

The Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

November 2023-2



From the Editor: This issue's article summaries include updates on Eli Lilly, CVS and Amazon, the latest Leapfrog safety grades and the worsening state of child health. Click on the headline to read the full article. If you enjoy TMR, please subscribe [here](#) for \$25.00 /year.



[FDA approves Zepbound, a new obesity drug that will take on Wegovy](#), by Yuki Noguchi, NPR, 11/8/23

TMR Topline – Eli Lilly's new

weight loss drug, Zepbound, won FDA approval for use in adults and will compete with Novo Nordisk's weight loss drug Wegovy. Eli Lilly says it provides greater weight loss at a lower list price and will be available in the US by the end of 2023. Zepbound will carry a list price of \$1,060, about 20% less than the list price for Wegovy. In clinical trials, the average individual weight loss was about 20%. In announcing the approval, Dr. John Sharretts of the FDA said: "*In light of increasing rates of both obesity and overweight in the United States, today's approval addresses an unmet medical need.*" About 70% of adult Americans have obesity or are overweight. Although Medicare doesn't pay for weight-loss drugs, [Congress is considering measures](#) that would expand insurance access to cover treatments for obesity, including some of the new medications, for Medicare enrollees.



[CVS' Karen Lynch has plans for Oak Street Health, AI](#), by Caroline Hudson, Modern Healthcare, 11/7/23

TMR Topline – In looking to disrupt traditional healthcare, CVS Health has poured billions into services ranging from primary care to clinical

trials. CEO Karen Lynch discussed CVS' expansion plans at an industry conference, noting that CVS is all in on value-based care and is bullish on Oak Street Health. CVS' strategy is transitioning from transactional care to a focus on quality and outcomes. Nearly 1/3rd of the US population lacks access to primary care and Oak Street, which focuses on Medicare patients, is one solution to the lack of access. It has more than 190 centers across 24 states and aims to open another 50-60 locations in 2024. CVS wants to connect the dots across healthcare and is looking for smart AI Investments. Prioritizing health equity, CVS launched its Community Equity Alliance initiative to address disparities in heart health and mental health outcomes.



[Amazon launches One Medical for Prime](#), by Giles Bruce, Becker's Hospital Review, 11/7/23

TMR Topline – Amazon Prime mem-

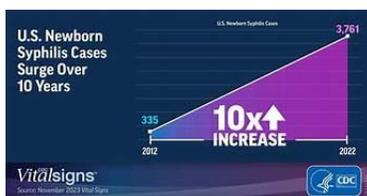
bers can now get healthcare at a discounted rate of \$9/mo. giving them unlimited 24/7 virtual visits and online scheduling for same- or next-day appointments at One Medical's more than 200 brick-and-mortar clinics. An estimated 200 million members already pay \$14.99 a month for free, speedy deliveries, and now can access the on-demand virtual visits at no extra cost through the One Medical app, including messaging-based care for common conditions such as seasonal allergies or cold sores, or urgent video chats for issues like minor injuries or high fevers. Like [other healthcare disruptors](#), One Medical also continues to grow its hospital partnerships. The company has specialty care [referral agreements](#) with health systems in its nearly 20 local markets.

TMR's Take: Modern Healthcare [reported](#) this week that Hackensack Meridian Health and Amazon's One Medical intend to open 20 primary care clinics throughout New Jersey over the next decade. They will fund the co-branded clinics which will join Hackensack's clinically integrated network, be managed and staffed by One Medical and target a predominantly [young and mostly healthy population](#) that often does not have a primary care physician.

LEAPFROG HOSPITAL SAFETY GRADE

[Leapfrog Group safety grades show progress on infection control](#), by Mari Devereaux, Modern Healthcare, 11/4/23

TMR Topline – The Leapfrog Group’s fall 2023 report revealed a 17.5% decrease between April 2021 and December 2022 in central line-associated bloodstream infections. MRSA cases and catheter-associated urinary tract infections decreased by 15.3% and 14.7%, respectively. CEO Leah Binder said the progress on reducing infections is likely due to increased focus from hospital leadership and fewer surges of critically ill Covid-19 patients. Hospital performance has remained fairly stable: nearly 30% earned an “A,” 24% a “B,” 39% a “C,” 7% a “D,” and less than 1% an “F.” Utah had the highest percentages of “A” hospitals, with 52% earning top marks. Vermont, Wyoming, Delaware, North Dakota and Washington, D.C. had no hospitals receiving “A” grades.



[Syphilis cases in US newborns skyrocketed in 2022. Health officials suggest more testing](#), by Mike

Stobbe and Kenya Hunter, AP, 11/7/23

TMR Topline – The CDC reported that more than 3,700 babies were born with congenital syphilis in 2022 — 10 times more than a decade ago and a 32% increase from 2021. In more than half of the congenital syphilis cases, the mothers tested positive during pregnancy but did not get properly treated. The CDC wants providers to begin treatment when a pregnant woman first tests positive and to expand access to transportation so the women can get treatment. The primary treatment is benzathine penicillin injections, but it’s in short supply and Pfizer is the sole manufacturer. Underfunded state health departments already are stretched thin and [there is no new federal money going out to state and local health departments](#) to bolster testing or access.



[Infant mortality rose in 2022 for the first time in two decades](#), by Aria Bendix, NBC News, 11/1/23

TMR Topline – In 2022, the US infant mortality rate rose last year to 5.6 deaths/1,000 live births. It was most pronounced in Georgia, Iowa, Missouri and Texas. Some experts speculated that some

pregnant people may not have received proper medical care during the Covid pandemic because they were seeing doctors virtually or hesitated to visit hospitals for pregnancy complications. It also led to job loss and economic instability, which can increase stress levels among pregnant people. Others said the increase in infant mortality is a byproduct of ending the constitutional right to abortion. Black infants still die at more than twice the rate of white infants, and they are nearly [four times more likely](#) to die from complications related to low birth weight.

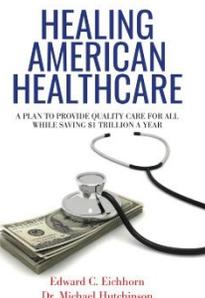


[‘Worse Than People Can Imagine’: Medicaid ‘Unwinding’ Breeds Chaos in States](#), by Phil Galewitz,

Kathryn Houghton, Brett Kelman and Samantha Liss, KFF Health News, 11/2/23

TMR Topline – Enrollment in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program surged to 94 million during the pandemic’s Public Health Emergency. Since the PHE ended, states have [terminated coverage](#) for over 10 million of more than 28 million people reviewed. The 20 states that provide data by age have already disenrolled [at least 2.2 million children](#). About 71% of enrollees terminated have been cut because of procedural issues, such as not responding to requests for information to verify their eligibility. The reviews have not gone smoothly: callers in Missouri and Florida reported waiting for more than two hours on hotlines to renew their Medicaid coverage. *“It’s not just bad, but worse than people can imagine,”* said [Camille Richoux](#), of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. *“This unwinding has not been about determining who is eligible by all possible means, but how we can kick people off by all possible means.”*

TMR’s Take: The US ranks [worst](#) among high-income countries for maternal and child health. The flawed Medi-



caid unwinding further exacerbates this disparity. Universal access to quality healthcare is a fundamental right in the other high-income countries. The Allcare Plan detailed in [“Healing American Healthcare: A Plan to Provide Quality Care for All, While Saving \\$1 Trillion a Year”](#) describes such a plan [for the US](#). It’s available in both soft-cover and

eBook versions. Click [here](#) to buy it at a discounted price with coupon Printbook or ebook at checkout.