

By Nick Niedzwiadek | 08/14/2017 05:52 AM EDT

TODAY IN HEALTH — The Medicaid Redesign Team will hold its upstate public comment day on the 1115 waiver at the SUNY Albany School of Public Health from 1 to 4 p.m.

PROGRAMMING NOTE — Dan's off until Aug. 21, so kindly save him the cascade of emails and instead please send all news and announcements to me at nniedzwiadek@politico.com.

WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY IT MATTERS: There's so much health policy news in New York and around the nation that it can often be difficult to keep track. So, we're going to tell you some of last week's most important news and why we think it matters.

— **NEW MEDICAL MARIJUANA RULES** — The Department of Health announced it will propose new regulations allowing medical marijuana providers to offer topical lotions and chewable products. Text of the changes will be published in the state register on Aug. 23 and will have a 30-day public comment period ... **Why it matters:** The state recently approved licenses for five more companies to grow and distribute medical marijuana, and DOH has been taking steps to make the fledgling market more appealing to companies and eligible patients. Read more [here](#).

— **STATE OF EMERGENCY** — President Donald Trump said he's working on the paperwork to declare the opioid crisis a "national emergency" just days after Health and Human Services secretary Tom Price effectively dismissed the notion. ... **Why it matters:** A state of emergency opens up a host of options that the government can deploy to combat the issue. And it was one of the key recommendations of the Trump-empaneled commission led by New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. More from our D.C. colleagues [here](#).

— **CITY COUNCIL PASSES TOBACCO PACKAGE** — The City Council passed a seven-bill package targeting smoking and tobacco use. The flagship proposal increases the minimum price for a pack of cigarettes in New York City to \$13 from \$10.50. The package also included [a prohibition on](#) the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies and retail stores that contain pharmacies, requiring a license to sell electronic cigarettes, and prohibiting smoking and use of e-cigarettes in the common areas of residential buildings with fewer than 10 units. ... **Why it matters:** City health officials hope raising the price of tobacco products will make them less appealing to lower-income residents, who are more likely to smoke despite an overall decline in tobacco use. More from me [here](#).

— **NALOXONE CO-PAYS** — The state will help defray the cost of purchasing naloxone at pharmacies by contributing up to \$40 toward the co-pay. People with health insurance that covers prescription drugs are now eligible for state aid to buy naloxone. ... **Why it matters:** Access to the drug is key to reducing the number of fatal overdoses, and has been a priority from public health and addiction advocates. Details [here](#).

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AND MAKE SURE YOU FOLLOW Dan [@DanCGoldberg](#) and Nick [@NickNiedz](#) on Twitter. And for all New Jersey health news, check out [@katedjennings](#).

NOW WE KNOW — The Food and Drug Administration is investigating the deaths of five people who underwent a FDA-approved obesity treatment that places a silicon balloon inside their stomachs. All five died within a month of the procedure. Read more [here](#).

NOW PRESIDING — The Buffalo News profiled Judge Craig Hannah, who oversees Buffalo's experimental opioid intervention court. Hannah came out as a recovering addict himself, saying he's been clean for nearly 20 years after struggling with cocaine addiction. Read more [here](#).

... **And here** is our [recent story](#) on the first-in-the-nation program.

COMMUNITY HEALTH — El Diario's Pedro F. Frisneda [reports](#): "They are not doctors or nurses. They are unable to diagnose diseases or prescribe medication. Still, for many in their neighborhood, they embody the difference between managing chronic illness and being healthy or spending more time in the hospital — or, even worse, dying prematurely. These everyday New Yorkers, most of whom live in developments of the New York City Housing Authority, have been trained by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to become community health workers who have the skills to help their own neighbors stay healthy."

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU: This roundup is for you, so please tell us how we can make it even better. Send tips, news, ideas, calendar items, releases, promotions, job postings, birthdays, congratulations, criticisms and corrections to nniedzwiadek@politico.com.

OPINION — Doug Wirth, president and CEO of Amida Care, argued in Newsweek that politicians must protect Medicaid funding if they are serious about wanting to combat the opioid crisis. Read more [here](#).

GRANT LAND — The NIH has [awarded](#) researchers at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine three grants totaling more than \$12 million to protect against three deadly viruses, including Ebola.

PHARMA REPORT:

NOW WANTED: PATIENTS — The New York times [reports](#): "With the arrival of two revolutionary treatment strategies, immunotherapy and personalized medicine, cancer researchers have found new hope — and a problem that is perhaps unprecedented in medical research. There are too many experimental cancer drugs in too many clinical trials, and not enough patients to test them on. The logjam is caused partly by companies hoping to rush profitable new cancer drugs to market, and partly by the nature of these therapies, which can be spectacularly effective but only in select patients."

VETS FOR MED MAR — Veterans groups in Long Island are backing a bill that passed the Legislature that would add PTSD to the list of conditions eligible for the state's medical

marijuana program. It would be a significant expansion to the program, which earlier this year added chronic pain to the eligibility list. Read more [here](#).

WHAT WE'RE READING:

1199 COOL ON DE BLASIO — 1199 SEIU, which represents 200,000 health care workers in New York City, was a key endorsement in Bill de Blasio's first mayoral campaign. However the union has done little to back his reelection after the relationship deteriorated during his tenure. NY1 has a deep look at what happened [here](#).

MAGGOT INVESTIGATION — The Associated Press reports: "State Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi, D-Utica, is demanding a federal probe into the state's facilities for the disabled following an Associated Press story that revealed the case of a man infested with maggots in a state-run group home. Brindisi told the AP Saturday that the state can't be trusted to police itself when it comes to abuse and neglect in state facilities." Read more [here](#).

PIGEON PROBE — Palladian Health, a West Seneca health care firm, is facing scrutiny by investigators looking into potential bribery by Buffalo political operative Steve Pigeon. Investigators are questioning the reasons a 2013 lawsuit by Palladian got transferred to a state Supreme Court judge with ties to Pigeon. Read more [here](#).

TRUMP'S SEPTEMBER — Inside President Donald Trump's White House, no one seems to be looking forward to September. ...The president is increasingly venting about the apparent inability of the Republican Congress to agree on legislation, especially the Senate's high-profile failure to agree on legislation repealing Obamacare. He has told others he will distance himself from any failures, even as some of his aides push him to cultivate stronger relationships on Capitol Hill. More from our D.C. colleagues [here](#).

TODAY'S TIP — Comes from the [Mayo Clinic](#): "If a shot glass full of sunscreen sounds like a lot of the lotion, you might not be used to applying enough of it."

STUDY THIS:

FEAR OF DYING — Our fear about mortality may be overblown, according to research from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A study published in [Psychological Science](#) found that diaries and blog posts kept by terminally ill patients and death-row inmates were more positive on average than healthy people imagining what that situation would feel like.

MISSED A ROUNDUP? Get caught up [here](#).

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