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Industry News

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Efforts to reform health care under way in Congress

Sens. Max Baucus, D-Mont., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., are developing separate proposals to reform the health care system, hoping that their prompt efforts will spur President-elect Barack Obama to act quickly on the issue. Baucus' plan would extend Medicare to individuals ages 55 to 64. An aide for Kennedy said the lawmaker is working to get Congress' backing for "a single, unified bill for early action next year." [The Washington Post](#) (11/12) [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)



Join [MEDDecision](#) at AHIP's Business Forum 2008 on 11/18 for our session "**Using Health Information Technology to Impact Care Management**". Presented by David St.Clair Chairman of the Board and CEO, MEDDecision, Inc. and William Gerardi, MD, Executive Medical Director, Health Care Service Corporation. This session will examine the changing role of health plans as investors in and adopters of health information technology.

Providers & Suppliers

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Pharmacists in short supply across U.S.

Retailers and health care employers are offering new pharmacy school grads six-figure salaries and big bonuses in response to a shortage of U.S. pharmacists, especially in rural areas. The need is driven partly by the expansion of health care into retail settings as well as by the aging population. [The News & Observer \(Raleigh, N.C.\)/McClatchy Newspapers](#) (11/12)

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Spartan offers discount generic drugs

Spartan Stores announced it will offer \$4 generic drugs on more than 300 medications prescribed in 30-day supplies at some of its stores. The effort is part of an expanding focus on health and wellness. [Progressive Grocer](#) (11/12) , [The Grand Rapids Press \(Mich.\)](#) (11/8)

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Maryland hospital executives to discuss green initiatives

Hospital executives representing more than 40 hospitals in Maryland met in Baltimore this week to discuss ways to improve the environmental impact of their facilities, including waste reduction and recycling and hazardous materials management. [WJZ 13 \(Baltimore, Md.\)/The Associated Press](#) (11/10) [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)

Other News

37% of Medicare spending from heart failure patients

Yahoo!/HealthDay News (11/12)

[Insurer's pilot project sends health coaches to schools](#)

The Boston Globe/The Associated Press (11/12)



Medical Update

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OptumHealthSM
Consumer Solutions

Waistline size better than BMI in predicting mortality risk

A study shows that among individuals with the same relative body mass index calculation, each 5-centimeter increase in waist circumference boosted mortality risk by 17% in men and 13% in women. The study suggests even people who are not obese are at higher risk of death if they carry too much weight around their waist. [Google/The Press Association](#) (11/12)

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Low-dose CT scan for lung cancer aids early detection

A U.S. study involving 3,642 people found that low-radiation CT screening detected a noncalcified lung nodule in 40.6% of patients on the first screening. However, 36 patients, or 1%, with abnormalities eventually underwent major thoracic surgery that resulted in a noncancer diagnosis. Experts say the challenge will be to create guidelines for treating such nodules that avoid unnecessary major surgery. [Yahoo!/Reuters](#) (11/12) [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)

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OptumHealth Webinar (11/20): Insights on Consumer Attitudes and Usage - Online Health Improvement Programs. Online Health Improvement Programs help many consumers stay healthy and manage their health conditions. Join our Webinar and discover what new, proprietary research says about how consumers view these programs, what drives participation and which components they find most effective. [Continue](#)

Emerging Trends

Web sites to help seniors compare drug plans, prices

Medicare.com and DestinationRx are teaming up for an online effort to provide comparisons of the cost, safety and therapeutic efficacy of a variety of drugs. The partners will also launch a Web-based tool that will help seniors enroll in Part D drug plans. [Drug Store News](#) (free registration) (11/11) [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)

More hospitals use electronic tracking systems

More hospitals have started to use electronic tracking systems, including infrared sensors and radio-frequency identification tags, to monitor medical equipment and laboratory specimens, as well as to locate patients and staff. The increased use of these systems, however, has raised some concerns related to privacy and safety, as tracking technology could disrupt the operation of medical devices or be used to access personal information. [The Wall Street Journal \(free content\)](#) (11/12) [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)

MyVetnetwork connects veterans on the Web

MyVetnetwork, which was launched Tuesday in honor of Veterans Day, aims to create a veteran community with links to mental-health resources, among others. The community provides opportunities for veterans and their supporters to help one another through social networking connections. [USA TODAY](#) (11/10) [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)

[AHIP Statement on Senator Baucus' Health Care Reform Proposal](#)

[APWU Health Plan Takes Lead in Introducing New Hearing Benefit and Cap on Prescription Drug Costs](#)

[Care Improvement Plus Members Overwhelmingly Pleased with Special Needs Plan](#)

[Regence Honored by American Heart Association as a Start! Fit-Friendly Company](#)

Other Company News from AHIP Solutions

[Nevada Gives Final Approval to AMERIGROUP Medicaid Contract](#)

[Conseco Completes Transfer of Senior Health Insurance Company of Pennsylvania to Independent Trust](#)

[Humana to Focus on Preventive Care with 2009 Medicare Plans](#)

[Study Proves The Vitality Health Enhancement Program Cuts Healthcare Costs by Motivating Healthy Behaviors](#)

[Apptis Delivers New Release of the Defense Health Services Systems \(DHSS\) Program Office's Medical Surveillance System](#)

[Magellan Expands Knowledge on Virtual Reality Therapy for Treatment of Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder](#)

[Medsphere and Indian Health Service Reach Accord on Multi-Year Contract for Healthcare Network Services](#)

[CVS Caremark Names Troyen Brennan, MD, EVP, Chief Medical Officer](#)

[Aflac Names M. Jeffrey Charney Senior Vice President; Chief Marketing Officer, Promotes Ronald S. Sanders to Senior Vice President; Deputy Director of U.S. Sales, Ronald E. Kirkland, Current Sales Director, to Retire at End of 2009](#)

[Aetna Names Lonny Reisman, M.D. as Chief Medical Officer](#)

Pharma News

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FDA deems osteoporosis drugs safe despite heart-event claims

An FDA review concluded that patients should not stop taking bisphosphonates because there is no clear link between the osteoporosis treatments and irregular heart rhythms. The agency examined studies involving seven approved brands in the drug class, including Merck & Co.'s Fosamax and Roche Holding's Boniva, as well as Novartis AG's Aredia and Reclast. The three companies said the FDA's finding is consistent with their data. [Bloomberg](#) (11/12)

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Other News

FDA review questions abuse-resistant design of Embeda

Reuters (11/12)

Is your data secure?

The vast majority of data leaks are accidental — a thumb drive left on a desk after work, or patient information uploaded to an unsecure computer or work station. Using a data loss prevention (DLP) application can help ensure that your data stays secure throughout its lifetime. To learn about data loss prevention technologies and individual DLP product strengths and weaknesses, [download this free Gartner Report](#).

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Policy Watch

Maryland universal health plan would cost \$15.5 billion

Health care experts in Maryland have proposed a universal health care plan for the state at an estimated cost of \$15.5 billion. The plan, developed with experts from Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland, would raise payroll taxes to provide coverage for low-income citizens. It also would create an insurance pool for small businesses and individuals seeking coverage. [The Sun \(Baltimore\)](#) (free registration) (11/12) [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)

Mass. regulators tighten rules for medical construction

Massachusetts' Public Health Council has adopted stronger oversight rules for medical building construction that require health organizations planning outpatient clinic projects over \$25 million to show they will not duplicate services or harm existing facilities. The rule also will extend to physician-owned surgery centers regardless of cost. [The Boston Globe](#) (11/13) [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)

AHIP News

AHIP releases recommendations on addressing obesity

AHIP's white paper, "[Facing the Challenge of Unhealthy Weight: Recommendations for the Health Care Community](#)," offers recommendations and examines promising programs that health plans and clinicians have developed in collaboration with community partners to encourage body mass index screening and address the obesity epidemic. The recommendations

are based on the work of an AHIP Expert Panel and AHIP-sponsored meetings. [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)

Medicare online training for brokers and agents

The [AHIP Center for Insurance Education and Professional Development](#)'s online training program, [Marketing Medicare Advantage and Part D Prescription Drug Plans: Understanding Medicare Basics, Plan Options, and Marketing and Enrollment Requirements](#), is designed to strengthen brokers, agents and health insurance plan marketing staff's ability to provide the information beneficiaries need to make the decisions that are best for them. [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)

CAQH CORE rules transforming healthcare administrative data exchange

Aetna, Aultcare, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina and Tennessee, Health Net, WellPoint and more than 25 other organizations are on the cutting edge of a movement that's improving health plan-provider connectivity and advancing interoperability. They're complying with CAQH's [CORE](#) rules to create nearly instant access to consistent patient information in provider offices. [Find out more.](#) [E-MAIL THIS STORY](#)

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SmartQuote

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--[Juli Inkster](#),
Hall of Fame golfer
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America's Health Insurance Plans
