

## News Highlights:

- The U.S. FDA issued a **black box warning** for asthma and allergy drug **Singulair (montelukast)** because of the risk of neuropsychiatric side effects, including agitation, depression, sleeping problems, and suicidal thoughts and actions.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-requires-stronger-warning-about-risk-neuropsychiatric-events-associated-asthma-and-allergy>

- Older adults with **irregular bedtime** and wake-up schedules are nearly twice as likely to develop **cardiovascular disease** as those with more regular sleep patterns, according to an NIH-funded study.

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/study-finds-irregular-sleep-patterns-double-risk-cardiovascular-disease-older-adults>

- A Korean study of more than 400 adults suggested that **moderate alcohol consumption** is associated with **reduced levels of beta amyloid**, the protein that forms the brain plaques of **Alzheimer's disease**, and that moderate drinkers fared better than abstainers.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/05/well/mind/drinking-alcohol-Alzheimers-dementia-brain.html>

- Public Citizen's Health Research Group placed **hot flashes drug Brisdelle (paroxetine)** on its *Worst Pills* "Do Not Use" drug list because of questionable benefits and known risks, including depression. Brisdelle is a lower-dose version of the antidepressant Paxil. *Worst Pills* recommends that women with hot flashes try **lifestyle strategies** first, such as those suggested by National Institute on Aging. Patients between 50 and 59 experiencing very severe symptoms might explore the possibility of taking **hormone therapy drugs**.

*Worst Pills* web site (article is subscriber-only): <https://worstpills.org/>

National Institute on Aging: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/hot-flashes-what-can-i-do>

- **Early onset dementia and Alzheimers** diagnoses increased by 200% between **2013-2017** for patients between the ages of 30 and 64, according to a Blue-Cross Blue-Shield report.

<https://www.bcbs.com/the-health-of-america/reports/early-onset-dementia-alzheimers-disease-affecting-younger-american-adults>

- Online pharmacy Valisure said its lab tests, for the second time, showed high levels of the probable cancer-causing impurity, **NDMA, in diabetes drug metformin**. They asked the FDA to recall versions of the drug made by Amneal Pharmaceuticals, Aurobindo Pharma Ltd., and nine other companies. The FDA previously tested metformin after receiving a citizen's petition from Valisure and said that it did not find the contaminant.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-diabetes-idUSKBN20P2TX>

- The U.S. FDA warned manufacturers, patients, and healthcare providers about a set of Bluetooth-related **cybersecurity vulnerabilities** called "**SweynTooth**." This technology is used in hundreds of consumer wearables like fitness trackers, blood glucose monitors, insulin pumps, and "internet of Things" devices in homes and hospitals.

<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/safety-communications/sweyntooth-cybersecurity-vulnerabilities-may-affect-certain-medical-devices-fda-safety-communication>

<https://www.zdnet.com/article/unknown-number-of-bluetooth-le-devices-impacted-by-sweyntooth-vulnerabilities/>

- The deadline is **Monday, March 9** for **submitting public comments** on the proposed federal rule to allow strictly controlled **importation of a select group of prescription drugs from Canada** by states and territories. So far, comments in opposition range from individuals who say that the proposed rule does not go far enough because it does not allow for personal importation of drugs, while others (such as pharmacist and sheriffs' groups) say it goes too far and that it opens the door to counterfeit and contaminated drugs entering the U.S.

The HHS and FDA-sponsored rule involves significant **red tape**, despite the fact that the supply chain is shortened from manufacturer to consumer. Importers would have to modify product labeling, gain permission from both Canada Health and the FDA, and conduct additional laboratory testing. Colorado and Oregon have abandoned proposed rules for importing from Canada, despite public support for it. However, a few other states, including **New Mexico and Vermont**, plan to try it out and work within the federal guidelines, assuming they are approved.

**Tomorrow is the last day to comment on the proposed rule** (link below to comment or view over 1,000 submitted comments).

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/12/23/2019-27474/importation-of-prescription-drugs>

News on Vermont public hearing:

[https://www.rutlandherald.com/news/state-holding-hearings-on-drug-import-rule/article\\_ca884c73-d439-58ee-94f8-5372bb0b86a3.html](https://www.rutlandherald.com/news/state-holding-hearings-on-drug-import-rule/article_ca884c73-d439-58ee-94f8-5372bb0b86a3.html)

## Novel Coronavirus News

- Another cruise ship has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and is scheduled to disembark more than 3,000 passengers in Oakland, California on Monday. So far, 19 crew and 2 passengers of the **Grand Princess** have tested positive for the virus. Passengers will be tested and in some cases quarantined, at facilities in the U.S. The **Diamond Princess** was the first cruise ship to be affected by the virus, and its quarantine-at-sea off the coast of Japan resulted in many people contracting the virus while on-board in quarantine.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/cruises/2020/03/07/coronavirus-grand-princess-cruise-ship-california/4978565002/>

- Health officials told Congress that they believe that the **novel coronavirus case fatality rate** in the U.S. will likely be in the range of .10 to 1 percent, **closer in lethality to pandemic influenza**, and much lower than the rate reported in China and significantly lower than the WHO fatality percentage. This is because the official WHO numbers represent the number of confirmed deaths as a fraction of the number of confirmed cases; many cases do not get tested and confirmed.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/coronavirus-mortality-rate/2020/03/06/b0c4cdfc-5efc-11ea-b014-4fafa866bb81\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/coronavirus-mortality-rate/2020/03/06/b0c4cdfc-5efc-11ea-b014-4fafa866bb81_story.html)

## Comparing COVID-19 with 2009-2010 H1-N1 Virus Outbreak

	COVID-19*	H1-N1**
Cases Worldwide	105,586	1,632,258
Deaths Worldwide	3,584	284,500
Countries Affected	101	214

\*as of March 8 , 2020

\*\*2009-2010 H1-N1 influenza pandemic

Source: World Health Organization, Situation Report for 2020 March 8, *Business Insider*

It is estimated that between 11% and 21% of the world's population contracted the **H1-N1 virus in 2009-2010**; there were so many cases that midway through the pandemic, the CDC and the WHO stopped keeping track of the number of cases. This article compares major viruses since 1967:

<https://www.businessinsider.com/how-wuhan-coronavirus-compares-to-other-outbreaks-pandemics-2020-1>

- The **European Union** met this week to discuss joint procurement of face masks and other protective gear on behalf of 20 EU states. EU members tried unsuccessfully to convince some of the member countries to lift their **bans on exporting the supplies**. Germany and some others said the export ban could be revised if an overall EU ban was introduced on sales to non-EU states.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-eu/eu-fails-to-persuade-france-germany-to-lift-coronavirus-health-gear-controls-idUKKBN20T166>

- In the U.S., **nineteen states** have reported cases of **COVID-19**. The Centers for Disease Control updates a map each day showing number of cases by state.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>

**March 8 situation report** from the World Health Organization: [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200308-sitrep-48-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=16f7ccef\\_4](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200308-sitrep-48-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=16f7ccef_4)

[Johns Hopkins Coronavirus dashboard](#)

The FDA said it is shipping **2 million testing kits** to labs by Monday with more to be shipped by the end of next week.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-fda-idUSKBN20U0VZ>

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