

POLICY & PRACTICE

Diabetes Prescriptions Double

Children and teenagers aged 5-19 years doubled their use of type 2 diabetes medications between 2002 and 2005, according to a study published in the journal *Pediatrics*. The rise in diabetes prescriptions was driven by huge increases in use of those medications by preteen and teen girls; the number of prescriptions filled for girls aged 10-14 years grew by 166%, while the number filled for girls aged 15-19 years rose by 135%, according to the researchers. They also found increases in prescriptions for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, attention-deficit disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, asthma, and depression.

Hawaii Ends Child Health Care Plan

Hawaii has stopped funding the only state universal child health care program in the country. The Keiki Care Plan (Keiki is the Hawaiian word for child) pilot project was intended to provide free health care coverage for children whose parents could not afford private insurance. But just 7 months after its launch, the results showed that an estimated 85% of the 2,000 children enrolled in the program had switched from a private health plan to the state-funded program, Linda Smith, senior adviser for Gov. Linda Lingle (R), said in a statement. Because the free state program was drawing many more insured than uninsured children, Gov. Lingle decided to cut off funding for it, Ms. Smith said.

WVU Creates Pediatric Institute

West Virginia University has launched the multimillion-dollar WVU Pediatric Research Institute, using a bequest from a well-known state physician and unclaimed settlement money from a class action lawsuit. Through a bequest from the late Dr. James H. Walker, WVU professor emeritus, nearly \$6.4 million will go toward the institute and the creation of the James H. Walker Chair in Pediatric Cardiology. Dr. William Neal is the inaugural recipient of the Walker chair. In addition, the institute will receive nearly \$5.7 million from a unique settlement in a state class action lawsuit against the makers of diabetes drug troglitazone (Rezulin). Because a number of patients who were eligible to receive damages in the case did not claim their money, the lawyers and judge who were involved agreed in September to award the money to WVU and to Marshall University in Huntington, W.Va. WVU officials said the university will use the money primarily to research links between obesity, diabetes, and asthma in the new research institute, while Marshall officials said they will use their share of the funds, \$2.2 million, to improve diabetes care.

U.S. Gets 'D' on Prematurity Rate

The United States received a "D" on the Premature Birth Report Card issued recently by the March of Dimes. The report card compares actual preterm birth rates in each state with the national Healthy People 2010 objectives set by the federal government. The Healthy People 2010 goal is to lower preterm birth to 7.6% of all live births, while data from 2005 shows that the national preterm birth rate is 12.7%. No state earned an "A" and only

one state—Vermont—earned a grade of "B." Eight states received a "C," 23 received a "D," and 18 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia received failing grades. "It is unacceptable that our nation is failing so many preterm babies," Jennifer L. Howse, Ph.D., president of the March of Dimes, said in a statement. "We are determined to find and implement solutions to prevent preterm birth, based on research, best clinical practices, and improved education for moms." This is the first year that the March of Dimes has issued the prematurity report card, but it is

expected to continue on an annual basis. In addition to rating state performance, the report card also calls on hospital officials to review all births by cesarean section and inductions of labor that occur before 39 weeks' gestation as a strategy to help curb preterm births.

TV Sex Tied to Teen Pregnancy

Teen pregnancy may be somehow linked to the amount of sex teens see on television, according to a provocative new study in the November issue of *Pediatrics*. The more exposure teens had to sexual content on television, the more likely they were to get pregnant or get someone else pregnant,

according to a multivariate regression model used in the study. Other significant predictors of teen pregnancy were being African American, having a problem behavior, and not living in a two-parent family. The researchers noted that while the results do not establish a causal relationship between exposure to sexual content on television and teen pregnancy, the magnitude of the association merits consideration in designing prevention programs. The findings are based on data from a national longitudinal survey of adolescents aged 12-17 years at baseline. The teens were reinterviewed 1 and 3 years later.

—Jane Anderson



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