Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of March 21, 2022

Read AMA Morning Rounds®’ most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of March 21, 2022–March 25, 2022.

More than two-thirds of physicians use audio-only telehealth modalities, survey reveals

mHealth Intelligence (3/24, Vaidya) reports that “more than two-thirds of telehealth providers said they use audio-only modalities to offer telehealth services, according to a... survey [PDF]” of 2,232 physicians conducted by the American Medical Association. Regarding “clinical care processes, physicians are primarily using telehealth to provide treatment or therapy (77%), screenings (72%), or follow-up care (70%).” AMA President Gerald E. Harmon, M.D., said, “Physicians view telehealth as providing quality care to their patients, and policymakers and payers have come to the same conclusion. Patients will benefit immensely from this new era of improved access to care.”

Editor’s Note: The AMA is leading the charge to aggressively expand telehealth advocacy, research and resources so physicians can adapt their practices and get paid equitably while maintaining patient access to care. Learn more.

Moderna says its COVID-19 vaccine safe in children aged 6 months to 5 years

The Washington Post (3/23, Johnson) reports Moderna “announced Wednesday its two-dose pediatric coronavirus vaccine was safe in young children, toddlers and babies in a study,” but the vaccine’s effectiveness “in children 6 months to 5 years old was more of a mixed picture” due to the Omicron variant. In the clinical trial, “the shot met the main criteria the company and regulators had defined for success, generating immune defenses equivalent to or better than those that protected young adults before the variant emerged, according to a Moderna news release.”
The Wall Street Journal (3/23, Loftus, Subscription Publication) reports the vaccine’s effectiveness against symptomatic illness was 43.7% in those aged six months to two years and 37.5% in those aged two to five years, the company said.

The AP (3/23, Neergaard) reports the company “said that in the coming weeks it would ask regulators in the U.S. and Europe to authorize two small-dose shots for youngsters under 6.”

People with COVID-19 more likely to develop diabetes during post-acute disease phase

MedPage Today (3/22, Monaco) reports, “People with COVID-19 were more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes in the year following their infection, according to a cohort study using national Department of Veterans Affairs databases.” The study published in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology found that “among 181,280 veterans who tested positive for COVID-19, there was a 40% higher risk for incident diabetes during the post-acute phase of the disease compared with a contemporary control group.” Also, over 12 months, there was “a significantly higher excess burden of new diabetes among those with a positive COVID test...the researchers wrote.”

FDA advisory panel to discuss considerations for use of COVID-19 vaccine boosters in April

Reuters (3/21, Maddipatla, Leo) reports the Food and Drug Administration “said on Monday a panel of independent advisers will meet on April 6 to discuss considerations for use of COVID-19 vaccine booster doses.” The FDA “said no vote was planned at this meeting and there will not be any discussion of any of the COVID vaccine makers’ applications for additional boosters.” The agency’s “Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee’s...discussion will focus particularly on factors that need to be looked at to update the strains that make up the vaccines as well as the timing and populations for booster doses.”

mRNA COVID-19 vaccines highly effective at preventing death, mechanical ventilation during Omicron surge, CDC study suggests
The Washington Post (3/18, Shepherd) reported “the coronavirus vaccines most widely used in the United States remained highly effective at preventing the worst outcomes from infections even in the face of the highly transmissible Omicron variant in January,” according to a CDC study. Although “protection against mild illness waned over time, the mRNA vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech provided a robust shield against death and needing mechanical ventilation, the study...found.”

The Hill (3/18, Sullivan) reported the study found “three doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines were 94% effective in preventing death or the need for a ventilator during the Omicron surge,” while “effectiveness against death or ventilation was significantly lower for people who only had two shots, at 79%.”