Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of March 22, 2021

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Small majority of front-line health care workers have been vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2, survey suggests

The Washington Post (3/19, A1, Wan, Sellers, Ahmed, Guskin) reported health care workers were the first group of people in the U.S. to be offered SARS-CoV-2 vaccines, but three months later, “many remain unconvincing, unreached and unprotected.” In a survey (3/7) conducted by The Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation between February 11 and March 7, 52% of front-line health care workers have received at least one dose of a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, and more than a third “said they were not confident vaccines were sufficiently tested for safety and effectiveness.”

Research review describes potential long-term effects of coronavirus on entire human body

NBC News (3/22, Edwards) reports researchers conducted a research review and published a paper in Nature Medicine that “describes the potential long-term effects of the coronavirus on the entire body, highlighting the challenges long-haulers face in their recovery.” NBC News adds, “The review outlines in detail every organ affected by long-term [COVID-19], including the lungs, heart, kidneys and skin, as well as the gastrointestinal, neurologic and endocrine systems.”

U.S. health officials say AstraZeneica’s SARS-CoV-2 vaccine trial results may have included outdated and incomplete information

officials said Tuesday that the encouraging results that AstraZeneca announced about its [COVID-19] vaccine may have been based on outdated and incomplete information about the vaccine’s effectiveness, an extraordinary blow to the credibility of an already embattled vaccine.” NIAID “said that an independent panel of medical experts that has been helping to oversee AstraZeneca’s U.S. trial had ‘expressed concern that AstraZeneca may have included outdated information from that trial, which may have provided an incomplete view of the efficacy data.’”

The Washington Post (3/23, Johnson, McGinley, Booth) reports on Monday, AstraZeneca said the vaccine was 79% effective based on the results of its clinical trial in the U.S., but “that news release triggered concern among independent monitors [on the Data and Safety Monitoring Board] who had seen more recent data, because when an additional month was taken into account, the effectiveness ranged from 69 to 75%.”

**AstraZeneca says COVID-19 vaccine is 76% effective in new analysis of U.S. trial**

Reuters (3/24, Swift, Pandey) reports that AstraZeneca “said its COVID-19 vaccine was 76% effective at preventing symptomatic illness in a new analysis of its major U.S. trial – a tad lower than the level announced earlier this week in a report that was criticised for using outdated information.” U.S. health officials “had publicly rebuked the drugmaker for not using the most up-to-date information when it published an interim analysis on Monday that said the vaccine was 79% effective.” The latest data were “based on 190 infections among more than 32,400 participants in the United States, Chile and Peru.”

CNN (3/24, Fox) reports that AstraZeneca “updated its data on how well its coronavirus vaccine works, saying late Wednesday the vaccine showed 76% efficacy against symptomatic coronavirus disease and 100% efficacy against severe or critical disease or the need for hospitalization.” The vaccine “was 85% effective in preventing symptoms in volunteers 65 and older, the company said.”

**Senate votes to delay Medicare payment cuts for remainder of year**
Modern Healthcare (3/25, Hellmann, Subscription Publication) reports, “The Senate voted Thursday to delay Medicare payment cuts for the rest of the year, a big win for hospitals and providers.” The cuts “were scheduled to resume next week absent Congressional action, but providers lobbied hard for an extension of the moratorium, arguing the pandemic continues to negatively impact their bottomlines.”

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