

Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of April 12, 2021

Read *AMA Morning Rounds®*' most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of April 12, 2021–April 16, 2021.

AMA applauds administration's proposed gun initiatives

HealthLeaders Media (4/9, Commins) reported, "President Joseph R. Biden's proposals to require serial numbers and background checks for 'ghost guns' and model legislation for 'red flag' laws that identify potentially dangerous gun owners are getting healthy reviews from physicians." AMA President Susan R. Bailey, MD, "applauded the administration for its 'bold action' on a 'public health crisis' that claims more than 40,000 lives each year, but stressed that the proposals 'are just a first step.'" Dr. Bailey said, "People die every day—and almost every place—in our country from firearm-related injuries. Movie theaters, grocery stores, places of worship, and elementary school classrooms have all been scenes of violence." She added, "Most of these deaths are preventable, and now is the time for lawmakers, policy leaders and advocates on all sides to seek common ground and save lives."

Medscape (4/12, Frellick, Subscription Publication) reports that Dr. Bailey said, "The AMA applauds today's action by the Biden administration to require background checks for ghost guns, and we urge a rapid rulemaking process to stop the proliferation of these dangerous weapons." She added, "The AMA also supports 'red flag' laws allowing family members, intimate partners, household members, and law enforcement personnel to petition a court for the removal of a firearm when there is a high or imminent risk for violence. But these actions are just a first step."

Editor's Note: Read the AMA's full statement about the executive actions to curb gun violence.

Illinois receives approval to extend Medicaid program to low-income people up to one year after they give birth

US News & World Report (4/12, Cirruzzo) reports, "Illinois received the green light on Monday for a first-in-the-nation waiver to extend its Medicaid program to low-income people up to one year after

they give birth.” This “approval means low-income women in Illinois with incomes up to 208% of the federal poverty line can stay on Medicaid up to one year after they give birth, with full coverage.”

The Hill (4/12, Coleman) reports that “the approval went into effect on Monday at the start of Black Maternal Health Week and will stay in place until Dec. 31, 2025.” HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra “also unveiled that \$12 million will be made available over four years for the Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies (RMOMS) program.”

Medscape (4/12, Ault, Subscription Publication) reports, “Continuing Medicaid coverage for new mothers has been backed by the American Medical Association, is a priority of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and has been promoted by Republicans and Democrats in Congress and state legislatures.”

FDA, CDC call for pause in use of Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine after six cases of rare, severe type of blood clot

The Washington Post (4/13, McGinley, Johnson) reports the FDA and CDC “called for a pause in the use of the Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine, saying they are reviewing reports of six U.S. cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot among the 6.8 million people who received the vaccine.” Acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock said, “I’d like to stress these events appear to be extremely rare. However, COVID-19 vaccine safety is a top priority for the federal government, and we take all reports of adverse events following vaccination very seriously.” Federal “health officials stressed that one reason to pause the use of the vaccine was to make sure health-care professionals were aware that the vaccine-associated blood clots should not be treated with a conventional drug, heparin, which could exacerbate the clots.” Johnson & Johnson said that three additional cases are being investigated in Europe, and the vaccine’s rollout has been delayed there.

USA Today (4/13, Rodriguez) reports all six cases occurred in women between the ages of 18 and 48, “with symptoms occurring 6 to 13 days after vaccination.” One of the women has died, and another “has been hospitalized in critical condition.”

Editor’s Note: Read the CDC’s Health Alert.

Administration moves to undo restrictions on Title X federally funded family planning program

The AP (4/14, Alonso-Zaldivar) reports that on Wednesday, the Biden administration began to undo “a policy that drove Planned Parenthood from the federal family planning program and created new complications for women trying to get birth control.” The proposed HHS rule “follows through on President Joe Biden’s campaign promise to reverse his predecessor’s family planning policy, which was branded a ‘gag rule’ by women’s groups and decried by medical associations as violating the doctor-patient relationship.”

Politico (4/14, Ollstein) reports that “the Biden administration said approximately a quarter of the program’s providers left due to the restrictions, leaving the program with 1,000 fewer service sites and 22% fewer patients served nationwide.” In addition, “six states lost all of their Title X providers, while another six lost the vast majority, according to the health department.”

The Hill (4/14, Weixel) reports that “the proposal did not immediately revoke the prior policy, and the...rules will remain in place until the current administration formally ends them through a final rule, which could take months.”

MedPage Today (4/14, Basen) reports that in a statement, AMA President Susan R. Bailey, MD, said that the American Medical Association “strongly applauds the Biden administration’s proposal to reverse the Title X ‘gag rule’ —a rule that has inappropriately interfered with the patient-physician relationship and jeopardized safe access to reproductive care.”

Editor’s Note: Read the full AMA statement on the Title X reversal.

CDC identifies about 5,800 breakthrough cases of COVID-19 infection among Americans who have been fully vaccinated

The Wall Street Journal (4/15, Whelan, Subscription Publication) reports the CDC has identified about 5,800 breakthrough cases of COVID-19 infection among more than 66 million Americans who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Based on this data, the CDC says breakthrough cases of infection occur in 0.008% of people who have been fully vaccinated.

CNN (4/15, Tinker, Fox) reports of the 5,800 breakthrough cases, 74 have died and 396 required hospitalization. The researchers also found that 65% of breakthrough cases occurred in women, and 29% of the cases were asymptomatic.

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