Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of March 15, 2021

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More than 1M patients had data exposed in health care data breaches in February

Modern Healthcare (3/12, Cohen, Subscription Publication) reported that more than 1.1 million patients “had data exposed in [health care] data breaches reported to the federal government last month.” Nearly 6.9 million patients “have had data exposed in breaches reported so far in 2021.” Health care providers, insurers, and their business associates “reported 74 breaches in January and February combined, marking the second-highest number of breaches reported in the first two months of the year since HHS’ Office for Civil Rights began maintaining its breach database in 2010.”

88% of Americans who received first dose of Pfizer, Moderna COVID-19 vaccines have also completed second dose, CDC study shows

Reuters (3/15, Maddipatla) reports, “Vaccination of about 88% of Americans who received the first dose of Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccines was complete, a study of over 12 million people by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed.” And “according to the analysis, about 3% of people in the United States who received the first dose of either of the vaccines did not get the second dose needed to complete vaccination, the agency said on Monday.”

The Hill (3/15, Weixel) reports that “the CDC said the groups prioritized to receive a shot during this period, such as health care workers and long-term care residents, had better access to a second dose because they were more likely to have been vaccinated at their work or residence.”

The New York Times (3/15, Rabin) reports, “The authors of the study urged providers and public health workers to encourage Americans to come back for second doses and to emphasize the
importance of full vaccination.” In addition, CDC officials “asked that vaccinators work to understand what keeps people from completing the series, and whether access or lack of confidence in the vaccines are playing a role.”

**USPSTF issues new guidelines recommending screening for diabetes to begin at age 35**

NBC News (3/16, Carroll) reports “screening for Type 2 diabetes and prediabetes should start at age 35 for people who” have “overweight, instead of the currently recommended age 40, a draft set of guidelines from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends.” The new “guidelines are specifically intended for people who” have “overweight – a body-mass index of 25 to 30 – or” have obesity, “a BMI of 30 or above.”

The Wall Street Journal (3/16, Burton, Subscription Publication) reports that if this draft recommendation becomes final following a public comment period, the blood tests will have to be offered free of charge by most private insurers.

**Reinfections from coronavirus appear to be rare, study suggests**

The New York Times (3/17, Mandavilli) reports that the “vast majority of people who recover from [COVID-19] remain shielded from the virus for at least six months, researchers reported on Wednesday in a large study from Denmark.” Prior infection with the coronavirus “reduced the chances of a second bout by about 80% in people under 65, but only by about half in those older than 65.” But “those results, published in the journal Lancet, were tempered by many caveats.”

CNN (3/17, Christensen) reports that a “team of scientists, including some from Denmark’s Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Prevention,” looked at “the reinfection rate among 4 million people during the second surge of [COVID-19] from September through December 31, and compared this to the infection rate during the first surge between March and May.” Of the “11,068 people who tested positive during the first surge, only 72 tested positive again during the second.” The older age group “had only about 47% protection against repeat infection, compared to younger people who seemed to have about 80% protection from reinfection, the team wrote.”

**Senate confirms Becerra as HHS secretary**
The AP (3/18, Alonso-Zaldivar) reports, “The Senate on Thursday confirmed California Attorney General Xavier Becerra as President Joe Biden’s health secretary, filling a key position in the administration’s coronavirus response and its ambitious push to lower drug costs, expand insurance coverage, and eliminate racial disparities in medical care.” The AP adds that “the American Medical Association...supported his nomination.”

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