



Welcome to *Washington Update*, the weekly e-newsletter on the latest health care happenings in the nation's capital that affect APG's members.

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Ongoing Disruption Across Government Now Extends To Harnessing Multiple Forms Of Health Data, Raising Privacy And Other Fears

Security, privacy, and other concerns surrounding various forms of health information mounted this week amid newly announced efforts to build large data hubs across government. According to [news reports](#) and at least one [lawsuit](#), the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is building a single, centralized hub of federal databases that has already given the DOGE workers building it access to the Social Security numbers and medical diagnoses of Medicare and Medicaid enrollees. And as Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.,

continues his quest to pinpoint environmental toxins as a cause of autism ([Washington Update - April 18, 2025](#)), the department announced it would build a new [data platform](#) to allow researchers to study the question by evaluating claims data, electronic health records (EHRs), and consumer wearables data of Medicare and Medicaid enrollees.

Although the massive DOGE-led database is pitched as an effort to root out waste, fraud, and abuse within government, data security experts' warnings of the potential for hacking and [data exploitation](#) have helped lead to at least one federal district court [injunction](#) against DOGE's access to Social Security data, which can include Medicare beneficiaries' information. And while Medicare and Medicaid claims data have been available to researchers for decades – including for persons diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) – the inclusion of EHRs and data from consumer wearables is a new element. A National Institutes of Health (NIH) [news release](#) describing the platform said information would be collected “in a manner consistent with applicable privacy laws,” but it is unclear whether submission of wearables and EHR data would be voluntary on the part of individuals.

Questionable value: Autism experts have also [said](#) that while an ASD-specific database could have some uses – notably, in identifying care disparities among those enrolled in some forms of public health coverage – it is unlikely to shed much if any light on autism's causes, in part because it will contain none of the genetic or genomic data known to be linked to autism. And some autism advocates have [blasted the effort](#) as an attempt to “weaponize” autism research for political reasons and redirect it away from more fruitful lines of scientific inquiry.



Trump Administration Reportedly Readying Major Actions On Prescription Drug Pricing And Pharmaceutical Tariffs

Amid ongoing [threats](#) to impose major tariffs on pharmaceutical imports, President Donald J. Trump is expected to release an executive order next week calling for a [new version](#) of a drug pricing initiative attempted in his first term. Although the precise contours of the new plan are as yet unknown, the [former one](#) would have tied prices for [drugs provided under Part B](#) of Medicare to the lower prices paid abroad for the same drugs. In addition to lowering U.S. prices paid for these drugs, the plan would also lower the fees that physicians and others administering the drugs receive through Medicare's [buy-and-bill](#) payment arrangements. This so-called reference pricing or “most favored nation” scheme was ultimately blocked in court in 2020 amid widespread industry opposition. Earlier reports this year suggested a

new White House plan would be announced for [drugs purchased under Medicaid](#) only, rather than for Medicare.

The administration has released no details to date on its looming pharmaceutical tariffs plan, which could affect the [roughly \\$170 billion in drugs imported](#) annually, the bulk of which come from the European Union. Complementing the likely tariff push, President Trump signed an [executive order](#) this week directing government agencies to fast-track approval of new pharmaceutical production plants in the United States. Several large pharma companies, including [Novartis](#) and [Eli Lilly](#), have already announced plans to expand U.S. production capacity, but that's unlikely to come soon enough to blunt any immediate tariff impact. And a recent Brookings Institution [analysis](#) suggested that although tariffs could provide "a strong incentive for increasing U.S. manufacturing of brand-name drugs," the manufacturing of the 90 percent of the drug market that consists of older, off-patent generic drugs is unlikely to return to the U.S.



Options For Medicaid Cuts Appear To Be Narrowing As House Republicans Confront Divisions In Their Ranks

House Republicans continued their search this week for Medicaid cuts that could gain consensus across a fractured caucus as they struggle to find federal spending cuts for a broad [reconciliation](#) package. Even as conservatives continue to demand large Medicaid cuts to offset the costs of the package, moderates have joined Democrats in protesting potential coverage losses that a new Congressional Budget Office [analysis](#) report suggests could drive up the number of uninsured by several million or more.

As options have fallen by the wayside, House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) [declared](#) that reducing the enhanced [federal matching rate](#) to states that expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act is now a non-starter, along with a broader proposal for [per-capita caps](#) on federal Medicaid spending. An *Inside Health Policy* report on May 8 said that lawmakers are now focusing on four approaches that could gain broad Republican support: work requirements on Medicaid enrollees; more frequent eligibility checks; not funding Medicaid coverage for undocumented residents and ensuring that people are not enrolled in Medicaid in multiple states. Barring Medicaid for the undocumented would take aim directly at California, where Medi-Cal covers individuals who otherwise meet Medicaid eligibility standards regardless of their [immigration status](#). There have been longstanding political disagreements over whether the state effectively uses some of

its federal matching dollars to help fund Medi-Cal coverage for the undocumented.

APG Advocacy: The House Energy and Commerce Committee is set to mark up its legislative text on Tuesday, May 13 – a deadline that has already been delayed once and could be again if intra-party consensus remains elusive. APG will hold a meeting of its Medicaid and Dual Eligibles advocacy coalition at its spring conference on May 14 to brief conference attendees on actions to date and discuss further steps.



In Case You Missed It

- Outcomes for Medicare Advantage (MA) patients cared for by many APG groups operating in full risk arrangements with MA health plans were vastly superior to those achieved for traditional Medicare patients cared for by the same groups, according to a new [study](#) released today in the *American Journal of Managed Care*. An infographic is available [here](#).
- Twenty Democratic state attorneys general [sued](#) HHS challenging sweeping plans to reorganize the department and the firing of more than 10,000 employees on constitutional grounds.
- HHS Secretary Kennedy is set to [testify](#) about the Trump administration's proposed budget request for HHS on Wednesday, May 14 at 1pm ET. The budget request, released last week, would cut \$33 billion from HHS's fiscal 2025 spending, or about 26 percent.
- Controversial appointments and nominations continue at HHS agencies, as follows:
 - Casey Means, MD, a health and wellness influencer who has not practiced medicine since dropping out of a residency program, has been [nominated](#) for U.S. Surgeon General. Means, a close associate of Sec. Kennedy, replaces [Janette Neisheiwat, MD](#), whose nomination was withdrawn.
 - [Vinay Prasad, MD](#), a hematologist oncologist from the University of California-San Francisco, has been named to lead the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research overseeing vaccines and biologic drugs. He has been an outspoken critic of FDA's accelerated drug approvals and other practices during the COVID pandemic.
 - Steven Hatfill, a virologist who served during President Trump's first term and promoted hydroxychloroquine as a COVID treatment, has returned to HHS in a [senior advisor](#)

[role](#) at the Administration of Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR).



APG Announcements And Offerings

- APG will host two *APG member-only* focus groups in the coming weeks on:
 - **The Request for Information (RFI) on Anti-Competitive Regulations on Wednesday, May 20, 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm ET.** To register please email Jenifer Callahan at jcallahan@apg.org.
 - **And the Request for Information (RFI) on Deregulation of the Medicare Program on Tuesday, June 3 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm ET.** To register please email Jenifer Callahan at jcallahan@apg.org.
- **Up to 10 APG members focused on dementia care with at least 30 percent of Medicare patients enrolled in Medicare Advantage,** are eligible for technical assistance support through the National Dementia Care Collaborative (NDCC) thanks to support from The John A. Hartford Foundation. To connect with the NDCC team and apply for this opportunity, visit the NDCC website [here](#).
- Registration is still open for the [APG Spring Conference 2025](#)— **Kickstarting Accountable Care: Innovations for an Urgent Future, May 14-16, in San Diego, CA.** Groups of 5 or more that register together receive an additional \$50 savings per registrant. **New this year: bundle your savings!** All APG Spring Conference 2025 registrants will have an opportunity to register for the APG Fall Conference 2025 at the lowest price of the year, with discounts up to \$400. Simply follow the link on your Spring Conference confirmation e-mail to register for Fall now!
- There is still time to become a sponsor of the **APG Spring Conference 2025**, May 14-16, in San Diego. Visit our [Spring Conference 2025 sponsor website](#) and reserve your space today!
- Want to get more involved in APG's Federal advocacy efforts? [Join APG Advocates today](#).

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