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

- The jury trial that was set to begin last Monday in Cleveland in an opioid damages lawsuit was avoided because of an eleventh-hour settlement between four drug distributors, one pharmaceutical company, and two local Ohio counties. The drug distributors agreed to pay $215 million in cash immediately, and Teva Pharmaceutical company will pay $20 million in cash and $25 million worth of generic Suboxone, an addiction treatment. The drug companies are still negotiating with states attorneys general and local governments over a nationwide, comprehensive settlement that may be in the range of $50 billion in cash and drug treatment payouts.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/companies-reach-260-million-deal-to-settle-opioids-lawsuit/2019/10/21/9859d982-f409-11e9-b2d2-1f37c9d82dbb_story.html

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Trikafta (elexacaftor/ivacaftor/tezacaftor), a breakthrough therapy with the potential to help as many as 90 percent of patients with cystic fibrosis. A rare, progressive, life-threatening disease, cystic fibrosis is characterized by the formation of thick mucus that builds up in the lungs, digestive tract, and other parts of the body.
https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-new-breakthrough-therapy-cystic-fibrosis

- A study of almost 20,000 patients over a six-year period found that bedtime is the best time of day to take blood pressure medication. Patients who took their medication at bedtime had nearly half the risk of suffering heart attacks, stroke, or heart failure compared with patients who took their medication on waking.
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/10/191022210216.htm

- In adults over the age of 60, vitamin D deficiency was associated with impaired muscle strength. Resistance exercise helps preserve muscle function, but this study suggests that Vitamin D status may also be protective.
https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-10/tcd-vdd102319.php

- The FDA is investigating whether heartburn drug ranitidine (brand name Zantac) causes levels of the carcinogen NDMA to rise in users' bodies. This is a different angle of investigation, in that they are seeking to "understand what happens to the NDMA levels in the body after ranitidine has been exposed to acid in the stomach." Sales of Zantac and many versions of ranitidine have been halted in the U.S. and Canada.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-fda-heartburn-zantac-idUSKBN1X32NA
related article on heartburn medication options: https://www.askapatient.com/news/otc-heartburn-stomach-acid-treatments.asp

- While the $23 billion no-cash settlement proposed by generic drug maker Teva to settle thousands of U.S. opioid lawsuits sounds like an enormous amount, in reality the actual cost to the company could be as little as $1.5 billion, since the payout would be in the form of addiction treatment drugs. Teva is valuing the drugs at list price, not cost to manufacture. Lawyers representing local governments say that the proposal is not appropriate.
https://www.cnbc.com/2019/10/24/tevas-proposed-opioid-settlement-could-cost-drugmaker-pennies-on-the-dollar.html

- Study suggests that half of commonly taken medications have a profoundly negative effect on the gut microbiome. The drug categories found to have the biggest impact: Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs; used for GERD and dyspepsia), Metformin (for type 2 diabetes), Antibiotics (for bacterial infections), and Laxatives (used for constipation). An additional seven drug categories, including SSRIs (a type of antidepressant) used by patients

with irritable bowel syndrome were associated with higher levels of a potentially harmful bacteria species.
https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-10/sh-hoa101519.php

- In a study of 164 patients with dementia who had at least one parent who also had been diagnosed with dementia, patients developed symptoms on average six years earlier than their parent did. If both parents had been diagnosed with dementia, the onset of symptoms took place an average of 13 years earlier. Researchers looked at a large set of risk factors for Alzheimer's disease.
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/10/191022174426.htm

- In a curious reversal, Biogen decided to resurrect their experimental Alzheimer's drug that they had recently declared ineffective. After abruptly halting clinical trials on aducanumab in March of 2019, they now plan to submit the drug to the FDA for approval consideration in coming months. The decision was made after reviewing test data and FDA consultation.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-biogen-alzheimers-focus/biogens-secret-campaign-to-bring-its-alzheimers-drug-back-from-the-ashes

- The FDA is recommending that both saline-filled and silicone gel breast implants should be accompanied by a warning about health risks associated with them. One of the most serious warnings is the association of the implants with a type of non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a kind of cancer of the immune system.
https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/statement-agencys-continued-efforts-protect-womens-health-and-enhance-safety-information-available

It is flu shot season! Check out the list of 2019-2020 flu vaccine options, including high dose, nasal spray, and non-egg-based types. Drugstores and other vaccination providers often have different flu vaccines available. Ask the pharmacist what brands they offer, and try a different store if they don't have the brand or type you want.
https://www.askapatient.com/news/flu-vaccines-for-2019-2020.asp