

News Highlights:

- An alarming outbreak of mysterious **viral pneumonia** in central China has been linked to a 1,000-stall food market in Wuhan. The market, now quarantined for cleaning, sold seafood and wild animals like marmots, deer, and venomous snakes. While the virus can cause severe illness, it does not transmit readily between people, according to Chinese authorities.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-51048366>

- Three stomach drugs were recalled this week because of possible NDMA (carcinogen) contamination. Apcco and Denton Pharma recalled their versions of **ranitidine** and Mylan recalled its **nizatidine** capsules.

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

- Researchers analyzing the National Health Interview Survey were surprised to find **higher than expected levels of drinking by cancer survivors**. Paradoxically, those with better self-reported health had higher levels of drinking. 16.7% of cancer survivors self-reported as smokers.

http://www.oleantimesherald.com/news/nation/researchers-surprised-by-high-levels-of-alcohol-consumption-among-cancer/article_ab56cd20-ad65-5377-a759-dfe2d2f0580b.html

- **Keytruda** won U.S. FDA approval for a hard-to-treat form of bladder cancer, non-muscle invasive bladder cancer. More than 80,000 Americans were newly diagnosed with bladder cancer over the last year. Merck's Keytruda is already approved for other cancers including melanoma, lung, head and neck, and Hodgkin lymphoma.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-merck-co-fda/mercks-keytruda-wins-u-s-fda-approval-for-bladder-cancer-idUSKBN1Z72QX>

- Some experts suggest that egg-based influenza vaccines are often less effective than egg-free types, since mutations can occur in the viruses as they grow in the embryo-containing eggs. The Department of Defense is conducting a large study comparing the effectiveness of the different vaccine types, with results expected within the next couple of years. Two egg-free vaccines, **Flucelvax** and **Flublok**, are available this flu season.

<https://cen.acs.org/pharmaceuticals/vaccines/Flu-shots-arent-always-effective/98/i1>

- Haven't gotten your flu shot yet? The CDC says it is still not too late. Check out the **nine vaccine choices** in the U.S. for 2019-2020 flu season and method of production: regular, high-dose, egg-free shots, and nasal spray. Chart provides patient age range for each vaccine.

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

- Finding genetic links to mental health disorders is the primary goal of the **Million Veteran Program**, a compilation of health and genetic data on 200,000 U.S. military veterans. Researchers at the program have identified six genetic variants that are linked to **anxiety**. This is significant because more is known about genetic links to depression (which often co-exists with anxiety) than to anxiety.

<https://www.newsweek.com/scientists-discover-six-genetic-links-anxiety-largest-ever-study-subject-1480903>

- Patient safety as well as doctor sanity is at risk when it takes 63 mouse clicks to review one patient lab report.

Fortune and Kaiser Health News continue to look into software problems and lawsuits over **electronic health record (EHR) systems**. The rush to build EHR systems and receive associated government subsidies have resulted in faulty software and "gaming of the system."

<https://khn.org/news/electronic-health-records-creating-a-new-era-of-health-care-fraud-officials-say/>

- The U.S. **cancer death rate fell 2.2 percent** between 2016 and 2017, the largest single-year drop ever reported, according to the American Cancer Society. The improvement was largely due to gains against lung cancer. Melanoma had the largest mortality rate drop of any cancer, especially in adults 65 and older, but there was less progress against colon, breast, and prostate cancer. The overall cancer death rate has fallen 29% since 1991, the peak year for cancer deaths.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-01/acs-cmc010620.php

- CVS, Walgreen Co., Walmart, Rite Aid, and other **drugstore chains are suing doctors** in northeast Ohio, claiming that it is the prescription-writing physicians who bear responsibility for the opioid crisis, not the pharmacists. The drugstore chains, in addition to drug manufacturers and distributors, are being sued by local governments for their part in causing the opioid epidemic. When the governments' lawsuits were amended to target pharmacists for dispensing the drugs, the drugstores reacted with their own litigation against doctors. The doctors in the lawsuits are unnamed, identified only as "John and Jane Does 1-500."

<https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Pharmacy-chains-sue-Ohio-doctors-as-part-of-14957497.php>

- A new government web site launched this week in recognition of **National Biotechnology Month**. "Unified Website for Biotechnology Regulation" is a joint platform among the three agencies responsible for overseeing agriculture biotechnology products: the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Agriculture, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

<https://usbiotechnologyregulation.mrp.usda.gov/biotechnologygov/home/>

- Less than 2% of people at risk for opioid overdose receive prescriptions for **naloxone**, a drug that could save their lives. Naloxone can help reverse the effects of an overdose of any type of opioid, from prescription pain medicine to heroin.

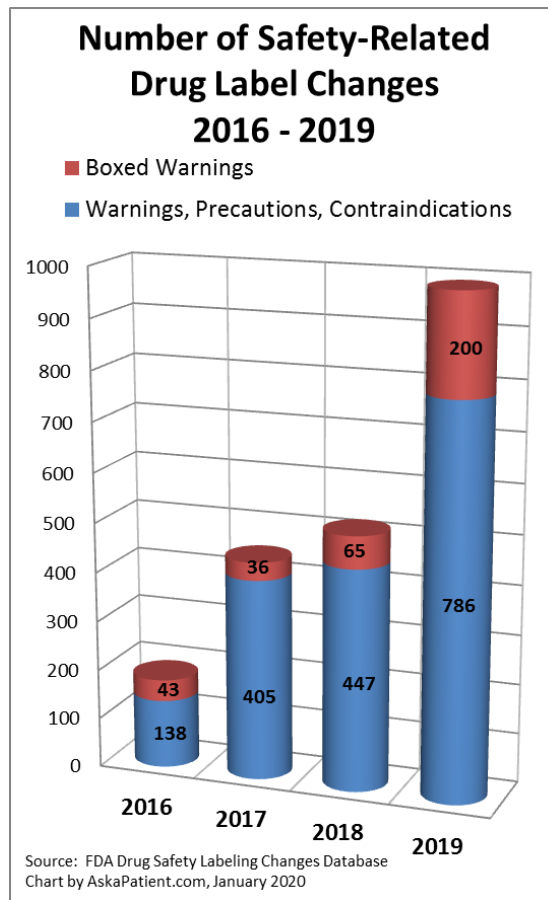
<https://ihpi.umich.edu/news/drug-could-save-their-lives-less-2-them-get-it>

- It has long been known that losing weight can improve **sleep apnea symptoms**, but sleep researchers discovered that the improvement is mainly due a loss in **tongue fat**.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-01/uops-ltf010320.php

In case you missed last week's email, check our web site for 2019's newly approved drug list along with the most important drug warnings of the year:

<https://www.askapatient.com/news/new-drugs-approved-2019.asp>



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