

Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of May 9, 2022

Read *AMA Morning Rounds*®' most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of May 9, 2022–May 13, 2022.

COVID-19 death toll in U.S. surpasses 1M

ABC News (5/12, Mitropoulos) reports “one million Americans have now died from the coronavirus, according to an announcement made Thursday by President Joe Biden.” According to CDC data, “COVID-19 was the third leading cause of death in the U.S. in 2021, following heart disease and cancer.” Moreover, an analysis published in the “Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences estimated that 9 million family members—mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, and children—may be grieving the loss of a loved one killed by the virus.”

CBS News (5/12, Tin) reports, “While most counts have yet to officially reach 1 million—a tally by Johns Hopkins University passed 999,000 on Thursday morning—the true sum of COVID deaths nationwide already far exceeds that mark.”

U.S. drug overdose deaths surpassed 100K in 2021, data show

The Washington Post (5/11, Kornfield) reports, “More Americans died of drug overdoses in 2021 than any previous year, a grim milestone in an epidemic that has now claimed 1 million lives in the 21st century, according to federal data released Wednesday.” Over “100,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in 2021, up 15% from the previous year, according to an estimate released by the National Center for Health Statistics.”

The New York Times (5/11, A1, Weiland, Sanger-Katz) reports that “a growing share of deaths continue to come from overdoses involving fentanyl...and methamphetamine.”

The AP (5/11, Stobbe) reports “overdoses involving fentanyl and other synthetic opioids surpassed 71,000.” Also, there was “a 23% increase in deaths involving cocaine and a 34% increase in deaths

involving meth and other stimulants.”

2020 surge in gun violence pushed firearm homicide rate to highest level in quarter-century, CDC finds

The Washington Post (5/10, Berman) reports, “The surge in gun violence across the United States in 2020 pushed the firearm homicide rate that year to its highest level in a quarter-century, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Tuesday.” The “rise in fatal shootings affected communities nationwide, but there were wide gaps across racial, ethnic and economic lines, with the increases in 2020 broadening already existing disparities, the CDC found.”

The New York Times (5/10, Rabin) reports, “Homicides involving firearms were generally highest, and showed the largest increases, in poor communities, and exacted a disproportionate toll on younger Black men in particular.” Over “half of gun deaths were suicides, however.”

The Hill (5/10, Weixel) reports, “Firearms were involved in 79% of all homicides in 2020, an increase of nearly 35% from 2019.”

Study ties eight modifiable risk factors to more than one in three cases of Alzheimer’s disease, related dementia

MedPage Today (5/9, George) reports, “Eight modifiable risk factors were linked to more than one in three cases of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia in the U.S.,” investigators concluded in a study that “gathered risk factor prevalence information from 378,615 participants in the 2018 CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and extracted relative risks for each factor from recent meta-analyses.” These “eight risk factors—midlife obesity, midlife hypertension, physical inactivity, depression, smoking, low education, diabetes, and hearing loss—were associated with 36.9%...of Alzheimer’s and dementia cases,” investigators found, and “risk factors differed based on sex, race, and ethnicity.” The findings were published online in JAMA Neurology.

CDC investigating 109 cases, five deaths of severe hepatitis of unknown cause in children

The Washington Post (5/6, Sellers, Shepherd) reported the CDC “is investigating 109 cases of severe hepatitis of unknown cause in children, officials said Friday.” The Post added, “Five of the children have died.”

The New York Times (5/6, Kolata) reported CDC Infectious Diseases Deputy Director Dr. Jay Butler “said most of the children had fully recovered,” yet “more than 90% were hospitalized, 14% received liver transplants and more than half had adenovirus infections, he said.”

Reuters (5/6, Beasley) reported these “cases have been identified over the past seven months in 25 states and territories...said” Dr. Butler.

The AP (5/6, Stobbe) reported that last week, “World Health Organization officials said they had reports of almost 300 probable cases in 20 countries.”

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