Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Aug. 1, 2022

Read AMA Morning Rounds®’ most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of Aug. 1, 2022–Aug. 5, 2022.

U.S. declares monkeypox outbreak a public health emergency

The Washington Post (8/4, Diamond) reports HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra “declared the monkeypox outbreak a public health emergency on Thursday in an effort to galvanize awareness and unlock additional flexibility and funding to fight the virus’s spread.” In addition, Becerra is “considering a second declaration empowering federal officials to expedite medical countermeasures, such as potential treatments and vaccines, without going through full-fledged federal reviews.”

The New York Times (8/4, A1, Stolberg, Mandavilli) reports the declaration “gives federal agencies power to quickly direct money toward developing and evaluating vaccines and drugs, to gain access to emergency funding and to hire additional workers to help manage the outbreak.”

HHS to create office of long COVID research and practice

Bloomberg Law (8/3, Baumann, Subscription Publication) reports HHS “is creating a new long COVID office as part of a White House plan to better understand why some patients continue to face symptoms long after they’ve shed the infection.” The new “Office of Long COVID Research and Practice will fall under the Health and Human Services assistant secretary for health, according to the White House’s National Research Action Plan on Long COVID released Wednesday.” This plan “makes long COVID a high-level priority by creating a permanent leadership within the department.”

National uninsured rate reached record low in beginning of 2022, HHS analysis finds
USA Today (8/2, Groppe) reports, “A record low 8% of Americans lacked health insurance at the start of the year, according to an analysis by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.” Over “5 million people have gained coverage since 2020, according to the department’s review of household survey data.” The article adds, “The drop was largest among people in poverty and those with incomes between 200% and 400% of the federal poverty level.”

The AP (8/2, Seitz) reports, “Roughly 26 million people remain without health insurance in the U.S.,” and “just under 2% of children are now uninsured.”

Researchers project steep increases in prevalence of CV risk factors by 2060

Medscape (8/1, Busko, Subscription Publication) reports researchers project “steep increases by 2060 in the prevalence of cardiovascular (CV) risk factors and disease” in findings published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology. The study team arrived at this conclusion by using “2020 U.S. census data and projected growth and 2013 to 2018 U.S. National Health and Nutrition Survey...data to estimate the number of people with CV risk factors and CV disease from 2025 to 2060.”

Healio (8/1, Schaffer) reports, “Researchers projected that the prevalence of CV risk factors and disease will decrease for people who identify as white; however, significant increases are projected among underrepresented groups.”

COVID-19 booster campaign with reformulated vaccine to launch in September

The Washington Post (7/29, McGinley, Diamond) reported, “The Biden administration is preparing to launch a coronavirus booster campaign in September—weeks earlier than expected—with a new, reformulated vaccine designed to provide stronger protection against the Omicron subvariants sweeping the country, the Food and Drug Administration said Friday.” The FDA “said it had received assurances from the vaccine manufacturers—Moderna and Pfizer and its German partner, BioNTech—that reformulated boosters will be ready in September.” Also, “the FDA has decided against making adults younger than 50 eligible for second boosters of the existing vaccine, the agency added.”

NBC News (7/29, Lenthang, Welker) reported, “Once those bivalent vaccine boosters are authorized by the FDA and the CDC, the first deliveries by both manufacturers will be received in the early fall,
Health and Human Services said in a news release.

The AP (7/29, Perrone, Neergaard) reported, “The U.S. has a contract to buy 105 million doses of the Pfizer combination shots once they’re ready, and 66 million of Moderna’s version.”