

## Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of July 13, 2020

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### **Coronavirus testing sites struggling to provide results in under a week**

The Washington Post (7/12, A1, Weiner, Wan, Hauslohner) reports “test results for the novel coronavirus are taking so long to come back across the United States that experts say the results are often proving useless in the campaign to control the deadly disease.” Some coronavirus “testing sites are struggling to provide results in five to seven days. Others are taking even longer.” Coronavirus “outbreaks across the Sun Belt have strained labs beyond capacity. That rising demand, in turn, has caused shortages of swabs, chemical reagents and equipment as far away as New York.”

USA Today (7/11, Alltucker) reported “America’s testing system is once again strained and labs are struggling to keep pace as coronavirus rages faster than ever in the South and West.” From California to Florida, “large and small labs running 24/7 can’t process samples quickly enough from millions of Americans tested every week,” meaning “COVID-19 test results are delayed a week or longer in hotspot communities, undercutting public health efforts to track, isolate and prevent spread.”

### **More than half of patients with COVID-19 have heart damage, study indicates**

Newsweek (7/13, Gander) reports, “A study on heart scans of COVID-19 patients has revealed more than half had some form of damage.” Among “the total 1,216 patients, 667 (55%) had abnormalities in their scan and one in seven participants had what researchers described as ‘severe abnormalities,’ according to the paper published in the journal *European Heart Journal – Cardiovascular Imaging*.” According to the findings, “those with abnormal scans were more likely to be older and have certain underlying heart problems,” but after researchers “excluded patients with existing heart conditions from their analysis, the proportion of abnormal scan results and those with severe cardiac disease was similar,” which “suggests that the issues were related to COVID-19, they said.”

Modern Healthcare (7/13, Johnson, Subscription Publication) reports, “The majority of patients tested had no pre-existing heart problems, yet 46% of that group were found to have heart abnormalities, with 13% showing signs of severe disease.” The “normal indicators that would alert clinicians of the possibility of a heart problem were not present in most of the patients who had abnormal echocardiograms.” Just “11% of patients with abnormal scans reported having chest pains, while signs of arrhythmia, or irregular heartbeat, were found in only 5% of that same group.”

## **CDC calls for all Americans to wear face masks in public to combat coronavirus**

CNN (7/14, Fox) reports, “The science shows face masks work both to protect the wearer and to protect others from coronavirus, and everyone needs to wear one when around other people in public, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Tuesday.” CNN adds, “Even cloth face masks help enough to be worthwhile, three top CDC officials said in a commentary published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.” In the joint-editorial, “CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield, CDC’s chief medical officer Dr. John Brooks and Deputy Director for Infectious Diseases Dr. Jay Butler” said, “While community use of face coverings has increased substantially, particularly in jurisdictions with mandatory orders, resistance continues.”

The Hill (7/14, Moreno) reports, “The decision came after reviewing two studies: a JAMA study that found adherence to universal mask-wearing policies reduced transmission within a Boston hospital system, and an internal study from the CDC that found wearing a mask prevented the spread of infection from two hair stylists to their customers in Missouri.”

## **Nearly 71,000 Americans died from drug overdoses last year, preliminary CDC data indicate**

The AP (7/15, Johnson) reports according to preliminary data released by the CDC, “nearly 71,000 Americans died of drug overdoses last year, a new record that predates the COVID-19 crisis, which the White House and many experts believe will drive such deaths even higher.” The AP adds “the trend is driven by fentanyl and similar synthetic opioids, which accounted for 36,500 overdose deaths,” but “deaths involving cocaine and methamphetamine also are rising.”

## **Physical distancing measures may reduce spread of coronavirus, study indicates**

CNN (7/16, Kane) reports “physical distancing measures can help slow down the spread of the novel coronavirus,” according to a study published in the BMJ. The study’s authors “gathered and analyzed information on daily reported cases from 149 countries or regions both before and after five different physical or social distancing measures were put into place.”

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