

2017

December 1, 2017

The Pain Management Best Practices Inter-Agency Task Force was launched by Health and Human Services (HHS) in August 2017. This task force was mandated by the 2016 Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and includes HHS, Departments of Defense and Veteran Affairs, Office of National Drug Control Policy and various other stakeholders. The task force's main role is to determine gaps or inconsistencies in the best practices of pain management. Many healthcare providers have expressed concerns that questions in the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey, which is tied to hospital reimbursement, could be leading to an increase of opioid prescriptions across the nation. In response to these concerns by healthcare providers, starting October 1, 2017, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will no longer link the HCAHPS pain management scores to hospital payment, which is under the Hospital Value-Based Purchasing Program. To also combat the opioid epidemic, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has released guidelines for prescribing opioids and an Rx Awareness Campaign to increase awareness of the risks of inappropriate opioid use.

For more information about this post [click here](#).

For more information about HCAHPS [click here](#).

Legislative Alert - The American Health Care Act of 2017

May 11, 2017

On May 4, 2017, the House of Representatives passed the American Health Care Act of 2017 (AHCA) H.R.1628 by a vote of 217-213.

This legislation impacts coverage for therapy services by allowing states to opt out of requiring the essential health benefits for both Medicaid and the individual market as required by the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Another notable change affects individuals with pre-existing conditions. Individuals with pre-existing conditions must be offered health insurance, but there is no limit on the cost of that insurance. The bill includes \$8 billion in supports to help lower premiums for these individuals.

The bill also permits states to apply a work requirement for non-disabled, non-elderly, non-pregnant adults in order to receive Medicaid.

To date, the legislation has not been introduced in the Senate, where it is expected to be modified.

[More information](#)

Legislative Alert - American Health Care Act Update

March 29, 2017

The American Health Care Act (AHCA) of 2017 H.R.1628 was the House Republican's proposal to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act and prohibit federal funding for Planned Parenthood. However, on March 24, 2017, the vote on the AHCA was withdrawn, rather than having the bill defeated on the House floor. The

withdrawal occurred because of several reasons, including the House Freedom Caucus pledging to oppose the AHCA due to the group believing the bill keeps too much of current legislation from the Affordable Care Act intact. There was also great push back from industry groups like the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Hospital Association (AHA), which have both spoken out against the legislation. There were also many Democrats opposed to the AHCA due to the changes it would have on healthcare coverage for many Americans.

The bottom line with how the AHCA would have affected you depends on income, how you receive your health insurance and your healthcare needs. For example, older individuals with a low-income and health insurance from an individual market could have expected their premiums to increase. Individuals who utilize Medicaid would have faced few benefits with higher out-of-pocket costs. Additionally, if you receive benefits through your employer, your employer would have the right to stop providing coverage, which would have been likely to occur because tax credits would be eliminated for employers. There also would have been tax breaks for individuals with higher incomes.

Because the AHCA bill was withdrawn Friday, it appears any proposed changes to the Affordable Care Act will have to go back to the drawing board.

The ASHT Practice Division will continue to follow and provide regular updates on legislation relative to hand rehabilitation. If you have not yet had chance, please check out the Legislative Action Center, which is an easy-to-use tool that provides sample position letters, phone scripts and tweets that can be personalized by you to reach you elected representatives!