

### ***This week's healthcare news highlights:***

- Women regularly using permanent hair dye have a nine percent higher chance of developing breast cancer than women who don't use those products, according to a National Institutes of Health (NIH) study. Researchers also found differences in cancer rates between white and African American women, and little to no increase in breast cancer risk for semi-permanent hair color or temporary dye use. Women who used hair straighteners frequently were about 30% more likely to develop breast cancer. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/12/191204090838.htm>

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first three generic versions of **Gilenya** (fingolimod). The drug treats relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (MS) in adult patients.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-generics-gilenya>

Patient reviews for Gilenya: <https://www.askapatient.com/viewrating.asp?drug=22527&name=GILENYA>

- Health regulators in the U.S. (FDA) and Europe (EMA), are looking into whether **metformin**, a widely used type 2 diabetes drug, may contain unsafe levels of **NDMA**, a carcinogen that has previously been found in heart and gastric medications. The EMA described the risk so far as very low, urging patients to continue taking their medication because the danger of not adequately controlling diabetes was far higher.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-diabetes-fda/fda-probes-diabetes-drug-metformin-for-carcinogen-ndma-idUSKBN1Y92UN>

Patient reviews for metformin (Glucophage): <https://www.askapatient.com/viewrating.asp?drug=20357&name=GLUCOPHAGE>

- Amazon Web Services said it is launching a service called "Amazon Transcribe Medical," which transcribes doctor-patient interactions and plugs the text straight into the medical record.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/02/amazon-web-services-unveils-transcribe-medical-software.html>

- The FDA announced the global launch of **CURE ID**, an online app for health care clinicians that will allow them to share their experiences with using FDA-approved drugs for an unapproved use, with a focus on difficult-to-treat diseases. These include neglected tropical diseases, emerging infectious threats and infections caused by antimicrobial-resistant organisms. The app works by collecting a simple case report form from health care professionals about their experience using an approved product for an unapproved use.

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/science-and-research-drugs/cure-id-app-lets-clinicians-report-novel-uses-existing-drugs>

- A Rutgers University study found a steady increase since 1998 in the number of head injuries linked to walking or driving while using a cell phone. They also noted dramatic spikes in injuries that correlate with the time frame when two popular products were released: in 2007, when the first iPhone was released and in 2016, at the launch of the cellphone game Pokémon Go.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/12/191205155300.htm>

- Older adults who practice a healthy lifestyle in advance of a major operation spend less time in the hospital and are more likely to return home after the operation rather than to a rehabilitation facility. Called "prehab," it involves exercising, eating a healthy diet, and practicing stress reduction techniques preoperatively. The study involved more than 500 Medicare patients taking part in a pre-operation home-based walking program.

[https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2019-12/acos-oaw120519.php](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-12/acos-oaw120519.php)

- Brushing your teeth frequently (three or more times a day) is associated with lower risks of atrial fibrillation and heart

failure, according to a European Society of Cardiology study of more than 160,000 patients aged 40 to 79.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/12/191202081649.htm>

- After discontinuing a clinical trial in March for its experimental **Alzheimer's** drug **aducanumab**, Biogen now says it made a mistake in doing that and will apply for FDA approval early next year. A panel of experts organized by Biogen said the drug did make a difference for patients who took the highest dose for the longest period of time—but only in one of two studies. There has not been a drug approved to treat the disease since 2003, and aducanumab would be the first aimed at modifying its progression rather than just its symptoms.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reassessment-of-alzheimers-drug-raises-hope-and-concerns/>

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-biogen-alzheimers/biogen-builds-case-for-its-alzheimers-drug-skeptics-say-more-data-needed-idUKKBN1Y918P>

- Autism and ADHD share changes in the same genes, according to researchers from iPSYCH, Denmark's largest psychiatry research project.

<https://psychcentral.com/news/2019/11/28/adhd-and-autism-share-changes-in-same-genes/152179.html>

- Stanford scientists have found that changes in the levels of proteins that migrate from the body's tissues into circulating blood can reliably predict a person's age to within three years. Physiological aging apparently does not proceed at an even pace, but is herky-jerky, with three distinct inflection points in the human life cycle: these occur on average at age 34, 60, and 78.

[https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2019-12/sm-ssr120519.php](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-12/sm-ssr120519.php)

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