

By Dan Goldberg | 06/21/2017 05:41 AM EDT

TODAY IN HEALTH — The New York State Nurses Association, 1199 SEIU and advocates from the Healthcare Education Project will be at Nathan Littauer Hospital at 3:30 p.m. to oppose the American Health Care Act. The hospital is in Rep. Elise Stefanik's district.

... Planned Parenthood advocates will be at the West Capitol Park at sunset for a rally to support Planned Parenthood and oppose Trumpcare.

A GREAT EXPLAINER — ProPublica's Marshall Allen, a world-class reporter, had some pain in his shoulder. He went to a specialist. He was given drugs by an assistant, though he couldn't remember the doctor mentioning medication. He was told he wouldn't have to pay much. Here is what happened next. "As an investigative reporter who has covered health care for more than a decade, the interaction was just the sort of thing to pique my interest. One thing I've learned is that almost nothing in medicine — especially brand-name drugs — is ever really a deal. When I got home, I looked up the drug: [Vimovo](#). The drug has been controversial, to say the least. Vimovo was created using two readily and cheaply available generic, or over-the-counter, medicines: naproxen, also known by the brand Aleve, and esomeprazole magnesium, also known as Nexium. The Aleve handles your pain and the Nexium helps with the upset stomach that's sometimes caused by the pain reliever. The key selling point of this new 'convenience drug'? It's easier to take one pill than two. But only a minority of patients get an upset stomach, and there was no indication I'd be one of them. Did I even need the Nexium component? Of course I also did the math. You can walk into your local drugstore and buy a month's supply of Aleve and Nexium for about \$40. For Vimovo, the pharmacy billed my insurance company \$3,252. This doesn't mean the drug company ultimately gets paid that much. The pharmaceutical world is rife with rebates and side deals — all designed to elbow ahead of the competition. But apparently the price of convenience comes at a steep mark-up." Read more [here](#).

BILL TRACKER — The state Senate passed a bill Tuesday expanding access to medical marijuana for people with post-traumatic stress disorder. The measure will now go to Gov. Andrew Cuomo's desk. The bill, which overwhelmingly passed the Assembly in May, [passed](#) 50 to 13 in unofficial results. Sen. Ruben Diaz Sr. of the Bronx was the sole Democrat to vote against the proposal. Read more from Nick [here](#).

KENDRA'S LAW — Lawmakers have approved a five-year extender of [Kendra's Law](#), which allows judges to mandate mental health treatment in some instances. Sen. Cathy Young, a Republican from Olean, had said she wanted to see the law extended permanently and expanded. Democrats in the state Assembly were loath to engage, and passed a five-year extension last week. On Tuesday evening, the Senate passed the same bill with a unanimous vote.

E-CIG — The Assembly [passed legislation](#) Tuesday to expand the Clean Indoor Air Act to include electronic cigarettes. The bill now awaits consideration by Gov. Andrew Cuomo after the Senate unanimously passed the measure Monday evening. Cuomo has previously expressed support for such legislation. Read more [here](#).

... In total, the Senate passed 174 bills and the Assembly passed 157.

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MOUNT SINAI'S UNEQUAL TREATMENT — Mount Sinai Health System's practice of seeing patients with Medicaid in residents' clinics and patients with private insurance in private faculty practices creates racial inequality and segregation in the health system, according to the New York City Coalition to Dismantle Racism in the Health System, which held a town hall in East Harlem Tuesday night. One of the group's members, Lily Ostrer, a coalition organizer and medical student at Mount Sinai, pointed to two Mount Sinai facilities, 5 E 98th Street and 17 E 102nd Street. The former takes private insurance and the latter Medicaid. This creates what the coalition calls "inequality by design." For example, patients with private insurance have a doctor on call at night if they need care, while patients with Medicaid, should they need care after hours, are sent to the emergency room. Members of the coalition also found, in their own research, that wait times for appointments are significantly longer for Medicaid patients. The wait for a patient with private insurance was, on average, 13 days. For Medicaid patients, it was 54. POLITICO New York's Addy Baird [has more](#).

**** A message from NY's Hospital Associations and Physician Societies:** New York is home to many of the world's finest doctors and hospitals, but they spend billions annually on medical malpractice costs - by far the nation's highest. Let's make sure Albany doesn't make things worse by passing bills that will raise those costs even higher and damage patient care.
www.nymedmalreform.com **

HEMOPHILIAC CONCERNS — Advocates for people with blood disorders like hemophilia are calling on Gov. Andrew Cuomo to sign a bill excluding Medicaid recipients from receiving treatment through managed care organizations. The state Department of Health is set to transition the roughly 350 hemophiliacs in the state Medicaid program blood clotting factor treatments from fee-for-service to managed care organizations — which negotiate contracts for services rather than have them billed directly — on July 1. Patient advocates worry such a model will slow down receiving treatment and prescription medication, without providing any financial relief or lower costs. Read more [here](#).

NOW WE KNOW — You're probably not as bad a mother as you have been led to believe. It's just that mommy-shaming is really common, according to the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at the University of Michigan. Six in 10 mothers of children from newborns to age 5 say they have been criticized about parenting. "Unsolicited advice — especially from the people closest to her child — can be perceived as meaning she's not doing a good job as a mother," poll co-director Sarah Clark, said in a press release from the university. And, in case you are wondering, the most vocal critics of new moms are — mom's parents. Read more [here](#).

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 dgoldberg@politico.com.

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE — U.S. Rep. John Katko introduced a bill that he hopes makes it easier to stop the importation and distribution of synthetic drugs, [according to WRVO](#). The bill would allow the federal Drug Enforcement Agency to put a synthetic drug on the banned substance list 30 days after identifying the chemical compound.

PRIDE IN THEIR WORK — In honor of Pride Month, Amida Care published "Let's Start a Conversation: Sexual Health and Pleasure," produced in partnership with the Ali Forney Center, Callen-Lorde, Housing Works, Iris House, The LGBT Center, and SAGE. It's a magazine exploring sexuality and sexual health. Read the [Sexual Health + Pleasure](#) magazine.

GRANT LAND — SUNY'S Empire Innovation Program awarded the University at Buffalo \$4.5 million to hire scholars. Read more [here](#).

A BUFFER — [New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman](#) filed suit against a group of anti-abortion activists that have, for at least five years, blocked access and harassed workers and patients at the Choices Women's Medical Center in Jamaica, [Metro reported](#). "The goal of Schneiderman's lawsuit, which comes after a yearlong investigation, is to not only prohibit protesters from harassing Choices' patients, staff and volunteers, but to also create a 16-foot 'buffer zone' around the facility 'to protect women's fundamental rights,' Schneiderman tweeted."

MAKING ROUNDS — Sara Banks, of Wyandanch, a volunteer at Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center, was elected to a one-year term as president of the Nassau-Suffolk Council of Hospital Auxiliaries. Banks is the chairperson and treasurer of the hospital's Baby Photos Program. Before her appointment as president, she spent six years rising through the ranks of the board, beginning with the position of parliamentarian.

PHARMA REPORT:

TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDER — The New York Times [got a draft copy](#) of President Donald Trump's executive order on drug prices. "The draft, which The New York Times obtained on Tuesday, is light on specifics but clear on philosophy: Easing regulatory hurdles for the drug industry is the best way to get prices down."

DEFLECT — Dr. Scott Gottlieb, head of the Food and Drug Administration, told Congress he does not know how legislation to replace the Affordable Care Act will affect access to addiction treatment as the nation faces an overdose epidemic. The Republicans want to cut more than \$800 billion from Medicaid, which helps fund addiction treatment. Modern Healthcare has [more](#).

PHARMA BRO IN THE POORHOUSE — Martin Shkreli made a habit of tweeting about how rich he was, but when it came to paying for his \$5 million bail, his lawyer dismissed Shkreli's claims to wealth as "preposterous," Bloomberg's Patricia Hurtado and Misyrlena Egkolfopoulou [report](#).

FOLLOW THE MONEY — Drug makers are flexing their lobbying muscle and finding success on Capitol Hill, despite Trump's many pledges to crack down on the industry, STAT News' Erin Mershon [writes](#).

WHAT WE'RE READING:

OBAMACARE LATEST — Mitch McConnell's current whip count to repeal Obamacare is far short of 50 votes. There is still no bill, and even Republicans are moaning about the rush and lack of transparency. The GOP plan to jam through a bill over the next 10 days amounts to a rare political risk by McConnell with no guarantee of success — and one that could jeopardize his Senate majority long-term if the bill ends up being viewed as poorly as the House-passed bill with its 17 percent approval rating. Read more from my D.C. colleagues [here](#).

THE POLITICS OF SECRECY — Obamacare supporters are up in arms over how the Senate is secretly crafting a repeal and replace bill. But [as my colleagues in D.C. report](#), Republicans are unapologetic because so far, it's working. By keeping the process under wraps, Senate Republican leaders have largely bypassed the headaches and inevitable blowback when any ambitious piece of legislation sees the light of day — especially one that has already become wildly unpopular if polls on the House GOP's effort to overhaul the U.S. health care system are any indication. They're also betting that for all the stone-throwing from the left, voters already convinced that Congress is broken won't punish Senate Republicans for putting yet another dent in the institution.

DECISION DAY — Health plans must decide today whether to file plans to sell through the federal exchange HealthCare.gov in 2018. But they're still waiting for assurances the Trump administration will fund subsidies to reduce low-income customers' health costs. Read more [here](#).

POLIO — STAT [reports](#): "The World Health Organization said Tuesday that an [outbreak of vaccine-related polio cases](#) in Syria has expanded, with 17 children so far paralyzed by the vaccine viruses."

ZIKA IS ON THE RISE — Two types of mosquitoes that carry chikungunya, dengue and Zika viruses are spreading across the Southern U.S., according to [a new CDC report](#). The report shows that during the course of 2016, the number of counties with the presence of the Aedes aegypti mosquito jumped 21 percent and those with a presence of the Aedes albopictus mosquito grew by 10 percent. The report recommends stepping up mosquito surveillance in a wide swath of the country, including in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Missouri, Georgia, Texas, Florida and the other Gulf Coast states, as well as northern mid-Atlantic states and the Midwest.

CMS GOING SLOW — The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services proposed allowing providers to use 2014 edition EHR technology next year as part of an approach that offers carrots instead of sticks to smaller practices. The agency reversed course in response to negative feedback to CMS's decision last year to require 2015 edition EHR technology in 2018, according to the [proposed quality payment rule](#). Many providers want the agency to delay the requirement into 2019, but the rule did not speak to that request. ONC statistics show that at least 83 percent

of hospitals — but fewer than three-quarters of clinicians — will be ready to use 2015-certified software in 2018, according to the text of the rule.

TODAY'S TIP — Comes from the state Department of Health: "Lightning can strike as far away as 10 miles from rainfall. Simple [steps](#) can save lives."

STUDY THIS:

AIDS MEDICINE — Researchers from the City College of New York are modifying nucleosides, hoping to improve upon AZT (zidovudine), which controls HIV infections, according to a study in the Royal Society of Chemistry publication. The researchers developed a quick method for preparing new pyrimidine nucleoside analogues, a family in which AZT belongs, and for modifying AZT itself, and identified several new compounds that are active against the more virulent HIV-1 and the less common and less pathogenic HIV-2. Read more [here](#).

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS — Drs. Sangeeta Chavan, Valentin Pavlov and Kevin Tracey, president and CEO of The Feinstein Institute for Medical Research at Northwell Health, completed an analysis of how the nervous and immune systems communicate with each other, according to an article in Immunity. The idea is to develop bioelectronic medicine devices to treat disease and injury. "Neuro-immune communication is an exciting area of research that bridges different disciplines and addresses questions of great importance," Chavan said in a press release. More [he re](#).

SIMPLE IDEA — Writing in The New York Times, Austin Frakt [highlights](#) a study suggesting hospital patients recover quicker when they're paired with a healthier roommate.

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

**** A message from NY's Hospital Associations and Physician Societies:** Everyone agrees: New York's hospitals and doctors deliver world-class patient care. But their out-of-control medical malpractice costs are by far the nation's highest, and stark proof of a deeply flawed system. Let's make sure Albany doesn't make things worse with harmful, misguided legislation. Join us in urging the New York State Legislature to reject any bills that would raise medical malpractice costs even higher and weaken the ability of doctors and hospitals to deliver high-quality care. [www .nymedmalreform.com](http://www.nymedmalreform.com) **

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