Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of July 4, 2022

Read AMA Morning Rounds®’ most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of July 4, 2022—July 8, 2022.

Approximately 300K children under age five have gotten at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine

CNN (7/7, Klein) reports, “Approximately 300,000 children under the age of 5 in the U.S.—about 2% of that age group—have received at least one shot of the COVID-19 vaccine since it was recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last month, a senior White House official told CNN Thursday.” The official also “told CNN Thursday’s data was ‘very much in line’ with… expectations for this age group, though it was significantly behind the pace of other age brackets.” Meanwhile, groups including the American Medical Association “wrote an open letter to parents and caregivers” on Thursday encouraging them to talk to their physicians about vaccinating their children.

Editor’s note: View the AMA’s letter to parents and caregivers.

FDA authorizes pharmacists to prescribe Paxlovid for COVID-19 treatment

The New York Times (7/6, Robbins) reports that on Wednesday, the FDA “added pharmacists...to the list of health care professionals who are allowed to prescribe Pfizer’s” Paxlovid for COVID-19 treatment. This decision, “aimed at making it easier for patients to get the drug, will significantly increase the number of prescribers who can order the treatment.”

Reuters (7/6, Mishra, Erman) reports the agency “said patients who tested positive for COVID-19 should bring their health records for the pharmacists to review for kidney and liver problems.” The FDA also “said pharmacists should refer the patients to a health care professional licensed to prescribe drugs if there is not sufficient information to assess kidney or liver function, or if modifications are
needed due to a potential drug reaction.” The American Medical Association “said in a statement prescribing decisions should be made by a [physician] wherever possible.” AMA President Jack Resneck, Jr., M.D., said, “It (Paxlovid) is not for everyone and prescribing it requires knowledge of a patient’s medical history, as well as clinical monitoring for side effects and follow-up care to determine whether a patient is improving.”

Editor’s note: Read the full AMA statement on Paxlovid prescribing.

Less than 7% of U.S. adults in good cardiometabolic shape

HealthDay (7/5, Mann) reports, “Less than 7% of U.S. adults are in good cardiometabolic shape, and new research” published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology “warns the trend is only getting worse,” with the “steepest declines in percentage of Americans with healthy weights and blood sugar (glucose) levels.” In arriving at this conclusion, the study team examined “measures of cardiometabolic health among 55,000 adults who participated in a national health and nutrition survey between 1999 and 2018.”

According to Healio (7/5, Buzby), for study purposes, “optimal cardiometabolic health was defined as optimal levels of adiposity, blood glucose, blood lipids and BP, as well as no history of clinical CVD.” The study revealed that in “2017-2018, only 6.8% American adults had good cardiometabolic health—a decline from 7.7%, an already concerning low figure, in 1999-2000—with disparities by age, sex, education level and race and ethnicity.”

Antibodies produced in response to COVID-19 may cause damage to brain

Healio (7/5, Downey) reports, “Antibodies produced in response to COVID-19 may mistakenly target cells essential to the blood-brain barrier, which can cause bleeds and clots in patients and increase the risk for stroke, researchers reported” after examining “brain tissue from nine patients,” all of whom “showed signs of blood vessel damage in the brain on postmortem MRI.” The study findings were published in Brain.

Researchers say eliminating certain risk factors may help prevent dementia
The New York Times (7/3, Span) reported cases of dementia are increasing “along with an aging world population, and yet another much-anticipated Alzheimer’s medication, crenezumab, has proved ineffective in clinical trials.” Researchers and public health experts contend “it is past time to turn our attention to a different approach—focusing on eliminating a dozen or so already known risk factors, like untreated high blood pressure, hearing loss and smoking, rather than on” a new drug. The article added, “The latest modifiable risk factor was identified in a study of vision impairment in the United States that was published...in JAMA Neurology” in April.