



December 3, 2007

**Health center reauthorization takes center stage in House Committee as public health officials tout health centers as one key to nation's health care future.** The [House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health](#) plans to hold a hearing tomorrow afternoon on legislation (HR1343) to reauthorize the Health Centers program. The measure would allow for significantly increased funding for health centers over the next five years. Among the witnesses scheduled to testify are the following: Steven Miracle, Chief Executive Officer, [Georgia Mountains Health Services](#), Morganton, Georgia; Wilbert Jones, Chief Executive Officer, [Greater Meridian Health Clinic](#), Meridian, Mississippi; and Ricardo Guzman, Chief Executive Officer, [Community Health and Social Services Center](#), Detroit, Michigan. Lawmakers also are expected to discuss the ability of health centers to take on additional providers during public health emergencies. The panel plans to also consider legislation to reauthorize the National Health Service Corps and establish school-based health clinics.

**Meanwhile, despite significant medical advances and breakthroughs,** public health officials are hoping the future of health care will be focused on preventing the nation's most expensive and deadly diseases from ever happening in the first place. One place to start, they say, is with community health centers. "At the community level, local health centers can reduce the prevalence of chronic disease by closing the loop between preventive testing and follow-up . . .," said Janet Collins, director of the national center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the [Centers for Disease Control](#).

**Talks continue as Senate Panel prepares for possible debate on Medicare changes.** As one local Capitol Hill paper describes it, discussions about a Medicare package are "pushing full steam ahead." And steam, is just what lawmakers need, as the Congressional calendar begins to wind down. The package is expected to include measures that would reverse for two years a scheduled 10% cut in reimbursements for physicians and would extend rural and low-income subsidies for beneficiaries. Scheduled for inclusion also are potential reductions in Medicare Advantage program. NACHC continues to work closely with the Committee in an effort to secure the inclusion of the [MATCH Act \(S. 2188\)](#) in any Medicare package. The MATCH Act was introduced by Senators [Jeff Bingaman \(D-NM\)](#) and [Olympia Snowe \(R-ME\)](#) and would restructure Medicare reimbursements to health centers to ensure adequate payment for Medicare services. To learn more and get involved in the effort to help pass the MATCH Act, click [here](#).

**NACHC is creating a new Center for Quality to represent health centers as drivers in the healthcare marketplace.** Spearheading the effort is NACHC's new Associate Medical Director Dr. David Stevens, a clinician and medical expert on policy initiatives to foster quality improvement in areas such as chronic disease management, clinical measures, data collection and pediatric immunizations. You can read more [here](#).

**Health centers are doing a good job of caring for diabetic patients.** That's the findings of a new study of Collaborative Data from the University of Chicago research team in this month's

issue of *Medical Care*. The study looked at a number of issues, including whether staff learning sessions, training on patient-provider communication and behavioral health, and patient empowerment resources can improve care (evidently they do). Read more [here](#).

**Forget The Young and the Restless, now it's the young and uninsured being featured on Facebook.** What's Facebook? It's the hottest thing in cyberspace - a social networking site that growing numbers of young people working without insurance are using as a bully pulpit to advocate for expanded health coverage. Check out the story [here](#).

**And speaking of uninsured, a new study challenges conventional thinking about the burden of undocumented immigrants on the U.S. health care system.** Researchers from the University of California's School of Public Health say even though Hispanic immigrants usually don't have a regular doctor or other health-care provider, they don't visit emergency rooms with any more frequency than Latinos born in the U.S. The researchers said undocumented Mexican immigrants had 1.6 fewer visits to doctors over the course of a year than people born in the U.S. to Mexican immigrants. Other undocumented Latinos had 2.1 fewer physician visits than their U.S.-born counterparts. "Low rates of use of health-care services by Mexican immigrants and similar trends among other Latinos do not support public concern about immigrants' overuse of the health care system," the researchers wrote.

**In the spotlight:** Utah Community Health Centers were highlighted in a recent PBS documentary that aired on affiliate KUED. The documentary looked at the barriers to health care, particularly among the uninsured. In Utah, an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 people are uninsured. That's roughly twice the population of Salt Lake City. You can read more [here](#). Meanwhile, in Bridgeport, CT, [Southwest Community Health Center](#) marked National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day to remember the city's homeless citizens who died in 2007. And kudos to Margaret J. Weston Community Health Centers in South Carolina for publishing an [article](#) about diabetes care in its local newspaper, the Aiken Standard, during November's **American Diabetes Month**. We proudly note that the health center used the NACHC Communications press templates that you can find online [here](#).

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The nation is bracing for a critical shortage of health-care workers. The National Association of Community Health Centers expects the country will need 14,000 physicians by 2020; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services placed the number closer to 25,000."

-- [Article](#) in the *Public Opinion News* (Chambersburg, PA) about primary care work force shortages and the joint initiative by NACHC and AT Still University to recruit more doctors and dentists.