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Morning eHealth

Senate HELP marks up again

By **DARIUS TAHIR** | 03/16/16 05:50 AM EDT

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WE'RE CHECKING THE LIST, THEY'RE MARKING IT UP TWICE: The Senate HELP Committee shall strike again this morning, as it considers a mental health bill. Between amendments and the main bill, there's plenty of interest for a watchful health IT observer.

— **Whitehouse amendment:** Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse is giving the get-behavioral-health-into-meaningful-use play a shot, with an amendment that calls for a five-year pilot.

— **The main bill:** As we've noted before, the main bill will request reports from HHS and GAO on 42 CFR Part 2, the strict informed consent language regarding substance abuse treatment records. And there's also a prescription drug monitoring component: the bill requires data on veterans and dependents to be reported to state PDMPs. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen's separate bill is also seeking to expand such programs, for instance by getting prescription history inserted into the workflow of a prescribing clinician's EHR.

ALSO ON THE HAPPENING HILL: Assuming beleaguered staffers — and our own David Pittman — can brave the WMATA-snarled byways (D.C., if you don't live here or somehow didn't notice, is losing all Metro service today), they'll be getting in a full day of work. At 2 p.m., the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee will be overseeing the VA's EHR upgrade effort. The agency is working to improve VistA, its open-source EHR, although the buzz is that Secretary Robert McDonald would like to ditch it for a commercial system. Meanwhile the Committee will be inquiring about cybersecurity.

It's an interesting time for the agency, whose EHR is beloved by many health IT observers (and, we presume, its users). VA officials have promised that they'll be fully interoperable with the Department of Defense's medical system by the end of the year. So we'll be listening.

— **Also on the Congressional front:** Our Health Care colleague Erin Mershon got Rep. Kevin Brady, the chair of the Ways and Means Committee, to dish on his health care agenda. Of interest to health IT: he and the committee will be conducting "very aggressive oversight" on CMS's implementation of MACRA and MIPS.

Many worry that MACRA will be delayed; Andy Slavitt has promised that the advent of the new requirements will shift the rules for health IT. So Brady's watchful ways may mean fodder for the health IT community (and those that report on it). Health Care pros can get the rest of the interview [here](#).

eHealth tweet of the day: Sassy, (future) MD @mcsassymd I'm only one year into my clinical training and I've used 11 EHRs
<https://twitter.com/mcsassymd/status/709765228922155009>

WOEFUL WEDNESDAY: If you're reading this, congratulations: you've survived the Ides of March. (And WMATA!) Bad news, however: you're not famous Roman general/emperor/salad enthusiast Julius Caesar. Your correspondent apologizes if he's broken any childhood dreams of conquering Gaul or crossing the Rubicon. Share dreams at dtahir@politico.com. Bravely discuss dreams publicly @David_Pittman, @arthurallen202, @DariusTahir @POLITICOPro, @Morning_eHealth.

NEW YEAR, NEW ASKS: It's a new year of asking for old things! The College of Health Information Management Executives (or, more melodiously, CHIME) and many other signatories — such as the Federation of American Hospitals and the American College of Cardiology — want a return of the 90-day reporting period in 2016, and have asked Andy Slavitt for it. Also, they'd prefer the agency not wait until the last moment like it did last year.

MORE LISTS: HHS should name the members of its Health Care Industry Cybersecurity Task Force today. The first teleconference is Thursday afternoon; some of David's sources were told they're in. (The panel, that is.) Its charge: draft a report to Congress on improving cybersecurity in health care.

MORE GROUPS: CHIME is organizing an internal working group to develop comments on the FDA's draft medical device interoperability guidance. Comments are due April 28; the group sees persistent challenges in getting devices and health IT tools to send data to one another. FDA's guidance discusses the conditions a device maker must fulfill to market its products as interoperable.

CUTTING DOWN ON ROAD TIME: It turns out you can save money and time by not paying patients to drive long distances. Telemedicine helped the Veterans Health Administration save more than \$18,000 per year in "travel pay" between 2005 and 2013, according to research published in the journal *Telemedicine and e-Health*.

The agency spent about \$1 billion last year providing qualifying patients travel reimbursement to make appointments. Using technology to treat them from afar saves about 145 miles and 142 minutes per visit. The paper: <http://bit.ly/1M5zEaW>

NOSTRA CULPA ON FLORIDA TELEMEDICINE: We reported Tuesday on the wrong version of the Florida telemedicine bill headed for the governor's desk. State policy insiders tell us that a special telemedicine registration for out-of-state providers was in the House-passed version but dropped from the final bill. The legislation creates a state Telehealth Advisory Council to advise state lawmakers on commercial insurance coverage, attorney Nathaniel M. Lacktman, who helped work on the bill with the Telehealth Association of Florida, wrote in his [blog](#). The final language hasn't been posted online yet.

GEE WHIZ, GENOMICS: Some brief updates from the burbling world of genomics ... Lab test company Genomic Health is having a bad few months. First FDA said in a November 2015 report that one of its Oncotype DX tests was often wrong, saying patients' tumors didn't have a certain type of receptor when they did. That affects the treatment regimen. And so, each time it was wrong, the agency says, it costs society roughly \$775,000 due to lost years of life. Well, now the company's being sued by a woman saying the company fired her for having breast cancer ... there's a "doggie DNA" startup claiming to create genetic profiles on dogs' disease risk ... the Baylor football team is going to create genetic profiles of its athletes and tailor workouts and nutrition plans to each individual.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

10 a.m. — Senate HELP Committee markup on mental health

1 p.m. — Precision Medicine Task Force, ONC FACA

2 p.m. — House Oversight and Government Reform on VA's health IT efforts

WHAT WE'RE CLICKING ON:

Health Care IT May Need a Reboot: <http://1.usa.gov/1Lh7qtL>

Copy and paste, done in haste, what a waste: <http://bit.ly/1WoUIK9>

Health-Tracking Startup Fails to Deliver on Its Ambitions: <http://bit.ly/1LpnJEY>

More than 300 companies seeking \$1 million patient matching prize from CHIME: <http://ubm.io/1M5zWhY>

NYPPost: Rushed Epic installment at NYC hospital will kill patients: <http://nyp.st/1MjCsfy>