

Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Oct. 17, 2022

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CDC panel recommends COVID-19 shots be added to 2023 vaccination schedules

Bloomberg (10/20, Rutherford, Milton) reports “COVID-19 shots should be added to the 2023 childhood and adult vaccination schedules, according to” the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The panel “voted 15-0 on Thursday to recommend COVID-19 shots from Moderna Inc., Pfizer Inc. and Novavax Inc.”

The AP (10/20, Stobbe) reports this “decision has no immediate effect,” but instead would “put the shots on the annually updated, formal lists of what vaccinations [physicians] should be routinely offering to their patients, alongside shots for polio, measles and hepatitis.”

FDA grants emergency use authorization to Novavax’s COVID-19 vaccine booster

The Washington Post (10/19, McGinley) reports that on Wednesday, the FDA “granted emergency use authorization to a booster shot for the coronavirus vaccine from Novavax.” The FDA “said people 18 and older can receive the booster six months after completing their primary series of any coronavirus vaccine authorized in the United States.” CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, MD, MPH, then “signed a decision memo allowing use of the booster, the last step before the shots can be administered.”

The AP (10/19, Dunn) reports the agency also “said the new booster option is for people 18 and older who can’t get the updated Omicron-targeting Pfizer or Moderna boosters for medical or accessibility reasons—or who otherwise would not receive a COVID-19 booster shot at all.”

Replacing poor diet with more nutritious foods has sizable health benefits at any age, study says

The Washington Post (10/18, O'Connor) reports a study published in The New England Journal of Medicine shows “that people can gain sizable health benefits at any age by cutting back on highly processed foods loaded with salt, sugar and other additives and replacing them with more nutritious foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans, lentils, seafood and whole grains.” In the study, researchers “followed roughly 74,000 people between the ages of 30 and 75 for over two decades” and “found that people who had consistently high diet scores were up to 14% less likely to die of any cause during the study period compared to people who had consistently poor diets.”

Over a million Americans with diabetes may be rationing insulin, skipping doses due to expense, study indicates

MedPage Today (10/17, MinerD) reports, “More than a million Americans with diabetes may be skipping insulin doses or delaying purchase of the drug because of its expense,” investigators concluded. The “data from 982 insulin users participating in the CDC’s 2021 National Health Interview Survey” reveal that “16.5% reported some form of rationing the drug.” Should that finding be “representative of all Americans with diabetes, it could mean more than one million patients are rationing insulin with potentially harmful consequences, the researchers wrote in a brief report” published online in a research letter in the Annals of Internal Medicine.

Medscape (10/17, Tucker, Subscription Publication) reports, “Not surprisingly, those without insurance had the highest rationing rate, at nearly a third,” but people “with private insurance also had higher rates, at nearly one in five, than the overall diabetes population.” Patients “with public insurance—Medicare and Medicaid—had lower rates.” The study authors also “point out that the \$35 co-pay cap on insulin included in the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 might improve insulin access for Medicare beneficiaries but a similar cap for privately insured people was removed from the bill,” and “co-pay caps don’t help people who are uninsured.”

Signs of brain impairment may appear as early as nine years before a diagnosis for dementia-related diseases

MedPage Today (10/15, George) reported, “Signs of brain impairment appeared as early as nine years before people received a diagnosis for Alzheimer’s or other dementia-related diseases,” investigators concluded in a study that “assessed baseline cognitive and functional measures in 2,778 participants who subsequently developed Alzheimer’s, 2,370 who developed Parkinson’s, 211 who developed frontotemporal dementia,” 133 “who developed progressive supranuclear palsy,” 40 “who developed dementia with Lewy bodies,” and “73 who developed multiple system atrophy.” Next, the study team “compared these individuals against baseline data from 493,735 Biobank controls who were not diagnosed later with a neurodegenerative diagnosis.” The findings were published online in the journal *Alzheimer’s & Dementia*.

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