

5. Anthem versus Enloe

After failing to agree on rates after six months, Enloe Medical Center and Anthem Blue Cross cut ties Nov. 1. That put Enloe “out of network” for Anthem subscribers, who’d have to pay a larger share of costs than when Enloe was “in network” or find another hospital. Enloe said Anthem pays 40 percent less than Blue Shield, another private insurer, and hadn’t increased reimbursements in eight of 12 years.

After the Camp Fire, the sides agreed to restore their contract through Dec. 31, 2018.

6. Single-payer rising?

Democrats love single-payer health care—aka Medicare for all. Yet, with the chance to pioneer a plan, Democratic legislators balked; California Senate Bill 562 died in the Assembly last summer, pulled by the speaker before any deliberation.

It’s regained steam since the November election, however: Gov.-Elect Gavin Newsom avidly supports single-payer, and a federal bill by Sen. Bernie Sanders has sign-on from, among many, Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.).

7. Places to go

Restrooms aren’t just a convenience, they’re a necessity. Without proper sanitation, public waterways grow polluted and disease spreads. Californians got a reminder when Hepatitis A spread among people exposed to human waste in San Diego, Los Angeles, Monterey and Santa Cruz.

Among the discussions of homelessness, public restrooms in Chico received scrutiny. The city closed, temporarily reopened, then closed again municipal bathrooms overnight. Butte County Public Health considers 24-hour restrooms with running water and soap to be important preventative measures for disease.

8. Mental health response

People battling mental illness can hit a crisis point at any time; Butte County Behavioral Health officials heard that message as they collected feedback for programs funded under the Mental Health Services Act (or MHSA). The department this year added a mobile crisis unit to accompany Chico police officers to incidents, but staffed the unit



Pediatricians Evbu Ogbeide, left, and Anna Robertson have moved in to fill a gap in Chico.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICO PEDIATRICS

only 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Behavioral Health did expand mobile crisis response to the Ridge and Oroville in the fall.

9. Care for kids

With a rush of retirements over the past year—notably Drs. Pat Tedford, John Asarian and James Wood—Chico’s shortage of pediatricians loomed large. However, a new wave has arrived to stanch the riptide.

Northern Valley Indian Health, which moved its Children’s Health Center to a larger building, nearly doubled its number of providers (from six to 10); though he closed his office, Tedford sees patients there, too. Meanwhile, Chico Pediatrics (Asarian’s old practice) brought in Drs. Evbu Ogbeide and Anna Robertson, who also work hospital shifts at Enloe.

10. Good screens, bad screens

Local hospitals embraced technology to expand patients’ access to specialists. Enloe launched a regular series of Facebook Live webcasts in which practitioners, such as bariatric surgeon Erik Simchuk, address medical issues. Oroville Hospital started utilizing telemedicine in its emergency room through the mobile interactive unit RED (remote examination device)—allowing local doctors to connect with large medical centers where experts actually can see the patient.

Not all screen news was good, though: Studies came out linking smartphone use to feelings of depression and social disconnection, while pediatricians renewed their push for parental limits on screen time. □

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We want to help you recover from home, health, and business losses.

Our law firm helps people whose lives and properties have been irreparably harmed by the Camp Fire. Our firm exists to help people fight corporate negligence.

We have filed suit against PG&E for actions which investigators believe led to the deadliest and most destructive fire in California’s history. We have assembled a team with years of experience in handling utility company lawsuits involving explosions, fires, and negligence of the kind which seems to have triggered the deadly Camp Fire.

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