Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of June 26, 2023

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**New analysis of toxicology reports reveals sharp rise in fentanyl laced with xylazine**

CNN (6/29, Kounang, McPhillips) reports, “The Biden administration recently declared fentanyl laced with xylazine—an animal sedative commonly known as ‘tranq’—to be an emerging threat facing the United States, and a new analysis of toxicology reports illustrates its sharp rise,” according to data published June 30 in the CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. The report reveals that “in June 2022, xylazine was present in nearly 11% of fentanyl overdose deaths, almost a four-fold increase from January 2019, when the combination was present in about 3% of cases.”

NBC News (6/29, Edwards) reports, “Tranq is increasingly found laced in the illegal supply of fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid blamed for 70,601 overdose deaths in 2021, according to the” NIDA. This past March, “the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration warned about a growing threat from the drug combination, often called ‘tranq dope,’ saying that the DEA had seized xylazine and fentanyl mixtures in 48 of 50 states.”

**Over 80M people under air quality alerts as Canadian wildfire smoke moves across country**

CBS News (6/28, King) reports, “More than 80 million people from the Midwest to the East Coast are under air quality alerts as smoke from Canadian wildfires sweeps across parts of the U.S., prompting beach closures, warnings of reduced visibility, and calls for people to stay indoors.” Canada’s “wildfires have led to the highest annual emissions on record for the country, according to a Tuesday report from Copernicus, a division of the European Union’s space program.”

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HHS releases updated guidelines for physical activity in older adults

Bloomberg Law (6/27, Subscription Publication) reports, “The Department of Health and Human Services published a report detailing evidence-based interventions to support physical activity among adults ages 65 years and older, according to a Tuesday news release.” The new report, titled, “Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Midcourse Report: Implementation Strategies for Older Adults,” is meant “to help older adults achieve the recommended amount of physical activity.”

Retatrutide helped adults with obesity lose an average of 24.2% of their body weight

NBC News (6/26, Lovelace) reports, “An experimental drug” from Eli Lilly “has the potential to provide greater weight loss benefits than any drug currently on the market.” The experimental medication, called “retatrutide, helped people lose, on average, about 24% of their body weight, the equivalent of about 58 pounds...the company” announced at ADA 2023 and in findings simultaneously published in the New England Journal of Medicine. Retatrutide appears to mimic GLP-1, GIP, and glucagon.

According to CNN (6/26, Tirrell), retatrutide appears to have “similar side effects—mainly gastrointestinal in nature—as approved drugs in the class.” For example, people taking “the medicine had side effects like nausea, diarrhea, vomiting and constipation, which got worse at higher doses, the study showed.” The research team, however, “described them as generally ‘mild to moderate’ in severity, and said they could be improved if patients started on lower doses before moving to higher ones.”

Healio (6/26, Schaffer) reports that in the 338-adult, phase 2 study, retatrutide also “reduced HbA1c and body weight in type 2 diabetes.”

Worldwide diabetes cases projected to hit 1.3B in next 30 years, researchers estimate

HealthDay (6/23, Reinberg) reported, “Diabetes is skyrocketing, with more than 500 million people of all ages living with the disease today and the number of cases worldwide projected to hit 1.3 billion in the next 30 years,” according to findings published online in The Lancet. What’s more, “96% of
diabetes cases are type 2 diabetes,” with obesity being “the primary risk, accounting for 52% of disability and premature death, followed by poor diet, environmental and occupational risks, smoking, inactivity and alcohol use, the researchers found.”

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