Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Feb. 1, 2021


**CDC issues nationwide mask mandate for flights, public transportation in United States**

The Washington Post (1/30, Laris) reported the CDC issued a public health order requiring masks to “be worn at train and subway stations, bus terminals, and airports nationwide, as well as on planes, trains, and other types of public transportation” in the U.S. The order requires people to wear masks “while boarding, disembarking, and traveling on any conveyance into or within the United States,” as well as “at any transportation hub that provides transportation” within the U.S. The order includes exceptions “for people with disabilities who cannot wear a mask and other cases, and said masks can be removed briefly while eating, drinking, taking medication, going through security screenings, and other circumstances.”

The AP (1/30) reported the order makes refusing “to wear a mask a violation of federal law, enforced by the Transportation Security Administration and other federal, state, and local authorities.”

**More Americans have received COVID-19 vaccine than have tested positive for virus, data indicate**

Bloomberg (2/1, Cortez, Court) reports, “More Americans have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine than have tested positive for the virus, an early but hopeful milestone in the race to end the pandemic.” According to data from the Bloomberg Vaccine Tracker, “as of Monday afternoon, 26.5 million Americans had received one or both doses of the current vaccines.”
Biden administration to provide coronavirus vaccines to U.S. pharmacies

The AP (2/2, Alonso-Zaldivar, Miller) reports, “The Biden administration will begin providing COVID-19 vaccines to U.S. pharmacies, part of its plan to ramp up vaccinations as new and potentially more serious virus strains are starting to appear, the White House said Tuesday.” Starting next week, about “6,500 pharmacies around the country will receive a total of [one] million doses of vaccine,” while “the number of participating pharmacies, and the allocation of vaccines, are expected to accelerate as drugmakers increase production.”

Majority of people previously infected with COVID have high level of antibodies for at least six months, study indicates

Reuters (2/3, Kelland) reports that almost all people “previously infected with COVID-19 have high levels of antibodies for at least six months that are likely to protect them from reinfection with the disease, results of a major U.K. study showed on Wednesday.” Scientists “said the study, which measured levels of previous COVID-19 infection in populations across Britain, as well as how long antibodies persisted in those infected, should provide some reassurance that swift cases of reinfection will be rare.”

Magnets in Apple iPhone 12 can disable defibrillators, implanted cardiac defibrillators, cardiologists find

The Detroit (MI) Free Press (2/4, Shamus) reports, “Magnets and other components inside iPhone 12 devices could disable pacemakers or implanted cardiac defibrillators...potentially putting millions of people at risk for dangerous heart complications.” Cardiologists at the Henry Ford Heart & Vascular Institute identified the problem.
According to Modern Healthcare (2/4, Kacik, Subscription Publication), in a letter to the editor published online in the HeartRhythm journal, the cardiologists detailed an incident in which an iPhone brought “close to a patient’s chest that had a Medtronic defibrillator” deactivated the device which only “started working again when” the phone was taken away. For its part, “Apple published a warning on its website on Jan. 23 instructing iPhone 12 users to ‘keep your iPhone and MagSafe accessories a safe distance away from your device (more than six inches / 15 cm apart or more than 12 inches / 30 cm apart if wirelessly charging).’”

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