

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

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

### **Biden's order on fostering competition calls for intensification of efforts to lower drug prices**

The Washington Post (7/9, Goldstein) reported, "President Biden is calling on federal health officials to intensify efforts to drive down prescription drug prices as part of an executive order he signed Friday to spur federal agencies to promote economic competition." The order "directs his administration to work with states to devise plans to import medicines safely from Canada." The President's directive "also urges the Federal Trade Commission to promote the availability of generic drugs by banning pharmaceutical manufacturers from paying their generic counterparts to delay entry of lower-price versions of medications into the market."

The Wall Street Journal (7/10, Evans, Subscription Publication) reported the order calls for the HHS to back regulations limiting surprise medical bills and requiring hospitals to disclose their prices.

### **J&J coronavirus vaccine tied to increased risk of Guillain-Barré syndrome, FDA warns**

The New York Times (7/12, LaFraniere, Weiland) reports that the Food and Drug Administration "warned on Monday that Johnson & Johnson's coronavirus vaccine can lead to an increased risk of a rare neurological condition known as Guillain-Barré syndrome." While "regulators have found that the chances of developing the condition are low, they appear to be three to five times higher among recipients of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine than among the general population," and "federal officials have identified roughly 100 suspected cases of Guillain-Barré disease among recipients of the Johnson & Johnson shot." The warning represents "another setback for a vaccine that has largely been sidelined in the United States."

The Washington Post (7/12, A1, McGinley, Sun) reports, "Available data do not show a pattern

suggesting a similar increased risk of Guillain-Barré with the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines.”

## **U.S. daily COVID-19 infection rates doubled in past three weeks, data show**

The Wall Street Journal (7/13, A1, Ansari, Subscription Publication) reports new COVID-19 infections are increasing in several U.S. states, concerning health authorities and epidemiologists as the Delta variant continues spreading and many Americans remain unvaccinated. Johns Hopkins University data show the U.S. is averaging more than 23,000 new cases daily, twice the seven-day average of nearly 11,300 cases three weeks ago.

According to CNN (7/13, Holcombe, Yan), “About a third of the nation’s cases came out of five states, Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri and Nevada,” all of which have vaccination rates below 48%, according to CDC data.

## **CDC reports unprecedented 29% increase in overdose deaths last year**

The New York Times (7/14, A1, Katz, Sanger-Katz) reports, “Drug overdose deaths rose nearly 30% in 2020 to a record 93,000, according to preliminary statistics released Wednesday by the” CDC. That figure represents the “largest single-year increase recorded.” According to the article, “Several grim records were set: the most drug overdose deaths in a year; the most deaths from opioid overdoses; the most overdose deaths from stimulants like methamphetamine; the most deaths from the deadly class of synthetic opioids known as fentanyls.”

The Washington Post (7/14, A1, Bernstein, Achenbach) reports, “The increase came as no surprise to addiction specialists, drug counselors and policy experts who have watched the steady rise in deaths throughout the pandemic. But that did not make the statistics any less horrifying.”

The Wall Street Journal (7/14, A1, McKay, Subscription Publication) says the drug overdose fatalities and the COVID-19 pandemic form a twin public health crisis.

## **CDC advisory panel to make recommendations on giving additional COVID-19 vaccine doses to immunocompromised patients**

The Washington Post (7/15, Sun, Abutaleb, McGinley) reports, “The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which makes vaccine recommendations to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is scheduled at a July 22 meeting to discuss” whether health care “workers should be allowed to give additional coronavirus shots to patients with fragile immune systems.” The “panel next week plans to focus on the 2 to 4% of U.S. adults who have suppressed immunity, a population that includes organ transplant recipients, people on cancer treatments and people living with rheumatologic conditions, HIV and leukemia.”

Bloomberg (7/15, Langreth) reports “vaccine experts and health officials in both the U.S. and Europe say that while a booster may eventually be needed, existing shots remain highly effective in preventing severe disease, including against all known variants.”

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