

News Highlights:

- **Amphetamines for children** (often used to treat ADHD) may be the next **over-prescription** epidemic, suggests Judy Butler at *PharmedOut*, a Georgetown University non-profit concerned with pharmaceutical company influence on the prescribing of drugs. Recent research published in *JAMA Pediatrics* estimates that 1 in 18 physicians have received marketing for stimulants from 2014 to 2018.

PharmedOut March 2020 [newsletter](#) (scroll down to read "We Know About Opioids, but Where Else Are Pharma Payments Going?")

- Have you noticed anything different about the nutrition labels on your groceries lately? **Newly designed nutrition labels** are being rolled out for the first time in 20 years, with larger food companies (more than \$10 million in sales) already using the new labels, and smaller food companies will be required to implement them by January 2021. The FDA's new education campaign, "What's in it for You" aims to help the public understand how the new labels can help them make healthier food choices.

New items on the label include **vitamin information for five key nutrients** (see green box below), more accurate serving sizes, bolder print for calories info, added sugars, and saturated and trans fat information.

Some might be disappointed by the fact that other than the five key nutrients, **vitamin information is now optional**, unless the vitamins do not occur naturally. For example, nutrition labels for tomato sauce might not list Vitamin C or A percentages, but vitamin-fortified breakfast cereals will include the vitamin information. As before, **ingredients are listed in descending order by weight**, but now the ingredient must be listed by its common or usual name rather than a chemical or scientific name.

The revised FDA label aims to help people to understand **which nutrients are most important and which are the least healthy**:

Nutrients to get less of: saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. Compare and choose foods to get less than 100% DV of these nutrients each day.

Nutrients to get more of: dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium. Compare and choose foods to get 100% DV of these nutrients on most days.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-launches-new-campaign-help-consumers-use-new-nutrition-facts-label> (Includes a 6-minute video explaining the new nutrition facts label.)

- The **AskaPatient web site** now includes links to recent **safety-related drug label changes** since 2016. Additional drug safety information includes drug safety communications, post-approval clinical trials requirements that are still pending, and more. For example, the **osteoporosis drug Prolia**, which was approved in June 2010, has **five studies pending** that will be due to the FDA in 2022 and 2023. Run a search on your drug of interest and click on 'Drug Safety Information.' Prolia example:

<https://www.askapatient.com/adverse-events.asp?drug=PROLIA>

- A study by Massachusetts General Hospital and Sweden's Karolinska Institute showed an association between a **low dose of daily aspirin** and less incidence of **liver cancer** among patients with viral hepatitis. Aspirin has been linked to less liver fat, inflammation and scar tissue.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-03/mgh-lal031220.php

Novel Coronavirus Updates:

- A **national emergency** was declared for the United States, which freed up more money for fighting the outbreak. More than 3,200 cases have been confirmed in the U.S. as of March 15, according to the [Johns Hopkins Coronavirus](#) dashboard. National emergency: <https://abc7.com/6012839/>

- On Wednesday, March 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially called the **COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic**, and Europe is now the epicenter while new cases in China continue to decline.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/13/europe-is-now-the-epicenter-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic-who-says.html>

March 14 situation report from the World Health Organization: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200314-sitrep-54-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=dcd46351_6

- With many schools and workplaces shutting down in hopes of slowing the spread of the novel coronavirus, some wonder if these "**social distancing**" measures are too extreme. The idea behind it is that peak cases will be reduced during the disease outbreak, resulting in a "flattening of the curve." This article from Vox provides **9 charts that explain various aspects of the coronavirus outbreak**. One chart lists percentage of patients experiencing each of the 12 most common symptoms of the illness, based on data from 55,000 patients in China. Here are the top three: 1: fever (88%) 2. Dry cough (68%) 3. fatigue (38%).

<https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2020/3/12/21172040/coronavirus-covid-19-virus-charts>

- A Johns Hopkins University analysis of publicly available data showed that about 97% of people who develop **symptoms of Covid-19** will do so within **11.5 days** of exposure, with the **median time** being **5.1 days**. This suggests that the **14-day quarantine** period for people with likely exposure is a reasonable one.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/03/200310164744.htm>

- In order to increase the availability of diagnostic tests for novel coronavirus, the U.S. FDA is giving the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) authority to approve **new diagnostic tests for COVID-19**. Also, the FDA authorized a new diagnostic test for COVID-19 that was developed by Roche. It is the third Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) granted for a diagnostic test during the COVID-19 outbreak.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-gives-flexibility-new-york-state-department-health-fda-issues>

- If the COVID-19 illness progresses beyond the initial fever and cough symptoms, it will turn into **pneumonia in both lungs** and lead to respiratory failure. This makes people wonder: could the **pneumonia vaccine** provide protection from developing pneumonia from the virus? Experts say no, although it could protect you from getting a

secondary kind of pneumonia. A doctor discusses the pneumonia vaccine as it relates to COVID-19.

<https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article240916181.html>

Last week's chart comparing COVID-19 with 2009 H1-N1 with updated information:

Comparing COVID-19 with 2009-2010 H1-N1 Virus Outbreak		
	COVID-19*	H1-N1**
Cases Worldwide	142,539	1,632,258
Deaths Worldwide	5,393	284,500
Countries Affected	135	214
*as of March 15, 2020		
**2009-2010 H1-N1 influenza pandemic		
Source: World Health Organization, Situation Report for 2020 March 15, <i>Business Insider</i>		

Here is our latest opinion poll:

How would you rate the media coverage of the novel coronavirus in terms of 1)quality and 2)quantity?

- Good; right amount of coverage
- Good; too much coverage
- Too alarmist; right amount of coverage
- Too alarmist; too much coverage
- Other (list below)

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