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Pro Morning Health Care

Examining the latest in health care policy every weekday morning.

POLITICO Pro Morning Health Care: Expats ineligible for NHS? — The French dental debate

By **HELEN COLLIS** | 2/22/17, 7:10 AM CET

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Welcome to your midweek burst of Morning Health Care!

Thanks to Carmen Paun, Natalie Huet, Sarah Wheaton, Vince Chadwick and Nirvi Shah.

HOW BAD IS AMR LOOKING? This morning, we're expecting a big update on superbugs. The European Food Safety Authority and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control will publish their latest monitoring report, from 2015 data, on the extent of antimicrobial resistance in bacteria found in humans, animals and food. Given the stark warnings we've had in the last year on the increasing signs of resistance, we're not expecting cheery reading. The report comes ahead of the launch of the European Commission's new AMR Action Plan, expected to be in place by the summer. Depending on this latest report, it could influence the strength of the next plan's actions.

COULD BRITISH EXPATS LOSE NHS ACCESS? That was the warning one law prof gave the U.K.'s parliament Tuesday. Asked if the U.K.'s 1.2 million citizens living in the EU could find themselves "ineligible" for NHS treatment if they return home, Jean McHale,

a Birmingham professor of health care law, replied: “They could indeed find themselves in a very, very difficult position.” According to Huffington Post, McHale warned parliament’s health select committee of “practical problems, in terms of patients being stranded in other EU member states.”

PESTICIDES LOBBY WANTS THE EXCEPTION BACK: The European Crop Protection Association (ECPA) sent a letter to European Commissioner for Health Vytenis Andriukaitis to ask for the derogation on endocrine disrupting criteria to be put back on the table at the comitology vote scheduled for later this month. “With the most recent decision to exclude the derogation from the proposals to be voted on February 28, 2017, we are yet again seeing the Commission giving in to perceived and political pressure to ignore science at the cost of agricultural productivity, competitiveness and trade in Europe; all with no added protection for health and the environment,” the ECPA boss Jean-Philippe Azoulay wrote.

The Commission announced in early February that it will no longer discuss a legal text implementing an exception to the rule banning endocrine disruptors in the pesticides regulation, as it proposed last year; here’s our refresher.

GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION AFTER WEAK UK OBESITY PLAN: Historically, the U.K. has taken the lead in public health policies, driving forward the European agenda. But not in obesity. Here, the U.K. government “missed an opportunity” to take global leadership of child health with its “severely limited” childhood obesity strategy, published last summer — after a year’s delay — according to health experts writing today in the British Medical Journal. “Strong actions were conspicuous by their absence,” with the strategy failing to include the World Health Organization’s recommendations on tackling obesity, or stronger advertising controls, mandatory food reformulation and nutrition education, said authors Mark Hanson, from the British Heart Foundation and Neena Modi, president of the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health.

So health professionals need to take matters into their own hands: They call for a new global alliance led by an international coalition of health care organizations, to focus on a “life course approach” to tackle obesity. Starting from “preconception,” health professionals need to engage parents-to-be on how to prevent obesity and promote health. They call for dialogue between industry, policymakers, scientists, educators, professional bodies, children and young people, and urge continued lobbying of governments for strong policies, regulations, fiscal actions and investment.

STOPPING THE KIDS FROM GETTING FAT: Over in Malta, the presidency of the Council kicks off a two-day event today on stopping the rise of childhood obesity. Malta

has a big problem itself, being the EU country with the highest obesity rate in 2015 and 2016.

WOMEN SMOKING & CANCER DEATH RATES: Death rates from cancer will fall faster in men than in women in Europe this year, according to research out today in the journal *Annals of Oncology*. Researchers in Italy, Switzerland and the U.S. predict that, compared with 2012, death rates in men will fall by around 8 percent to 132 per 100,000 of the population, while in women the decline will be around 4 percent to 84.5 per 100,000. This trend “reflects the different trends in lung and other tobacco-related cancers between the two sexes,” said lead researcher Carlo La Vecchia, adding that it was “striking” that death rates from lung cancer are higher in women between the ages of 25 and 44 than in men. Overall, lung cancer is predicted to cause 275,700 deaths in men and women in 2017, corresponding to about 20 percent of cancer deaths.

At least there's some new hope for those women getting lung cancer: The European Commission on Tuesday rubber-stamped the conditional approval of Swiss drugmaker Roche's lung cancer therapy Alecensa. Following the European Medicines Agency's recommendation, approval is for one year and contingent upon further real-world evidence generation in patients with a certain form of lung cancer after they have developed resistance to standard therapy, Pfizer's Xalkori.

RARE DISEASE WINNERS: Belgian ALDE MEP Frédérique Ries and GlaxoSmithKline were among the winners Tuesday evening of the Eurordis Awards, given by the rare disease patient organization every year. Ries was honored for promoting a pilot project on rare disease research that actively involves patients. As for GSK, in 2016, its cooperation with Fondazione Telethon and Ospedale San Raffaele in Italy brought to market “an innovative gene therapy to treat patients with the rare disease adenosine deaminase severe combined immunodeficiency syndrome,” according to Eurordis. Commissioner Andriukaitis awarded the prizes at a ceremony in Brussels.

This kicked off a two-days event in Brussels on improving patients' access to rare disease therapies.

ITALIAN MEETING AND A THREE-COURSE DINNER: Speaking of Andriukaitis, he is scheduled to meet the Italian Health Minister Beatrice Lorenzin in Brussels today. Although no agenda has been published, we expect the relocation of the EMA to come up. Tonight, Andriukaitis will give a speech over a three-course dinner on health and food safety. We're sure that his own food will not serve as a bad example for food safety, even if it hosted by the British Chamber of Commerce.

FILLON'S NEW PITCH – FREE TEETH: France's embattled presidential candidate François Fillon hopes to win back voters by promising free glasses, hearing aids and dentures. The former prime minister made a dramatic U-turn on his health care reform pitch Tuesday, after he came under fire this fall over a plan to restrict public health insurance to serious and chronic diseases.

Independent rival Emmanuel Macron, who has yet to unveil a detailed campaign manifesto but made a similar pitch weeks ago to fully reimburse dental work, eye care and hearing aids, couldn't help but note the irony: "They've been telling me, you don't have a platform — but somehow it gets copied." Read more here or below.

Dentists say thanks, but no thanks. Each year, French patients spend €2.4 billion out-of-pocket on dental care. One of the country's main dentists' unions now asks: Who will foot the bill? Dentists are already fighting a push by the Socialist government to cap their rates, and have called a nationwide strike for March 3. They're not reassured by presidential candidates' sudden interest in the price of crowns and dental implants. In a statement, the CNSD union called on candidates not to succumb to demagoguery and "not repeat the same mistakes" as the current "statist" administration.

French Socialist presidential candidate Benoît Hamon also mocked how Fillon "must have been touched by grace" in making access to care a priority, and he focused his own pitch on prevention and environmental health. He suggested he was a tough enough guy to stand up to industry lobbies to fight junk food, diesel emissions and chemicals that can disrupt the human hormone system.

Speaking of endocrine disruptors: Consumer group UFC Que Choisir found the baddies in about 400 creams and other personal care products you may be using every day, including on your baby.

CMA INVESTIGATES UK CARE HOMES MARKET: Britain's competition watchdog is investigating the U.K.-wide care home market for the elderly, including nursing homes, to "examine how well the market is working, including whether care home providers are treating residents and their representatives fairly." It's a hot topic in the country, with failures in the market blamed for bed-blocking in NHS hospitals, long waiting lists and ineffective use of NHS resources. The Competition and Markets Authority has put out a call for evidence from all interested parties. Submissions can be made via its website.

CASH FOR IDEAS: Businesses can apply for a share of £15 million for projects that support small- and medium-sized companies to develop innovations in health and life sciences. Innovate U.K., the government's funding arm, is investing in projects addressing technical or commercial challenges in health and life sciences, which

includes agriculture, food and health care. The aim is to increase the competitiveness for U.K. businesses.

QUICK LINKS

'I want to get cancer' ad campaign attracts almost 100 complaints, reported the Irish Times.

POLITICO reported on the Cannabis party's high fine for late filing of accounts.

Dutch MPs vote in favor of regulated marijuana cultivation, reported Dutch News.

The U.K.'s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency launched a blog: MedReg.

Hospital cuts planned in most of England, a BBC analysis found.

Hepatitis C will be eradicated in Australia by 2026, according to national broadcaster ABC.

A Q&A with Lilianne Ploumen, the Dutch official behind the new global family planning fund meant to counteract U.S. President Donald Trump's global gag rule, via the New York Times.

***** POLITICO Pro Article *****

France's Fillon mellows on health care reform

— By Natalie Huet

France's beleaguered François Fillon sought to win back voters Tuesday by promising free glasses, hearing aids and dentures.

The center-right presidential candidate had been widely expected to win the election in May until he tripped on plans to slash health spending, and on a major scandal over payments to his wife and children.

Eager to regain the ground that polls suggest he may have lost to far-right leader Marine Le Pen and independent candidate Emmanuel Macron, Fillon has now seriously softened his pitch for health care reform.

"There is no question of touching public health insurance, even less privatizing it or lowering its coverage," Fillon told a conference hosted by the Mutualité Française, the French federation of non-profit complementary health insurers.

Fillon plans to fully reimburse eyeglasses for children – starting this year, he told Le Parisien newspaper – and to negotiate a new deal with private health insurers to better cover hearing aids and dental implants. The aim is to bring household out-of-pocket costs for these products “as close as possible to zero” by 2022, he said.

Former economy minister Macron, who has yet to unveil a detailed campaign manifesto, was quick to point out that he had been the first candidate to promise full reimbursement of glasses, hearing aids and dental implants in the next five years.

“They’ve been telling me, you don’t have a platform — but somehow it gets copied,” he quipped.

Macron also wants to invest €5 billion in over-stretched hospitals while boosting prevention and access to primary doctors. By relying more on outpatient care, he foresees €15 billion in spending cuts over five years.

Fillon initially came under fire this fall over his radical plan to limit public health insurance to serious and chronic diseases. By Christmas, he had backpedaled on the proposal, deleted it from his website and took his whole health care reform back to the drawing board.

The former prime minister still plans to slash €20 billion in health care costs over five years by focusing on efficiency gains, capping health spending growth at 2 percent per year and ensuring patients have better access to primary care doctors so they don’t rush to hospitals to seek care.

But he sought to show he was “far from caricatures” and open-minded about how to make France’s generous health care system more sustainable. If elected, he said he plans to call a major convention at the end of the year to discuss its future with “all the stakeholders concerned.”