Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of May 25 - 29, 2020

Read AMA Morning Rounds®, most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of May 25 - 29.

Eighty million babies may be missing routine vaccines during pandemic, WHO says

CNN (5/22, Fox) reported that “as many as 80 million babies worldwide are missing out on routine childhood vaccines because of the coronavirus pandemic, the World Health Organization said Friday.” This “pandemic has disrupted vaccination programs in at least 68 countries, according to a joint news release by WHO, the global vaccine initiative Gavi, the United National Children’s Fund UNICEF and the Sabin Vaccine Institute.” The “WHO released new guidance to countries on how they can resume vaccination campaigns safely during the pandemic.”

Newsweek (5/22, Roos) reported, “An estimated 53% of the 129 countries that reported vaccination data to global health officials said their immunization programs have been disrupted.” In a news release, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, “Disruption to immunization programmes from the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to unwind decades of progress against vaccine-preventable diseases like measles.”

CDC: Antibody tests for COVID-19 might be wrong up to half the time

CNN (5/26, Fox) reports that “antibody tests used to determine if people have been infected in the past with [COVID-19] might be wrong up to half the time, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in new guidance posted on its website.” CNN adds, “Health officials or health care providers who are using antibody tests need to use the most accurate test they can find and might need to test people twice, the CDC said in the new guidance.”

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Asymptomatic patients with COVID-19 shed virus for about eight days, study indicates

NBC News (5/27, Edwards) reports, “New estimates of the number of asymptomatic people with the coronavirus suggest that ‘silent’ COVID-19 is much more prevalent than once thought—but these individuals may not spread the virus for as long as symptomatic patients do, a study from China suggests.” The report published in JAMA Network Open found “the asymptomatic patients were more likely to be women, and more likely to be younger, in their 20s, 30s and early 40s.” Furthermore, “the researchers found the asymptomatic individuals shed the virus for about eight days, compared with 19 days among those who did have symptoms.”

Coronavirus pandemic continues to impact supplies of many prescription drugs

The New York Times (5/28, O’Connor) reports on how the coronavirus pandemic has affected supplies of multiple prescription drugs, including ACE inhibitors and ARBs, citing a research letter published in JAMA. The researchers examined nationwide prescription patterns and concluded that some patients have likely stockpiled prescription drugs they take, due to fears they would be unable to renew or refill their prescriptions, while other people have been unable to receive new prescriptions they would have otherwise received, because they were unable to meet with physicians. The researchers also examined prescription patterns for hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine, which are used to treat malaria and autoimmune diseases, but some have claimed can treat coronavirus.

AMA president says efforts to contain coronavirus have increased risk for domestic abuse in some households

AMA President Patrice A. Harris, M.D., M.A., writes in an op-ed for NBC News (5/28), “The need to contain the spread of the virus by limiting our contact with others—sometimes even with members of our immediate family—has in some cases created situations that increase the risk of intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect and elder abuse.” Dr. Harris adds, “As a psychiatrist who specializes in the mental health of children and adolescents, and in the impact of trauma on children and adults, I know that the likelihood of child abuse rises in tandem with stress. Losing a job, facing a health crisis, grieving the loss of a relative or friend—these and other stressors can increase the risk of domestic abuse.” Dr. Harris continues to outline how the pandemic has increased the risk for domestic abuse.

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and discusses the short-term and long-term impacts of such abuse before concluding, “As this situation evolves in the weeks and months ahead, it is my hope that all of us emerge stronger and more vigilant, with greater awareness of the potential for abuse and harm that others face.”

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