Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Aug. 2, 2021

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People fully immunized against COVID-19 potentially able to spread Delta variant at same level as unvaccinated people, CDC report suggests

The New York Times (7/30, A1, Mandavilli) reported the CDC, “in yet another unexpected and unwelcome twist in the pandemic,” released a report Friday which strongly suggested “fully immunized people with so-called breakthrough infections of the Delta variant can spread the virus to others just as readily as unvaccinated people.” Vaccines “remain powerfully effective against severe illness and death, and the agency said infections in vaccinated people were comparatively rare,” but the new report “follows a series of other recent findings about the Delta variant that have upended scientists’ understanding of the coronavirus.” The new CDC report “described an outbreak in Provincetown, Mass., this month that quickly mushroomed to 470 cases in Massachusetts alone, as of Thursday.” The report found that 75% of those infected “were fully immunized, and the Delta variant was found in most of the samples that were genetically analyzed.”

The Washington Post (7/30, Johnson, Abutaleb, Achenbach) reported the study “found that vaccinated individuals carried as much virus in their noses as unvaccinated individuals, strongly suggesting that vaccinated people could spread the virus to others.” However, scientists “said the Provincetown outbreak and other recent data on breakthrough infections make clear that vaccines offer significant protections, as they were designed to, against severe illness and death but do not offer blanket protection against any chance of infection.” For example, the outbreak in Provincetown saw only saw a handful of people hospitalized. Further, while data suggest vaccinated people can spread the virus, “the extent to which they contribute is not yet clear.”
U.S. reaches milestone of 70% of adults receiving at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine

The Washington Post (8/2, A1, Suliman, Pietsch, Shammas, Goldstein) reports the U.S. on Monday “reported that 70% of adults had received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine, a benchmark President Biden had hoped to reach nearly a month earlier, on July 4.” News of the milestone “came as the highly contagious Delta variant is driving a coronavirus surge, with the nation reporting more than 85,000 cases a day, according to The Washington Post’s rolling seven-day average.”

Much of U.S. grappling with responses to Delta variant

The Washington Post (8/3, A1, Nirappil, Cusick) reports that while much of the U.S. “wrestles with new masking guidance and new evidence of the dangers of the highly transmissible Delta variant, public health authorities and doctors in the states hit hardest by the latest viral surge area confronting a new stage of the pandemic unlike anything they have seen.” COVID-19 infections “are tearing through their communities faster than before, even with significant chunks of their population immunized through vaccinations or natural antibodies from infections.” Further, hospitals “are struggling to keep up as their beds rapidly fill up with young and middle-aged unvaccinated adults.”

COVID-19 cases worldwide surpass 200 million

Reuters (8/4, Abrahams, Kavya) reports, “Coronavirus cases worldwide surpassed 200 million on Wednesday, according to a Reuters tally, as the more-infectious Delta variant threatens areas with low vaccination rates and strains health care systems.” The new results are “highlighting the widening gap in inoculation rates between wealthy and poor nations,” with “the countries reporting the most cases on a seven-day average—the United States, Brazil, Indonesia, India and Iran—represent[ing] about 38% of all global cases reported each day.”

COVID-19 vaccination rates increasing in states where Delta variant is surging, White House says

The Wall Street Journal (8/5, Abbott, Subscription Publication) reports that COVID-19 vaccinations rates are on the rise throughout the U.S., especially in states where the Delta variant is surging, the White House said on Thursday. According to CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the U.S. is seeing
a daily average of 89,400 COVID-19 cases.

NBC News (8/5, Pettypiece) reports in “the last 24 hours, the U.S. saw the highest number of daily shots administered since July 3, with 864,000 vaccinations administered. Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Oklahoma are now vaccinating people at a pace not seen since April, White House COVID coordinator Jeffrey Zients said Thursday.”