Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Jan. 25, 2021


CDC: Severe allergic reactions to Moderna’s coronavirus vaccine appear to be rare

Reuters (1/22, Chander) reported more than 4 million people in the U.S. have received Moderna’s coronavirus vaccine, and severe allergic reactions appear to be rare, according to CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. According to CDC data, anaphylaxis “occurred at a rate of 2.5 cases per 1 million shots administered.” A CDC report released earlier this month found that severe allergic reactions to Pfizer’s and BioNTech’s coronavirus vaccine “occurred at a rate of 11.1 per 1 million vaccinations.”

More contagious COVID-19 variant first discovered in Brazil detected for first time in United States

The Washington Post (1/25, Achenbach) reports, “Minnesota officials announced Monday they have identified a person infected with a highly transmissible variant of the coronavirus that has been spreading at alarming rates in recent weeks in Brazil.” It is “the first report in the United States of the P.1 variant, which has been of particular concern to scientists as they have observed the disastrous surge in infections in the Brazilian city of Manaus.”

The AP (1/25, Karnowski, Stobbe) reports the variant “was found in a specimen from a patient who lives in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area who became ill in the first week of January, the Minnesota Department of Health said in a statement.” The AP adds, “There was no immediate indication that the variant was spreading in Minnesota.”
The Hill (1/25, Sullivan) reports the P.1 variant “is similar to the South African one, which has provoked some concern that the vaccines could be less effective against it.”

**Researchers: Schools operating in person with precautions in place see scant coronavirus transmission**

The Washington Post (1/26, Meckler) reports “Schools operating in person have seen scant transmission of the coronavirus, particularly when masks and distancing are employed, but some indoor athletics have led to infections and should be curtailed if schools want to operate safely, researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded in papers published Tuesday” as a viewpoint piece in JAMA. The researchers “reviewed data from studies in the United States and abroad and found the experience in schools differed from nursing homes and high-density work sites where rapid spread has occurred.”

Furthermore, the New York Times (1/26, Rabin) says that according to the researchers, “local officials also must be willing to impose limits on other settings – like indoor dining, bars or poorly ventilated gyms – in order to keep infection rates low in the community at large.”

**CDC observes lower rate of severe allergic reactions to Pfizer coronavirus vaccine than previously reported**

Reuters (1/27, Erman) reports the CDC announced “it is observing a lower rate of severe allergic reactions in people in the United States who have received” the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine. The agency “said that through Jan. 18, there were 50 cases of anaphylaxis reported in recipients of the vaccine,” implying “a rate of about 5 per million doses administered,” which is lower than the “previously reported rate of 11.1 per million doses administered through Dec. 23.”

Meanwhile, MedPage Today (1/27, Walker) reports that “rates of anaphylaxis for the Moderna vaccine remained ‘comparable,’ at 2.8 per million, compared with 2.5 per million from CDC data last week.”

**B. 1.351 variant detected in U.S. for first time**

The Washington Post (1/28, Achenbach, Johnson) reports the B. 1.351 variant of SARS-CoV-2, first identified in South Africa, “has infected two people in South Carolina with no travel history,” marking the first confirmed cases of infection with the variant in the U.S. The people’s “lack of travel or a
connection to one another suggests that the variant is spreading in the community following an undetected introduction.” The state health department said the two people infected are both adults, and one is “from the Lowcountry and one from the Pee Dee region.” Research indicates that the B. 1.351 variant is more infectious, but not more deadly, than other variants; however, “if it is more transmissible, as scientists suspect based on preliminary data, the resulting boost to the infection rate would increase hospitalizations and deaths.”

Politico (1/28, Din) reports that the variant is also “known to be more resistant to current vaccines.”

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