Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of May 3, 2021

Read AMA Morning Rounds®’ most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of May 3, 2021–May 7, 2021.

Anxiety sometimes causes fainting, dizziness and other short-term reactions in people receiving COVID-19 vaccines, CDC report says

The AP (4/30, Stobbe) reported anxiety, rather than COVID-19 vaccines, “caused fainting, dizziness and other short-term reactions in dozens of people at coronavirus vaccine clinics in five states,” according to a CDC report. The report’s authors said similar reactions have been documented in people receiving different vaccines for decades.

The Hill (4/30, Coleman) reported the CDC “investigated clusters of anxiety-related events, with a total 64 incidents out of 8,624 doses administered.”

Experts say “herd immunity” is unlikely in the U.S. because of large number of people who do not plan to be vaccinated

The New York Times (5/3, Mandavilli) reports experts say it is unlikely the U.S. will reach “herd immunity,” because so many people do not plan to be vaccinated. As a result, experts expect “the virus will most likely become a manageable threat that will continue to circulate in the United States for years to come, still causing hospitalizations and deaths but in much smaller numbers.”

President Biden says he wants at least 60% of adults to be fully vaccinated against coronavirus by Fourth of July
The Washington Post (5/4, A1, Pager, Abutaleb) reports President Biden says he wants at least 60% of adults to be fully vaccinated against coronavirus by the Fourth of July, and for 70% to have received at least one dose. To help more people get vaccinated, President Biden also “announced a shift in strategy to focus more sharply on hesitant and rural Americans – directing pharmacies to offer walk-in appointments, allocating funding for pop-up clinics and sending more doses to rural health clinics, among other moves.” To meet Biden’s new goals, the U.S. “will need to dispense 100 million shots over the next 60 days, beyond the more than 200 million that have been administered so far.”

USA Today (5/4, Groppe) reports around 56% of adults in the U.S. have received at least one dose so far. The Biden “administration also told states on Tuesday that it will redistribute vaccine doses allocated to states if a state isn’t able to use all of its share in a given week,” and “states that want more can apply for any unclaimed amounts each week.”

AMA survey finds majority of physicians now work outside of physician-owned practices

Modern Healthcare (5/5, Bannow, Subscription Publication) reports, “For the first time, most physicians worked outside of physician-owned practices in 2020, as doctors continue to gravitate toward employment by hospitals and other organizations, according to” the AMA’s latest Physician Practice Benchmark Survey. According to the survey, “49.1% of patient care physicians worked in physician-owned practices in 2020,” compared to 54% in 2018 and 60% in 2012. AMA President Susan R. Bailey, M.D., said in a statement that multiple factors are driving the trend, including physician job changes, practice closures, and mergers and acquisitions. She added that the survey was concluded last fall and the COVID-19 pandemic has likely had a further impact on these trends. Dr. Bailey said, “Physician practices were hit hard by the economic impact of the early pandemic as patient volume and revenues shrunk while medical supply expenses spiked. The impact of these economic forces on physician practice arrangements is ongoing and may not be fully realized for some time.”

Almost one million people have signed up for health insurance on federal exchange during special enrollment period so far

The New York Times (5/6, Sanger-Katz, Kliff) reports almost one million Americans have signed up for health insurance on the federal exchange “during the first 10 weeks of a special open enrollment period the Biden administration began in February.” HHS data shows 940,000 people enrolled

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through the federal exchange between February 15 and April 30.

The Hill (5/6, Coleman) reports, “The Biden administration implemented the special enrollment period to allow people who needed health insurance due to the disruption of the pandemic to have extra time to sign up.” The special enrollment period is scheduled to continue until August 15.

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