

News Highlights:

- Starting March 23, the FDA will classify **insulin as a biological drug** instead of as a **chemical drug**, which will open the door for approval of "biosimilar" insulin products. This move is expected to make the insulin market more competitive, leading to **lower prices**. Because the definition of a "biological" drug is being modified, some additional drugs, like **infertility treatment Follistem**, will no longer be classified as chemical drugs.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-works-ensure-smooth-regulatory-transition-insulin-and-other-biological-products>

Here is a **list of drugs** making the switch to biological: <https://www.fda.gov/media/119229/download>

- This week, the Japanese government announced it will begin clinical trials testing **HIV drugs to treat the new coronavirus**. Drugs are chosen for testing that may treat a number of RNA viruses, which include viruses that cause Ebola, hepatitis C, and SARS, HIV, and the new coronavirus.

<https://gizmodo.com/why-are-hiv-drugs-being-used-to-treat-the-new-coronavir-1841770027>

- The U.S. FDA authorized marketing of the first test to detect "**Fragile X**" (FXS) **syndrome**, which is caused by a mutation on the FMR1 gene on the X chromosome. It is associated with developmental delays, learning disabilities, social and behavioral issues, and autism spectrum disorder. One in 4,000 males and 1 in 8,000 females in the U.S. have FXS, and it is the most common known cause of inherited developmental delay and intellectual disability.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-authorizes-marketing-first-genetic-test-aid-diagnosis-fragile-x-syndrome>

- ZDNet reports that almost half of **Windows-connected medical devices** are likely to be vulnerable to a **Microsoft vulnerability called "BlueKeep,"** which affects remote connections to some of the older Windows operating systems (such as Windows 7 and Windows Server 2008). This is a big problem because many hospitals use the older software, which will no longer be supported with security patches.

<https://www.zdnet.com/article/cybersecurity-warning-almost-half-of-connected-medical-devices-are-vulnerable-to-hackers-exploiting-bluekeep/>

- A WPLN/NPR/Kaiser Health News investigation found that it is not just hospitals but also **emergency room physician-staffing firms** that have been **suing hundreds of patients in the Nashville area** for unpaid medical bills. While patients try to work out payment arrangements, some are faced with wage garnishment and bankruptcy. Now, both the hospital and the physician staffing firm are saying they are dropping the lawsuits.

<https://khn.org/news/its-not-just-hospitals-that-sue-patients-who-cant-pay/>

- In his "State of the State" address, **California Governor Gavin Newsom** focused almost entirely on the problem of homelessness and **the need for improved mental health care**. His proposals include the exploring the controversial practice of involuntary treatment for people with behavioral health problems along with holding local governments accountable for spending their mental health budgets on mental health services.

<https://californiahealthline.org/news/newsom-to-fix-homelessness-california-must-fix-mental-health/>

- While Director of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology David Rucker, policy crafter Jared Kushner, and tech executives like Google Health chief David Feinberg **push for a rule allowing**

expanded patient access to electronic health records (EHR) through **API-based apps** like you have on your phone, others say many more details need to be worked out first. Rifts among Big Tech, hospitals, current EHR providers, and consumer groups have temporarily postponed the release of the rule.

<https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/tech/onc-s-rucker-hhs-trying-to-balance-privacy-and-patient-access-landmark-interoperability-rule>

- Senator Kirsten Gillibrand introduced legislation to create a brand new **federal agency devoted to EU-style data protection** and privacy in health and other sectors.

<https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/483997-now-is-the-time-for-a-us-data-protection-agency>

- China has a **critical shortage of doctors**, with the situation especially dire during this coronavirus epidemic, according to health officials. Doctors there say that many trained medical students do not go on to practice medicine, instead they often opt for better pay and working conditions at pharmaceutical companies or other employers.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-health-healthcare/virus-shows-plight-of-chinas-overstretched-doctors-idUSKBN20F0ZR>

- There are currently [78,993 confirmed cases](#) and [2,470 deaths](#) from the **coronavirus COVID-19** outbreak as of February 23, 2020, 18:41 GMT. (Worldometer links). Experts do not agree on whether the epidemic is headed to **"pandemic" status**, in which there are self-sustaining lines of infection in multiple countries and continents. An official at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) said that it's possible, "even likely" that community spread may eventually happen.

<https://internewscast.com/coronavirus-outbreak-edges-closer-to-pandemic/>

- How does one cope with **fears about getting dementia**? Kaiser Health News writer Judith Graham, whose father and two uncles had Alzheimer's and whose sister had frontotemporal dementia at age 58, writes about her own fears and interviews others about theirs. While some find that genetic or neuropsychological tests provide helpful information, others focus on protecting their brain by managing stress and depression, and eating a healthy "MIND" diet.

<https://khn.org/news/stalked-by-the-fear-that-dementia-is-stalking-you/>

- Researchers at Imperial College in London discovered that two currently available drugs, used in combination, can boost the body's ability to heal from **spine and other bone fractures** by triggering release of stem cells from bone marrow. The experimental treatment, not yet tested in humans, is a "cocktail" consisting of a bladder control drug and a bone marrow transplant drug.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/02/200221084809.htm>

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