

# Private Sector Environmental Scan

From

AAFP Private Sector Advocacy Staff

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## [AAFP NEWS NOW](#)

### [Family Practice Management \(FPM\)](#)

#### ACCESS TO CARE

- **Law Equalizes Coverage For Mental, Physical Care**

Washington Post, October 10, 2008

“The new law bars companies from setting higher co-pays or deductibles for mental health and substance abuse treatment. Plans also will be prohibited from lowering benefit levels or restricting the number of outpatient therapy sessions or hospital treatment days.”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/09/AR2008100902873.html?hpid=topnews>

#### AROUND THE WORLD

- **More GP surgeries open evenings and weekends, says government**

Society Guardian, October 14 2008

“More than half of GP practices are now offering extended hours to patients - meeting a government target three months early, figures published today show.”

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/oct/14/nhs-health-gp-extended-hours>

#### DISEASE MANAGEMENT

- **North Carolina medical networks acclaimed**

Raleigh News & Observer, October 13, 2008

“In North Carolina, a novel approach called Community Care may have found a cure to Medicaid bleeding money. One way Community Care saves money is by keeping up with Medicaid patients who have chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma. By making sure patients are receiving medicines and other treatment, the program cuts down on costly emergency room visits and unnecessary hospital stays.”

“...”North Carolina has led on this -- it's had an instrumental role,” said **Dr. Ted Epperly**, president of the American Academy of Family Physicians and moderator of this week's forum.

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/story/1252194.html>

## **E-HEALTH**

- **EHR (Electronic Health Record)**
  - **CMS introduces EHR incentive program for smaller practices**  
HealthImaging.com, October 14, 2008  
“The CMS worked with federal and state health agencies to launch an incentive program aimed at encouraging small and midsize physician practices to use electronic health records. Under the program, eligible practices could receive as much as \$290,000 in incentives over five years.”  
[http://www.healthimaging.com/index.php?option=com\\_articles&view=article&id=14294](http://www.healthimaging.com/index.php?option=com_articles&view=article&id=14294)
- **E-Prescribing**
  - **Everything You Need to Know About E-Prescribing**  
Health Leaders Media, October 14, 2008  
“The practice of prescribing medications electronically has been getting a good amount of attention recently. For those providers who either remain baffled by how e-prescribing works or aren't convinced the switch is worth the trouble, the eHealth Initiative last week announced the publication of a "how-to" guide for clinicians looking to make the switch.”  
[http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/content/221557/topic/WS\\_HL\\_M2\\_TEC/Everything-You-Need-to-Know-About-EPrescribing.html](http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/content/221557/topic/WS_HL_M2_TEC/Everything-You-Need-to-Know-About-EPrescribing.html)

## **HEALTH PLANS**

- **WellPoint, X Prize launch \$10 million healthcare contest**  
AP/Yahoo News, October 15, 2008  
“The California-based foundation X-Prize, which helped launch the first private manned space flight in 2004, is teaming with the insurer WellPoint Inc. to try to fix the U.S. healthcare system. The companies have announced an open competition to devise solutions that improve healthcare cost and quality, with a \$10 million prize for the winner. Essentially, the competition will look for ways to "dramatically improve" cost and quality, said Brad Fluegel, a WellPoint executive vice president.”  
[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20081015/ap\\_on\\_bi\\_ge/wellpoint\\_x\\_prize\\_2](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20081015/ap_on_bi_ge/wellpoint_x_prize_2)

## **HOSPITAL**

- **Pilot Testing**  
HealthLeaders Magazine, October 13, 2008  
A partnership with six physician practices helps a Missouri hospital test a care delivery model one patient at a time.

“On March 30, 2009, SSM Health Care in suburban St. Louis will open the \$236 million, 154-bed St. Clare Health Center, a full-service, acute-care hospital that will offer a patient-centered, team approach to care delivery. The system hopes the new facility's operating philosophy will enhance patient satisfaction, reduce medical errors, and improve outcomes by encouraging interaction among physicians, patients, and support staff.”  
[http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/content/221425/topic/WS\\_HLM2\\_MAG/Pilot-Testing.html](http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/content/221425/topic/WS_HLM2_MAG/Pilot-Testing.html)

## **INSURANCE TRENDS**

- **Both candidates' plans increase health coverage, analysis says**  
Associated Press, October 9, 2008  
“WASHINGTON — John McCain's health plan would reduce the ranks of the uninsured by about 21.1 million people if fully put in place by 2010, while Barack Obama's would reduce the number by 26.6 million, an analysis predicts.”  
<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/politics/6048389.html>
- **The financial crisis and healthcare**  
Chicago Tribune, October 13, 2008  
“In this opinion piece for the Chicago Tribune, Ezekiel J. Emanuel, MD, says the recent economic upheaval makes healthcare reform more pressing, and makes comprehensive reform—change in the way healthcare is paid for and how care is organized and delivered—more realistic and feasible. Emanuel is chair of the department of bioethics at The Clinical Center of the National Institutes of Health.”  
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chicoped1012healthoct12,0,3173634.story>

## **NATIONAL TOPICS**

- **How the Election Could Impact Physicians**  
HealthLeaders Media, October 9, 2008  
“When John McCain and Barack Obama talk about their respective plans for healthcare reform, they understandably focus almost exclusively on how patients will be affected. But what about physicians and other providers within the healthcare system?”  
[http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/content/221212/page/2/topic/WS\\_HLM2\\_PHY/How-the-Election-Could-Impact-Physicians.html](http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/content/221212/page/2/topic/WS_HLM2_PHY/How-the-Election-Could-Impact-Physicians.html)

## **PATIENT MANAGEMENT**

- **Companies offer perks to get workers to improve health**  
The Washington Post, October 14, 2008  
“More companies are offering cash, gifts, vacations and other perks for employees who get annual physicals or improve their health by dropping bad habits, exercising and losing weight. A Kaiser Family Foundation survey shows about 80% of large companies that offer wellness programs

believe they improve health and 68% say they really do reduce health care costs.”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/10/AR2008101002658.html>

- **Online tools help patients manage health**

The New York Times, October 11, 2008

“New Web-connected tools are in development that patients will use as reminders to take pills, to keep track of disease information, and to chart data from heart rate and glucose tests. Many applications allow patients to share health data with physicians and nurses through programs like HealthVault, which uploads information from a variety of devices to an online account.”

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/business/12novel.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/business/12novel.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

## **RETAIL HEALTH CLINICS**

- **Independence Blue Cross adding MinuteClinics to network**

Philadelphia Business Journal, October 13, 2008

“Philadelphia-based Independence Blue Cross will soon add MinuteClinics' health centers of Minneapolis to its PPO network roster of participating healthcare providers. Throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania, there are 17 MinuteClinics, which have locations in CVS pharmacies are staffed by nurse practitioners who provide routine primary care.”

<http://www.bizjournals.com/philadelphia/stories/2008/10/13/daily10.html?surround=1fn&brthrs=1>

## **TECHNOLOGY**

- **Insurer gives health tips via Facebook**

Washington Post, October 14, 2008

“Cigna has launched a set of free online courses, games, and podcasts about health issues that can be found on the popular social networking site Facebook as well as on iTunes. The goal is to take confusion out of healthcare and help people make confident healthcare decisions, said Cigna representatives. Cigna also offers interactive charts about the healthcare plans of the Republican and Democratic parties, and how they might affect individuals.”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/10/AR2008101002677.html>

Reminder: Chapter Executives

AAFP-AAFP chapter Private Sector Advocacy call schedule, 1-888-271-3491, press “3”

**October 16, 2008** 1:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M. Central time

**November 20, 2008** 1:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M. Central time

**December 18, 2008** 1:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M. Central time