

## Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of March 9, 2020

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### **Coronavirus tests reportedly in short supply**

The New York Times (3/6, Thomas, Kliff, Bogel-Burroughs) reported that while the President said on Friday that anyone who needed to be tested for coronavirus “gets a test,” physicians and patients across the U.S. “are clamoring for tests that they say are in woefully short supply, and their frustration is mounting alongside the growing number of cases around the country.” For example, in California, thousands of people “are being monitored for the virus,” but “only 516 tests had been conducted by the state as of Thursday.” Meanwhile, a New York City official pleaded with the CDC to send more tests, saying in a letter, “The slow federal action on this matter has impeded our ability to beat back this epidemic.”

Newsweek (3/6, Gander) reported some experts say the U.S. lost precious time trying to contain the virus because of the testing problems and on Thursday, Vice President Mike Pence said, “We don’t have enough tests today to meet what we anticipate will be the demand going forward.”

### **CDC official says many Americans will likely become infected by coronavirus**

The Hill (3/9, Weixel) reports Dr. Nancy Messonnier, the director of the CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, said that many Americans will likely become infected by the coronavirus and that older Americans with underlying health conditions should be among the most concerned so they should stock up on supplies now. Dr. Messonnier said, “As the trajectory of the outbreak continues, many people in the U.S. will at some point in time this year or next be exposed to this virus, and there’s a good chance many will become sick. The reason to stock up now is to kind of stick close to home.”

STAT (3/9, Joseph) reports Dr. Messonnier also said that the virus may continue spreading in the

U.S. for the rest of the year and into next year, but health officials suspect that many of those exposed to the virus will not develop COVID-19.

## **Experts believe strategic national stockpile has not been significantly replenished since 2009 influenza pandemic**

The Washington Post (3/10, Reinhard, Brown) reports the reserves of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), “the federal government’s last-resort cache of drugs and medical supplies,” were “not significantly restored after the 2009” H1N1 influenza pandemic, “in the view of industry and public health experts.” The 2009 epidemic “triggered the largest deployment in U.S. history of the” SNS, as it “distributed 85 million N95 respirators...along with millions of other masks, gowns and gloves.” Last week, HHS “said...that the stockpile has about 12 million N95 respirators and 30 million surgical masks – a scant 1% of the estimated 3.5 billion masks the nation would need in a severe pandemic,” while “another 5 million N95 masks in the stockpile are expired.”

## **Alcoholics Anonymous, twelve-step programs may lead to increased rates, lengths of abstinence compared with other common treatments, systematic review indicates**

The New York Times (3/11, Frakt, Carroll) reports, “An updated systematic review published” online March 11 in the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews “found that A.A. (Alcoholics Anonymous) leads to increased rates and lengths of abstinence compared with other common treatments.” Additionally, “Alcoholics Anonymous not only produced higher rates of abstinence and remission, but it also did so at a lower cost, the Cochrane review found. A.A. meetings are free to attend,” while treatments using the health care system can be expensive.

USA Today (3/11, Rodriguez, O'Donnell) reports the review “had the opposite findings of a similar study published by Cochrane in 2006 that found ‘no experimental studies unequivocally demonstrated the effectiveness of AA or TSF (Twelve-step facilitation) approaches for reducing alcohol dependence of problems.’”

Reuters (3/11, Carroll) reports, “In an analysis of pooled data from 27 earlier studies, researchers found a 20% higher rate of abstinence for one year among people who attended AA or a 12-step program that encourages participation in AA.” Included in the review were “studies that compared 12-step programs to other...treatments.” The 27 studies “included 10,565 patients with an average age of 34.”

## Cancer death rates decreased in the U.S. from 2001 to 2017, report says

Medscape (3/12, Harrison, Subscription Publication) reports “cancer death rates continued to decline in the United States for cancer of all sites combined, and this trend was seen in all major racial and ethnic groups as well as in men and women and in all age groups,” according to the Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer. In addition, “the 2020 targets were met for reductions in mortality from lung, prostate, breast, and colorectal cancer, according to the companion report, Progress Toward Healthy People 2020 Objectives for 4 Common Cancers.” The article says that “both reports were published online March 12 in Cancer.”

HealthDay (3/12, Preidt) says the first report concluded that death rates from cancer in the U.S. fell “from 2001 to 2017 – dropping an average 1.5% a year.” The report also found that “the annual decline was slightly larger among men (1.8%) than women (1.4%).” In addition, “lung cancer death rates decreased 4.8% a year among men and 3.7% a year among women. However, lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer death in the United States, accounting for about one-quarter of all cancer deaths.”

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