



## POLICY & PRACTICE

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### Hospital Sours on Sweet Drinks

In an effort to combat obesity, Fairview Hospital, a 24-bed acute care hospital in Great Barrington, Mass., has announced that sodas and sugar-sweetened sports drinks no longer will be available on hospital grounds. Fairview, which has signed a "Healthy Food in Healthcare Pledge" that was developed by the advocacy group Health Care Without Harm, said the decision was made to eliminate sugary drinks after the state's House of Representatives voted to ban their sale in schools. According to Health Care Without Harm, many hospitals make money by negotiating agreements with beverage companies to limit sales to single brands of soft drinks.

### Diabetic Teens Need Help

Many teenagers who have type 1 diabetes, especially those who are experiencing family conflict concerning their condition, need help as they assume responsibility for their own care, a study has concluded. Published online in the Journal of Adolescent Health, the research measured parent versus child responsibility for care, family conflict over diabetes, hemoglobin A<sub>1c</sub> concentrations, and teens' frequency of blood glucose monitoring over 6 months. The Ohio and Texas-based researchers found that the more that disease-management responsibility rested with adolescents, the higher were their hemoglobin A<sub>1c</sub> concentrations and the less frequent was their blood glucose monitoring. Teens who reported greater family conflict fared worse on these measures than did others.

### Pain Care Adds Up to \$7,000

Each case of peripheral-diabetic or postherpetic neuropathic pain costs an extra \$1,600-\$7,000 per year for inpatient care, outpatient and professional services, and prescription drugs, a study in the Journal of Pain has found. The researchers compared the health care costs of such patients with those of people who have herpes zoster but no persistent pain or a diagnosis of diabetes without neurological complications. Both pain conditions added to care costs, but the diabetes-associated neuropathy had the more powerful impact, the authors said. They pointed out that the incidence of the pain conditions should rise as the population in the United States continues to age and diabetes increases. Prevention and more treatment of the conditions could reduce health care spending, the authors concluded.

### More Diabetics Getting Flu Shots

The proportion of diabetic Americans aged 18-64 who received flu shots rose from 40% in 2000 to more than 50.5% in 2007, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The increase was driven by health insurance, the federal agency found. For example, among the population covered by public insurance, such as Medicaid, the proportion of those getting flu shots surged from 39% to 53%. Meanwhile, the increase among nonelderly diabetic adults with private insurance was from 41% to 53%. The immunization rate for this population without insurance remained at just over 30%. In addition, the pro-

portion of seniors aged 65 and older with diabetes who reported getting a flu shot remained roughly stable at around 70%, the agency reported.

### Insurer to Cover Prevention

UnitedHealth Group said it will pay for diabetes prevention and control programs provided by YMCA of the USA and Walgreen Co. In an effort to curb diabetes, prediabetes, and obesity, the health insurer announced that its employer-paid health policies will cover a clinically validated prevention program at YMCA chapters and diabetes-control sessions at Walgreen pharmacies. Programs will be available initially in six cities and will roll out nationally over the next 2 years, the insurer said.

### FDA Proposes New Ad Rules

The Food and Drug Administration wants manufacturers to detail more of the contraindications and potential side effects of drugs in radio and television direct-to-consumer advertisements. The proposed rule would require that an ad's major statement on side effects and contraindications "be presented in a clear, conspicuous, and neutral manner." The new rule would require manufacturers to present the information in both the audio and visual components of a video ad and make sure that it is not overshadowed by other parts of either type of ad. The FDA said it will accept comments on the proposed rule until June 28.

### Restaurants Must Post Calories

As part of the newly approved health care reform law, chain restaurants will be required to post the calorie content for their standard menu items along with information on daily suggested calorie intake from the Department of Agriculture. The provision in the Patient

Protection and Affordable Care Act, signed into law in March by President Obama, will affect restaurants and other retail food establishments that have 20 or more locations and the same menu items at each location. Restaurants also will be required to have additional nutrition information, such as fat and sodium content, available for their menu items. Vending operators with more than 20 machines will be required to post calorie information on their food items. The law requires the FDA to issue proposed regulations by next March.

—Jane Anderson

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