Medicaid Reform reduces fraud, improves care
Alon Levine says the bad actors at WellCare have been replaced by good people, and it would be a mistake to think Medicaid reform had anything to do with the fraud. In fact, he says, the opposite is true.

It takes a village to fight obesity
7/6/2010 © Sarasota Herald Tribune
Eric Ernst writes that cultural habits are hard to change. And we all know fighting childhood isn’t really a school’s problem. It’s a societal one. Public health advocates are working on a communitywide approach to fighting obesity.

A peaceful death: Just what the doctor ordered
FSU geriatrics professor Marshall Kapp tells how health-care providers, caregivers and patient advocates can collaborate to prevent aggressive, pointless end-of-life resuscitation.

Drilling moratorium more about politics than science
7/2/2010 © South Florida Sun Sentinel
Kingsley Guy writes that the decision to impose a moratorium on oil drilling was based not on technical or economic rationales, but on the political calculation that it would make President Obama look like he was being tough on the oil companies so hated by the public.

Why should a little fraud mess up a state contract?
7/1/2010 © St. Petersburg Times
Howard Troxler writes that the top brass who were supposed to be riding herd on WellCare sometimes simply went to work for WellCare, or joined its board. How is that legal? How is the company’s contract not canceled?

Millions for Orioles, pennies for kids
6/30/2010 © Sarasota Herald Tribune
Eric Ernst writes that Sarasota County’s $31 million to renovate a stadium for the Baltimore Orioles stands in stark contrast to charging children $2 an hour to play on fields their parents already purchased with taxes. Especially since kids are the very group we’re trying to push to be more active.

Special session on spill is a must
6/28/2010 © Tampa Tribune
Dan Gelber, state senator and candidate for attorney general, writes that a special session on the oil spill is needed to make sure we have the backs of our residents and businesses that may find themselves damaged.

ANALYSIS & OPINION

Health News Florida takes no positions on issues or candidates; instead, we post links to editorials, columns and letters that appear in publications around the state. The cartoons also run the gamut of opinions; if you disagree with the one we’ve posted today, you may like the one we post tomorrow.

A peaceful death: Just what the doctor ordered
It happens all the time: Dying patients who sign papers saying they don’t want resuscitation or aggressive medical treatment get it anyway. When they go into cardiac arrest, their family or nursing-home staff calls 911. The EMS squad engages in a “full code,” with intubation and chest-pounding.

The death that comes then or in a few days is exactly the one the patient didn’t want.

A number of factors contribute, but one important explanation is health-care providers’ fear of legal repercussions if a “full-court press” is not initiated for every patient.

The result is wasted resources for society and diminished quality of life in the final hours for dying individuals, as well as emotional scars for family members and friends.

Now, an effort being coordinated by the Center for Innovative Collaboration in Medicine & Law at Florida State University hopes to change the way end-of-life care is managed by producing clear medical orders.

The POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) Paradigm is intended to ensure that a patient’s wishes regarding the initiation, continuation, withholding, or withdrawal of life-sustaining medical interventions are honored across all health care settings, including the individual’s home.

Unlike advance directives, the POLST is actually the physician’s order, with the same power to direct the behavior of other involved health care professionals as it would in the hospital.

A POLST for a patient would only be written by the physician based on conversations with the patient and family, and would embody and enforce their wishes about end-of-life care.

The POLST Instrument would not apply in situations such as that on display in the tragic Florida case of Terri Schiavo, where there was irreconcilable disagreement among family members about the appropriate medical care of a patient who could not speak for herself.

Neither would a POLST help when there are intractable differences between the patient and family or between them and the physician regarding the appropriate medical course to pursue.

Rather, the POLST would apply when there is agreement among the patient, family members or health care proxies, and attending physician. There, a POLST would serve the purpose of making sure the decision is followed.

Such cases should not be controversial, but are difficult to implement today because of the surrounding legal uncertainties and anxieties.

Kenneth Brunmel-Smith, M.D., Chair of the FSU Department of Geriatrics, was instrumental in starting the POLST Paradigm while on the faculty at Oregon Health Sciences University.

He has been working informally with Tracy Christner, executive director of Project GRACE (Guidelines for Resuscitation and Care at End of Life), an affiliate of the Suncoast Hospice in Clearwater, to implement and promote the POLST Paradigm in Florida. Their ad hoc efforts now will be coordinated through the Center for Innovative Collaboration in Medicine & Law at Florida State University.

The first major event in this coordination effort will be a meeting on Sept. 20 at the Orlando Regional Campus of the Florida State University College of Medicine. At that meeting, interested individuals from around the state will have the opportunity to brainstorm a detailed strategy for implementing POLST in Florida.

There is no charge. To register or obtain information, contact Alyson Odom at Alyson.odom@med.fsu.edu or 850-645-9473.

Marshall B. Kapp, J.D., M.P.H.
Director, FSU Center for Innovative Collaboration in Medicine & Law and Professor of Geriatrics
There's some varnish in Rick Scott's 'unvarnished truth'
John Agnew writes that in campaign ads, Rick Scott repeatedly pointed out that he left Columbia/HCA before the fine, and he “was not charged personally or even questioned.” That's a disingenuous description of what really happened:

New breed of med schools may transform health care
6/28/2010 © Miami Herald
John A. Rock, M.D., senior VP for Medical Affairs at Florida International University, writes that a new breed of medical school education is arising with the ability to integrate such seemingly disparate interests as research, community issues and public health.

McCollum wants to keep us in the dark
6/25/2010 © Orlando Sentinel
Scott Maxwell writes that Attorney General Bill McCollum took a baffling and troubling stand last week by opposing your right to know what your elected officials are doing. This comes from a man who not only wants to be your next governor, but who also is currently your attorney general.

Unfinished work for mental health, substance abuse system
By David L. Miller
Chair, Florida Substance Abuse & Mental Health Corp.
Florida's only independent body providing oversight of the state's substance abuse and mental health system will shut its doors July 1, the victim of legislative budget cuts.

Left behind will be an unfinished agenda for improving the state’s treatment programs.

Lethal nurse likely killed many more
Columnist Sam Cook writes that a former Punta Gorda nurse, sentenced to lethal injection for the murder of one man, likely killed several more people.

We won't stop swimming in the gulf
6/19/2010 © Northwest Florida Daily News
Wendy Victora writes that as much as she believes in protecting loved ones against health risks, she doesn't want to take the beach away from her kids, any more than it already has been from the oil spill.

Protect our aquifers from spill before it's too late
6/20/2010 © South Florida Sun Sentinel
Sandy H. Straus and Larry Straus write that while BP pursues methods of controlling the leak, millions of lives remain at risk of toxicity if the oil and dispersants seep into the groundwater and aquifers.

Speeding crackdown didn't help
6/20/2010 © Florida Today
Matt Reed writes of plans to discontinue a three-year state experiment to prevent crashes.
and injuries on I-95: Speed itself causes only a minuscule portion of all wrecks on the interstate.

Is it worth $511 to me to have Jackson Labs in Collier?
6/19/2010 © Naples Daily News
Brent Batten writes that the work of Jackson Laboratories is mind-bogglingly complicated, but the financing required to bring the lab’s latest endeavor to Collier County is only slightly less complex.

Soap won't clean politicians' oil-smudged fingerprints
6/21/2010 © Palm Beach Post
Randy Schultz writes that some politicians come to the Gulf of Mexico oil disaster with clean hands. You will not be surprised to know that most don't. You also will not be surprised to know that those who don't want to wash that record away.

FSU prof is spot on with oil-leak estimates
6/18/2010 © Fort Myers News Press
Paul Flemming writes that It's hard to say which is greater, Ian MacDonald's expertise or his restraint. The FSU professor of biological oceanography was right on the money about the immense scope of the BP oil disaster.

Stopping the Medicare fraud gusher
6/18/2010 © Tampa Tribune
Jane M. Orient, M.D., executive director of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, writes that all eyes are on the BP gusher in the Gulf, but there's another big leak that will do even more damage to our economy: the one in the Medicare well.

Don't let funding crisis mutate into AIDS crisis
6/17/2010 © South Florida Sun Sentinel
Activist Tony Plakas writes that an AIDS Drug Assistance Program crisis is not an option, even in troubling economic times. But that's where we are. After getting AIDS to a point where more people are now living with the disease than dying from it, state drug programs are balancing funding cuts by slicing and dicing a proven strategy that has kept it under control.

The consequences of ignoring mental illness
6/16/2010 © Daytona Beach News Journal
Susan Ashby, a mental health educator and parent of a son who was lost to the disease, writes that releasing folks from the mental health wing of the jail or other facility without ensuring that treatment is continuously maintained is an incomprehensible waste of money.

Summer of voters' discontent
6/16/2010 © Miami Herald
Michael Putney writes that a summer of growing discontent is reflected in a poll that shows health-care executive Rick Scott holding a 13-point lead over Bill McCollum in the GOP governor's race and Democrat Jeff Greene in a statistical tie with Kendrick Meek for the Senate nomination.

'I only have one what?'
6/15/2010 © Pensacola News Journal
Writer Michael Lewis' recent trip to the emergency room for an unrelated condition
brought him a bit of a surprise after an X-ray.

**Let's feed oil executives to our gators**
6/11/2010 © St. Petersburg Times
Jeff Klinkenberg writes that the idea of something so unnatural and so horrific happening to the astonishing beach at St. Joseph Peninsula State Park is too much to bear. His favorite beach in the world is oil-free for the moment.

**Why are dead fish floating down the St. John's?**
6/11/2010 © Florida Times Union
Ron Littlepage writes that the stench from the thousands of dead fish in the St. Johns River the past two weeks is about the smell of money -- money the major polluters don't want to spend to help restore the river's health.

**Fact-checking Rick Scott's claims on quality of his hospitals**
6/11/2010 © Sarasota Health News
David Gulliver explains why Rick Scott's ads claiming his hospitals were high-quality are factual but misleading.

**Industry wants to reassure us they've got it under control**
6/11/2010 © Sarasota Herald Tribune
Eric Ernst writes of the disconnect between government's assurances that they can handle the effects of the oil spill and the reality that tar balls and dead sea animals will soon be washing up on the beaches.

**No evidence that chiropractic 'subluxation' exists**
By Jann Bellamy
6/9/2010 © Special to Health News Florida
If the Florida Legislature passes a law based on a fiction, does the fiction become fact? The law on chiropractic says that "vertical subluxations" cause disease. But there is no such thing as "subluxation." It's time for the law to catch up to reality.

**Surgery program is good news for Volusia**
6/9/2010 © Daytona Beach News Journal
In a guest editorial, Dr. Remigio Lacsamana writes that the news that Halifax Health will be launching a surgical residency program next year should be welcome news to this community.

**It's not about public safety; it's about icky people**
6/8/2010 © St. Petersburg Times
On St. Petersburg's new vendor restrictions, Howard Troxler writes that the government cannot take away First Amendment freedoms from the citizens easily. Neither can it be done on a whim, or just because the government thinks some people are especially icky.

**Oil spill is Florida's gas-guzzling fault**
6/7/2010 © Orlando Sentinel
Mike Thomas writes that listening to Florida complain...
about oil drilling is like listening to a crack addict complain about drug pushers. BP stuck its giant, steel proboscis into the Gulf floor because we need what is down there.

**Freedom from coverage means mooching off others**

5/29/2010 © Palm Beach Post
Editorial page editor Randy Schultz says those opposing the mandate to have health insurance are saying they want others to be billed for their treatment.