Fixing American policing also requires an end to the War on Drugs

The death of George Floyd has dominated headlines and led to accelerated calls for police reform. In a post for the Baker Institute Blog, Katharine Neill Harris, the Alfred C. Glassell, III, Fellow in Drug Policy, observes that many of the aggressive tactics currently used by police officers stem from the 40-year “war on drugs.” According to Harris, proactive drug enforcement has normalized aggressive policing and has led to unnecessary citizen-police interactions, many of which escalate rapidly and end violently. By decriminalizing low-level drug possession, these interactions can be reduced, she writes.

Harris also recommends that police officers be trained in de-escalation methods, particularly when dealing with people who may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. By enlisting the help of substance abuse counselors and instilling officers with the mindset that their primary purpose is to serve as guardians of the public, police departments will see a reduction in violent interactions. Harris acknowledges that decriminalizing drugs will not completely solve the problem of police violence, but she sees it as one step toward meaningful structural change.

To make internet voting viable, time is needed to develop the technology and end-to-end encryption. “Will we be in a different world 10 years from now? Almost certainly. But ... we’re nowhere near ready for this today.”

Dan Wallach, Baker Institute Rice Faculty Scholar, to Politico
Webinar: Covid-19 and the rise of telemedicine

Recent physical distancing requirements have sparked a rapid transition to telemedicine, the provision of medical care to patients by means of telecommunications technology. At a recent webinar, Heidi Schwarzwald, chief medical officer of Aetna Better Health of Texas, and Rhonda Mundhenk, chief executive officer of Lone Star Circle of Care, discussed changes in health care delivery as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, including new regulations and reimbursements, and the challenges of implementing and utilizing telehealth services. Quianta Moore, fellow in child health policy, served as the moderator.

Schwarzwald and Mundhenk emphasized the importance of addressing the barriers to telemedicine. A patient's access to a computer and high-speed internet are major factors to consider, in addition to a patient's comfort with technology. As health care providers transition to online care, Mundhenk noted that it is essential to ask, “Who is being left behind?” For instance, people living in rural areas or in low-income households may be especially disadvantaged, as their access to technology and high-speed internet can be limited.

To enhance the reach and use of telemedicine, Schwarzwald said there is an urgent need for public and private organizations to work together to make hardware available in underserved communities and that translation services are needed for non-English speakers. Allowing telephone calls rather than video calls and offering training for patients who lack digital literacy skills are other potential solutions for expanding access to telehealth services.

In a Q&A segment, viewers submitted questions about patient privacy and the challenges providers may face when diagnosing and treating patients remotely. To hear their responses and to view the full webinar, please visit the event page.

Covid-19 updates from the Baker Institute Blog

Covid-19 Updates: By the Numbers. Vivian Ho, the James A. Baker III Institute Chair in Health Economics; Kirstin Matthews, fellow in science and technology policy; and Heidi Russell, associate professor at the Baylor College of Medicine, discuss the latest Covid-19 developments, including case counts, vaccine trials and the fallout for public health workers.

Browse the Baker Institute research library and the Baker Insitute Blog to keep up with the latest research and news on the coronavirus pandemic.
Upcoming Events

**Webinar — In the recovery room: How the Houston and Texas energy and economic revival will fare.** Michelle Michot Foss, fellow in energy and minerals, will host a conversation with Bill Gilmer, director of the Institute for Regional Forecasting at the University of Houston's Bauer College of Business, and Brett Perlman, CEO and president of the Center for Houston's Future, on the energy market and fiscal challenges as Houston and Texas start to recover from the combined shock of the oil market crash and the Covid-19 pandemic.

*June 19 | 3:00 pm*


*July 1 | 11:00 am*

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