conducted extensive field testing in military and civilian organizations.
- On November 9, the U.S. Family Health Plan (USFHP) reported receiving an overall satisfaction rating of 87 percent in its 2006 national member satisfaction survey. This is 22 percent higher than the national average for satisfaction with health plans as reported by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) in its Quality Compass 2006 Public Report. The survey, which included a sample of members from each TRICARE Designated Provider organization, was conducted by The Myers Group of Snellville, Ga. The most comprehensive tool available for assessing consumers' experiences with their health plans was used.
- The results showed USFHP members highly satisfied with their personal providers and specialist, as well as the customer service received. USFHP, celebrating 25 years of serving military families, is available through networks of community-based hospitals and physicians in six areas of the country. US Family Health Plan enrollment is offered through Martin's Point Health Care, Portland, Maine; Brighton Marine Health Center, Boston, Mass.; Johns Hopkins Medical Services Corporation, Baltimore, Md.; CHRISTUS Health, Houston, Texas; St. Vincent Catholic Medical Centers, **Jamaica, N.Y.**; and the Pacific Medical Clinics,

Seattle, Wash. <http://www.primezone.com/newsroom/news.html?d=108456>

[Back to Top](#)

Veterans Health Care News

- Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield was inducted into the “Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Hall of Fame” for his service to veterans with spinal cord injuries. Mansfield, who also serves as the chief operating officer for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), joined 10 other SCI advocates at the second annual induction of the SCI Hall of Fame, sponsored by the National Spinal Cord Injury Association. The association selects inductees for making “significant contributions to the quality of life and advancements toward a better future for all individuals with spinal cord injury.”

Mansfield was a company commander with the 101st Airborne Division during the Vietnam War when he sustained a spinal cord injury during the Tet Offensive of 1968. After receiving a law degree from the University of Miami, he served in the Department of Housing and Urban Development from 1989 to 1993 as Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. He has held a number of positions with Paralyzed Veterans of America, including executive director. Coming to VA in August 2001, he served as Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs until January 2004, when he became VA’s Deputy Secretary, responsible for day-to-day operation of the federal government’s second largest department, with an annual budget of more than \$70 billion and a workforce of 235,000.

- On Nov. 2, 2006, Lois B. Pope, co-founder and chairman of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial Foundation, announced that half the money needed to build the \$65 million marble and glass memorial honoring the sacrifices of America’s disabled military veterans has been raised. The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will honor America’s 3 million disabled military veterans living today. It will be located on two acres of land adjacent to the National Mall within view of the U.S. Capitol. Groundbreaking is set for 2008, with completion planned in 2010. <http://www.avdlm.com/>

[Back to Top](#)

Health Care News

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) this week announced an action plan for strengthening the way it monitors the safety of medical devices after they reach the marketplace. FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH) last year completed a comprehensive assessment of the tools used to monitor the safety of medical devices after the agency approves them for marketing. In January, the agency formed a Postmarket Transformation Leadership Team to develop an action plan focusing on four main areas: enhancing the center's culture of collaboration; developing world class data systems; enhancing risk/benefit communication efforts; and collaborating on improved enforcement strategies and outcomes. These efforts will increase the agency's ability to identify, analyze, and act on the risks that may be posed by the thousands of devices used by health professionals and consumers every day.

<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2006/NEW01506.html>

- The executive board of the World Health Organization (WHO) named Dr. Margaret Chan as the next director-general, after the untimely death of Lee Jong-wook in May. Dr. Chan is the first Chinese national chosen for such a high-ranking U.N. post. Dr. Chan is an expert on the bird flu virus and was Hong Kong's former director of public health.
- The Office of Population Affairs of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced awards totaling \$3,213,917 on November 6. Nine Adolescent Family Life (AFL) Care Demonstration Grants were awarded to school districts, a faith-based organization and seven community-based organizations. The AFL care demonstration programs establish and evaluate innovative approaches to the delivery of care to pregnant and parenting teens in an effort to ameliorate the effects of too-early childbearing. The programs provide an array of services to help prevent repeat pregnancies and enhance the well being of teen mothers and fathers, their infants and their families.

Programs include pregnancy testing and maternity counseling; adoption counseling and referral services; primary and preventive health services; counseling and referrals for family planning services; referrals for screenings and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV; and educational services relating to parenting and family life. These nine new care projects will make a total of 31 AFL care demonstration programs currently funded by the Office of Population Affairs. The AFL care demonstration grants are for five years, based on funds available. To view the list of grant recipients, please visit <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2006pres/20061106.html>

- On November 9, President Bush announced that he intends to nominate Terry L. Cline of Oklahoma to be Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. Cline currently serves as the Oklahoma Secretary of Health and Commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Prior to this, he served as a Health Care Policy Fellow at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Earlier in his career, he served as Clinical Director of the Cambridge Youth Guidance Center. Dr. Cline received his bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma. He received his master's degree and PhD from Oklahoma State University. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/11/20061109-5.html>

- The state of Tennessee has selected **Express Scripts Inc.**, one of the largest pharmacy benefit managers in the country, to manage the CoverRX prescription drug benefit package. CoverRX is the pharmacy portion of CoverTN, which will provide health insurance plans to small businesses with 25 or fewer employees. The program replicates the safety net program already in place and expands the choice of generic drugs from 55 to 200. Express Scripts was scheduled to start work on the program on November 9. The maximum value of the contract for the first year, which covers only the second half of the state's fiscal year, is set at \$11.5 million.

The maximum value for the next two years is \$16 million annually. Under the agreement, Express Scripts will maintain a statewide pharmacy assistance program for low-income adults without access to prescription drug coverage. The program also covers individuals with severe and persistent mental illnesses being served by Tennessee's Mental Health Safety Net. Tennessee residents who are U.S. citizens aged 19 to 64, are uninsured and have a household income of less than 250 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible.

Excluding insulin and diabetic supplies, there is a five-prescription limit.

<http://sanantonio.bizjournals.com/stlouis/stories/2006/10/30/daily32.html?t=printable>

[Back to Top](#)

Reserve/Guard

- The total number of Guard and Reserve currently on active duty has **decreased** by 41 from the last report to 98,528. The totals for each service are Army National Guard and Army Reserve, 79,495; Navy Reserve, 5,382; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 6,259; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,127; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 265.

www.defenselink.mil

[Back to Top](#)

Contracts/Procurements

- The U.S. Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity in Fredrick Md. issued a Request for Information (RFI) for a Department of Defense (DoD) Formulary Publication & Management Commercial Product on Nov. 7, 2006. The TRICARE Management Activity (TMA), Pharmaceutical Operations Directorate is seeking information regarding a formulary publication and management application to provide access to appropriate individuals. TMA is conducting market research to determine current capability of commercial applications offering electronic formulary services to enable the electronic publication and overall management of TRICARE formulary information. The intent is to make the TRICARE formulary available for download to medical providers of TRICARE beneficiaries throughout the United States. The TRICARE Formulary is currently available through a web based search tool hosted on the TMA Web site at <http://www.tricareformularysearch.org>, but is not in a format accessible for electronic download. Responses via e-mail in Microsoft Office 2000 (at a minimum) format are due by 4:00 p.m. on November 28 to Kelly R. Green via e-mail at kelly.r.green@det.amedd.army.mil.

- The Department of Defense, TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) issued a Request for Information (RFI) in order to solicit industry input on its draft RFP for the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) for a follow-on contract to one currently performed by Delta Dental of California. The draft [TRDP RFP](#) provides for a voluntary, enrollee-funded, group indemnity insurance plan for retired members of the uniformed services and certain family members. Services required include, but are not limited to, underwriting, marketing, eligibility verification and enrollment, premium collection, provider credentialing, claim adjudication and payment, customer services, and processing of appeals and grievances.

TMA requests that industry review the information provided relating to the TRDP follow-on requirement and submit their feedback to TMA by not later than December 1. All questions answers and/or comments should be sent to Thomas L. Griffin, contracting officer via e-mail at tom.griffin@tma.osd.mil.

[Back to Top](#)

Reports/Policies

- A RAND report “*The Quality of Pharmacologic Care for Adults in the United States,*” published in **October, found** significant deficits in the quality of prescription drug care for U.S. adults, particularly with regard to the under-use of appropriate medications. Low performance was also found for medication monitoring and for education and documentation. Some differences in quality were associated with patients' ethnicity, but insurance status did not appear to have an effect. Participants received 61.9 percent of recommended pharmacologic care overall. Performance was lowest in education and documentation at 46.2 percent; medication monitoring at 54.7 percent and 62.6 percent under using of appropriate medications. Patient race and health services utilization were associated with modest quality differences, while insurance status was not. The report concluded that strategies to measure and improve pharmacologic care quality ought to be considered, especially as a prescription drug benefit for seniors is initiated. <http://www.lww-medicalcare.com/pt/re/medcare/abstract.00005650-200610000-00008.htm>

[Back to Top](#)

Legislation

- No legislation was proposed this week.

[Back to Top](#)

Hill Hearings

- There are no hearings scheduled.

[Back to Top](#)

Meetings / Conferences

- The State of the MHS - The 2007 Annual TRICARE Conference will be held **Jan. 29 to Feb. 1, 2007**, in Washington D.C. <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/conferences.cfm>
- The American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM) will hold "Preventive Medicine 2007," on **Feb. 21-25, 2007**, in Miami, Florida.
- The 2007 HIMSS will be held **Feb. 25 to March 1, 2007**, in New Orleans, La. <http://www.himss07.org/>
- The 2007 International Symposium on Antimicrobial Agents and Resistance (ISAAR) will be held on

March 7-9, 2007, in Singapore. http://www.isaar.org/sub01_invitation.asp

[Back to Top](#)

If you need further information on any of the items in the Federal Health Update, please contact Kate Connelly Theroux at (703) 447-3257 or by e-mail at kate@usminstitute.org. To subscribe, please visit <http://usminstitute.org/subscriber.cfm>. To unsubscribe, please send an email to update@usminstitute.org with UNSUBSCRIBE as the subject.