

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

- A part-time dog breeder hovers over a petri dish in his backyard laboratory, attempting to insert a jellyfish gene into the sperm of a mastiff dog. The end goal for this amateur "bio-hacker"? To make glow-in-the-dark puppies. This scene is from a television show, but it isn't science fiction. In Netflix's new documentary series, "Unnatural Selection," which premiered October 18, the filmmakers provide examples of miraculous as well as ominous applications of the gene editing technology called Crispr (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats).

<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/oct/17/unnatural-selection-netflix-docuseries-gene-editing>.

- Acting commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration Ned Sharpless reported that for the fiscal year ending September 30 2019, a total of 1,171 generic drugs were approved (935 full approvals and 236 tentative). This breaks the all-time record of 971 generic approvals in fiscal year 2018.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/statement-continued-progress-enhancing-patient-access-high-quality-low-cost-generic-drugs>

- A study suggests that blue wavelengths (similar to the blue light emitted by devices like smartphones and tablets) might cause faster aging in addition to retina damage. In a study, fruit flies only exposed to blue LED light for twelve hours a day had impaired locomotion and a shorter lifespan than those raised in complete darkness or with blue light filtered out. It has long been known that excessive blue light is not good for human eyes. Authors suggest that computer glasses or monitor shields can help mitigate excessive exposure to blue light.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/10/191017101253.htm>

Related story from August 2018: <https://www.sciencealert.com/how-blue-wavelengths-light-affect-retinal-cell-tissues-eye-disease>

- Tyson's Food has stopped using the growth drug ractopamine in its U.S. hog supply so that it can export pork products to China, where that chemical is banned. African swine fever has spread to more than 50 countries, and has decimated much of China's domestic hog herd. The drug is also banned in the European Union and Russia over health concerns. The United States and some other countries say it can be safely used to add lean muscle to pigs.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tyson-foods-hogs-china/tyson-foods-bans-growth-drug-from-u-s-hog-supply-as-meat-firms-chase-china-demand-idUSKBN1WW1H5>

- If you like real-life medical stories, you will enjoy "The Beating Heart," a feature from Gene Weingarten's new book called "One Day." The story tells of a tragic crime, a medical breakthrough, and a last chance at life. It gives a riveting account of the events leading up to, during, and after an extraordinary heart transplant procedure that took place on a December day in 1986.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/magazine/wp/2019/09/30/feature/a-terrible-crime-a-patient-waiting-for-a-transplant-the-tragic-redemptive-journey-of-one-heart/>

- The first pricing report released as a result of California's new transparency law reveals that pharmaceutical companies raised the median "wholesale acquisition cost" of generic drugs by 37.6% between 2017 and early 2019. By comparison, the annual inflation rate during the same period was 2%.

<https://khn.org/news/californias-new-transparency-law-reveals-steep-rise-in-wholesale-drug-prices/>

- A Kaiser Health News investigation found that University of Virginia Health System engaged in aggressive collection practices such as seizing paychecks and homes in order to collect unpaid patient medical bills. They filed more than 36,000 lawsuits against patients totaling \$106 million over the course of six years. In response, this week Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) sent a letter demanding answers to questions about UVA's relentless billing practices. Grassley wrote, "I am also concerned about how patients' hospital bills get so high in the first place."

<https://khn.org/news/sen-grassley-questions-uva-health-on-findings-from-khn-investigation/>

- Recalls of H2 blocker drug Zantac and generic ranitidine have expanded in several countries, including the U.S. and Canada because of possible contamination with the carcinogen NDMA, the same contaminant found in valsartan and other ARB blood pressure drugs. Teva UK, Sanofi, and others have recalled brand name and generic versions of the heartburn drug.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/zantac-recall-sanofi-sa-latest-drugmaker-to-recall-popular-heartburn-mediation/>  
related story on heartburn drug choices: <https://www.askapatient.com/news/otc-heartburn-stomach-acid-treatments.asp> and ARB recalls: <https://www.askapatient.com/news/generic-api-valsartan-worldwide-recall.asp>

- A University of Houston psychologist suggests that patients being treated for anxiety who are the most "hopeful" achieve the most recovery, and that cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) leads to a gradual increase in hope. In terms of psychotherapy, hope represents the capacity of patients to identify strategies or pathways to achieve goals and the motivation to effectively pursue those pathways. The author studied the use of CBT for four different anxiety disorders.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/10/191015115354.htm>

- Because no settlement has yet been reached between drug manufacturers and distributors and the group of towns and cities suing over the opioid epidemic, a massive lawsuit is set to go before a jury in Cleveland on Monday, October 21.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-opeioids-litigation-settlement/opioid-settlement-talks-fail-landmark-trial-expected-monday>

**Don't forget that it is flu shot season! Check out the list of 2019-2020 flu vaccine options, including high dose, intranasal, and non-egg-based types.**

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

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