

Here are this week's healthcare news highlights from AskaPatient:

- WHO warns air pollution is the "new tobacco," affecting more than 90 percent of the world's population. <http://ow.ly/eiVG30mp5GB> (10-29-18)
- Gut bacteria can bounce back six months after antibiotic treatment, but some microorganisms may be permanently lost. <http://ow.ly/mLHn30mp5Ln> (10-29-18)
- For the few people who worry about getting too much exercise, don't fear; new research says there is no such thing as too much. <http://ow.ly/TiVr30mp5Rg> (10-29-18)
- New imaging technique can quickly identify Alzheimer's before symptoms start by looking into the eye. <http://ow.ly/AcUG30mqbzn> (10-30-18)
- Drugs commonly used to treat heart problems and arthritis may cause lung damage, researchers call for better screening. <http://ow.ly/89it30mqbEn> (10-30-18)
- High levels of stress hormone cortisol linked to poor memory and attention as well as structural brain changes even in young people. <http://ow.ly/WKYZ30mqbMJ> (10-30-18)
- Professor of surgery argues that medical students today lack the dexterity for stitching patients due to too much screen time. <http://ow.ly/zjEu30mr6IB> (10-31-18)
- A protein being studied for its role in cancer turns out to reduce large amounts of fat and reverse metabolic disorders in mice. <http://ow.ly/UA2z30mr6tO> (10-31-18)
- Newly identified area of the brain is responsible for inhibiting fear, targeted treatments for psychiatric disorders being pursued. <http://ow.ly/4vJa30mr6Gp> (10-31-18)
- Blood marker for common form of heart failure has been identified, meaning doctors can treat the disease before symptoms develop. <http://ow.ly/RvZM30ms6WY> (11-01-18)
- Bioprosthetics that integrate into an amputee's nervous system could one day make everyday tasks possible again. <http://ow.ly/PQTD30ms6Yh> (11-01-18)
- Appendectomies early in life reduce the risk of developing Parkinson's and can delay disease progression later. <http://ow.ly/JUbk30ms6Z7> (11-01-18)
- Non-surgical treatments for tennis elbow fare no better than a placebo, but increase risk of adverse events. <http://ow.ly/voEi30mt19w> (11-02-18)
- Popular drug combination for treating depression shows no benefit over a single antidepressant. <http://ow.ly/khzL30mt1bB> (11-02-18)
- Data from 40 million births find a link between older fathers and a higher risk of a variety of birth defects. <http://ow.ly/lHaC30mt1fq> (11-02-18)
- Loneliness increases risk of dementia by 40 percent, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender. <http://ow.ly/p99430mtSNR> (11-03-18)
- Teens with a history of depressive symptoms may benefit from a web-based intervention where other programs have failed. <http://ow.ly/DWjv30mtSSS> (11-03-18)
- Does a U.S. diet destroy the gut microbiome? Immigrants saw an immediate reduction in microbial diversity, worsening over time.

<http://ow.ly/BOIL30mtT0q> (11-03-18)

- A new season of romaine lettuce growing begins in Yuma Arizona; FDA explains its efforts to prevent E.coli contamination. [Press Release](#) (11-03-2018)

From AskaPatient: FDA approves another one of 23andme's genetic tests

On Wednesday, October 31, the FDA announced that it had approved the marketing of yet another over-the-counter genetic test developed by 23andMe Inc. The new test, "Personal Genome Service Pharmacogenetic Report" provides information on eight drug metabolizing genes, and will help a patient know how quickly or slowly their body is likely to metabolize drugs associated with a particular gene. The results report won't provide specific drug names, since the intent of the test is not to cause a patient to switch treatments. The FDA recommends that patients take an additional test with an "independent" pharmacogenetics testing service before making such a decision.

Perhaps due to the FDA's concerns about the possibility of the public misconstruing the purpose of the test, on Thursday it issued a warning against the "use of many genetic tests with unapproved claims to predict patient response to specific medications."

While this is the first FDA test of its kind to be approved for direct-to-consumer marketing, similar kinds of pharmacokinetic lab tests have been available for years when obtained at the request of a health care provider. **Genesight**, for example, states on its web site that the FDA has not decided to oversee its tests, but meets or exceeds all industry quality standards and complies with federal law and has been approved by CLIA (Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments) and CAP (College of American Pathologists). Also, Medicare and the Department of Veterans Affairs have approved its tests and even some private insurance will cover them.

Genesight result reports are sent to the physician but are fairly easy for the layman to understand, with drug names listed in categories, along with "red", "yellow", and "green" zones to indicate how well suited, based on the genetic assessment, the patient is for different categories of psychiatric drugs, pain drugs, or ADHD drugs. Because the report is drug specific, and provides information that goes beyond what might be related to drug metabolism markers in the genes, it is worth wondering if the FDA intends to look more closely at regulating the report claims of genetic testing labs like Genesight that it previously chose not to regulate.

Sources and more reading:

- Pharmacogenomic test now available to help guide clinicians' medication decisions for veterans being treated for behavioral health conditions ([Genesight company press release, 2014](#))
- Sample [pharmacogenetic report](#) for Psychotropic drugs, Genesight. Includes antidepressants, anti-anxiety drugs, antipsychotics, and mood stabilizers. (No sample report was available for the newly approved 23andme OTC product.)
- NBC News Report: "New Psychiatric DNA Testing is Unproven Ground" [October 4, 2015](#)
- FDA Safety Communication: warning to consumers about genetic tests that claim to predict patients' responses to specific medications. [November 1, 2018](#)
- FDA News Release: FDA authorizes first direct-to-consumer test for detecting genetic variants that may be associated with medication metabolism. [October 31, 2018](#)

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