

TODAY IN WASHINGTON - MARCH 19, 2020: COVID-19 UPDATES

THURSDAY, MARCH 19 RECAP

Note - We believe this is the most up-to-date information available at this time, but it is subject to change as circumstances warrant. Also, all finalized resources can be found on the [COVID-19 Resource Center page of Hall Render's website](#).

CONGRESSIONAL OUTLOOK

- Senate Republicans released the attached proposal for the third COVID-19 economic stimulus package (i.e., emergency spending bill).
- The measure includes many health care-related provisions. Two that may have the most direct economic impact for hospitals are: 1) a temporary exemption of the 2% Medicare sequester cut from May 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020, which would amount to over \$15 billion in savings for hospitals; and 2) a 15% IPPS add-on payment for treating COVID-19 patients during the emergency period.
- Other provisions include allowing for increased telehealth services for Medicare patients at certain health centers and rural clinics during the emergency, waiving a requirement for face-to-face visits between dialysis patients and doctors and language clarifying that private insurers must cover coronavirus testing without cost-sharing to beneficiaries. A high-level summary of the bill is in the works.
- Despite heavy lobbying by the insurance industry, surprise medical billing language was not included in this proposal.
- It is important to note that this proposal is the product of Senate Republicans. In order to get the 60 votes needed to pass the bill in the Senate, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) must now negotiate with Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY). Thus, it is almost certain that additional changes to the bill will be made before the Senate votes on the package. Furthermore, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has indicated that House Democrats plan to pass their own third emergency spending bill. If that happens, the House and Senate will have to negotiate the differences between the two bills, which would delay delivery of the measure to President Trump for his signature.

ADULT ELECTIVE SURGERY AND PROCEDURES RECOMMENDATIONS

- CMS released [guidelines](#) to limit all non-essential planned surgeries and procedures, including dental procedures.

NEWLY RELEASED RESOURCES

- On 3/19/2020, CMS released [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on Catastrophic Plan Coverage and COVID-19.
- The CDC released [strategies](#) for how to optimize PPE supply.

FDA UPDATE

- On 3/19/2020, FDA put out an [advisory](#) on patients using non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for COVID-19.
- On 3/19/2020, FDA provided an [update](#) on blood donations.
- On 3/19/2020, FDA provided an [update](#) on facilitating development of COVID-19 treatments. In today's press conference, Trump and Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn cited the malaria drug Chloroquine, along with Remdesivir, an experimental antiviral from Gilead Sciences, and possibly using plasma from survivors of COVID-19 as potential treatments.

STATE ACTION

- On 3/19, Indiana's Family and Social Services Administration ("FSSA") announced Indiana Medicaid will temporarily cover telephone and telemedicine interactions between Medicaid beneficiaries and health care providers. Stay tuned for a Hall Render alert on this topic.
- Kaiser Family Foundation [released a tool](#) tracking the latest COVID-19 state policy action.

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To access Hall Render's COVID-19 resource page and hotline, click [here](#).