

# Three Minute Read™

## Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

Will America's safety net survive Trump and RFK Jr? Read on!

November 2024-2



**From the Editor:** This issue's article summaries look at the incoming Trump administration's health agenda, the uninsured, pre-term births and dentists. Click the headline for the full article. If you like **TMR**, click [here](#) to subscribe.



[Trump's White House Return Poised To Tangle Health Care Safety Net](#), by Stephanie Armour, KFF Health News, 11/6/24

**TMR Topline** – Former President Trump's victory could lead to an erosion of the ACA's consumer protections, the imposition of work requirements in Medicaid and funding cuts to the safety net insurance, and challenges to federal agencies that safeguard public health. Worst case, public health authorities worry, the US could see increases in preventable illnesses; a weakening of public confidence in established science; and debunked notions — such as a link between vaccines and autism — adopted as policy. Polls show the ACA has [gained support among the public](#), including provisions such as preexisting condition protections and allowing young people to stay on family health plans until age 26. Efforts to weaken the ACA could include cutting funds for enrollment outreach, enabling consumers to purchase health plans that don't comply with ACA consumer protections, and allowing insurers to charge sicker people higher premiums.

Trump has said decisions about abortion restrictions should be left to the states. Thirteen states ban abortion with few exceptions, while 28 others restrict the procedure based on gestational duration [according to the Guttmacher Institute](#). Trump could move to restrict access to abortion medications either by withdrawing the FDA's authorization for the drugs or by enforcing the 19th-century Comstock Act to ban mail delivery of the drugs.



[Kennedy's F.D.A. Wish List: Raw Milk, Stem Cells, Heavy Metals](#), by Christina Jewett, New York Times,

11/13/24

**TMR Topline** – Long critical of the FDA, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has said he wants to fire agency experts who have taken action against treatments that have sometimes harmed people or are on the fringe of accepted medical practice that he strongly believes should be allowed. President-elect Trump has voiced support for Mr. Kennedy, saying he will let him “go wild on health.” Days before the election, in [a post on X](#), Mr. Kennedy threatened to fire FDA employees who have waged a “war on public health.” He listed some of the products that he claimed the FDA had subjected to “aggressive suppression,” including ivermectin, raw milk and vitamins as well as therapies involving stem cells, chelation and hyperbaric oxygen. Current FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf, who spoke frequently about the dangers of misinformation in the Covid pandemic, [said](#) that he was aware that experts were not always right, but worried about them being broadly ignored. Noting that leadership above the FDA, including HHS, rarely interferes with scientific decisions at the FDA, Dr. Califf said, “it’s totally within the law for the president or the HHS secretary to overrule the entire FDA.”



[CDC director warns about RFK Jr.'s skeptical vaccine views](#), by Gerry Smith, Bloomberg, 11/13/24

**TMR Topline** – CDC Director Mandy Cohen warned about the threat of curtailing vaccination efforts as long-time skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr. prepares for an influential role in the incoming Trump administration noting, “We have a very short memory of what it is like to hold a child who has been paralyzed with polio, or to comfort a mom who lost their kid from measles. I don’t want to have to see us go backward in order to remind ourselves that vaccines work.” Long critical of immunizations, Kennedy says they lack effectiveness and have

links to autism, claims that have been repeatedly debunked. Kennedy also said that he wouldn't take vaccines away from Americans.

**TMR's Take:** President-elect Trump has nominated Mr. Kennedy to head HHS.



[CDC reports 7.6% of Americans are uninsured,](#)

by Lauren Berryman, Modern Healthcare, 11/11/24

**TMR Topline** – Commenting on a CDC report showing that 7.6% of Americans, or 25.3 million people, lacked health insurance during the second quarter, HHS Secretary Becerra said, *“More people have health insurance coverage than ever before — and the peace of mind that comes with it.”* He attributed it to the ACA's expansion of Medicaid and creation of the Marketplace. Conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, private health insurance provided by job-based plans, the ACA marketplace and state-based exchanges covered 62.1% of Americans, or 205.8 million people.

Nearly 40% of Americans, or 129.5 million people, received coverage through public health plans, including Medicare, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program and military plans. The uninsured rate could rise to [8.9% within the next decade](#) as Medicaid redeterminations conclude and enhanced ACA subsidies potentially expire.

**TMR's Take:** Prior to the ACA's 2010 enactment, 44 million people lacked health insurance coverage.



[Premature births in the U.S. remain at an all-time high, the March of Dimes reports,](#)

by Erika Edwards, NBC News, 11/14/24

**TMR Topline** – A new [March of Dimes](#) report finds that there have been no improvements in the preterm birth rate in the last 10 years. In 2013, the preterm birth rate was 9.8%; last year, it was 10.4%, with about 370,000 babies born at 37 weeks' gestation or earlier. States in the South had the highest percentage of preterm births. Women with diabetes or high blood pressure had the highest preterm birth rates. Experts worry the problem could worsen as pregnant women increasingly go without doctors' care amid an [exodus of OB-GYNs in states with strict abortion bans](#).



[Ozempic and Wegovy may be beneficial in fighting alcohol addiction: Study,](#)

by Lauren Irwin, The HILL, 11/13/24

**TMR Topline** – A recent study of 228,000 Swedes who had alcohol use disorder and Type 2 diabetes found that the weight loss drugs Ozempic and Wegovy may be beneficial for people struggling with alcohol addiction. Published in JAMA Psychiatry and conducted over an 8-year period, the study found that 58.5% experienced alcohol-related hospitalizations. The risk of hospitalization was much lower (5%) among the 4,300 individuals taking these drugs than those taking approved alcohol disorder drugs.

Dr. Markku Lähteenvuo, a psychiatric researcher at Finland's Niuvanniemi Hospital [told NBC News](#) many patients do not have good outcomes on various alcohol use disorder medications, noting *“We really do need more tools in the toolbox,”*



[Dentists Are Pulling 'Healthy' and Treatable Teeth To Profit From Implants, Experts Warn,](#)

by Brett Kelman and Anna

Werner, CBS News, 11/1/24

**TMR Topline** – Dental implant surgery can be a godsend for patients with unsalvageable teeth and business is booming. A single implant costs a few thousand dollars while full-arch implants cost tens of thousands. Implants require upkeep, and although they can't get cavities, [studies have shown](#) that patients can be susceptible to infections in the gums and bone around their implants. Some worry implant dentistry has gone too far and had witnessed the overuse of implants first hand.

Dentistry's fundamental goal is to preserve natural teeth. Many dental clinics that offer implants have consolidated into chains owned by private equity firms that have bought out much of implant dentistry. Four large chains (ClearChoice, Aspen Dental, Affordable Care, and Dental Care Alliance) declined to be interviewed for the article.

**TMR's Take:** Caveat emptor! As one dissatisfied ClearChoice patient said in an interview, *“I should have asked more questions ... like, Can they save these teeth?”* Any patient considering a full-arch implant should seek a second opinion before proceeding.