Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Nov. 21, 2022

Read AMA Morning Rounds®’ most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of Nov. 21–Nov. 25, 2022.

**CDC: Bivalent boosters better at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 than previous shots**

Bloomberg Law (11/22, Langreth, Muller, Subscription Publication) reports bivalent COVID-19 vaccine boosters from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech “that fight the latest Omicron variants provide only modest short-term protection against mild infections, and experts say it’s still unclear whether the updated shots are any better than earlier versions at preventing hospitalization and severe illness.” These “bivalent boosters were just 43% effective at preventing mild illness compared to receiving no vaccine in adults 49 and under, according to a” CDC study.

NBC News (11/22, Lovelace) reports, “The first real-world data on the new Omicron vaccines find that they are better at preventing symptomatic COVID infections than the earlier doses...said” the CDC. These “results are based on more than 360,000 symptomatic adults tested for COVID at pharmacies nationwide from Sept. 14 to Nov. 11.”

The Hill (11/22, Choi) reports the results indicated the bivalent shots “provided stronger protection when those who received it were compared to people who only received two, three or four doses of the original monoclonal vaccine.”

**Study examines role of HDL levels in heart health**

Reuters (11/21, Lapid) reports, “The widely-held concept that levels of ‘good’ cholesterol in the blood can indicate heart disease risk is not equally true for Blacks and whites, and the measure itself may be of less value than previously thought,” according to findings from “a U.S. study published on Monday” in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology.
According to HealthDay (11/21, Norton), the study involving “nearly 24,000 U.S. adults found that low HDL levels were tied to a somewhat higher risk of heart attack among white people,” but not for Black adults. What’s more, “high HDL levels—traditionally lauded as heart-healthy—made no difference in heart risks for Black or white adults,” the study revealed.

**Women who adhere to plant-based portfolio diet may lower risk for T2D**

Healio (11/21, Monostra) reports, “Women who adhered more to a plant-based Portfolio diet lowered their risk for developing type 2 diabetes” (T2D), investigators concluded in a study that “included 145,299 women, of whom 13,943 developed type 2 diabetes during a mean follow-up of 16 years.” The findings were published online in the journal Diabetes Care.

**Seasonal flu activity “elevated” across U.S., CDC says**

CNN (11/18, McPhillips) reported, “Seasonal flu activity is ‘elevated across the country,’ with ‘high’ or ‘very high’ respiratory virus activity in more than half of U.S. states, according to an update published Friday by the” CDC. Also, “health care systems nationwide continue to feel the strain of a respiratory virus season that has hit earlier and harder than usual.”

NBC News (11/18, Edwards) reported that “most of the worst of respiratory illnesses remain concentrated in Southern states,” but “there are signs that flu is ramping up in other areas such as Colorado, New Mexico and Texas, according to the CDC.”

**Researchers develop practical risk score tool for dementia**

Healio (11/18, Downey) reported researchers have developed “a practical risk score tool...to help people identify their potential risk for dementia.” The study “identified some risk factors of dementia, which covered socioeconomic adversity, sleep phenotypes, physical activity, and comorbidities.” The findings of the 444,695-participant study were published online in JAMA Network Open.