

CRAIN'S Health Pulse

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Local leaders invoke opioid crisis to urge Congress to reject health bill

Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio often work at cross-purposes, but they serendipitously operated in tandem this week in their efforts to highlight how the Senate's Better Care Reconciliation Act would worsen the opioid epidemic.

Their comments were part of larger efforts by their administrations to influence the New York congressional delegation to reject the health bill.

De Blasio made his appeal during a joint call with mayors from around the country Wednesday. Mayors from both sides of the aisle expressed a sense of unity on the issue following the annual Conference of Mayors in Miami over the weekend and said they hoped to help drive bipartisan rejection of the Senate bill.

"We are struggling, all of us as mayors, to address this crisis, but imagine if we had a hand tied behind our backs because it was harder to connect people to care," de Blasio said on the call. "Right now Medicaid is a lifeline for many people, and if that's taken away, we're going to lose more people to opioids."

About two-thirds of the 38,000 New York City residents currently using methadone or buprenorphine to stave off opioid cravings are insured through Medicaid, according to a spokeswoman for the city.

If enacted, the Senate bill would result in more than \$7 billion in cuts in federal aid to the state over the first four years, which would be particularly detrimental to Medicaid enrollees, according to the state Department of Health.

Jason Helgeson, state Medicaid director, touched on the opioid crisis during his speech against the Senate bill at Hostos Community College in the Bronx Tuesday evening. The event was one of several panels Cuomo convened around the state this week to discuss the potential impact of health care proposals in Washington, D.C., on New York.

The \$2 billion the Senate included in the bill to address the opioid epidemic nationwide is "like a drop in the ocean," Helgeson said. "It would have very little impact and would not make up for the fact that millions of people, many of whom are challenged by opioid addiction, would all of a sudden lose their health care access because of the act."

Cuomo, who last year approved insurance mandates related to addiction treatment along with \$189 million to expand its availability, addressed the issue in his own statement Monday. "In New York alone, cuts to Medicaid would mean two-thirds of the budget that goes to fund substance-use-disorder treatment could be at risk," he said.

The Cuomo administration has sought to influence New York Republicans in the House, who will have to reconcile differences between the Senate and the House bills if the Better Care Reconciliation Act passes the Senate.

Meanwhile, de Blasio said Wednesday he has been in frequent contact with New York senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, Democrats who already share his views on the legislation.

"What's been more important is that mayors in states represented by Republicans on this call have gotten

people to reach out to their senators," de Blasio said. "We've been all working together to maximize our voices."

EDC awards grants to digital health startups

Seven local health tech startups got a boost to their business Wednesday as winners in the city's fourth Digital Health Marketplace Funding Program.

The twice-yearly competition, sponsored by the New York City Economic Development Corp. and Health 2.0, matches health tech startups that are ready to test-drive their products with local health care customers, including hospitals and clinics. Four of the startups are working on pilots with Northwell Health or Mount Sinai Health System.

Each company will receive a grant ranging from \$25,000 to \$75,000.

Valet, a patient-engagement platform, is teaming up with Mount Sinai to educate patients hospitalized with spinal cord injuries about their care plans. The health system is also working with mobile platform Wellth to engage patients with acute myocardial infarction and heart failure to adhere to their medications as a way to reduce readmissions and costs.

Lenox Hill Hospital is partnering with CareGeneral, which offers care coordination in up to five languages, to focus on diabetes management within the Hispanic population, and with PurpleSun, whose patented device disinfects hospital and health care equipment with UV light in 90 seconds.

Canopy Innovations, a mobile and web-based interpreter delivery and analytics program, will launch a pilot with Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn to ensure that patients with limited English skills get "on the fly" translation services.

Vital Score is paired with medical group AdvantageCare Physicians, a partner of EmblemHealth, to develop a model for improving patient care and increasing immunization rates and adherence to medication through its mobile app.

Klara, a cloud-based secure messaging tool, is partnering with Betances Health Center to improve communications with their patients via text messaging.

ColumbiaDoctors lands workplace health deal

ColumbiaDoctors has agreed to a deal with commercial landlord Tishman Speyer to provide clinical services at 30 Rockefeller Plaza as part of a new workplace wellness amenity the property manager is rolling out for tenants.

The faculty practice's Primary Care Nurse Practitioner Group will provide same-day appointments during the workweek, offering preventive services such as vaccinations and treatment for illnesses and minor injuries.

The agreement follows the broader trend of medical services moving closer to where people live and work through urgent-care chains like CityMD and on-site workplace clinics run by the city's major medical centers. This is Columbia's first onsite clinic.

"It's a convenience factor," said Stephen Ferrara, associate dean of clinical affairs at Columbia's School of Nursing. "If we go to where people are, it cuts down the time away from work."

Starting July 1, ColumbiaDoctors will be available to the more than 30,000 people who work at Rockefeller Center as part of a program Tishman Speyer calls Zo, which also includes yoga, meditation, massages, and grooming and beauty services.

Chinese New Yorkers more likely to die from cancer

Cancer was the leading cause of death for Chinese New Yorkers in 2014 and was responsible for one-third of deaths in that population, a new city Health Department analysis shows. That compares with one-quarter of all city deaths that were related to cancer that year.

The rate of Chinese New Yorkers who died from heart disease, the leading cause of death in the country and the city, was less than half of that of all city residents. The city's Chinese population also showed a disproportionately low rate of death from diabetes. City data show Asian New Yorkers are the least likely to be overweight or obese among major ethnic groups.

In 2014 Chinese New Yorkers had the second-oldest average age of death, 75.4 years, behind white New Yorkers. And Chinese New Yorkers were more likely to die of head and neck, liver and stomach cancers than other city residents.

The city released the data as it prepares to participate later this summer in community health events—at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn and Charles B. Wang Community Health Centers in Manhattan and Queens—to encourage Chinese New Yorkers to quit smoking.

"The smoking rate for Asian-American men in New York City was 25.4% in 2015, the highest rate for all major race and ethnic groups in New York City," according to Dr. Warren Chin, executive director of the Chinese American Medical Society.

AT A GLANCE

WHO'S NEWS: Dr. John Kim is now medical director at EMU Surgical Center in Glendale, Queens. Kim is a practicing ophthalmologist with offices in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. Earlier in his career, he served as a director of residency at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where he led the training of eye surgeons.

ACA REPEAL: [An Urban Institute report](#) on the state-by-state implications of the Better Care Reconciliation Act estimates that it would result in 1.3 million more non-elderly people being uninsured in New York by 2022.

HYPERBARIC THERAPY: Lured by attractive Medicare reimbursements, a growing number of hospitals have installed hyperbaric oxygen chambers to treat certain diabetic wounds despite concerns that the therapy may not be effective, [reported Kaiser Health News](#). The American Diabetes Association does not recommend the treatment, Kaiser noted.