

## Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of April 25, 2022

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Read *AMA Morning Rounds*®' most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of April 18, 2022–April 22, 2022.

### **FDA announces proposed ban on menthol cigarettes, flavored cigars**

The New York Times (4/28, A1, Jewett) reports that on Thursday, the FDA “announced a plan to ban sales of menthol-flavored cigarettes in the United States, a measure many public health experts hailed as the government’s most meaningful action in more than a decade of tobacco control efforts.” The blueprint for the proposed “ban will be published as a proposed regulation in the May 4 Federal Register, and will be open for public comments for at least 60 days after that, then finalized with possible revisions.” It is expected to “take a least a year to go into effect.”

The Washington Post (4/28, A1, McGinley) reports that “the FDA also proposed prohibiting flavors in cigars, including small ones called cigarillos.”

### **Federal report finds Medicare Advantage plans often deny necessary care**

The New York Times (4/28, Abelson) reports, “Every year, tens of thousands of people enrolled in private Medicare Advantage plans are denied necessary care that should be covered under the program, federal investigators concluded in a report published on Thursday.” The investigators, from HHS’ Office of the Inspector General, “urged Medicare officials to strengthen oversight of these private insurance plans, which provide benefits to 28 million older Americans, and called for increased enforcement against plans with a pattern of inappropriate denials.” AMA President-Elect Jack Resneck Jr., M.D., “said the plans’ denials had become widespread.” The AMA “has been aggressively lobbying lawmakers to impose stricter rules.”

## **USPSTF finalizes recommendations on low-dose aspirin regimens for CVD prevention**

CNN (4/26, Christensen) reports that “after years of recommending regular aspirin to prevent heart attack and stroke,” scientists with the U.S. Preventive Service Task Force (USPSTF) “now see little benefit for most healthy people, and say it may contribute to a risk of bleeding in your stomach or brain that goes up as you get older.” The task force “has finalized its latest recommendations on low-dose aspirin regimens and now says people over 60 should not start taking a daily aspirin for primary prevention of” cardiovascular disease (CVD), “in most cases.” The recommendations were published in JAMA.

STAT (4/26, Cueto) reports, “Among adults 40 to 59 years old, the task force...concluded ‘with moderate certainty’ that there was a small net benefit to taking low-dose aspirin among those who have a 10% or higher risk of developing heart disease in a 10-year period.”

Healio (4/26, Viguers) reports the new “recommendations were based on a systematic review of 11 randomized controlled trials involving more than 134,400 patients.”

## **Adolescents made up a larger share of suicides at the start of the pandemic**

CNN (4/25, Rogers) reports, “The number of suicides among adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 increased in five states during the pandemic, according to research looking at 14 states.” In addition, “data from Georgia, Indiana, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Virginia and California...showed an increase in the proportion of adolescent deaths by suicide relative to suicides by people of all ages.”

MedPage Today (4/25, Walker) reports, “Adolescent suicides made up a larger share of suicides at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to prepandemic years, according to data from 14 states,” data which “comprised 32% of all U.S. residents and about a third of all adolescents.” The study revealed that “in 2020, individuals ages 10-19 comprised a significantly higher proportion of total suicides versus the prepandemic period of 2015-2019 (6.5% vs 5.9%, respectively), a relative 10% increase,” but even though “there was also an increase in the absolute number of adolescent suicides in 2020, at 903 versus 835.6 on average in the prepandemic years, it was not statistically significant, the authors stated.” The findings were published online in an April 25 research letter in JAMA Pediatrics.

## **Biden administration to promote supply of, expand access to Paxlovid**

The AP (4/22, Miller) reported the administration is “moving to raise awareness of” the U.S.’ supply of Pfizer’s COVID-19 antiviral treatment Paxlovid and is “taking steps to make it easier to access.” Administration “officials are planning to highlight the relative abundance of the drug next week, and government officials will be stepping up their outreach to patients and providers.” This “effort includes expanding the availability of the pills by providing a direct-to-pharmacy ordering pathway for the drug.”

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