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Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

NIH funding restored; AHIP promises prior authorization reform

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From the Editor: As vaccine skeptic RFK Jr. stacks the CDC's vaccine advisory committee with skeptics, only 3% of measles cases are fully vaccinated patients. America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) promise prior authorization reform and NIH funds are restored. Click the headline for the full article; subscribe to TMR for \$25/year [here](#).



[Dozens of insurers vow to ease off prior authorizations](#),
by Nona Tepper and Bridget Early, Modern Healthcare,
6/23/25

TMR Topline – A coalition of 48 for-profit and nonprofit insurers pledged to reduce what providers characterize as the ever-increasing burden of obtaining prior authorizations (PAs) for care. In 2026 they will cancel some PA rules and improve communications. In 2027, the companies intend to adopt a common technology standard to process PAs and to respond to 80% of electronic requests in real time. Providers are likely to greet the news with skepticism given that past promises weren't kept. However, CMS regulations being finalized will make some of the promises mandatory. By 2027, insurers that administer government health benefits must use the same standard for electronic PA processes.



[Inside Aetna's prior authorization, approval overhauls](#), by Nona Tepper, Modern Healthcare, 6/19/25

TMR Topline – Steve Nelson, Aetna's new President, laid out his plans for revamping the way Aetna interacts with providers and policyholders at the AHIP 2025 Conference. It's part of a \$20 billion decade-long plan to drive affordability, ease the provider experience, and simplify access for members. Aetna began bundling prior author-

ization (PA) requirements for certain services, such as maternity care, and implemented a tool that allows members to track providers' requests, and does not use [artificial intelligence](#) to deny prior authorizations. The company recently exempted 1,000 providers including hospital chains and physician groups from its PA rules.



[Trump administration makes sweeping changes to ObamaCare, ends 'Dreamer' coverage](#),

by Nathaniel Weixel, The HILL, 06/20/25

TMR Topline – The Trump administration is shortening ObamaCare's annual open enrollment period and ending the law's coverage of immigrants who entered the US illegally as children. The federal open enrollment period now will run from Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, not to Jan. 15. Enrollment had swelled to [an all-time high](#) when the Biden administration made it easier to sign up for Affordable Care Act plans. According to CMS, the rule is projected to save up to \$12 billion in 2026 by ["reining in wasteful federal spending, and refocusing on making health insurance markets more affordable and sustainable for hardworking American families."](#)

TMR's Take: Providers and patients will welcome the prior authorization reforms that should ease access to needed care and reduce administrative costs. AHIP also vowed to fight the [Trump budget bill](#) to avoid the harshest cuts and changes to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act and extend the ACA enhanced premium tax credits, noting that the Medicaid changes clearly go far beyond mere waste, fraud and abuse.



[NIH employees publish 'Bethesda Declaration' in dissent of Trump administration policies](#), by Meg Tirrell, CNN, 6/9/25

TMR Topline – Before Covid-19 vaccines were available in 2020, Stanford professor Dr. Jay Bhattacharya and two colleagues published the [Great Barrington Declaration](#), that called for protecting the most vulnerable while allowing others to resume normal life to

attain herd immunity through infection. WHO's director-general called the idea "[unethical](#)." He now leads the NIH. Staff published their own letter of dissent; [The Bethesda Declaration](#) signed by more than 300 NIH scientists. It was issued the day before Bhattacharya was due to testify before Congress, in a budget [hearing](#). The Trump Administration plans to cut the NIH budget by 40%.



[Judge orders NIH to restore hundreds of grants cut under Trump](#), by Sara Reardon, Science, 6/16/25

TMR Topline – Appointed to

the Massachusetts US District Court by in 1985 by President Reagan, Judge William Young ruled that the NIH must immediately restore funding for roughly 800 grants in areas of sensitive topics that it abruptly canceled. "*The court finds and rules that [NIH's] explanations are bereft of reasoning, virtually in their entirety,*" he said "*I would be blind not to call it out. My duty is to call it out.*". Young added "*I've sat on this bench now for 40 years and I've never seen government racial discrimination like this, Is it true of our society as a whole, have we fallen so low? Have we no shame?*



[AMA resolution opposes RFK Jr.'s dismantling of vaccine panel](#), by Jon Asplund, Modern Healthcare, 6/10/25

TMR Topline – The AMA's House of Delegates has adopted an emergency resolution opposing RFK Jr.'s move to gut the federal vaccine advisory council and will seek a US Senate investigation of his action. AMA President Dr. Bruce Scott said in a statement that ACIP "has been a trusted national source of science- and data-driven advice and guidance on the use of vaccines to prevent and control disease. Physicians, parents, community leaders and public health officials rely on them for clinical guidance, public health information and knowledge," for generations.



[Kennedy's vaccine panel contains skeptics, nonspecialists](#), by Lia De Groot, Sandhya Raman and Jessie Hellmann, Roll Call, 6/11/25

TMR Topline – The eight members selected for the CDC's vaccine advisory panel include critics of the nation's Covid-19 vaccine policies or those who don't specialize in vaccine science. Physician and

biochemist Robert W. Malone has advocated for the use of hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin to treat Covid-19, and had been banned from social media platforms [for spreading misinformation](#) about the pandemic. Martin Kulldorff's credentials include epidemiology. In 2021 he said that Covid-19 vaccines were not necessary for children or people with prior natural infection. Others on the panel don't appear to have significant experience with vaccine science. Retsef Levi, an MIT professor, specializes in supply chains and logistics. James Pagano is described as an emergency medicine physician. Most of the former ACIP members had backgrounds directly in infectious disease or immunization.



[Cassidy, in Break With Kennedy, Calls for Vaccine Meeting Delay](#), by Sheryl Gay Stolberg, New York Times, 6/24/25

TMR Topline – Senator Bill Cassidy, Chairman of the Senate health committee, asked HHS Secretary RFK Jr. to postpone the scheduled meeting of his vaccine advisory committee. Mr. Cassidy, a physician and a strong proponent of vaccines, wrote in a [social media post](#), "*Although the appointees to ACIP have scientific credentials, many do not have significant experience studying microbiology, epidemiology or immunology. In particular, some lack experience studying new technologies such as mRNA vaccines, and may even have a preconceived bias against them.*" The advisory committee wields enormous influence. Insurers rely on its recommendations for guidance about what vaccines should be covered.

TMR's Take: At RFK Jr.'s confirmation hearing, Cassidy recalled loading an 18-year-old woman who had hepatitis B onto an ambulance so she could get an emergency liver transplant. "*And as she took off, it was the worst day of my medical career, because I thought \$50 of vaccines could have prevented this all,*" he said. "*That was an inflection point in my career.*" Cassidy extracted a promise from RFK Jr. that, in return for his Senate confirmation vote, "*If confirmed, he will maintain the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' recommendations without changes.*" Primum non nocere – first do no harm. Senator Cassidy is up for reelection in 2026. Apparently his fear of being primaried trumps allegiance to the Hippocratic oath. Are vaccines effective? The CDC [reported](#) that nearly 97% of recent cases are patients who were unvaccinated or unknown vaccine status.