Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of April 5, 2021

Read AMA Morning Rounds®’ most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of April 5, 2021–April 9, 2021.

CDC says Americans who have been fully vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 can safely travel

The New York Times (4/2, A1, Rabin) reported the CDC announced that Americans who have been fully vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 can safely travel inside or outside the U.S., “as long as they take basic precautions like wearing masks.” The agency said they preferred that people not travel, but there is growing evidence that people who have been fully vaccinated can travel “at low risk to themselves.”

CDC says risk of COVID-19 infection from contaminated surfaces is very low

The Hill (4/5, Weixel) reports, “The risk of getting a COVID-19 infection from contaminated surfaces is extremely low, according to updated” CDC guidance. The CDC said, “It is possible for people to be infected through contact with contaminated surfaces or objects (fomites), but the risk is generally considered to be low.” The agency said the principal mode of transmission is respiratory droplets, and the risk of infection from fomites is “generally less than 1 in 10,000.”

A third of COVID-19 survivors receive a diagnosis for psychiatric or neurological illness within six months of their infection, research suggests

STAT (4/6, Cooney) reports that a study found that “six months after being diagnosed with [COVID-19], 1 in 3 patients also had experienced a psychiatric or neurological illness.” While “anxiety, mood,
and substance use disorders were most common,” investigators “also found worrying, if lower, rates of serious neurological complications, especially in patients who had been severely ill with [COVID-19].” The data also indicated that “compared to control groups of people who had the flu or other [non-COVID] respiratory infections, first-ever neuropsychiatric diagnoses were almost twice as high.” The study was published in Lancet Psychiatry.

Reuters (4/6, Kelland) reports that the study, which analyzed health records of more than 236,000 patients with COVID-19, “was not able to determine the biological or psychological mechanisms involved...” said Max Taquet, who co-led the research.

More than 500K Americans have signed up for ACA coverage during special enrollment period

The AP (4/7, Alonso-Zaldivar) reports, “More than a half million Americans have taken advantage of the Biden administration’s special health insurance sign-up window keyed to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government announced Wednesday in anticipation that even more consumers will gain coverage in the coming months.” The special sign-up opportunity will be available until August 15.

CNN (4/7, Luhby) reports that this is “more than double the number that turned to the exchange, healthcare.gov, in the same period over the past two years, when enrollment was limited to those losing job-based policies and experiencing other major life events,” according to the data released Wednesday. Meanwhile, “Floridians and Texans flocked to the federal exchange, with more than 146,000 and 98,000 residents signing up, respectively.” These “states, which have among the highest uninsured rates in the nation, have had the most people selecting policies during this special enrollment period so far.”

Racism is a serious threat to public health, CDC says

NBC News (4/8, Pflum) reports that on Thursday, the CDC said racism is a “serious threat” to public health, “becoming the latest, and largest, U.S.-based health agency to single out racism as having a ‘profound and negative impact on communities of color’ and contributing to disproportionate mortality rates among people of color.” CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said, “Confronting the impact of racism will not be easy. I know that we can do this if we work together. I certainly hope you will lean in and join me.” Many public health agencies and medical organizations, including the AMA, “have condemned racism in recent months.”

Read the AMA’s statement on the CDC statement.