The Leg.Up
Local, state and national news of interest to the physician community
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Dr. O'Bannon Offers GOP Healthcare Alternative

Del. John M. O'Bannon III of Henrico is leading House Republicans' efforts to include $124 million for mental-health care and health services for the poor - slightly more than the money proposed last fall by Gov. Terry McAuliffe, reports The Washington Post.

"The move reflects a bid by the GOP to build on mental-health reforms begun after a tragedy involving [Sen. Creigh Deeds'] son and to shake off the 'party of no' label Democrats have lobbed at them for rejecting McAuliffe's big push to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act."

The GOP played up differences between their plan and McAuliffe's fallback "Healthy Virginia" program. McAuliffe took credit for spurring them to action.
Said Dr. O'Bannon, a former RAM president, "Let's be clear: We are not expanding Medicaid, not funding the specifics the governor put out. Our budget will strengthen the existing safety net for the truly needy... We're using real dollars, not promises of federal funding for the most pressing needs of our most vulnerable Virginians."

A related column by veteran Virginia political activists Norman Leahy (Republican) and Paul Goldman (Democrat) took the Washington Post editorial page to task for equating House of Delegates Speaker William Howell (R-Stafford) to white supremacist Harry F. Byrd.

The analogy was unfair, they wrote, because unlike Virginia's shameful Massive Resistance to school integration, "The fight over Medicaid expansion... is an issue created by the Supreme Court's decision to uphold Obamacare."

The High Court let each state decide whether or not to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. "Led by Del. John O'Bannon... a highly respected physician, Republicans continue to back the program. But they have their own alternatives for additional coverage."

Pre-Authorization Bill Passes: Congrats to White Coat Advocates!

**Congrats to all you White Coat Day ambassadors for better medicine!**

After your lobbying efforts last week, the "preauthorization bill" was passed by UNANIMOUS votes of the Senate and the House (by a whopping 100-0 margin), according to our friends at [the Medical Society of Virginia](http://www.msv.org).

Read below for last week's White Coat lobbying effort:

Among the white-coated doctors were other allies - such as Tom Gallo, executive director of the [Virginia Cancer Institute](http://www.vcaonline.org) - who explained how the current cumbersome method of insurers' approval for cancer drugs can sometime leave patients waiting for 10 days for critical medications.
They were speaking in support of reforms to the health plan preauthorization process (House Bill 1942 sponsored by Del. Greg Habeeb, R-Salem, and Senate Bill 1262 sponsored by Sen. Steve Newman, R-Lynchburg).

Nodding, Del. Delores McQuinn commented, "I just went through that with a friend of mine." She added, "I'm a cancer survivor." With that, she assured her visitors that they had her full support for passage of the bill.

Obviously, RAM members and other supporters made a great case for the legislation!

Thanks to the following RAM members and guests who brought their special talents and energy to White Coat Day:

N. Douglas Boardman III, MD  
Owen W. Brodie, MD  
Carolyn A. Burns, MD  
John F. Butterworth IV, MD  
L. Randolph Chisholm, MD  
John M. Daniel III, MD  
Chris Darling  
Georgean G. deBlois, MD  
Siobhan S. Dunnavant, MD  
Raymond S. Farhi, MD  
A. William Feria, MD  
Helen M. Foster, MD  
Thomas A. Gallo  
Harry L. Gewanter, MD  
Jessica Gonzalez, MD  
John Hilliard  
Karsten F. Konerding, MD  
Hazle S. Konerding, MD  
Ritsu Kuno, MD  
Walter Lawrence Jr., MD  
David W. MacMillan, MD  
Rhoda B. Mahoney, MD  
Thomas L. Moffatt, MD  
Kanayo Okafor, MD  
M. Craig Pinsker, MD  
Ghulam D. Qureshi, MD  
Maggie H. Sigman, MD  
Richard A. Szucs, MD  
Bill Webb  
Carl B. Weiss, MD  
Joyce L. Whitaker, MD  
Bert Wilson  
Patrick M. Woodward, MD  
Vishal Yajnik, MD  
Peter A. Zedler, MD
MSV's Shout Out to Physicians RE: New State Board Opportunities!

One way that the Medical Society of Virginia (MSV) helps physicians influence healthcare in Virginia is by nominating them to serve on state boards, task forces and commissions.

If YOU would like MSV to support your request for appointment to a state board, please send a copy of your CV and/or biography with your request for support to healthpolicy@msv.org by February 15th.

To qualify for MSV support, you must be an MSV member, be willing to serve a multi-year term and meet the state's qualifications for the current vacancy. You must also complete an application for appointment on the Secretary of the Commonwealth's website. Click here!

To learn more about MSV's role in state board appointments, click here.

In a related article, The Washington Post reports on a GOP push to scrutinize all new candidates for appointments to state boards. And here for Gov. McAuliffe brushing off the effort, saying "let's get the deal done."

Quacks vs. Vaccines? Just Revoke Their Licenses

The measles outbreak that has spread from California across the country has sparked a slew of news reports and columns, which we'll get to below.

But it was this column - "Quack against vaccines? Revoke their licenses" by bioethicist Arthur L. Caplan - that caught our eye.
"Amateurs and hucksters are not the only people telling parents not to vaccinate their children," he writes in the Washington Post's Sunday Outlook section.

"Unfortunately some doctors - men and women sworn to the Hippocratic Oath - are purveying junk science. They say that vaccines cause autism, as in the famous case of Andrew Wakefield, whose study drawing the link has been retracted. Or that measles isn't that bad, so your child can skip the shots," something attributed to an Arizona cardiologist.

While it's only a handful of doctors around the country "who purvey views based on anecdote, myth, hearsay, rumor, ideology, fraud or some combination of all of these, particularly during an epidemic, [they] should have their medical licenses revoked.

"Thankfully, states have the right tools to do so. It's time to use them."

Caplan, director of the Division of Medical Ethics at NYU Langone Medical Center's Department of Population Health, explains his own experience in New York, where the right to free speech is trumped by occasions when "misinformation leads to harm" and when "grossly improbable statements are made which have a tendency to deceive or defraud the public."

The Post also published an account by Gal Adam Spinrad who writes, "I was a vaccine skeptic. Now I'm a believer." Based on her own experiences with her children, she describes how she became convinced living in San Francisco "that my daughter's immune system should have a chance to build up on its own, without being bombarded with viruses and chemicals."

This is a useful piece to share with patients because it shows how an intelligent woman realized she had erred in dismissing sound medical care for her child. After losing a child to a congenital defect, her nearly two-months in an NICU - where she saw the many ways that unimmunized children were suffering - changed her mind. She also quotes an essay on immunization that describes an important concept in public health - the idea of "herd immunity."

The January, 2013 essay by Eula Biss in Harper's states, "Any given vaccine can fail to produce immunity in an individual, and some vaccines, like the influenza vaccine, often fail to produce immunity. But when enough people are given even a relatively ineffective vaccine, viruses have trouble moving from host to host and cease to spread, sparing both the unvaccinated and those in whom vaccination has not produced immunity."

"Herd immunity" may be a concept worth sharing with your
Here are some other articles related to the measles story:

In 2014, there were only two cases of measles in Virginia, according to the state Department of Health - both in Northern Virginia, and as of last week, Virginia had no confirmed measles cases in 2015, reports the Times-Dispatch.

Nationally, the measles outbreak spread to three more states and Washington, D.C. by last week, reports the Post, "affecting 19 additional people... The highly contagious disease is now in 18 jurisdictions, with 121 people affected." Most of the cases are part of the large outbreak that began in Disneyland in Southern California in late December, according to the Post and the CDC.

If the foreign press covered the U.S. measles outbreak the way the American press covered the Ebola crisis, it might sound like this, writes Catherine Rampell in the TD: "Paranoia and fear have spread throughout this human-resource-rich but politically dysfunctional nation, allowing a disease once nearly eradicated to return and ravage large swaths of the U.S. population..."

"Many have opted for alternative methods to ward off illness relying on dietary supplements, frantic Google searches and advice from former Playboy models."

If you want to win a bet, ask which state in the nation has the highest rate of vaccinations. Click here for the answer!

(Ok, it's Mississippi, where the state Supreme Court ruled in 1979 that religious exemptions over vaccinations violated the state constitution; today, Mississippi is one of 32 states that don't allow exemptions for philosophical reasons.)

Result: 99.7 percent of 45,719 Mississippi kindergartners had received the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, as well as diphtheria, tetanus toxoids, and pertussis vaccine.

Virginia law requires students to be vaccinated for common childhood diseases before they enter school, but the Old Dominion does allow exemptions for religious or medical reasons, writes Tammie Smith of the TD.

Click here to read about Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul's ties to an anti-vaccine group.

Anthem Hit Hard by Hackers, "Phishing" Reels in 80 Million Records

"The cyberattack on Anthem, one of the nation's largest
health insurers, [exposes] the vulnerability of healthcare companies, which security specialists say are behind other industries in protecting sensitive personal information," reports The New York Times.

"Experts said the information was vulnerable because Anthem did not take steps, like protecting the data in its computers through encryption, in the same way it protected medical information that was sent or shared outside of the database."

Anthem officials said they don't know who's behind the attack - where hackers gained access to 80 million records that included Social Security, birthdays, addresses, email and employment information and income data for customers and employees, including its own chief executive."

According to The Hill.com, "Investigators are focused on weak security for login credentials, as the hackers are believed to have accessed Anthem Inc.'s information by stealing the company system administrator's access information."

Contrary to the Times' report. The Hill reports that Anthem's main "security sin may not have been the lack of encryption, but instead improper access controls...Hackers were able to get the credentials of five different Anthem tech workers."

"It's widely believed the attackers used targeted 'phishing' campaigns, in which they sent Anthem's network administrators fake emails trying to dupe them into either revealing login info or clicking a link that gives hackers access to their computer."

The hackers are thought to have infiltrated Anthem's networks by using a sophisticated malicious software program that gave them access to the login credential of an Anthem employee.

Over the weekend, a new problem emerged as Anthem warned Virginia residents about a scam email - or "phishing" - that's designed to look like it came from Anthem. The emails include a "click here" link for credit monitoring.

By late last week, it wasn't known how many Virginians had been affected by the scam or the hacking into the heart of Anthem's records.

And the Associated Press asked this question: "Is your doctor's office the most dangerous place for data?"

Even before the Anthem data breach, last year more than 10 million people in the U.S. were victims of health care
data breaches, according to the AP.

One expert told the AP that "the health care industry is about 10 years behind the financial services sector in terms of protecting consumer information."

This appears to be why Anthem was such an easy target.

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**Ramifications Explores "The Dating Game" of Physician Recruitment**

Trying to find a "perfect" match for a medical practice is a lot like seeking a new spouse. But it's worth the effort. "Especially in smaller physician groups like ours, you truly are 'marrying' that physician who's joining your practice," said Dr. Mark Rausch, CEO and medical director at BetterMed in Midlothian.

The winter issue of *Ramifications* - which will be mailed to members by Feb. 20 - explores other aspects of best business practices, including Dr. Isaac L. Wornom III’s "Musings on running a medical practice (Or, what they never taught me in med school)." Kit Young, administrator of Richmond Plastic Surgeons, discusses the importance of customer service in "Making patient connections" and "Physician, protect yourself: The ins and outs of fraud prevention."

Click [here](#) to read the issue on our website!

Dr. Richard P. Wenzel, an internationally acclaimed specialist in infectious diseases, writes "Lessons from Ebola," while Dr. Donald R. Stern, director of the Richmond City Health District, details public education efforts during the Ebola scare last fall.

RAM President Peter A. Zedler, MD, discusses the importance of "Moving Forward Together," and explores the continually changing face of medicine. He also welcomes
James G. "Jim" Beckner, the Academy's new executive director.

House Approves Pot Oils to Treat Epilepsy

The Virginia House of Delegates overwhelmingly approved (98-0, with two abstentions) a bill intended to make it easier for Virginians with severe forms of epilepsy to use two oils derived from marijuana, reports The Washington Post.

Tuesday's victory stunned advocates "who never expected to succeed in Richmond's highly conservative lower chamber on their first try," reports the Post, adding that "the vote might be seen as a turning point for Virginia, which has staunchly opposed loosening marijuana laws as neighboring Maryland and the District [of Columbia] have eased theirs."

But legislators and activists on both sides of the pot issue "cautioned against reading the House action" as a sign that the Virginia GOP is leaning toward loosening the state's marijuana laws.

"It's a very narrow bill that is tailored to a very specific medical condition," said political scientist Bob Holsworth. "I think we're far from going down the path of becoming Rocky Mountain high."

The bill allows two pot-extracted oils that lack the plant's stoner properties but help alleviate debilitating seizures for those patients who suffer from "intractable epilepsy." And the bills "would not legalize the oils but instead would provide an "affirmative defense" to anyone charged with possession of the oils.

HDL's Dr. Dall Branching into Concierge Care

Dr. Tara L. Dall, chief medical officer of Health Diagnostic Laboratory, is partnering with Dr. Neal Carl, a general practitioner in the area for 17 years, to open a new concierge practice - Virtua MD, reports the Times-Dispatch.

The RAM members are staging a "soft launch" with a small group of new patients (10) at their new office at 2500 Gaskins Road in western Henrico County. They expect to be fully operational by this spring, charging patients an annual fee of $3,000 per year, or $250 per month, for care.

They also plan to offer "walk-in" consultations for a $400
Joining other local concierge practices such as PartnerMD and MDVIP, Virtua MD "aims to differentiate itself by providing advanced biomarker testing to help inform patients about their health risks and prevent chronic conditions."

The article notes that Carl "is currently working on a fellowship in anti-aging medicine," which focuses on the prevention of age-related illnesses. "We want people to live and age without chronic disease," Dall said.

Dall said she remains CMO for HDL, which provides specialized blood-testing services to detect early signs of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Initially, she'll work part time for Virtua MD.

The practice currently is limiting itself to about 500 patients.

Inova Plans Center on Cancer & Genomics

Inova, Northern Virginia’s largest hospital system, plans to buy Exxon Mobil’s 117-acre campus in Fairfax County "to create a complex dedicated to what many view as a potential remedy for Northern Virginia’s sagging economy: genomics and personalized medicine," reports The Washington Post.

Inova plans to form a research campus that would house a long-planned cancer center "and a new research hub that would combine a medical school with laboratories and Inova’s high-profile Translational Medicine Institute.

In this effort to create a big draw for patients akin to the prestigious Mayo Clinic, Inova also hopes to attract "the best genomics researchers in the United States." The economic impact is hoped to be in the "hundreds of millions of dollars."

Speaking of the Mayo Clinic: An Arlington hospital - Virginia Hospital Center - has become a member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network, a national consortium of health-care providers, reports Insidenova.com.

Why "dying has only gotten worse"

The number of Americans who experienced pain the last year of their life rose by nearly 12 percent between 1998
and 2010, according to a new study in the Annals of Internal Medicine.

Commenting on an earlier report from the Institute of Medicine, the new study indicates "dying has only gotten worse" since that 1997 IOM report.

For the study, researchers assessed about 7,200 patients over age 50 who enrolled in a nationally representative Health and Retirement Study. It included interviews with patients until they died, along with interviews with family members about their relatives' experiences, particularly whether participants experienced pain, depression or periods of confusion near the end of their lives.

Senate Panel Supports Secrecy on Execution Drugs

Legislation that would let the state prevent public disclosure of just about every aspect of the drugs used in lethal-injection executions barely survived a Senate Committee Monday, reports the Times-Dispatch.

The Senate Courts of Justice Committee voted 7-6 to advance Senate Bill 1392, sponsored by Sen. Richard L. Saslaw (D-Fairfax) and supported by the McAuliffe administration.

The bill was approved by the Senate Tuesday by a 23-14 vote after what the Associated Press described as "a contentious debate" over keeping such information secret. It now moves on to the House of Delegates for consideration.

"The bill would give the Department of Corrections the authority to contract with pharmacies to compound the drugs used in the lethal cocktail used in state executions," reports the TD. "But it also would protect from disclosure the identity of the pharmacy compounding the drugs; the names of the drugs; the identity of the companies that produced the drugs; and the concentration of the drugs used."

Saslaw said his bill arose from a need to find domestic sources to supply and compound chemicals that can be used in the state's executions. This became a problem when European suppliers - bowing to death penalty opponents - halted the flow of the drugs and created a scarcity in the U.S.

This "made it necessary for states that have lethal injections to seek domestic suppliers and different deadly combinations." The issue "has galvanized advocates for open government, who argue that states that use lethal
injections should be transparent about their methods," as well as death penalty opponents "who say the practice constitutes cruel and unusual punishment."

Virginia has eight inmates on death row. The state also has electrocution as a method of execution, reports the TD, "but cannot carry out a death sentence by the electric chair without the inmate's consent."

Docs Deal with Burnout

Click here for a Medscape report on what it calls the "growing problem" of physician burnout. It cites recent surveys and articles that address this quality-of-life issue. This includes the latest Medscape Physician Lifestyle Report that found that nearly half - 46 percent - of all physicians responded that they had experienced burnout, a "substantial increase" from a 2013 survey (when 40 percent expressed burnout).

Medscape says this means U.S. physicians suffer more burnout than other American workers. The highest rates were found in critical care (53 percent) and emergency medicine (52 percent), along with half of all family physicians, internists and general surgeons.

"Of even more concern," wrote Medscape's Carol Peckham, "among internists and family physicians who responded... burnout rates rose from about 43 percent in 2013 to 50 percent in both groups, an absolute increase of 7 percent but a 16 percent rise incidence in just two years."

In a measure of "Physicians and Happiness," the lowest happiness scores at work belonged to radiologists... and as expected, those on the front line of care: internists and emergency medicine physicians and family physicians."

Dermatologists and ophthalmologists seemed to be happiest in their jobs.

On a sunnier front: Medscape cited a 2014 survey by the Physicians Foundation reporting a positive mood among 44 percent of physicians, which, while clearly not a majority, was higher than the 31.8 percent reported in the 2012 survey.

The study's authors "believed that this increase was powered by the emergence of physicians who are younger, female, and employed and also by increasing optimism among primary care doctors."

There was also an uptick in the number of physicians who would recommend medicine to their children.
Leave it to "The Beav" to Battle Diabetes at Fan Free Fundraiser

For baby boomers, Jerry Mathers of "Leave It to Beaver" was the nice boy next door.

But whether or not you're a boomer, you'll want to attend a fundraiser for the Fan Free Clinic Feb. 17 at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts: "From Actor to Activist: An Evening with Jerry Mathers."

Click here for more information.

Jerry Mathers is a leading lecturer on living and dealing with diabetes. "About 20 percent of the patients who are seen at Fan Free Clinic are type 2 diabetics," says Karen Legato, executive director. "Most of them are baby boomers just like the Beav."

R-Rated Penn & Teller Rant vs. Anti-Vac Crowd

User alert: This isn't for the faint-hearted or G-rated ears!

With that warning, we share this from MedPage Today: a Penn & Teller video that literally "bowls over" any arguments made AGAINST vaccinating kids.

What's Happening?

Check your RAM calendar here.

Check out back issues of The Leg.Up.