March 12: The Academy and the American Nurses Association sent a letter to Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar in response to HHS's final rule on Title X Family Planning programs. The letter outlined concerns that the "gag" rule, which prohibits providers receiving Title X funding from referring their patients for safe and legal abortion services, threatens the patient-provider relationship centered on honesty and transparency. Read the letter here.

February 22: The Academy, along with the Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science, submitted comments to the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) within the National Institute of Health in response to their Request for Information regarding their working definitions of "behavioral" and "social" as it relates to future research proposals. The comments requests the definitions be broadened to ensure potential variables are not excluded and that OBSSR will be able to conduct comprehensive research. Read the comments here.

February 21: The Academy, along with 165 other national, state, and local medical, public health, and research organizations signed on to letters sent to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees requesting $50 million be provided to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct public health research into firearm morbidity and mortality prevention as a part of Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations. This funding request reflects the Academy's position that robust research is needed in order to prevent and reduce unintended firearm injuries and fatalities. Read the letter here.
From the President's Desk

President's Fiscal Year 2020 Budget

- March 11: A Budget for a Better America; Promises Kept. Taxpayers First
  - The President's FY 2020 budget proposes a 12% overall decrease in HHS discretionary spending by allotting $87.1 billion in discretionary budget and $1.2 trillion in mandatory funding, including:
    - $5 billion in cuts to the National Institutes of Health
    - $1.5 trillion in cuts to Medicaid and over $800 billion in cuts to Medicare, to be implemented over the next 10 years
  - However, the President's budget proposal does include some funding set aside for key health issues, including:
    - $4.8 billion to combat the opioid epidemic, $4 million of which are designated expanding the number of providers prescribing Medication-Assisted Treatments via the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act
    - $290 million for the first phase of the President's initiative to end the HIV epidemic
  - The President's budget requests have been sent to Congress where it will be up to the House and Senate Budget and Appropriations Committees to decide what to include in appropriations legislation for FY 2020.

From the Federal Register

Proposed Rules

- **CMS, HHS**: Patient Protection and the Affordable Care Act: Increasing Consumer Choice Through the Sale of Individual Health Insurance Coverage Across State Lines Through Health Care Choice Compacts
  - Request for comments on how to eliminate barriers to and enhance health insurance issuers' ability to sell individual health insurance coverage across state lines.

- **ONC, HHS**: 21st Century Cures Act: Interoperability, Information Blocking, and the ONC Health IT Certification Program
  - This proposed rule would implement certain provisions of the 21st Century Cures Act to advance interoperability and support the access, exchange, and use of electronic health information.

- **CMS, HHS**: Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Interoperability and Patient Access for Medicare Advantage Organization and Medicaid Managed Care Plans, State Medicaid Agencies, CHIP Agencies and CHIP
Managed Care Entities, Issuers of Qualified Health Plans in the Federally-Facilitated Exchanges and Health Care Providers

- This proposed rule is the first phase of proposed policies focused on advancing interoperability and patient access to health information within the CMS system.

**Notice**

- **HRSA, HHS:** "Low Income Levels" Used for Various Health Professions and Nursing Programs Authorized in the Public Health Service Act
  - HRSA is updating income levels used to identify a "low-income family" for the purpose of determining eligibility for programs such as the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs.

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**AROUND THE HILL**

**Congressional Hearings**

*Based on previous positions taken by the Academy, the following scan is meant for informational purposes and does not directly translate to Academy endorsement. Links provided allow you to watch the recordings and read witness testimony.*

**House Appropriations**

- March 7: Addressing the Public Health Emergency of Gun Violence
- March 13: Department of Health and Human Services Budget Request for FY 2020
- March 13: Gun Violence Prevention and Enforcement

**House Education & Labor**

- February 27: Caring for Our Caregivers: Protecting Health Care and Social Service Workers from Workplace Violence

**House Energy & Commerce**

- February 7: Examining the Failures of the Trump Administration's Inhuman Family Separation Policy
- February 13: Strengthening Our Health Care System: Legislation to Reverse ACA Sabotage and Ensure Pre-Existing Conditions Protections
- February 27: Confronting a Growing Public Health Threat: Measles Outbreaks in the U.S.
- March 6: Strengthening Our Health Care System: Legislation to Lower Consumer Costs and Expand Access
- March 12: The Fiscal Year 2020 HHS Budget
- March 13: Lowering the Cost of Prescription Drugs: Reducing Barriers to Market Competition
House Judiciary

- February 6: Preventing Gun Violence: A Call to Action
- March 7: Diagnosing the Problem: Exploring the Effects of Consolidation and Anticompetitive Conduct in Health Care Markets

House Oversight & Reform

- March 7: Trump Administration's Response to the Drug Crisis

House Ways & Means

- February 12: The Cost of Rising Prescription Drug Prices
- March 7: Promoting Competition to Lower Medicare Drug Prices

Senate Appropriations

- February 5: Review of the VA's Electronic Health Record Modernization
- February 28: Review of the Opioid Epidemic in America
- March 14: Review of the Ebola Outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Other Emerging Health Threats

Senate HELP

- February 5: How Primary Care Affects Health Care Costs and Outcomes
- February 12: Managing Pain During the Opioid Crisis
- March 5: Vaccines Save Lives: What is Driving Preventable Disease Outbreaks?
- March 26: Implementing the 21st Century Cures Act: Making Electronic Health Information Available to Patients and Providers

Senate Finance

- February 26: Drug Pricing in America: A Prescription for Change, Part II
- March 6: Not Forgotten: Protecting Americans from Abuse and Neglect in Nursing Homes
- March 14: The President's Fiscal Year 2020 Budget

Legislative Schedule

The House will be in a District Work Period from March 18-March 22.
The House will be in session March 25-March 28, April 1-April 4, and April 9-April 12.

The Senate will be in a District Work Period from March 18-March 22.
The Senate will be in session March 25-April 12.