

Weekly Report: 8/22 – 8/26  
Olivia Pham

**Monday August 22, 2016**

*Mark Hayes, Liz Fowler*

This was a really fascinating lunch meeting which was set up in order to further discuss healthcare reform negotiations. I never knew there were so many events (like CHIP reauthorization) that set the stage for negotiations, and how profoundly they affected the attitude of both parties. It was amazing to see Mark and Liz answer some of the questions they had never asked each other. I hope we finally convinced the two of them to write a book.

*Jenny Kenney – Urban Institute*

We spoke at length with Ms. Kenney about her work at the institute, and asked more specifically what she thought about the potential upcoming changes to the ACA. She briefly went over each of the following: the appropriateness of risk adjustment, the three R's (particularly the risk corridors), greater (and more) subsidies, and the debate on split coverage in families. That last topic was very interesting to me, as we have not heard that mentioned previously. Ms. Kenney said that Urban Institute, as well as others, are now investigating the financial consequences of split coverage. She also spoke about some of the issues surrounding CHIP reauthorization, including the enhance match rate and the choice for a Marketplace plan instead of CHIP.

**Tuesday August 23, 2016**

*Beth Wikler – Office of Senator Al Franken*

After speaking briefly on her own career history, she shared with us the policy priorities of Senator Franken's office. These include prescription drug pricing, three rural health bills, the upcoming user fee agreements, mental health parity, tribal health, infectious disease, correctional health, and housing. Ms. Wikler said that she would love to have a fellow, and that the office would be very accommodating to us. She also said that Sen. Franken is very passionate about health, and that she really admires him as a politician and a boss. It's great to see elected officials who truly inspire their staff.

*Chuck Clapton - Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America*

Let me preface our meeting with Mr. Clapton by saying that it was a little more difficult for me to grasp since I am not very familiar with pharmaceuticals as an industry. PhRMA has the following priorities for the next year: Medicare Part B and D, 340B, Intellectual property (including the TPP) and the concept of value in pharmaceuticals. He did not go into much detail, but did his best to explain the cost of pharmaceuticals. I agree that research and development over a long period of time is costly but I'm not entirely convinced that the cost attributed to R&D is justified. Otherwise, Mr. Clapton was happy to give us his opinion on the hill and where we should work. Like many others, he strongly recommended that we go to a committee.

*John Rother – National Coalition on Health Care*

Mr. Rother was kind enough to go over his career experience, then described the policy priorities of NCHC. In the future, they will focus heavily on drug pricing, including transparency, competition, and value. There will also be a strong focus on public health prevention. Mr. Rother mentioned that there hasn't been a strong, recognizable public health figure in some time, and this really hinders the progress of public health prevention. He also discussed at length Medicare and Social Security. He is not confident that there will be any movement in the long-term care space because it is so politically costly.

**Wednesday August 24, 2016**

*Christine Simmon – Generic Pharmaceutical Association*

Ms. Simmon mostly explained the organizational aspect of GPhA. It was very interesting that they manage to find consensus even when their members are competing companies. She also stated that GPhA is most concerned with drug affordability and that her advocacy focuses on driving savings, not cost.

*Katherine Hayes – Bipartisan Policy Center*

I'm very glad we got to meet with Ms. Hayes! We spoke at quite some length over her career, and she gave us plenty of advice moving forward. She also spoke about her general views on Medicare and long term care.

*Patrick Conway – Deputy Administrator for Innovation and Quality & CMS Chief Medical Officer*

This was an amazing opportunity! Dr. Conway focused on two particularly goals for the innovation centers: to continue to test new innovative models, and to continue with expansion. Oncology and specialty models were of particular interest to me. We spoke briefly about the task of scaling up state models to national models, and Dr. Conway left us with the names of a few more people to speak with.

*Hannah Katch, Some Dude – Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*

Our meeting at CBPP was not what I expected (I thought we would be learning more about the Center itself) but it was still a great opportunity to ask some policy questions. We spoke for a bit on the fate of Kynnect in Kentucky, and we also spoke about the role of Medicaid in addressing housing. The position of CBPP is that although housing and health are clearly linked, that Medicaid was never meant to address housing. It not only has the improper structures, but it is also dangerous to tie any more eligibility requirements to housing.

### **Thursday August 25, 2016**

*Marc Boutin – National Health Council*

Marc Boutin has really led a fascinating life, and it clearly shapes his perspective on health care. While NHC does work in many areas, we focused our discussion around patient engagement in the drug development process. This was something I had never even heard about or considered before, although now the idea of getting patient input when developing drugs seems so common sense. I don't know how much political capital the concept of patient engagement has these days, but Mr. Boutin is very hopeful that PDUFA VI will contain more patient engagement requirements.

*Niall Brennan - Director and CMS Chief Data Officer*

Mr. Brennan was an excellent meeting – I'm glad we had a chance to speak to someone who is completely data-oriented. He briefly went over the role of the office, and explained how it was created out of a vacuum over governance of CMS data. His role is to improve and facilitate the use of CMS data. He explained that no single person can embody all the ideals of data science, so he hires multiple experts to tackle a single project. This is how he thinks he differs from other CMS offices – he hires people with technical skill, sometimes competing with companies like Microsoft and Google for employees. All of his future priorities surround the stabilization and growth of healthcare.gov, as well as improving data collection methods. Based on his experience at CBO Mr. Brennan strongly recommended that we choose a committee of jurisdiction, particularly Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Finance.

*Lydia Orth – Former Fellow, Office of Enterprise Data and Analytics*

This was just a casual check-in with Lydia to see where Kripa and I were in our decision process. It was lovely to catch-up and hear that she's enjoying her placement at the Office of Enterprise Data and Analytics.

### **Friday August 26, 2016**

*Cathy Cohen – American Academy of Ophthalmology*

Learning about the policy priorities of the ophthalmology community was very interesting. Most of their services are reimbursed by Medicare. Kripa asked Ms. Cohen the Academy's position on MACRA, and it seems that they actually believe MACRA won't be as devastating as other groups seem to believe. When asked how ophthalmologists are expected to improve outcomes through their own power, Ms. Cohen explained that they would immediately take it upon themselves to improve their practices if they have access to the outcomes data of other practices.. Ms. Cohen herself was a pleasure to talk to, and this was a great learning opportunity.

*Ashley Coloumbe – Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren*

After briefly describing her background in campaign work and women's health, Ms. Columbe went on to explain the health priorities of Sen. Warren's office. These include NIH funding, individual bankruptcy, mental health, and Medicare fraud. Ms. Coloumbe also told us that as a highly visible congressman, Sen. Warren's letter to agencies is an extremely powerful tool. It was also nice to hear that Ms. Coloumbe is really inspired by Sen. Warren, and that Sen. Warren is exactly as we expected. She is extremely passionate, curious, academic, and is truly a force to be reckoned with.