

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

- Lured by pharmaceutical company payments of \$20 - \$40 per donation and "bring-a-friend" bonuses, Mexican donors come across the southern border as often as twice a week to sell their blood plasma, and they sometimes experience negative health effects. Unlike most other countries, the U.S. allows companies to pay donors and has comparatively loose standards for monitoring their health.

<https://www.propublica.org/article/pharmaceutical-companies-are-luring-mexicans-across-the-u.s.-border-to-donate-blood-plasma>

- A federal judge ruled that a non-profit's plan to create a "safehouse" where people can inject heroin and other drugs under medical supervision does not violate a federal law intended to crack down on drug houses.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/02/us/injection-safehouse-philadelphia-ruling.html>

- The FDA issued a warning about medical device cybersecurity vulnerabilities, referred to as "URGENT/11." The FDA did not provide a list of the affected devices. Instead it is asking manufacturers to work with health care providers to identify them and develop a "risk mitigation" plan.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-informs-patients-providers-and-manufacturers-about-potential-cybersecurity-vulnerabilities>

- Doctors at Mayo Clinic examined lung tissue samples from 17 patients with recent vaping illnesses, and found that the lung damage in those cases resembled damage caused by chemical burns or exposure to chemical poisons like mustard gas.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/02/health/vaping-illnesses.html>

- Ten hospitals—three in Alabama and seven in Australia—were victims of ransomware attacks that paralyzed the hospitals' computer networks and left them with no choice but to turn away all but the most critically ill new patients.

<https://www.terabitweb.com/2019/10/02/hospitals-ransomware-attacks-html/>

- After running its own tests on samples of heartburn drug Zantac and ranitidine, FDA found an "unacceptable level" of NDMA carcinogen, although not as high as levels found by Valisure, the independent testing lab who first reported the contaminant.

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

- The American Academy of Pediatrics issued its latest treatment guidelines for ADHD. Some physicians hoped that behavioral interventions would be the recommended first-line of treatment instead of prescription drugs. But the AAP renewed its recommendation that children 6 and older should be given medicine combined with therapy after diagnosis.

<https://khn.org/news/adhd-treatment-medication-vs-behavioral-therapy-pediatrician-guidelines/>

- A new formulation of Gilead's HIV drug Descovy was approved for HIV prevention (pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP) in men. Truvada, Gilead's current PrEP drug, will lose patent protection next year.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gilead-sciences-fda/u-s-fda-approves-gileads-descovy-for-hiv-prevention-idUSKBN1WI29I?feedType=RSS&feedName=healthNews>

- A test to detect opioid drugs in exhaled breath has been developed at the University of California, Davis. The experimental version of the test requires freezing of samples before testing; the goal is to eventually develop a real-time breath test.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/10/191004105645.htm>

- Astrazeneca's Fasenra pen is now approved for self administration. Originally approved in November 2017, it is used every eight weeks and treats severe eosinophilic asthma.

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/fasenra-benralizumab-approved-us-self-110000718.html>

- The FDA strengthened its warning to consumers to stop using vaping products containing THC amid more than 1,000 reports of lung injuries—including some resulting in deaths—following the use of vaping products.

<https://www.fda.gov/safety/medwatch-safety-alerts-human-medical-products/lung-injury-update-fda-warns-public-stop-using-tetrahydrocannabinol-thc-containing-vaping-products>

- Chair yoga has benefits for those with moderate to severe dementia, study shows, with more than 97% of participants fully engaged in each session. Although some participants showed mild levels of agitation or wandering in the intervention room prior to the yoga session, they became calm and attentive when the yoga interventionist started demonstrating yoga poses.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/10/191002102800.htm>

- The number of HIV cases in the Philippines has more than doubled in the past five years as usage of dating apps has soared but knowledge about HIV prevention has not.

<https://www.kff.org/news-summary/philippines-experiences-surge-in-hiv-cases-some-health-advocates-believe-dating-apps-behind-increase/>

- The FDA is requiring changes to the label and packaging for diarrhea drug Imodium (loperamide) to help prevent misuse. Most people don't know that Imodium is actually a kind of an opioid that targets receptors in the digestive tract instead of the brain.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/fda-brief/fda-brief-fda-approves-new-packaging-brand-name-over-counter-loperamide-help-curb-abuse-and-misuse>

More on how it can be a drug of abuse: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/11/health/imodium-opioid-addiction.html> ...

- A blitz of recent television commercials features doctors asking viewers to tell lawmakers not to support "government rate setting." The mystery behind the ad's sponsor, "Doctor Patient Unity," has finally been solved: the political action group is funded by TeamHealth and Envision Healthcare, owners of physician practices that provide staffing for emergency rooms throughout the U.S. They oppose bipartisan legislation that aims to put a stop to surprise medical bills faced by many patients.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/13/upshot/surprise-billing-laws-ad-spending-doctor-patient-unity.html>

Don't forget that it is flu shot season! Check out the list of 2019-2020 flu vaccine options, with links to some patient reviews:

<https://www.askapatient.com/comparedrugs.asp?class=INFLUENZA+VACCINES+2019>

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