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*The Critical Care News Summary is an update from The Roundtable on Critical Care Policy. For further information on the Roundtable, please visit our website at [www.CriticalCareRoundtable.org](http://www.CriticalCareRoundtable.org).*

## Roundtable News

The Roundtable is pleased to announce the **Congressional Breakfast and Washington Outreach Day on Tuesday, March 8<sup>th</sup> in Washington, DC**. Participants will have the opportunity to engage with key Congressional staff and hear their insights on the health care landscape and the new Republican majority's health care agenda for the next two years. Following the breakfast, we will be meeting directly with Members of Congress and their staff to help raise the profile of critical care medicine on Capitol Hill and garner support for the Critical Care Assessment and Improvement Act of 2011.

For additional event details, please see the attached invitation. To RSVP, please contact [skskubikowski@CriticalCareRoundtable.org](mailto:skskubikowski@CriticalCareRoundtable.org)

## Capitol Hill Events and Updates

### State of the Union

This past Tuesday, President Obama delivered his second State of the Union address -- his first to a divided Congress -- laying out his agenda for the coming year. The President's plan to "win the future" focused primarily on the nation's economic outlook and proposed budget-cutting measures, though he did spend several minutes discussing the new health care law, acknowledging that there was still room for improvement, and telling members "If you have ideas about how to improve this law by making care better or more affordable, I am eager to work with you." To view the text of the health-related passages of the address, please click [here](#).

### Committee News

Following the recent House passage of legislation to repeal the health care law, the House Budget, Ways & Means, and Energy & Commerce Committees, as well as the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee have all held hearings this past week to examine various portions of the new health care law. We anticipate these hearing to continue over the next few months.

## Federal Activity

**["Appointments Announced to Methodology Committee of the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute \(PCORI\)," \(GAO Press Release\) January 21, 2011](#)**

Gene L. Dodaro, Comptroller General of the United States and head of the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), today announced the appointment of 15 members to the Methodology Committee of the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). The Committee has the responsibility of helping PCORI develop and update methodological standards and guidance for comparative clinical effectiveness research. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act authorized PCORI as a non-profit corporation to assist patients, clinicians,

purchasers, and policymakers in making informed health decisions by providing quality, relevant evidence on how best to prevent, diagnose, treat, and monitor diseases and other health conditions.

**[“No personalized medicine experts on CER committee,”](#)** *The Vitals Blog, InsideHealthPolicy.com, January 24, 2011*

Personalized medicine advocates are unhappy that there are no private-sector experts in personalized medicine on a committee that will play a key role in shaping the government's work on comparative effectiveness research.

**[“Public Health Information Technology: Additional Strategic Planning Needed to Guide HHS's Efforts to Establish Electronic Situational Awareness Capabilities,”](#)** *GAO Report to Congressional Committees, December 2010*

A catastrophic public health event could threaten our national security and cause hundreds of thousands of casualties. Recognizing the need for efficient sharing of real-time information to help prevent devastating consequences of public health emergencies, Congress included in the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act in December 2006 a mandate for the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in collaboration with state, local, and tribal public health officials, to develop and deliver to Congress a strategic plan for the establishment and evaluation of an electronic nationwide public health situational awareness capability. GAO reviewed HHS's plans for and status of efforts to implement these capabilities, described collaborative efforts to establish a network, and determined grants authorized by the act and awarded to public health entities. GAO assessed relevant strategic planning documents and interviewed HHS officials and public health stakeholders.

Please click [here](#) to view the full report.

**[“Preventing Transmission of Pandemic Influenza and Other Viral Respiratory Diseases: Personal Protective Equipment for Healthcare Personnel Update 2010,”](#)** *Institute of Medicine Report, January 27, 2011*

In 2009, the H1N1 influenza pandemic brought to the forefront the many unknowns about the virulence, spread, and nature of the virus, as well as questions regarding personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare personnel. In this report, the IOM assesses the progress of PPE research and identifies future directions for PPE for healthcare personnel.

## News and Reports

**[“Implementing Health Care Reform—An Interview with HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius,”](#)** *The New England Journal of Medicine, January 6, 2011*

As Secretary of a sprawling agency that spends about 25% of the federal budget, administers Medicare and Medicaid and oversees the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and other agencies, Sebelius took charge of the department during a tumultuous period, as Congress debated the sweeping health care reform bill that HHS must now administer. Sebelius shared her opinions in an interview conducted by John Iglehart.

**[“U.S. laws a barrier for advance directives: study,”](#)** *Reuters, January 18, 2011*

U.S. laws surrounding advanced planning for end-of-life care set up too many practical roadblocks, according to a report published this month. In a study of advance directive laws across all U.S. states, researchers found that the documents used in end-of-life planning were written in legalese that the average American would be hard-pressed to understand.

**[“Advance directives can ease the stress of life-or-death medical decisions,”](#)** *The Washington Post, January 17, 2011*

Experts say family members who act as surrogate decision makers for critically ill loved ones need more attention and support because it is stressful having to make decisions for those who have not executed advance directives. Clinicians can offer guidance throughout the process, and more attention is being paid to training critical care doctors in this area.

**["U.S. Alters Rule on Paying for End-of-Life Planning,"](#) *The New York Times*, January 5, 2011**

The Obama administration, reversing course, will revise a Medicare regulation to delete references to end-of-life planning as part of the annual physical examinations covered under the new health care law, administration officials said Tuesday. The move is an abrupt shift, coming just days after the new policy took effect on Jan. 1.

**["UMC nurses who staffed ICU called 'unsung heroes',"](#) *Arizona Daily Star*, January 25, 2011**

University Medical Center ICU nurses who cared for U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., and other victims of the Jan. 8 shooting were hailed as unsung heroes during a meeting with the media.