

Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Jan. 10, 2022

Read *AMA Morning Rounds*®' most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of Jan. 10, 2022–Jan. 14, 2022.

FDA shortens duration between second dose of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, booster to five months

The AP (1/7) reported the Food and Drug Administration on Friday “shortened the time that people who received Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccine have to wait for a booster—to five months rather than six.” The AP added, “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention agreed” with the decision, which is “in line with new recommendations for recipients of the Pfizer vaccine.”

More than 13.8M Americans sign up for ACA coverage ahead of deadline

Forbes (1/10, Japsen) reports a record number of “Americans have purchased individual coverage under the Affordable Care Act...for this year with another five days for people to sign up.” The Biden administration on Monday “said more than 13.8 million Americans have signed up for 2022 health care coverage that began Jan. 1, 2022 via the federal HealthCare.gov marketplace and state-based marketplaces.” The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said, “This year’s Open Enrollment Period...continues to outpace previous years’ enrollment, including a 21% increase in plan selections through December 15, 2021, compared to the last year’s Open Enrollment.”

Fierce Healthcare (1/10, King) reports, “Of those who have signed up so far, more than 9.7 million people were already enrolled in a health plan in the 33 states that use HealthCare.gov through Dec. 15,” while “HealthCare.gov saw 8.1 million returning consumers and 1.6 million new signups.”

U.S. COVID-19 hospitalizations reach new record amid Omicron surge

The New York Times (1/11, Astor, Hassan, Sun) reports, “The number of Americans hospitalized with COVID-19 has surpassed last winter’s peak, underscoring the severity of the threat the virus continues to pose as the extremely contagious Omicron variant tears through the United States.” According to the Times, “As of Sunday, 142,388 people with the virus were hospitalized nationwide, according to data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, surpassing the single-day peak of 142,315 reported on Jan. 14 of last year.”

The Wall Street Journal (1/11, A1, Kamp, Evans, Subscription Publication) reports the seven-day average also surpassed that of last winter, reaching 140,576 Tuesday.

COVID-19 vaccinations among children aged five to 11 “alarmingly low,” officials warn

The AP (1/12, Tanner) reports, “Distrust, misinformation and delays because of the holidays and bad weather have combined to produce what authorities say are alarmingly low COVID-19 vaccination rates in U.S. children ages 5 to 11.” According to the AP, “As of Tuesday, just over 17% were fully vaccinated, more than two months after shots became available to the age group,” while “among children 12 to 17, the rate is 54%.”

Supreme Court blocks administration’s COVID-19 vaccine-test mandate for private employers, allows for health care workers

The Washington Post (1/13, A1, Barnes) reports that on Thursday, the Supreme Court “stopped the Biden administration’s vaccination-or-testing requirement for the nation’s largest employers,” but it “allowed a different and smaller policy to go forward, requiring vaccinations for most health-care workers at the facilities that receive Medicaid and Medicare funds.” The Occupational Safety and Health Administration mandate “would have applied to 84 million people,” and “the health-care worker requirement covers about 10 million.”

Bloomberg (1/13, Stohr) reports the OSHA ruling “limits Biden’s options for increasing the country’s vaccination rate as the Omicron variant propels a spike in cases.” The CDC “says only 63% of the

country is fully vaccinated and of that group just 37% have received a booster shot.”

Reuters (1/13, Hurley, Chung) reports that AMA President Gerald E. Harmon, M.D., “said that although he is pleased the court allowed the health care worker mandate, the broader workplace rule is also needed.” Dr. Harmon remarked, “Workplace transmission has been a major factor in the spread of COVID-19. ... Now more than ever, workers in all settings across the country need commonsense, evidence-based protections against COVID-19 infection, hospitalization and death.”

Editor’s note: Read the full AMA statement from President Gerald E. Harmon, M.D.

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