

Weekly Report: 9/6 – 9/9
Olivia Pham

Tuesday September 6, 2016

Dr. Judy Feder – George Washington University

Truly a pleasant meeting! During our meeting with Dr. Feder we spoke on two main topics: long term care and her experience with health reform during the Clinton administration. Regarding long term care, we discussed at length the role of the state and federal government in addressing the high-cost high-need population. She emphasized that she thought Medicare (and thus the federal government) should be providing more guidance to this population. She also gave us a short overview of health reform during the Clinton years, and pointed out that the ACA is a “lessons learned” version of the Clinton health plan. It was fascinating to hear about how health reform a few years ago differed from the health from in the 90s.

Katie Smith Sloan – LeadingAge

Our meeting with Ms. Sloan was very informative, especially because we had the opportunity to learn about LeadingAge’s international advocacy arm. While of course I expected there to be some global efforts to share information on LTSS, I did not recognize the extent to which LeadingAge was invested in these meetings. We also spoke about the role of applied research in aging services and the ways in which the organization is using research to promote their priorities. Ms. Sloan also offered her perspective on advocacy from not-for-profit organizations, which is very mission-driven and does not have to worry as heavily about profit margins.

Wednesday September 7, 2016

Megan Spindel Jackson - Office of Congressman Brett Guthrie

Our meeting with Ms. Jackson was brief, but this was just enough time for her to speak about Rep. Guthrie’s health policy priorities. His office will remain focused heavily on the Medicaid taskforce and gathering more information from state Medicaid programs. They are very interested in state flexibility regarding Medicaid. We were also able to meet Rep. Guthrie, who is the first congressman we have ever met! He stepped in to say hello to us, which was a really nice experience.

Dan Hawkins – National Association for Community Health Centers

Meeting with Mr. Hawkins was a great educational opportunity, I always appreciate the chance to learn more about the safety net. First, Mr. Hawkins discussed the current political environment and stressed how difficult it was for CHCs to operate with so much tension. Even though many congressmen have CHCs in their district, it doesn't always motivate them to action. Mr. Hawkins told us about the many problems plaguing CHCs, including a lack of funding, problems hiring and maintaining staff, and difficulty helping their patients access the appropriate services. Mr. Hawkins really focused on the importance of CHCs to the underserved and uninsured. He pointed out that about three-quarters of the people living in the Zika hot spot in Miami all used the same CHC for their health needs. CHCs often have to shoulder the burden of public health and health delivery for vulnerable populations, so they require support from the government on all fronts.

Janet Trautwein – National Association of Health Underwriters

Prior to this meeting, Kripa and I did not have much intimate knowledge of the role of a health insurance agent/broker. Ms. Trautwein generously gave us an overview of their role in the overall health system, explained how they are compensated, and provided information on the difficulties they face in serving their customers. She also spoke about some of their current and future priorities, which include repealing the Cadillac tax and reinstating the Medicare open enrollment period.

Lawrence Atkins – Long Term Quality Care

Dr. Atkins has such a wealth of knowledge on LTSS, it was truly fascinating to be able to listen to him speak on the topic. It has been difficult for Congress to move on LTSS, especially when considering the cost to the federal government. Dr. Atkins, however, shared his plan to eventually have an LTSS package included in Medicaid. There are definitely challenges: there is a dearth of hard data and evidence of cost-effectiveness, and it would be a very costly package. However, Dr. Atkins believe that at this point, action is the only way forward. Even with a background in research and science, I tend to understand his point of view. There are times when you are forced to act, and you have to make the best and most ethical decision that you can at the time. It is not ideal, but it is a test of the ability of government to address upcoming crises and care for its citizens.

Thursday September 8, 2016

Jim Esquea - Office of the Assistant Secretary of Legislation

Mr. Esquea was truly a fun meeting. He focused his time on giving us career advice, and encouraged us to try and remain in one position for several years. He also told us to be unafraid of not knowing things. Mr. Esquea, lastly, pointed out that he is the first Latino person (and the first person of color) to ever hold the ASL position, and that it has never been publicly recognized. In some ways, he is comforted by this. In other ways, he wishes there would be some attention to it. I am so glad to hear him voice his thoughts, because this situation (of wanting to be recognized, but also wanting to have normalized diversity) may be something I encounter as a woman of color in the policy world. To know that other people wrestle with the same issues and understand my own doubts and insecurities is very reassuring, and reminds me that even with these doubts that I have a place at the table.

Kristen Malloy – Office of Senator Tim Kaine

Kripa and I were very excited to enter this meeting, especially with Sen. Kaine's role in the upcoming election. It was a little disappointing to learn that Ms. Malloy could not really comment on the campaign. This is totally understandable, as she is a Senate employee and it would be improper. Nonetheless, we really enjoyed learning about Sen. Kaine's history in veteran's health, and learning about the way the campaign has changed (or rather, not changed) the office.

Shawn Bishop – The Commonwealth Fund

We were introduced to Ms. Bishop at the HNHC Patient briefing. Our meeting with Ms. Bishop was spent talking about the Hill and the way it works – we learned a little about protocol and the culture of the Hill

Friday September 9, 2016

John Gay – Consumer Healthcare Products

From Mr. Gay we learned so much about how over the counter products are regulated. Their efforts to mitigate abuse of single ingredients was really fascinating. Mr. Gay told us about their 3-pronged approach to combating abuse of certain ingredients like Dextromethorphan, which mostly consisted of media-based educational materials. Their

state-level advocacy is very strong, so it was interesting to learn about that aspect of their team as well.

Kathleen Jaeger – National Association of Chain Drug Stores

During this meeting, Ms. Jaeger explained to us the trade and foundation aspects of NADC, which both fall under her purview but seem to have very different priorities. After learning about her career history, we spoke at length about the drug pricing issue. Ms. Jaeger provided us with quite a few primers, fact sheets, and graphics to help us prepare for the Hill. She also recommended several articles – this was very helpful!