Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of Nov. 28, 2022

Pandemic stress aged brains of teens by about three years

The Washington Post (12/1, Reynolds Lewis) reports, “The stress of pandemic lockdowns prematurely aged the brains of teenagers by at least three years and in ways similar to changes observed in children who have faced chronic stress and adversity,” according to a study published in Biological Psychiatry: Global Open Science. Researchers compared “MRI scans of a group of 128 children, half taken before and half at the end of the first year of the pandemic” and “found growth in the hippocampus and amygdala, brain areas that respectively control access to some memories and help regulate fear, stress and other emotions.” Researchers “also found thinning of the tissues in the cortex, which is involved in executive functioning.”

Deaths related to drug misuse, alcohol abuse appear to be increasing among older U.S. adults

CNN (11/30, Howard) reports, “Deaths related to drug misuse and alcohol abuse appear to be on the rise among older adults in the United States, similar to the recent increases seen among younger adults, according to two new reports from the” CDC. A “report published...by the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics” found that “rates of deaths from drug overdoses among seniors have more than tripled in the past two decades.” Meanwhile, a “report from the National Center for Health Statistics finds that rates of alcohol-induced deaths among adults 65 and older have been climbing since 2011 and rose more than 18% from 2019 to 2020.”

Gun-related fatalities hit 28-year high in 2021
The Wall Street Journal (11/29, Mosbergen, Subscription Publication) reports the rate of gun-related deaths in the U.S. in 2021 hit a 28-year high, with a total of 48,953 deaths, according to researchers who evaluated CDC data from 1990 to 2021. The results published in JAMA Network Open show more than 1.1 million have died in firearm-related incidents since 1990.

The AP (11/29, Stobbe) reports researchers found both homicide and suicide rates “rose 8% last year, each hitting levels not seen since the early 1990s.” The researchers also found that “gun deaths began to steadily increase in 2005, but the rise accelerated recently, with a 20% jump from 2019 to 2021.”

CNN (11/29, McPhillips) reports, “The researchers found that firearm homicides were highest among Black men, and firearm suicide rates were highest among senior White men.”

**Higher intake of flavonols may slow rate of cognitive decline**

CNN (11/28, LaMotte) reports, “Eating more flavonols, antioxidants found in many vegetables, fruits, tea and wine, may slow your rate of memory loss, a...study finds.” According to the findings published in Neurology, “the cognitive score of people in the study who ate the most flavonols declined 0.4 units per decade more slowly than those who ate the fewest flavonols.” These “results held even after adjusting for other factors that can affect memory, such as age, sex and smoking, according to the study.”

**Adults with persistent asthma may have higher carotid plaque burden compared with those without asthma**

Healio (11/23, Schaffer) reported, “Adults with persistent asthma, but not those with intermittent asthma, have a higher carotid plaque burden compared with those without asthma,” researchers concluded in findings published online ahead of print in the Journal of the American Heart Association. In their “analysis of participants enrolled in the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA), researchers also found that adjustment for inflammatory markers did not attenuate the association of persistent asthma and carotid plaque presence or burden, suggesting that atherosclerotic CVD risk among people with asthma may be multifactorial.”

According to TCTMD (11/24, O'Riordan), the study now “adds to a growing body of evidence showing that asthma may be linked with the development of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease.”
AMA Morning Rounds news coverage is developed in affiliation with Bulletin Healthcare LLC.
Subscribe to Morning Rounds Daily.