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Digest
SUN-SENTINEL STORIES

WASHINGTON

Clinton: U.S. to fight Medicare swindlers

President Clinton said on Saturday he wants to send a "final fighter" to the office of every Medicare contractor in the country in a new campaign to crack down on billions of dollars in false claims.

Clinton asked Congress to approve the \$43 million cost of the initiative as part of the federal budget for fiscal 2001. He said it is needed to stop a raid on the Treasury that persists despite what he called aggressive detection, enforcement and prosecution efforts.

Clinton took credit for persistent efforts to stem fraud and abuse in the Medicare health care program. "All told, our efforts have prevented the wasteful spending of an estimated \$50 billion," he said.

NORTHEAST

Mother charged with dumping infant

ALLENTOWN, Pa.—A woman who claimed she found a newborn baby when she took her family's trash to the curb was arrested Saturday on charges she left the child outside in a garbage bag on a freezing night last week.

Jenny Sueser, 21, turned herself in to police to face charges of reckless endangerment and endangering the welfare of a child, both misdemeanors.

She was also charged with filing a false report. Sueser had told police that she found the hours-old baby when she took her family's trash to the curb on Tuesday night. Sueser's mother then called 911, not knowing the child was her grandchild.

The temperature had dropped to 18 degrees at the time Sueser said she found the child. The baby, dubbed "Baby Jane" by nurses, was in stable condition at Sacred Heart Hospital on Saturday.

SOUTH

Anchor ruptures Gulf oil pipeline

NEW ORLEANS—A made 60 sick floated on the Gulf of Mexico on Saturday after an anchor pipeline was ruptured by an 8-ton anchor dropped accidentally from a drilling rig.

The 9,000-gallon slick was floating slowly westward, about 115 miles south of New Orleans and 75 miles south of the closest land, and did not pose an immediate threat to coastal areas, Coast Guard spokesman James Neuhauer said. No dead birds or fish had been sighted.

MIDWEST

Boy, 14, accused in baby's death

ROCKFORD, Ill.—A 14-year-old boy was charged with the murder and sexual assault charges in a child court for allegedly feeding windshield fluid to the toddler. The boy, 14, was charged with the murder and sexual assault charges in a child court for allegedly feeding windshield fluid to the toddler.

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CORRECTION

Thursday's lottery results were incorrect in some editions of Sunday's Sun Sentinel. The correct numbers selected on Friday, Jan. 21, were:

- Cash 5: 5-9
- Play 4: 4-7-4
- Fantasy 5: 6-9-17-19-20
- Megamillions: 16-27-30-23-5

On Thursday's Fantasy 5 results, which also were corrected, 36,444 winners selected three correct numbers; the payout was \$5.56. There were 729 winners who selected four correct numbers; the payout was \$42. Four winners selected five correct numbers; the payout was \$45,878.17.

We regret the error.

Without a Trace



ABDUCTED: Teekah Lewis appears in a family photograph that was taken shortly before she vanished Jan. 23, 1999, in Tacoma, Wash.



MOTHER AND SISTER: T-shirt showing Teekah Lewis hangs on a bedroom door in her Tacoma, Wash., home as her mother, Theresa English, and sister, Tameeka Lewis, stand nearby on Jan. 6. AP/Wide World Photos

By **REBECCA COOK**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Toddler's baffling disappearance breaks mold of most child kidnappings.

TACOMA, Wash.—Theresa English looked away for only a minute.

It was Jan. 23, 1999, and English was watching her 2-year-old daughter play in the video arcade of a crowded bowling alley. The mother of five walked over to the lane where her friends and family were bowling, then quickly returned to the video games. Teekah was not there.

English scanned the crowds of children and adults that filled Tacoma's New Frontier Lanes that Saturday night. She checked the spaces between the video games, in case Teekah was playing hide-and-seek. She walked into the women's restroom, where a cousin was changing her baby's diaper. "Have you seen Teekah?" English said, checking the walls. "No," her cousin replied.

English ran out of the restroom and found an off-duty police officer, who started searching with her. Over the loudspeaker, a voice announced that a 2-year-old was missing. People went on bowling, cheering for strikes, grunting for gutter balls. But English knew something was seriously wrong. Teekah was a man's girl who cried when others tried to hold her. She wouldn't even let uncles or aunts pick her up.

English pushed open a side door near the arcade and stood in the cold night air. The heavy door rattling the clock and clatter inside the bowling alley. She called her daughter's name again and again, her shouts fading into the woods surrounding the alley. Teekah was scared of the dark. English felt panic, willing to be pushed back down. "She's going to come back," she thought. That night was the last time English saw her daughter.

One year later, investigators say Teekah's disappearance is a rare and baffling case that defies the pattern of most child abductions. For weeks stretched into months, hundreds of police and volunteers searched the woods and neighborhoods near the bowling alley. TV, newspaper and radio reports carried Teekah's photograph and her description. Twenty-five detectives worked full time for a month on the case. Tips poured in, but nothing led to Teekah.

At first, English and her family were prime suspects. In 87 percent of all child abductions, the child is taken by a relative. English seemed too calm, some investigators thought. But what looked like cold-bloodedness was shock, English says now. The mother, 28, can't explain her demeanor to those first days any more than she could explain her reaction in a nightmare.

The Tacoma Police Department, with help from the FBI, conducted parallel investigations from the start. One focused on the family, while the other looked at the possibility of abduction by a stranger.

Teekah's father, Robert Lewis, is serving his third year of a four-year prison term for theft, and police do not consider him a likely suspect. No one except

Tameeka kicks off her shoes as soon as her mother's back is turned, the same way Teekah did. They share the same shy smile.

English misses the little things the most — fixing Teekah's curls or watching Winnie-the-Pooh together. Sometimes she sleeps with the pink fleece jacket Teekah wore to the bowling alley that night. Teekah's bed is covered with Pooh bears, including Teekah's first one, its fur rubbed off in places when a little girl held it tight.

English has bought all the special edition Poohs, each one bear marking another holiday without her girl. Valentine's Day, Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas. When Teekah comes back, English says, she doesn't want her daughter to feel as if she has missed anything.

On second thought, English says, she'll want to get rid of the bears when Teekah returns. It makes sense, she says, when you consider what must have happened: Teekah was taken by a couple who wanted a mixed-race child but couldn't have a baby of their own. English is part Chickpea Indian and Lewis is black.

The kidnappers have Teekah locked up in a white house way out in the country, spending her money, English figures. When Teekah cries for her mother, they tell her, "Your mommy and daddy don't want you no more."

"They've probably showed her with gifts of Pooh," English says, looking at the bears on Teekah's bed. "She probably won't be a Pooh fan no more. We'll probably just give them away."

The police have their own theories. They expect to find something, perhaps a body, when the property next to the bowling alley was excavated for development. Nothing turned up. "If you talked to a hundred police officers, they would all probably say she's dead," Lindberg says. "They would say she's near the bowling alley somewhere — we just haven't found her."

English will never say such talk. "Teekah was my heart," she says. "I wait for the day the police tell me they have my daughter. They have to find her. I know she'll come home."

English woke up on Christmas Eve feeling certain that the phone would ring with good news. She waited at home all day, but she didn't get one call. That night, she drove to her mother's house for a big family dinner, vowing to bring the best for Teekah.

"This is what Grammy's house looks like," English's voice says from behind the camera.

"This tree has ribbons for every day you've been gone," she says, then she starts to cry as the camera sweeps across hundreds of ribbons fluttering in the wind.

"Teekah, Mommy misses you. She loves you. Whenever you're up, I hope the person that has you give you the best Christmas ever."

"There's not a day goes by that I don't think about you. I'll never give up the search for you. I love you, Teekah."

States tackling the HMO problem

Repair measures are stacking up

By **CARLY GOLDREB**
THE NEW YORK TIMES

BOSTON—When Massachusetts legislators returned to work this month, these jumbo-sized, hard-to-chew items were on their legislative plate: The financial meltdown of the state's biggest health maintenance organization, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care; rising prices for prescription drugs; and the lack of an HMO patients' bill of rights.

And more: The confidentiality of medical records, more prompt payment by insurers, long-term care, nursing salaries, and on and on, for at least 400 bills related to health care.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, health care issues made up a greater proportion of bills in state legislatures around the country than any other topic in 1999, about 27,000 bills out of about 140,000.

About 1,400 of those health care bills became law last year. Although fewer state legislatures are in session this year — 44 as opposed to 58 — already 10,000 health care proposals, again the largest proportion of 100,000 bills on the table, have carried over or been introduced for 2000. A good percentage will pass, said Lee Dixon, director of the health policy tracking services of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

"There is every likelihood that the states will continue to enact legislation that addresses the concerns of the citizens of the states around access to care, managed care and cost of health care," Dixon said. "It's a popular issue. It's not a Republican or Democratic issue. It's a state legislators and legislators' issue to address the needs of their constituents."

At a time when Congress is stuck on many critical health care questions, some state legislators are taking the lead in addressing the burden of the burden, struggling to fill the most glaring holes in the medical system. They cannot wait for Congress, they say, to tighten controls over managed care, to expand health insurance coverage, to begin addressing the rise in demand for long-term care and more.

While the states can serve as laboratories for what later becomes federal policy, some legislators say the lead is feeling really heavy.

"As state lawmakers, we recognize that this has taken us, but I think you would be hard pressed to find many legislative leaders in the country who don't think the time is ripe for a national health care reform," said state Rep. Gerald Martineau, the Democratic majority leader of the Rhode Island House. "Some sort of solution is necessary. It's just too big, and we've been doing the best we can."

In Rhode Island, legislators have just finished helping to assure the transition of 125,000 patients to new health care plans after Harvard Pilgrim pulled out of an earlier admission of financial deficit. In the coming weeks, Martineau said, legislators will try to fashion some relief for companies whose health insurance premiums have gone up from 12 percent to 60 percent as a result. They are considering a plan to help small companies form groups to gain lower rates.

The focus now, Martineau said, is how the state can prevent such crises in health maintenance groups and "how we can act as a facilitator to improve the affordability and accessibility of health care to our citizenry."

A similar focus prevails in Wisconsin, where state Sen. Russell Decker, a Democrat, said that his competing proposals to help older people pay for prescription drugs were in the works, along with plans for a patients' bill of rights.

In Maryland, the speaker of the House of Representatives is promoting a broad program to equalize health insurance coverage for working people and children.