

Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Aug. 29, 2022

Read *AMA Morning Rounds*®' most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of Aug. 29, 2022–Sept. 2, 2022.

Ultraprocessed food tied to increased risk of colorectal cancer, heart disease, early death

CNN (9/1, LaMotte) reports, “Eating a lot of ultraprocessed foods significantly increases men’s risk of colorectal cancer and can lead to heart disease and early death in both men and women, according to two...large-scale studies of people in the United States and Italy” published in *The BMJ*. The U.S. study “examined the diets of over 200,000 men and women for up to 28 years and found a link between ultraprocessed foods and colorectal cancer...in men, but not women.” Meanwhile, the Italy-based study “compared the role of nutrient-poor foods...versus ultraprocessed foods in the development of chronic disease and early death” and “found that both types of foods independently increased the risk of an early death, especially from cardiovascular diseases.”

FDA authorizes updated bivalent COVID-19 vaccine boosters

The *Washington Post* (8/31, McGinley) reports, “New Omicron-targeting coronavirus booster shots are poised for rollout after being authorized Wednesday by the Food and Drug Administration—a move designed to improve protection against severe illness and death during a potential rise in COVID-19 cases this fall and winter.” These bivalent “boosters, reformulated to take aim at the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants dominant in the United States, are scheduled to be reviewed by advisers to the” CDC and if approved, “some boosters may be available starting this weekend, with more showing up in pharmacies, [physicians’] offices and clinics after Labor Day.”

The AP (8/31, Neergaard) reports, “The updated boosters are only for people who have already had their primary vaccinations, using the original vaccines.” The shots “made by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech are for anyone 12 and older while Moderna’s updated shots are for adults—if it has been at

least two months since their last primary vaccination or their latest booster.”

Reuters (8/31, Erman, Steenhuisen) reports the U.S. “has secured more than 170 million doses of the two shots” for the rollout.

DEA issues advisory over “brightly-colored” fentanyl pills targeting youth

CBS News (8/30) reports, “The Drug Enforcement Administration issued an advisory Tuesday about an ‘emerging trend’ of ‘brightly-colored’ fentanyl pills being used to lure children and young people.” The so-called “‘rainbow fentanyl’ has been seized by law enforcement agencies in 18 states just this month, the DEA said.” These “drugs, made to look like candy, comes in several forms, including ‘pills, powder and blocks that resembles sidewalk chalk,’ the DEA said.”

Statins cause muscle pain in less than 10% of patients

According to CNN (8/29, Thomas), “for more than 90% of patients on statins who experience muscle pain, the statin is not the cause of the pain,” according to findings published online in *The Lancet* and presented at ESC Congress 2022. The study did find “that in the first year, statin therapy produced a 7% relative increase in muscle pain or weakness, but there was no significant increase after that.” In fact, “the increased risk was already present within the first three months after treatment was assigned.”

HealthDay (8/29, Thompson) reports, “Overall, for every 1,000 people taking a moderate dose of statin, there were 11 episodes of muscle pain and weakness in the first year, the study” authors concluded. Eugene Yang, MD, Chair of the American College of Cardiology’s Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease Council, stated, “This study is consistent with other studies that have shown that less than 10% of people have muscle-related symptoms like muscle aches that we can say seem to be associated with taking a statin.”

U.S. health officials cautiously optimistic in view of declining new monkeypox cases

The Washington Post (8/26, A1, Diamond) reported that following “three months of surging monkeypox cases, the worldwide outbreak may have peaked, amid evidence that” individuals are

“curbing risky sexual behaviors and more people are getting vaccinated against a virus that spread by close contact.” New cases in the U.S. “have fallen by about 25% in the past two weeks, from 444 cases a day on Aug. 10 to 337 on Aug. 24, according to The Washington Post’s rolling seven-day average.” But “even as public health experts cheered the slowdown in new infections, they cautioned that the virus continues to pose a risk.”

CNBC (8/26, Kimball) reported the CDC “is cautiously optimistic that the U.S. is slowing the spread of monkeypox as new cases fall in several major cities.”

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