

Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Nov. 8, 2021

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Pfizer says its antiviral pill demonstrates efficacy against COVID-19

The New York Times (11/5, A1, Robbins) reported, “Pfizer announced on Friday that its pill to treat COVID-19 had been found in a key clinical trial to be highly effective at preventing severe illness among at-risk people who received the drug soon after they exhibited symptoms, making it the second antiviral pill to demonstrate efficacy against COVID.” The treatment “appears to be more effective than a similar offering from Merck, which is awaiting federal authorization.” Pfizer’s pill “cut the risk of hospitalization or death by 89% when given within three days after the start of symptoms.”

The Washington Post (11/5, A1, Johnson) reported, “If the pills are deemed safe and effective by the Food and Drug Administration in coming weeks, they are expected to become available right away, although supply of the Pfizer drug could be limited initially.”

U.S. reopens borders for foreign travelers fully vaccinated against COVID-19

The New York Times (11/8, Rivlin-Nadler) reports, “The United States reopened its borders for vaccinated foreign travelers on Monday, ending more than 18 months of restrictions on international travel that separated families and cost the global travel industry hundreds of billions of dollars.” Under the new guidance, “fully vaccinated travelers are allowed to enter the United States if they can show proof of vaccination and a negative coronavirus test taken within three days before departure.” According to the Times, “Unvaccinated Americans and children under 18 are exempt from the requirement, but must take a coronavirus test within 24 hours of travel.”

The AP (11/8, Spagat, Thompson) reports, “The U.S. will accept travelers who have been fully vaccinated with any of the shots approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization, not just those in use in the U.S.”

Study examines relationship between sleep onset timing, risk of developing cardiovascular trouble

The Washington Post (11/9, Suliman) reports that “by attaching wrist-worn accelerometer devices to more than 88,000 people,” researchers claim they “have been able more accurately to monitor sleep patterns and say they could have found an optimal bedtime to keep hearts healthy.”

HealthDay (11/9, Reinberg) reports a bedtime “between 10 and 11 p.m. may be the ideal time to cut the risk for cardiovascular trouble,” investigators concluded. The study also revealed that “going to sleep before 10 p.m. or at midnight or later might raise the risk for heart disease by nearly 25%,” an increased risk that “may be traced to the altering of the body’s circadian rhythm.” The findings were published online in the European Heart Journal: Digital Health.

More than 22M infants globally did not receive first dose of measles vaccine in 2020, WHO-CDC report finds

Reuters (11/10, Karimi, Aripaka) reports, “The risk of measles outbreaks is high after more than 22 million infants missed their first vaccine doses during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned” in a joint report. Reported cases of measles “fell by more than 80% last year compared with 2019, but a higher number of children missing their vaccine doses leaves them vulnerable,” according to the report. Nearly “3 million more children missed the shots in 2020 than the previous year, the largest increase in two decades.”

Patients with NASH and obesity who undergo bariatric surgery may significantly lower risk for liver disease, CV events, researchers say

The New York Times (11/11, Rabin) reports research shows “that bariatric surgery, in addition to helping with weight loss, can protect the liver.” The study revealed that “of a group of more than 1,100

patients” with nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) and obesity, “those who had weight-loss surgery cut their risk of advanced liver disease, liver cancer or related death by almost 90% over the next decade.” Those who underwent the surgery “were also at significantly lower risk for cardiovascular disease,” according to the study published in JAMA.

Healio (11/11, Monostra) reports the findings also found an “88% lower risk for major adverse liver outcomes and a 70% reduced risk for a major CV event compared with a matched control group, in addition to significantly greater reductions in body weight and HbA1c,” following the surgery.

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