Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of May 23, 2022

Read AMA Morning Rounds®’ most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of May 23, 2022–May 27, 2022.

CDC says nine suspected cases of monkeypox have been detected in seven states

The Washington Post (5/26, Nirappil) reports, “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that nine suspected cases of monkeypox have been detected in seven states as of Wednesday, as global health authorities confront an unprecedented spread of the virus.” Officials in the U.S. “say the cases are concentrated among men who have sex with men, mirroring trends seen in European countries where the outbreak began.”

USA Today (5/26, Weise) reports, “The White House, together with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is working to ensure that tests, vaccines and treatments are easily available to all who need them...said” U.S. National Security Council Global Health Security and Biodefense Senior Director Dr. Raj Panjabi.

Reuters (5/26, Singh) reports the cases “were confirmed in Massachusetts, Florida, Utah, Washington, California, Virginia and New York.”

Vaccination tied to 15% reduction in long COVID symptoms in people with breakthrough infections

The Washington Post (5/25, Cha) reports, “A large U.S. study looking at whether vaccination protects against long COVID showed the shots have only a slight protective effect: Being vaccinated appeared to reduce the risk of lung and blood clot disorders, but did little to protect against most other symptoms.” The study, published “in Nature Medicine, is part of a series of studies by the Department of Veterans Affairs on the impact of the coronavirus, and was based on 33,940 people who
experienced breakthrough infections after vaccination.”

The Wall Street Journal (5/25, Reddy, Subscription Publication) reports that, compared with people who were unvaccinated and contracted COVID-19, those who were vaccinated and developed a breakthrough infection experienced a 15% reduction in new or persistent symptoms and health conditions for up to six months after infection.

Patients who experience recurrence of symptoms after taking Paxlovid should isolate again

Reuters (5/24, Mishra) reports, “Patients who experience recurrence of COVID-19 symptoms after completing treatment with Pfizer’s drug Paxlovid should isolate again for five days, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in an advisory issued on Tuesday.” The agency “said...that case reports suggest that recurrence results in mild symptoms, and there have been no reports of severe disease so far.” The CDC “still continues to recommend the oral antiviral drug as a treatment.”

However, NBC News (5/24, Bendix) says that the agency “has not yet determined if patients with COVID rebounds are more or less likely to spread the virus than they were during their initial illness.”

Editor’s note: Read the CDC’s HAN advisory.

AHA urging DOJ to investigate routine denials from major health insurance companies

Healthcare Finance News (5/23, Lagasse) reports, “The American Hospital Association has sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Justice asking it to investigate routine denials from major health insurance companies.” Furthermore, “the AHA recommended that the DOJ establish a task force ‘to conduct False Claims Act investigations into commercial health insurance companies that are found to routinely deny patients access to services and deny payments to health care providers.’” This “recommendation was based in large part on a recent report released by the” HHS OIG, titled, “Some Medicare Advantage Organization Denials of Prior Authorization Requests Raise Concerns About Beneficiary Access to Medically Necessary Care.” The report “garnered reaction from” American Medical Association President Gerald E. Harmon, M.D., who said the report “uncovered information that mirrors physician experiences.” He added, “Surveys of physicians have consistently found that excessive authorization controls required by health insurers are persistently responsible for serious harm when necessary medical care is delayed, denied, or disrupted.”


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Editor’s note: Delays caused by prior authorization have a significant impact on both patients and physician practices. Find more information on how the AMA is fighting for prior authorization reform.

CDC issues health alert for monkeypox amid global spread

The Washington Post (5/20, Nirappil) reported the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday “issued an alert...urging [physicians] and state health departments to be vigilant for cases of monkeypox as an unprecedented global spread of the virus raises alarm among public health authorities.” This “alert comes two days after the agency confirmed a monkeypox case in Massachusetts.” Federal health officials “say they expect to identify additional infections in the coming days.”

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