Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds: Week of June 1, 2020

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President says U.S. will end relationship with WHO

NPR (5/29, Huang) reports that the president "has announced that he is immediately halting the decades-long U.S. membership in the World Health Organization over its response to China’s handling of the coronavirus epidemic."

CNN (5/29, Fox, Erdman, Watts) reported, "Groups representing infectious disease doctors, pediatricians and general physicians all protested" the president’s "decision to withdraw from the World Health Organization on Friday, saying it will make it harder to fight the coronavirus pandemic."

American Medical Association President Patrice A. Harris, M.D., M.A., said in a statement, "This senseless action will have significant, harmful repercussions now and far beyond this perilous moment, particularly as the WHO is leading worldwide vaccine development and drug trials to combat the pandemic."

The Hill (5/29, Chalfant) reported that the AMA "said in a statement that the decision to cut ties with the WHO 'serves no logical purpose and makes finding a way out of this public health crisis dramatically more challenging.'"

*Editor's Note: To read the full statement from AMA President Patrice A. Harris, M.D., M.A., click here.*

AMA and other groups: Racism and police brutality are a public health issue

CNN (6/1, Howard) reports, "As protests over George Floyd's death continue nationwide, several doctors' groups," including the American Medical Association, "are emphasizing that racism is a public health issue and they're calling for police brutality to stop." Various "studies suggest that experiences of racism or discrimination raise the risk of emotional and physical health problems,
including depression, cardiovascular disease, hypertension – more than 40% of Black adults have high blood pressure – and even death." On Friday, the AMA "released a joint statement" from its president Dr. Patrice A. Harris, M.D., M.A., and board chair Dr. Jesse Ehrenfeld, M.D., M.P.H., which said that "police brutality must stop."

The Hill (6/1, Hellmann) reports that the recent "protests have worried public health experts because large gatherings are conducive to the spread of COVID-19." However, "experts also note that police brutality and over-policing of communities of color are a public health issue." In the statement, Dr. Harris and Dr. Ehrenfeld said, "Police brutality in the midst of public health crises is not crime-preventive – it creates demoralized conditions in an already strained time."

*Editor's Note: To read the full statement from Drs. Harris and Ehrenfeld on police brutality, click here.*

**Researchers identify proteins present in blood of people infected with SARS-CoV-2 that may predict severity of illness**

Reuters (6/2, Kelland) reports researchers identified 27 proteins in the blood of people infected with SARS-CoV-2 that may help predict how severe the resulting illness will be, according to a study published in Cell Systems. The researchers "found the proteins are present in different levels in COVID-19 patients, depending on the severity of their symptoms."

**ED visits in the U.S. decreased 42% in the early days of the pandemic, study indicates**

Reuters (6/3, Chander) reports, "Emergency department [ED] visits fell 42% across the United States during the early days of the coronavirus pandemic compared to the same period last year, according to a" CDC study. The data indicated that "the steepest declines in emergency department visits, from the start of 2020 through May 30, were seen in children younger than 14 and women, and in the northeast region that includes New York and New Jersey, the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak."

The Hill (6/3, Conradis) reports, "While emergency department visits for infectious diseases and respiratory illness increased during the pandemic, visits for heart attacks, chest and stomach pain and high blood pressure decreased between March 29 and April 25, compared to a similar period last year."

**U.S. laboratories to be required to collect demographic**
information on those receiving coronavirus tests beginning August 1

The Washington Post (6/4, Goldstein) reports the federal government released new guidance that will require laboratories to collect demographic information on people being tested for coronavirus or coronavirus antibodies beginning August 1. Under the new guidance, laboratories will be required "to collect and submit information on people's age, sex, location and test result, as well as on race and ethnicity."

Reuters (6/4, Mishra) reports the HHS said in a statement that the new requirements are being imposed to better understand who is being infected and developing COVID-19. In the statement, HHS said, "As the country begins to reopen, access to clear and accurate data is essential to communities and leadership for making decisions critical to a phased reopening."

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