Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of July 20, 2020

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40% of U.S. adults at risk for severe COVID-19 complications due to underlying health condition(s)

NBC News (7/23, Edwards) reports, “About 40% of adults in the U.S. have at least one underlying health condition that would put them at risk for severe complications of COVID-19, according to a report published Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.” Some “chronic health problems, such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes, kidney disease and cardiovascular disease, are known to be more prevalent among COVID-19 patients sick enough to be hospitalized.” The researchers found that “in general, the rates of chronic medical conditions were higher in rural areas.”

Black children three times more likely to die following surgery than white peers, study shows

The Washington Post (7/18, Weiner) reported, “African American children are three times more likely than their white peers to die after surgery despite arriving at hospitals without serious underlying conditions, the latest evidence of unequal outcomes in health care, according to a study published” in Pediatrics. The Post added, “Out of 172,549 children, only 36 died within a month of their operation,” but among those children, nearly 50% were Black, “even though African Americans made up only 11% of the patients overall.” Furthermore, Black children also “had a 0.07% chance of dying after surgery, compared with 0.02 for white children.”

USA Today (7/20, Rodriguez) reports that in the study, the “children were younger than 17 and were considered relatively healthy before their surgeries.” In addition, although “Black children had slightly more heart and digestive problems, pre-existing conditions were uncommon.”

STAT (7/20, Gaffney) reports, “In addition to a higher rate of death, Black children had 18% relative higher odds of developing complications after surgery, and 7% relative higher odds of developing
serious adverse events, such as cardiac arrest, sepsis, readmission, or reoperation.”

**Report: Number of people infected with coronavirus may be much higher than the number of reported cases**

The New York Times (7/21, Mandavilli) reports researchers conducted coronavirus antibody testing in 10 different cities and states in the U.S. and concluded that the number of people with coronavirus “is anywhere from two to 13 times higher than the reported rates for those regions.” The results “suggest that large numbers of people who did not have symptoms or did not seek medical care may have kept the virus circulating in their communities.” The research was published in a CDC report and in JAMA Internal Medicine.

The Washington Post (7/21, McGinley) reports “there are about 3.8 million reported cases” of coronavirus, but “the CDC data suggests the actual number of infections could be 38 million.” The researchers tested samples collected “during routine screenings, such as cholesterol tests,” for coronavirus antibodies.

Bloomberg (7/21, Brown) reports the rates of infection differed across the country. For example, the researchers estimated that 6.9% of the New York City metropolitan area had contracted the virus, which was at least 12 times higher than the number of reported cases. Meanwhile, in the San Francisco Bay area, around 1% of people had contracted the virus, which was around 9 times higher than the number of reported cases there.

STAT (7/21, Joseph) reports the research suggests that the total number of coronavirus cases in the U.S. could be six to 24 times higher than the confirmed number of cases. The results also indicate that most Americans are still vulnerable to the virus and that the U.S. has not reached herd immunity.

**New from CDC: Patients with COVID-19 no longer need tests to come out of isolation**
The New York Times (7/22, McNeil) reports that most Americans “recovering from [COVID-19] can come out of isolation without further testing to show they no longer carry the coronavirus, federal health officials said on Wednesday.” Instead, patients “may be judged to have recovered if 10 days have passed since they first felt ill; they no longer have any symptoms, such as shortness of breath or diarrhea; and they have not had a fever for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medicine.” Thenew CDC recommendations “are not rules but guidelines intended for patients, doctors and health policymakers.”

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