



Around the world of US healthcare in 360 words or less



September 21, 2026 | Issue 432

Editor's note

[This series](#) is produced by KPMG Healthcare and is intended to be short and succinct, less than 360 words, to provide a weekly digestible bite of healthcare regulatory, policy, and industry news relevant to our clients. Links are provided to source material (proposed and final regulations, agency guidance and press releases, reports, research, etc.) when available. Please share this email with colleagues and other interested individuals, and encourage them to [subscribe to our mailing list here](#).

We welcome your feedback. Let us know if KPMG can help. Please reply to this email with any comments or requests.

Subscribe here



Healthcare regulatory news

CMS is [expanding](#) its value-based [ACCESS](#) model to cover additional chronic conditions, including heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and substance use disorders. This 10-year initiative provides payments to digital health organizations based on patient outcome improvements rather than service volume, seeking to establish a standardized payment framework across public and commercial payers.

FDA [initiated](#) a new pilot program aiming to shorten the time required for manufacturers to commence human trials of new products. The program, part of the broader [Operation TrialBlazer](#) initiative, will create a network of qualified research institutions to partner with companies in developing and reviewing Investigational New Drug (IND) applications before formal submission.

In new [guidance](#) released from CMS, the agency will allow states to implement a tiered system to evaluate medical frailty for exemptions from Medicaid work requirements. Under this framework, a severe diagnosis can automatically qualify a beneficiary for an exemption, aiming to reduce administrative barriers that might otherwise lead to coverage loss.



Healthcare law and policy news

HHS Secretary Kennedy has [appointed](#) eight new members, including a new chair, to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) following a period of leadership transitions. While these appointments fill long-standing vacancies, several medical organizations have [expressed](#) concerns regarding the panel's future direction and the increased representation of specialists over primary care experts.

With enrollment surpassing half a million participants, the [Medicare GLP-1 Bridge](#) program has expanded consumer access to high-cost obesity medications. This rapid adoption, however, [threatens](#) to shift billions of dollars in premium liabilities onto Medicare Advantage insurers, creating acute forecasting volatility and substantial downside risk to industry margins.

Hospital operating margins [declined](#) in July, primarily due to weak outpatient volumes, a seasonal drop in elective surgeries, and continued payer mix erosion. These financial pressures were intensified by a 16% year-to-date increase in bad debt and charity care, along with a 1% rise in labor expenses.

A group of senators has [claimed](#) that HHS is intentionally allowing tens of millions of dollars appropriated for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to expire. The alleged [withholding](#) of funds endangers the work of USPSTF, which relies on AHRQ partnership to make evidence-based recommendations on preventative care.



Please send your questions or comments to us-hclspractice@kpmg.com.

KPMG. Make the Difference.

Learn about us:



kpmg.com



Subscribe

Some or all of the services described herein may not be permissible for KPMG audit clients and their affiliates or related entities.

[Privacy](#) | [Legal](#)

You have received this message from KPMG LLP. If you wish to unsubscribe from this publication or from other KPMG communications, please click [here](#) to visit your KPMG Communication Preferences Center. To unsubscribe from all KPMG communications, click [here](#).

© 2026 KPMG LLP, a Delaware limited liability partnership, and its subsidiaries are part of the KPMG global organization of independent member firms affiliated with KPMG International Limited, a private English company limited by guarantee. All rights reserved.

The KPMG name and logo are trademarks used under license by the independent member firms of the KPMG global organization.

USCS035556-1A