

Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

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[Biden-Sanders task force health platform pushes for public option, a free COVID-19 vaccine](#), by Paige Minemyer, Fierce

Healthcare, 7/9/2020

From the Editor: The global pandemic continues to rage throughout the South and West claiming the lives of more than 140,000 Americans, 5.4 million have lost health insurance...and United Healthcare's 2nd quarter profits doubled. This issue of **TMR** summarizes recent articles that include the looming physician shortage, the presumptive Democratic nominee's healthcare plan, how a third-world country controlled the spread, and drug store clinics. To access each full article, just click on the headline.



[New AAMC Report Confirms Growing Physician Shortage](#), 6/26/2020

TMR Topline™ - In its sixth annual study, [The Complexities of Physician Supply and Demand: Projections from 2018-2033](#), the American Association of Medical Colleges projects an estimated shortage of between 54,100 and 139,000 physicians by 2033. The study was conducted in 2019 prior to the pandemic.

TMR's Take – The AAMC's latest projection of physician shortages by 2025 is more than 40% higher than its 2017 estimate. More than 30% of America's physicians are over 55. To attract more Americans to practice medicine, the high cost of a medical education must be addressed and incentives need to be provided to correct the primary care/specialists imbalance. Other issues to be addressed include stress of dealing with private insurance pre-authorization requirements and the burdensome aspects of electronic health records on physician practices.

TMR Topline™ - The [platform](#) released by presumptive Democratic presidential nominee places a high priority on implementing a public option, including a plan with no deductible. Building on the ACA, Medicare, Medicaid and the VA system, the healthcare task force members wrote "*Private insurers need real competition to ensure they have incentive to provide affordable, quality coverage to every American.*" Co-chaired by Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Washington, and former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, M.D., the task force's principal recommendations also include:

- Make free COVID-19 testing more widely available and, when available, vaccines for the virus to come at no cost to the patient.
- Recruit 100,000 contact tracers and set up a system for public health agencies to track the virus.
- Set a cap to ensure that patients spend no more than 8.5% of their income on premiums and lift the cap on subsidies for ACA plans.
- Allow Medicare to negotiate directly with drug manufacturers on pricing, and cap out-of-pocket drug costs for seniors.
- Lower the age for Medicare enrollment to 60.

TMR's Take – In speeches and articles last year, your Editor forecast that "M4A is DOA" and the task force co-chaired by one of its most ardent advocates saw the light. Their approach has much in common with the Eichhorn-Hutchinson universal healthcare [plan](#) that provides choice along with a public option, and reduces administrative waste, drug costs and medically related bankruptcies.

Other than continued efforts to repeal the ACA, Republicans have yet to release their healthcare plan.

[A COVID-19 Success Story in Rwanda: Free](#)



[Testing, Robot Caregivers](#), by Jason Beaubien, NPR, 7/15/2020

TMR Topline™ - Mainland Africa's most densely populated country, with per capita income of roughly \$2,000 per year, has taken a unique approach to containing COVID-19. Health officials in personal protective equipment administer tests randomly at no cost to the individual. Sample collection and completion of contact information paperwork takes about five minutes. Anyone who tests positive is immediately quarantined at a dedicated COVID-19 clinic. Contact tracing is done and any who are deemed at high risk are quarantined until they can be tested. Rwanda uses "pool testing" to maximize its testing capacity. If a positive result is obtained, each of the 20-25 nasal swabs are tested individually to identify the infected person(s). Community healthcare workers and police and college students were mobilized to work as contact tracers. Human-size robots are used in the COVID-19 clinics to take patients' temperatures and deliver supplies. Residents have been following the government's orders regarding masks, washing hands and staying home. The result: the country of 12 million has recorded just over 1,200 cases since its first case in mid-March. With a population of 11.7 million (and four times the area), Ohio has recently been reporting roughly 1,200 cases **a day**.

TMR's Take – A former Belgian colony, Rwanda was the site of a heinous genocide in 1994. What a difference 25 years makes. It's embarrassing to see that a third-world country with limited resources has managed to minimize COVID-19's impact far better than its former parent and the US. So much for American exceptionalism.



[Nordic Study Suggests Open Schools Don't Spread Virus Much](#), Kati Pohjanpalo & Hanna Hoikkala, Bloomberg, 7/19/2020

TMR Topline™ - The June 11 issue of **TMR** covered Sweden's failed attempt at reaching "herd immunity." Proof that every cloud may have a silver lining, a Nordic study found that keeping primary schools open during the coronavirus pandemic may not have had much

bearing on contagion rates. They found no measurable difference in the number of coronavirus cases among children in Sweden, where schools were left open, compared with neighboring Finland, where schools were shut. Conducted by the Public Health Agency of Sweden and the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, the data showed no difference in the overall incidence of COVID-19 cases in children aged 1-19. Finland's contact tracing found hardly any evidence of children infecting others. A [French study](#) recently found that school children don't appear to transmit COVID-19 to peers or teachers, show fewer symptoms than adults, and are less contagious.

Israel's experience was different – the spread of COVID-19 among middle and high school students accelerated after schools reopened. However, Israel has larger class sizes in smaller classrooms. Study co-author Hanna Nohynek, chief physician at the infectious diseases unit of Finland's health authority, said that "children get sick with COVID-19 much more rarely and less severely." She cautioned that more data is needed.

TMR's Take – News of the Scandinavian study coincides with Florida's teachers union filing [suit](#) to keep the state from reopening its schools for "at least five days a week for all students," while the coronavirus is surging. **TMR** agrees with Dr. Fauci who said the "default position is that you should try, to the best of your ability, with all considerations to the safety and welfare of the children and the teachers, we should try to get the children back to school as best as we possibly can."



[Walgreens Boots Alliance invests \\$1B in VillageMD to open 500+ medical clinics, by](#)

Laura Dyrda, Beckers Hospital Review, 7/8/2020

Walgreens TMR Topline™ - VillageMD, a primary care startup that focuses on helping manage chronic care conditions, partnered with Walgreens at five co-located clinics in the Houston area. The stores have reported high patient satisfaction and increased medication adherence. The \$1 billion investment will enable VillageMD to open 500-700 more clinics, half in areas with shortages of medical professionals. It already manages over 1,000 clinics in nine states.

TMR's Take – Americans trust their pharmacists. Rival CVS Health is opening HealthHubs in its stores to help customers better manage their health. With the looming physician shortage, will there be doctors to staff them?