

News Highlights:

- Scientists are close to cataloging the entire **cancer genome** for 2,600 cancers from 38 tumor types. The February 5 edition of the journal *Nature* features a collection of research from the **Pan-Cancer Project**, an international collaboration involving over 1,000 cancer scientists. The results may help lead to highly effective personalized treatments and early (by many years) detection of cancer mutations.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20200205/Cancer-mutations-may-arise-decades-before-diagnosis.aspx>

"Cancer Cataloged," a special edition of *Nature*:

<https://www.nature.com/collections/afdejfafdb/>

- The death toll from the **Coronavirus outbreak**, over 800, now surpasses the number of deaths from the **SARS** virus. However, the number of new infection cases on Saturday, February 8 represented the first daily drop since Feb. 1, falling below 3,000 to 2,656 cases. Experts say it is too early to determine if the disease is now peaking. The **Worldometer** web site reports [40,533 confirmed cases](#) and [909 deaths](#) attributed to the Wuhan Novel Coronavirus outbreak as of February 10, 2020, 00:15 GMT.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/08/world/asia/coronavirus-china.html>

- A jury ordered **Johnson & Johnson** to pay \$750 million in punitive damages to four plaintiffs who allege that the company's **baby powder** caused their cancers. (The amount was reduced to \$186 million because of New Jersey limits on punitive damages). Earlier, a different jury awarded the plaintiffs \$37.2 million in compensatory damages. J&J said it will appeal both verdicts, but it faces more than 16,000 lawsuits alleging that asbestos was in its talcum powder.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/finance/companies/j-26j-ordered-to-pay-24750-million-in-punitive-damages-for-talc/ar-BBZJgfT>

- The U.S. FDA had a public hearing on the topic of **asbestos testing for talcum powders and cosmetics** after traces of it were found in some products, including J&J baby powder. This was the first public hearing on asbestos testing standards for talc since 1971. Recommendations for testing standards published last month favored positions held by public health authorities and plaintiffs' experts in the recent talc-related lawsuits. In 2018, a Reuters investigation found that J&J internal documents showed that the company knew asbestos was in some of its products but did not share that information with regulators.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-fda-talc-idUSKBN1ZY0IX>

This Reuters investigation covers the history of J&J baby powder and decades-long concerns about asbestos particle contamination:

<https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/johnsonandjohnson-cancer/>

- The U.S. Department of Justice announced that a former executive at generic drug maker **Taro Pharmaceuticals** has been indicted for participating in conspiracies to fix **generic drug prices** between 2013 and 2015.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/news/former-taro-pharmaceutical-vp-of-sales-and-marketing-indicted-for-price-fixing/ar-BBZGadr>

For more on this topic, check out our article on the **generic drug price fixing lawsuits** filed by attorneys general from 43 states and Puerto Rico. Generic drug manufacturers are charged with conspiring to fix prices and markets for **114 drugs**. The lawsuit named 15 pharma executives and these companies as defendants: Teva,

Pfizer, Mylan, Actavis Pharma, Amneal Pharmaceuticals, Apotex, Aurobindo Pharma U.S.A., Breckenridge Pharmaceutical, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals, Greenstone, Lannett Company, Lupin Pharmaceuticals, Par Pharmaceutical Companies, Sandoz, Taro Pharmaceuticals USA, Upsher-Smith Laboratories, Wockhardt USA and Zydus Pharmaceuticals.

<https://www.askapatient.com/news/generic-drug-price-conspiracy-lawsuit.asp>

- Experimental "**chemical earmuffs**" being tested on mice appear to prevent **hearing loss** caused by loud sounds without affecting the ability to hear. Amazingly, the treatment does not muffle the sound. Permanent hearing damage or even deafness can be caused by prolonged exposure to loud noises throughout life.

<https://newatlas.com/medical/chemical-earmuffs-drugs-prevent-hearing-loss/>

- **Look up how much your doctor or surgeon received from pharmaceutical or medical device companies in 2018** using the **Open Payments Database**. This tool from the Centers for Medicare Services (CMS) has been updated with data on payments to doctors from pharmaceutical and medical device companies covering through the end of 2018.

<https://openpaymentsdata.cms.gov/>

In case you missed out on these tools we featured in last week's newsletter:

- **Look up your hospital** to find out if it was penalized by Medicare for **high rates of complications**. Note: not all states are listed in the drop-down menu, so for more accurate results, search by city or town or the name of the hospital.

<https://khn.org/news/hospital-penalties/?penalty=hac>

- **Find out your hospital's "Quality Star Rating,"** including patient ratings of the hospital using the "**Hospital Compare**" database at Center for Medicare Services (CMS). It was recently updated.

<https://www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare/search.html>

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