President's Perspective – Vaccine Policy Must Stay with Health Experts
A lot of undesirable things float around the Kansas Capitol during the legislative session—the cold and flu virus, unfounded gossip and numerous bad ideas. One particularly bad idea found its way to a House of Representatives hearing room recently. House Bill 2601 would strip much of the power of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to mandate vaccines and instead put the legislature in charge of the mandatory vaccine process.

The controversy leading to the proposal started when the Kansas Department of Health and Environment added meningitis and hepatitis A to the list of required immunizations, sparking outcry from concerned parents who see connections between vaccines and a variety of health problems suffered by their children.

These recent hearings attracted more than 150 people, many complaining about unknown risks they associate with vaccines and what they consider unnecessary state requirements. Bolstered by their own research, they accused vaccine supporters of "fearmongering." That drew a sharp rebuke from Andy Marso, a meningitis survivor who also is a journalist. Marso contracted bacterial meningitis in 2004 as a senior at the University of Kansas. He spent a month in a medically induced coma and lost circulation to his extremities, losing parts of them. He said his medical bills that year totaled $1.5 million to treat a disease that can be prevented with a $150 shot. "This is about much more than money," Marso said. "It's about people's lives, limbs, vision, hearing and brain function. Meningitis can steal them all. KDHE's experts, free from any lobbying or re-election pressures, made a good decision for the sake of public health, and the vast majority of Kansans are fine with that decision."

According to Lisa Hubbert of the Kansas City Health Department, vaccination rates in Kansas have dropped below 90 percent, which is the threshold needed to maintain the concept of "herd immunity." Throw in the fact that of all the states in the U.S. over the past 30 years, Kansas has seen the greatest decline in its health rankings. It's hard to conclude that the proposed legislation would do anything but make the situation worse.

There are always plenty of misguided proposals in every legislation session. But frankly, it's hard for me to think of anything more misguided than to take a clear public health regulatory decision away from the experts at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and put it in the hands of the Kansas Legislature. In fact, the legislation in question would be removing exactly the kind of decision that an administrative agency is designed to make.

Let's hope the Kansas Legislature spends the rest of the session working to solve public health problems, instead of passing legislation that could help to create one.

--Tom Bell
KHA Membership Directory Updates Due Today – Feb. 28

The *Kansas Hospital Association Membership Directory* is an indispensable tool for our members. We strive to assist our members in communicating with peers. We need your help to ensure that information is current. KHA members were recently sent a draft of their current data as it appears in the KHA online and print directories. We ask that you edit this document, providing us with names, titles and email addresses of your executive staff. As a reminder, the online and print directories are only available to KHA members. If you haven't already done so, please return the requested information, noting any edits, additions or deletions you wish made, as soon as possible, to the attention of Jan Fenwick, (KHA, 215 SE 8th Ave., Topeka, KS, 66603; email jfenwick@kha.net.org; or fax: (785) 233-6955).

In addition, our publishing partner for the directory, E&M Consulting, is wrapping up their advertising campaign for the KHA Membership Directory. They will be contacting our members with advertising opportunities. They are very professional and produce a high quality directory. If you have an interest in advertising or have questions, please contact Brian, project leader, at E&M Consulting, Inc., at (800) 572-0011 or (785) 379-6575.

As always, your support of the Kansas Hospital Association is greatly appreciated!

--Jan Fenwick

Join AHA in Minneapolis on May 7 for the Value Initiative's Executive Forum

The American Hospital Association's member hospital leaders are invited to explore opportunities and challenges to improve value through innovation and collaboration with providers, payers, employers and community partners. This AHA-members-only, complimentary event is part of The Value Initiative's Executive Forum series that is exploring hospitals' role in addressing value and affordability in health care. The agenda features an exciting lineup of speakers to spark discussion around how hospitals are creating value through consumer-driven innovation and collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders to improve outcomes, enhance the patient experience and reduce cost. [View the full agenda and register.]

--Tom Bell

New Quality and Patient Safety Initiative with KHC – Enroll Now!

The Kansas Hospital Association is pleased to announce that our partner, the Kansas Healthcare Collaborative, has been awarded a new contract with the Health Quality Innovation Network. HQIN serves as the new CMS Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization for Kansas. This program is available to hospitals and other health care providers and stakeholders; is available at no cost to providers, and those who enroll will receive education and resources through KHC to support work to improve outcomes in behavioral health/opioids; reduced readmissions; transitions of care; and patient safety. We strongly encourage your hospital join with KHC in this important work at the local and state level. This is a new quality improvement initiative for KHC and is separate from the Hospital Improvement Innovation Network that concludes at the end of March.

Enrollment is open now. To learn more about the initiative and/or to join, please visit KHC's webpage at [www.KHConline.org/HQIN](http://www.KHConline.org/HQIN). Please contact KHC Program Director Rosanne Rutkowski at (785) 235-0763, if you have questions or would like more details.

--Karen Braman
Making the Most of the 2020 County Health Rankings Release – Webinar March 3
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings and Roadmaps is hosting a webinar at 2 p.m. on March 3, on Making the Most of the 2020 County Health Rankings Release. The webinar will explore what’s new in the 2020 County Health Rankings, including interactive features on the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps website. The webinar also will provide tips for using tools and resources on the site, and will provide guidance on how to use the County Health Rankings to inspire action in your community. Click here for more information and to register.
--Karen Braman

Maternal Mortality Review Alert – Wear Your Seatbelt
Nationwide, approximately 700 women die of pregnancy-related causes each year. In 2018, Kansas law K.S.A. 65-177 went into effect and allows the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to identify maternal death cases, review and evaluate related medical records and develop recommendations and strategies to prevent maternal deaths. That same year, KDHE joined more than 30 states and created a Maternal Mortality Review Committee to study de-identified maternal deaths in Kansas occurring during pregnancy or within one year from the end of pregnancy. The KDHE Maternal Mortality Review Committee continues to meet several times a year, and based on information from chart reviews has released its first Action Alert urging seat belt use during pregnancy and in the postpartum period.
--Deborah Stern

Enter Your Hospital Communications in the Emerald Awards
The Kansas Association of Health Care Communicators invites Kansas hospitals and health care providers to enter their communications for a chance to win awards and acclaim from peers. The Call for Entries is now available. Categories in the KAHCC Emerald Awards include: Internal and External Communications, Special Events, Digital Media Projects, Videos, Websites, Advertising, Writing, Media Relations/Crisis Communication, Small Budget-Big Results and Wildcard. We will also be awarding a Best of Show. Work entered can be created by an individual, team or be a vendor/agency supported project.

The Emerald Awards are completely electronic. An entry form and narrative should accompany all entries. Email entries to emeralds@kha-net.org. Entries must be sent by 5 p.m. on Friday, March 6, 2020.

Awardees will be recognized at the KAHCC Spring Conference, April 23-24, in Lawrence. Registration information for the Spring Conference will be available soon.

KAHCC is looking forward to a fantastic awards event and encourages your participation. For more information, visit www.kahcc.org or contact Cindy Samuelson or Jan Fenwick at (785) 233-7436.
--Cindy Samuelson

CEO Staffing Changes
The Kansas Hospital Association would like to inform you of the latest member hospital administrator changes since our last hospital list printout in January:
• Mark Rooker, chief executive officer, Hillsboro Community Hospital, Hillsboro;
• Robert Whitaker, president and chief executive officer, Southwest Medical Center, Liberal;
• Jeanne Goche, acting chief executive officer, Lincoln County Hospital, Lincoln;
• Dallas Purkeypile, chief executive officer, AdventHealth Ottawa, Ottawa;
• David Caudill, chief executive officer, Gove County Medical Center, Quinter;
• Rayna Bittel and Joni Pfaff, co-chief executive officers, Grisell Memorial Hospital District #1, Ransom;
• Leslie Lacy, interim chief executive officer, Cheyenne County Hospital, Saint Francis;
• Michael Knecht, president, AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, Shawnee Mission; and
• Elmore Patterson, chief executive officer, Hamilton County Hospital, Syracuse.

Our Kansas Hospitals and Health-Related Facilities list is available on the KHA website in PDF (Adobe Acrobat Reader format) at www.kha-net.org. A username and password is required. Click on Kansas Hospitals, CEO Directories, Kansas Hospital List and Kansas Hospitals and Health-Related Facilities List. Please contact Cheryl Carson at (785) 233-7436 if you have updates and provide the start date of the new administrator/chief executive officer, picture, birthday and press release/bio.

--Cheryl Carson

Health Observances and Recognition Days for March

Month-Long Observances:

• Child Life Month
• Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month
• MS Education and Awareness Month (National)
• Nutrition Month® (National)
• Save Your Vision Month

Week-Long Observances:

• March 1-7 – Dental Assistants Recognition Week
• March 8-14 – Pulmonary Rehabilitation Week (National)
• March 13-19 – Patient Safety Awareness Week
• March 16-20 – Health Care HR Week

Recognition Days | Events:

• March 3 – Birth Defects Day (World)
• March 11 – Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Day
• March 24 – Tuberculosis Day (World)
• March 26 – Diabetes Association Alert Day
• March 30 – Doctor’s Day (National)
The Kansas Hospital Association is pleased to present our members with the 2020 Health Observances Calendar. This publication is intended to provide our members with accurate and authoritative information about health care related events. The calendar is published and copyrighted in cooperation with the Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development of the American Hospital Association. All rights are reserved. Special thanks to the Kansas Health Service Corporation for their sponsorship of the Health Observances Calendar. In an effort to go green and reduce paper waste, the calendar is only available on the KHA website; login is required. If you have questions, please contact Jan Fenwick at (785) 233-7436.
--Jan Fenwick

**Patient Safety Awareness Week: Achieving Safe and Reliable Health Care**
In recognition of Patient Safety Awareness Week (March 13-19), the Health Resources and Services Administration is hosting a webcast with Dr. Allan Frankel, an internationally recognized expert in patient safety. He will discuss the socio-technical framework for promoting a culture of safety, effective leadership, and continuous learning. He will provide practical strategies for improving safety, focusing on teamwork, psychological safety, and accountability.

Tuesday, March 10
Noon - 1:30 p.m.
[Join the webcast the day of the session](#)
Call-in: (888) 795-3252
Passcode: 3284388
--Karen Braman

**Federal Focus**
**CDC Interim Estimates of 2019–20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness**
According to updated data from the U.S. Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness Network published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Feb. 21, the overall estimated effectiveness of seasonal influenza vaccine for preventing medically attended, laboratory-confirmed influenza virus infection is 45 percent. The CDC published that during the 2019–20 influenza season, influenza-like illness (ILI) activity first exceeded the national baseline during the week ending Nov. 9, 2019, signaling the earliest start to the influenza season since the 2009 influenza A(H1N1) pandemic. Activity remains elevated as of mid-February 2020. Annual influenza vaccination is the best strategy for preventing seasonal influenza and influenza-associated complications. According to the CDC, the current season’s influenza vaccine reduces the risk of medical visits associated with influenza, including visits associated with circulating influenza B viruses. Persons aged ≥6 months who have not yet received influenza vaccine during the current season should get vaccinated to protect against influenza. For more information, [click here](#).
HHS Releases Strategy on Reducing EHR Burden
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released on Feb. 21 a comprehensive strategy to reduce the regulatory and administrative burden related to the use of health information technology, including electronic health records. The *Strategy on Reducing Regulatory and Administrative Burdens Relating to the Use of Health IT and EHRs*, which HHS stated is reflective of public comment, targets burdens tied to regulatory and administrative requirements that HHS can directly impact through the rulemaking process. According to HHS, the report's strategies, recommendations, and policy shifts aim to give clinicians more time to focus on caring for their patients. The report is a collaborative effort between the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

VA Resources to Help Communities Prevent Suicide among Veterans
The Department of Veterans Affairs offers a host of materials to help community partners, including health care organizations, prevent suicide among veterans. The resources include a Coaching into Care website and national telephone service; community provider toolkit; safe messaging practices; and family suicide prevention guides, among others. To access these and other suicide prevention tools and information, visit [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/resources.asp](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/resources.asp).

HRSA Announces Rural Healthcare Provider Transition Project
The Health Resources and Services Administration announced one award of $800,000 to assist small rural hospitals and rural health clinics in strengthening their foundation in key elements of value-based care, including, but not limited to quality, efficiency, patient experience and safety of care. Eligible applicants include domestic public or private, nonprofit entities. Domestic faith-based and community-based organizations, tribes, and tribal organizations also are eligible to apply.

CMS Announces Hospital VBP Program Education Session
Fiscal year 2022 baseline measures reports for the Hospital Value-Based Purchasing Program now are offered on [QualityNet](https://www.qualitynet.org). Additional information is available.

A webinar for hospitals participating in the Hospital VBP Program is scheduled at 1 p.m. Tuesday, March 3. [Registration](https://www.qualitynet.org) is required for the presentation, which will provide an overview of the FY 2022 Hospital VBP Program, including updates on the domains and measures, review of performance standards and measurement periods, and program resources.

TJC Offers Complimentary Total Hip/Knee Replacement Certification Webinar
The Joint Commission announced a complimentary webinar regarding steps to achieve advanced total hip and knee replacement certification. The webinar is offered at noon Tuesday, March 3. [Registration](https://www.qualitynet.org) is required.

CMS Issues CJR Three-Year Extension
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services announced a proposed rule that would extend the Comprehensive Care for Joint Replacement model for three years ending Dec. 31, 2023. CMS also proposes to change the definition of a CJR episode of care to include both inpatient and outpatient services and revises the target price calculation.
**MLN Connects Provider eNews Available**

Updates to *MLN Connects Provider eNews* were issued by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. *eNews* includes information about national provider calls, meetings, events, announcements and other MLN educational product updates. The latest issue provides updates and summaries of the following:

- Bill correctly for Medicare telehealth services
- CMS develops new code for coronavirus lab test
- CMS program statistics: 2018 data