Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Nov. 1, 2021

Read AMA Morning Rounds®’ most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of Nov. 1, 2021–Nov. 5, 2021.

FDA authorizes Pfizer-BioNTech’s COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 to 11

The New York Times (10/29, Weiland, LaFraniere) reported that on Friday the FDA “authorized Pfizer-BioNTech’s coronavirus vaccine for emergency use in children 5 to 11, a move eagerly anticipated by millions of families looking to protect some of the only remaining Americans left out of the vaccination campaign.” Approximately “28 million children in the group will be eligible to receive one-third of the adult dose, with two injections three weeks apart.” And, “if the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention signs off, as is expected, they could start getting shots as early as Wednesday.”

Reuters (10/29, Mishra, Erman) reported, “Pfizer said it will begin shipping pediatric vials of the vaccine on Saturday to pharmacies, pediatricians’ offices and other places where the shots may be administered.”

Global COVID-19 death toll surpasses 5M

The Wall Street Journal (11/1, Abdel-Baqui, Subscription Publication) says the reported global COVID-19 death toll passed five million on Monday, Johns Hopkins University data show.

The AP (11/1, Johnson) reports the U.S., the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Brazil collectively “account for one-eighth of the world’s population but nearly half of all reported deaths.” The U.S. by itself has experienced in excess of 740,000 fatalities, “more than any other nation.”
According to the New York Times (11/1, Slotnik), some experts believe “five million is an undercount. Many countries are unable to accurately record the number of people who have died from COVID-19, like India and African nations; experts have questioned the veracity of data from other countries, like Russia.”

CDC authorizes Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine for use in children ages five to 11

The Wall Street Journal (11/2, Loftus, Subscription Publication) reports the CDC on Tuesday recommended the use of Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine in children ages five to 11, opening the door for vaccinations to begin.

The Washington Post (11/2, A1, Sun, Shepherd) reports “pediatricians are preparing to administer” the vaccine to younger children “as early as Wednesday” after CDC Director Rochelle Walensky signed off Tuesday night on a unanimous agency vaccine advisory panel recommendation earlier in the day to use the pediatric vaccine, “a watershed moment in the fight against the pandemic.” The “panel members had a robust debate about” increased risks of myocarditis with the vaccine, but a “follow-up study...suggests the vaccine-related cases are generally mild and that symptoms resolve promptly.” In addition, “CDC and FDA officials say the vaccines are being given under one of the most intensive safety-monitoring efforts ever.”

Bloomberg (11/2, Rutherford) reports the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices “voted 14-0 in favor of giving children the shot” after it was cleared Friday by the FDA.

According to the New York Times (11/2, A1, Mandavilli), “While relatively few of the 29 million children in this age group will be fully immunized a month from now, even partial vaccination will provide some protection.” The CDC estimates that “every million doses given to children ages 5 to 11 would prevent about 58,000 cases and 226 hospitalizations in that group.” The Times adds, “Immunizing these children is expected to prevent about 600,000 new cases from November 2021 to March 2022.”

CDC advisory committee recommends all U.S. adults under 60 receive hepatitis B vaccines

The AP (11/3, Stobbe) reports the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices “on Wednesday recommended that all U.S. adults younger than 60 be vaccinated against hepatitis B, because progress against the liver-damaging disease has stalled.” This recommendation “means that
tens of millions of U.S. adults—mostly between the ages of 30 and 59—would be advised to get shots.” Vaccinations for hepatitis B “became standard for children in 1991, meaning most adults younger that 30 already are protected.”

**Administration sets January 4 deadline for companies to implement COVID-19 vaccine, testing mandates**

The Washington Post (11/4, A1, Rosenberg) reports, “Companies with more than 100 employees will be mandated to require coronavirus vaccinations for their workers or do regular testing by Jan. 4 under the terms of a new federal rule released Thursday by the Biden administration.” The rule “would require weekly testing and mandatory face-masking for workers who choose not to get vaccinated,” and “also specifies that employers must provide paid time off for workers to get vaccinated or recover from any side effects.” However, “companies are able to require unvaccinated employees to foot the bill for tests.”

The New York Times (11/4, A1, Hirsch) reports the policy “is expected to cover 84 million workers, roughly 31 million of whom are unvaccinated.” According to the Times, “In a separate measure that will affect 17 million more workers, nursing homes and other health care facilities that receive Medicare and Medicaid funds must ensure all employees are vaccinated by Jan. 4, with no option for testing.”

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