

This week's healthcare news highlights:

- The U.S. Senate confirmed Dr. Stephen Hahn, a radiation oncologist and medical executive at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, to become commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). He will replace Steven Gottlieb, who stepped down in April and was well regarded by public health advocates and won bipartisan support for his efforts to curb youth use of flavored e-cigarettes.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-healthcare-fda/senate-votes-to-confirm-stephen-hahn-as-new-fda-chief-idUSKBN1YG2G1?il=0>

- A whopping 92% of consumers have no idea what the FDA is or isn't doing around **CBD products**, and most think that clear regulations exist, even though they don't.

<https://www.pilotonline.com/business/marijuana/sns-tft-fda-stance-on-cbd-confusing-consumers-20191210-mm5p5beicnc6xk3ex76g2w3j7a-story.html>

- "This could be drug pricing's moment" — That's what "Future of Health Summit" attendees told Dan Diamond of *Politico* after they heard thought leaders from government, academia, and the health care industry at October's Milken Institute conference. <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/pulsefrommilken/2019/10/31/what-we-learned-from-the-future-of-health-487522>

- The FDA provided an update into its investigation of the E. coli outbreak related to **romaine lettuce**. It continues to warn against eating romaine from Salinas California. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports 102 cases of E. coli linked to the lettuce. <https://www.fda.gov/food/outbreaks-foodborne-illness/investigation-e-coli-o157h7-outbreak-linked-romaine-salinas-california-november-2019>

Separately, a different strain of E. coli has been linked to **Fresh Express** brand Sunflower Crisp Chopped Salad Kits. This outbreak has caused eight illnesses in three states. <https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2019/o157h7-12-19/>

- A novel MRI-guided therapeutic procedure -- **transurethral ultrasound ablation (TULSA)** – treats prostate cancer with minimal side effects, according to a new study presented at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA). https://press.rsna.org/timssnet/media/pressreleases/14_pr_target.cfm?id=2129

- AstraZeneca and Daiichi reported promising clinical trial results for an **experimental breast cancer drug DS-8201**. Advanced stage patients showed no further disease progression for a median of 16 months.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-astrazeneca-breast-cancer-study/astrazeneca-daiichi-drug-halts-cancer-for-months-in-first-readout-idUSKBN1YF1K1>

Clarification on a story from last week's news highlights (edits)

- 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 study using data from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' "Sister 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>

It is important to clarify that the women in the study were part of NIH's "**Sister Study**," a cohort of 50,000 women from all 50 states and Puerto Rico of various ages and ethnicities. Each of the women, at the time of enrollment in the multi-year study, had a sister with breast cancer but did not have breast cancer herself. Since breast cancer has some

hereditary associations, the results are not indicative of the incidence of breast cancer for hair dye users in the general population.

- Click here to read the *International Journal of Cancer* article "Hair dye and chemical straightener use and breast cancer risk in a large US population of black and white women" <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ijc.32738> (abstract and tables only)

- Click here to read more about the NIH "Sister Study": <https://sisterstudy.niehs.nih.gov/English/about.htm>

The newsletter will be on holiday break next week and will resume Sunday, December 29.

This will be our special 2019 year-end edition, with a list of the "best" and "worst" medications and a roundup of the top health care news stories of 2019.

Wishing you a happy and healthy holiday!

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