



AAFP News: *AFP* Edition

Policy and Health Issues in the News

AAFP Joins Campaign to Push Back Against Increasing Drug Prices

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) recently joined the Campaign for Sustainable Rx Pricing, a nonpartisan coalition of organizations seeking to strike a balance between innovation and affordability in the pharmaceutical industry. Spending on prescription drugs is growing faster than any other health care expenditure segment. In 2015, prescription drug prices rose 7%, the highest one-year increase since 1992. The campaign has released a detailed proposal of potential solutions to the problem. In the proposal, the campaign said greater transparency and stronger regulatory enforcement can help bring drug costs under control. Manufacturers should be required to disclose to government agencies the maximum price they intend to charge for a new drug and the total cost of treatment. Insurers already operate under a similar rule that requires them to submit premium information to state insurance commissions months in advance and to publicly justify rate increases greater than 10%. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/practice-professional-issues/20170407rxcampaign.html>.

CDC Reports Birth Defects Occur in 10% of Zika-Infected Pregnancies

Of the 250 U.S. women who had laboratory-confirmed Zika virus infection during pregnancy in 2016, about one in 10 had a fetus or baby with Zika-related birth defects, according to two reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The reports are the first to analyze the subset of pregnant women in the United States who had laboratory-confirmed Zika virus infection. The CDC established the U.S. Zika Pregnancy Registry (USZPR) in 2016 to monitor pregnant women with laboratory evidence of possible recent Zika virus infection and their infants. The CDC reports are based on an analysis of completed pregnancies (including live births and pregnancy losses, regardless of gestational age) in the 50 states and the District of Columbia with laboratory evidence of possible recent Zika virus infection reported to the USZPR from January 15 to December 27, 2016. Zika virus-associated birth defects were analyzed in two mutually exclusive categories: (1) brain abnormalities and/or microcephaly, regardless of the presence of additional birth defects; and (2) neural tube defects and other early brain malformations, eye abnormalities, and other consequences of central nervous system

dysfunction, among fetuses and infants without evident brain abnormalities or microcephaly. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/health-of-the-public/20170405mmwrzika.html>.

VA Changes Stance on Sharing Negative Results on HIV, Sickle Cell Tests

In an effort to improve the exchange of patient information, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will begin allowing veterans' negative test results for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and sickle cell anemia to be shared between medical professionals without written authorization. For years, results from these tests could not be shared with physicians outside the VA without written patient consent. The agency recently announced that it lifted this restriction with a final rule that took effect on April 24, 2017. When the rule prohibiting exchange of this information without written consent was first adopted, the intent was to protect patients from the stigma associated with HIV. The VA noted that such testing is now so routine that it requires only verbal consent and no pretest counseling. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/government-medicine/20170404vatestresults.html>.

Opioid Task Force Issues Resource on Safe Storage, Disposal of Medications

The American Medical Association Task Force to Reduce Opioid Abuse has released a new resource family physicians can use to promote safe use, storage, and disposal of opioids and other medications. The two-page document suggests a three-step process family physicians can use: (1) educate patients about safe use of prescription opioids and ensure that they are used only by the person for whom they are prescribed; (2) remind patients that medications should be stored in a safe place out of reach of children; and (3) discuss the most appropriate way to dispose of expired, unwanted, and unused medications. The task force's resource also includes links physicians and patients can use to access local drug disposal operations and U.S. Food and Drug Administration resources on proper disposal of unused medications. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/health-of-the-public/20170410amaopioidresource.html>.

— AFP AND AAFP NEWS STAFF

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