

Here are this week's health care news stories from AskAPatient:

- Arrests were made in Georgia, Texas, Florida, and Louisiana in one of the largest ever healthcare fraud schemes, involving \$2.1 billion in fraudulent Medicare claims. Elderly people were bilked into turning over cheek swabs with DNA and providing their Medicare information, and received nothing in return but billings to their Medicare accounts.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-fraud-genetics/u-s-agents-raid-genetic-testing-labs-charge-35-in-medicare-fraud-probe>

- A CBS news video tells the story of a couple from Austin who became victims of the genetics testing scam at a Fort Lauderdale art festival.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/massive-medicare-fraud-offering-free-genetic-cancer-testing-may-cost-taxpayers-millions/>

- The ranitidine (generic for heartburn drug Zantac) recall continues to grow. Tablets with Walgreens, Walmart, and Rite-Aid labels and products labeled by Sandoz have been recalled in the U.S. due to possible contamination with NDMA, the same carcinogen involved in the recent losartan/valsartan recalls. So far, brand name Zantac itself has not been recalled by manufacturer Sanofi.

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-updates-and-press-announcements-ndma-zantac-ranitidine>

- In Canada, five companies recently announced recalls of ranitidine: Apotex, Pro Doc Limitee, Sanis Health, Sivem Pharma, and Sandoz (Novartis).

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-canada-heartburn/health-canada-says-four-more-companies-recalling-versions-of-zantac->

- CVS suspended the sale of Zantac brand as well as its own generic label pending FDA's safety review of ranitidine products.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cvs-health-heartburn/cvs-suspends-sales-of-zantac-brand-and-generic-heartburn-drug-during-safety-review>

- Artificial intelligence is on a par with human experts when it comes to making medical diagnoses based on images, a review has found.

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/sep/24/ai-equal-with-human-experts-in-medical-diagnosis-study-finds>

- University of Bergen researchers discovered that healthy neurons form synaptic connections with brain cancer cells, effectively "hijacking" them. Epilepsy medicine shows promise in reducing messages between the neurons and the cancer cells, offering a way to inhibit cancer growth.

<https://www.uib.no/en/med/129945/cancer-tumours-form-surprising-connections-healthy-brain-cells>

- While aging has always been considered to be the biggest risk factor for cancer, a University of Liverpool study suggests that the aging process can actually hinder cancer development, because of decreased cell proliferation in older tissues. The complex relationship explains why at advanced ages cancer incidence levels off and may

even decline.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-09/uol-sfa092719.php

- China is putting pressure on pharmaceutical firms to negotiate lower drug prices. It is expanding its bulk buying program country-wide and pressuring multinational companies and their domestic rivals. The pilot program in 11 Chinese cities caused the prices of some medicines to plunge over 90%.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-health-idUSKCN1VN0QS>

- A new theory, based on geometry, challenges the current "blueprint" for virus construction. It claims to accurately predict the positions of proteins in the containers of all icosahedral (or twenty-sided) viruses for the first time. This could be a breakthrough discovery with implications for improving our understanding of viruses like Zika and herpes.

<https://scitechdaily.com/geometry-goes-viral-math-used-to-solve-virus-puzz>

- The FDA awarded five-year contracts for its **Sentinel System**, "the FDA's flagship active surveillance system" to Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and Deloitte Consulting. No longer a pilot project, the FDA plans to expand its efforts to extract and structure information from U.S. electronic health records. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/fda-brief/fda-brief-fda-announces-new-sentinel-system-contract-affirming-its-commitment-harnessing-real-world>

- *Consumer Reports* looked into the quality of bottled water and found a number of roadblocks and red flags.

<https://www.consumerreports.org/water-quality/looking-for-info-about-bottled-water-quality-good-luck/>

The 2019 - 2020 flu season is here! Check out our article on the eight approved 2019 flu shots (and one nasal spray) choices along with a summary of what is different this year.

<https://www.askapatient.com/news/flu-vaccines-for-2019-2020.asp>

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