



Healthcare Policy Roundup

July 25, 2018

Catch the Highlights!

- City announces \$12.8 million initiative to reduce maternal mortality
- New law requires drug manufacturers & vendors to set up programs to collect unused medicine
- Citi Bike discount program not reaching most SNAP recipients

Questions? Comments?

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City announces plan to reduce maternal mortality:

First Lady Chirlane McCray and Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services Dr. Herminia Palacio announced last week that a new initiative aimed at addressing racial disparities among women experiencing fatal birth complications. According to McCray and Palacio, the city will invest \$12.8 million over the next three years to improve prenatal and post-partum services across public and private sectors.

Funding will be used to support maternal health services across NYC Health + Hospital facilities and offer implicit bias training for both public and private providers. The Administration also plans to develop a city-wide data tracking network which will be used to inform hospital-specific recommendations around maternal health risk. Finally, the program will expand public education opportunities for New York City residents and launch a public awareness campaign around pregnancy-related risk.

According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, more than 3,000 women experience life-threatening events during pregnancy each year. About 1% of these women die from birth complications. Notably, black non-Hispanic women are eight times more likely to die from pregnancy-related events than white women, a statistic that far exceeds the national average. Researchers attribute this to factors including socioeconomic status, provider bias, and general health disparities.

State law aims to increase collection of unused medicine:

A new state law will soon require drug manufacturers to set up programs that collect, transport, and properly dispose of unused drugs. The Drug Take Back Act, which goes into effect January 2019, aims to prevent misuse of controlled substances and protect water supply from contamination. According to bill sponsor Senator Kemp Hannon, the new legislation is expected to increase the number of collected drugs by 2,000%.

Beginning January 6, 2019 chain and mail-order pharmacies will be required to offer drug collection through drop-off boxes, prepaid envelopes, and other methods approved by the Drug Enforcement Agency. Chain pharmacies like CVS and Duane Reade already offer drug disposal boxes in more than 50 locations throughout New York State. In a recent statement, CVS Health's Long Island Regional Director Ed Campbell noted that "helping patients dispose of unwanted medication, especially opioids, is critical to prevent misuse and diversion."



According to a recent [study](#) published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, over 60% of participants reported keeping leftover opioid medication for future use, while nearly 50% reported not knowing what to do with leftover drugs. New York State has previously worked to reduce unused drug abuse by sponsoring a statewide Take Back Day during which New Yorkers can dispose leftover medications at over 200 locations.

SNAP recipients not reaping Citi Bike benefits:

Recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, opting into the city's discounted Citi Bike program may be having trouble accessing the service. According to data from the Department of Social Services, many SNAP recipients live in neighborhoods without Citi Bike access and cannot reap benefits of the discounted program.

In June, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced an expansion of the Citi Bike program as part of city efforts to increase transportation options and improve health outcomes. However, many neighborhoods in Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island remain underserved. According to the New York City Human Resources Administration, approximately one-third of SNAP recipients live in the Bronx and Staten Island, where Citi Bike has yet to expand. Many of these neighborhoods also have limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables furthering health disparities among low-income residents.

Despite these caveats, the city is working with local agencies and community-based organizations to promote the discounted program through in-person outreach and multilingual sign-up opportunities at SNAP enrollment locations, green markets, and housing developments. The program is already available for New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents who are allotted an unlimited number of 45-minute rides each month at a discounted price.