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**CAPITAL LIVING**



## Morning Health

By Julian Pecquet - 09/03/10 06:15 AM ET

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**Worker health issues back on the radar:** Advocates are pushing for shorter shifts for medical residents and mandatory flu shots for healthcare workers. Meanwhile, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce rings the alarm bell over mine safety legislation pending in Congress.

**Sleep deprivation linked to medical errors:** The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued a statement late Thursday linking medical residents' long hours to a range of safety issues.

"We are very concerned about medical residents working extremely long hours, and we know of evidence linking sleep deprivation with an increased risk of needle sticks, puncture wounds, lacerations, medical errors and motor vehicle accidents," said David Michaels, the Labor Department's OSHA assistant secretary. <http://bit.ly/cNSSF>

The statement comes in response to a petition by Public Citizen, SEIU and others requesting that OSHA assume jurisdiction over the work hours of physician residents — and to put strict limits on what those hours can be. <http://bit.ly/9OCmVi>

"For OSHA not to regulate resident physician work hours is to abdicate its responsibility to protect the health of those who care for the nation's sick and dying," reads the petition.

The petitioners say the rules established by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, which currently monitors the residents' work hours, don't go far enough to ensure the safety of residents and the patients they see. **Read the story:** <http://bit.ly/9bfCPc>

**Mandatory flu shots recommended:** Flu vaccines for healthcare professionals are an ethical responsibility that should be mandatory, infectious disease experts say.

In a paper published this week, the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) recommends that all healthcare workers — even students, volunteers, contractors and those without direct patient contact — receive annual flu shots as a condition of their employment. Only workers known to react adversely to the vaccine should be excepted, SHEA argues in the journal *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology*: <http://bit.ly/dlm7Hq>

"Healthcare providers are ethically obligated to take measures proven to keep patients from acquiring influenza in healthcare settings," SHEA President Neil Fishman said in a statement. <http://bit.ly/ckRIEF>

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Gulf Coast workers will lose more than \$400 million in wages due to the moratorium.

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**Chamber warns members of pending mine safety regulations:** The U.S. Chamber of Commerce in its annual Labor Day assessment of the country's business climate says the mine safety bill is among those "most likely to be acted on this year," along with the Payment Fairness Act. "Card-check" might be dead, the Chamber warns, but mine safety legislation remains pending among "organized labor's top priorities in this Congress." <http://bit.ly/ad8MjP>

The proposal by House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-Calif.) passed the panel in July. The bill focuses largely on protecting the nation's miners underground, but also includes language that would greatly expand the powers of OSHA to police other job sites as well.

The Chamber says the "troubling" reforms represent "the most sweeping changes to [OSHA's powers] since its inception in 1970" — changes that will hobble businesses trying to emerge from the recession. **Read the story:** <http://bit.ly/ceWRyY>

**Employers pass healthcare costs onto workers:** Health insurance costs for the nation's workers skyrocketed this year, even as the quality of many plans deteriorated, according to a new Kaiser Family Foundation report. The average worker is now paying roughly \$4,000 toward employer-sponsored family healthcare coverage — a jump of \$482 (14 percent) above last year's figure, according to the report. By contrast, overall premium costs rose just 3 percent above 2009 levels, researchers found, and employer contributions toward family coverage did not rise at all: <http://bit.ly/90ytl5>

**Read the story:** <http://bit.ly/aUdhDH>

**Efforts to enroll children in health programs praised:** Secretaries Kathleen Sebelius (HHS) and Arne Duncan (Education) are scheduled to announce a national coalition to enroll uninsured children in healthcare.

The announcement will highlight the "unprecedented coalition of partners who have 'stepped up' to the challenge to enroll kids and educate families" since Sebelius in February launched her challenge to enroll five million children in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) within five years.

**View the list of those being recognized for their early efforts:** <http://bit.ly/d0HHH6>

During the announcement, the Urban Institute's Genevieve Kenney will present a new report on states' success enrolling target populations in Medicaid and CHIP. The report will be released in *Health Affairs* online Friday along with commentary by Sebelius.

**Cincinnati, Detroit selected for health information technology award:** The two struggling cities will get a total of \$30 million as the final pilot communities selected under the new Beacon Community Program that is using health information technology to help tackle leading health problems in communities across the country, according to HHS.

The Beacon Community awards are part of a \$100 billion federal investment in science, innovation and technology made through last year's recovery act. Fifteen other awardees were announced in May.

The Greater Cincinnati HealthBridge, Inc. will get \$13.8 million over three years and the Southeastern Michigan Health Association will get \$16.2 million over the same period. **Read the release:** <http://bit.ly/cyPFIN>

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**Brent Budowsky**



Revolution in the air

**David Keene**



The benefits of friendly

**Cheri Jacobus**



Missouri sets tone

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**Pros and cons of healthcare reform debated:** The California-based nonprofit ProCon.org has added healthcare reform to its list of websites that weigh the pros and cons of major issues (thanks for the tip, Tim!). <http://bit.ly/9sFhyZ>

The website — [healthcarereform.procon.org](http://healthcarereform.procon.org) — divides the question of whether the new law is good for America into 17 categories. These include its effect on the deficit, its constitutionality — and whether healthcare reform is socialism.

The group's mission statement: "Promoting critical thinking, education, and informed citizenship by presenting controversial issues in a straightforward, nonpartisan, primarily pro-con format."

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