

## News Highlights:

- A U.K. study analyzing more than 400,000 patient records found that people age 75 or older with **low blood pressure** (below 130/80) had **increased mortality rates** compared with those with normal blood pressure. For people **age 85 and older** or frail, those with **higher blood pressure actually had reduced mortality rates**. The research has implications for international guidelines for blood pressure targets, especially for older patients.

[https://sciencesources.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2020-03/uoelbp030320.php](https://sciencesources.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-03/uoelbp030320.php)

- The FDA has **suspended inspections of facilities** it regulates domestically, including U.S. manufacturing sites, compounding pharmacies, drug warehouses, and vape shops. This follows a suspension of inspections of overseas plants announced earlier this month.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-focuses-safety-regulated-products-while-scaling-back-domestic>

- Effective June 21, 2021, the FDA will require "the most significant change to **cigarette labels** in 35 years." Each new label will display one of eleven textual warning statements paired with an accompanying photo-realistic image depicting the **negative health consequences** of smoking. An example: "WARNING: Smoking can cause heart disease and strokes by clogging arteries."

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-requires-new-health-warnings-cigarette-packages-and-advertisements>

- After a heart attack, patients may suffer from anxiety along with episodes of chest pain. Something as simple as listening to music for 30 minutes a day can help with those symptoms, according to this seven-year long study of 350 patients diagnosed with **heart attack and early post infarction angina**. The **music therapy patients** had an 18% reduction in the rate of heart failure and a 23% lower rate of subsequent heart attack at the end of the seven-year period.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/03/200318104453.htm>

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) News

*The coronavirus outbreak continues to dominate health news.*

- The FDA approved the first point-of-care **diagnostic for COVID-19**; the test will provide results within hours rather than in days; product roll-out is expected by March 30.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-issues-first-emergency-use-authorization-point-care-diagnostic>

- The World Health Organization (WHO) is compiling a **database of scientific research related to COVID-19** disease. Scroll down to the middle of the page to search by author or key word, or journal.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/global-research-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

- A study published this week in *Pediatrics* reports that **children with COVID-19** tend to have milder symptoms than those experienced by adults, although infants and toddlers tend to have more severe symptoms than older children.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/some-children-develop-severe-infections-from-coronavirus-2020-3>  
[Pediatrics journal article pdf](#)

- **Cybercriminals** are taking advantage of the world's preoccupation with coronavirus by attacking systems, using ransomware, email scams, and social engineering messages. Oddly, two criminal outfits have "pledged" to scale back their attacks, at least for hospitals, according to Forbes.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/daveywinder/2020/03/19/coronavirus-pandemic-self-preservation-not-altruism-behind-no-more-healthcare-cyber-attacks-during-covid-19-crisis-promise/#1cb5c181252b>

- According to the FBI, online criminals from outside the U.S. are **ramping up scams** and attacks in states with the highest rates of COVID-19 infections: **California, New York and Washington**.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/daveywinder/2020/03/21/fbi-coronavirus-warning-significant-spike-in-covid-19-scams-targeting-these-three-states/>

- The FDA warned consumers that no at-home diagnostic tests for the coronavirus have been approved, and to be aware that some **fraudulent COVID-19 tests** are being marketed.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-alerts-consumers-about-unauthorized-fraudulent-covid-19-test-kits>

- HHS (Health and Human Services) announced it was **relaxing HIPPA privacy rules** to allow for more **telemedicine** and health device apps use during this period of "social distancing." Patients should be careful about what platforms are used, the security of devices on both ends, and know whether sessions are being streamed vs. being recorded. Some reasons "why you shouldn't just skype your therapist:"

<https://slate.com/technology/2020/03/coronavirus-pandemic-therapy-online-teletherapy.html>

- Despite the growing consensus among governors and big city mayors for **school closures**, the decisions appear at odds with guidance issued from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and some public health experts are questioning whether the widespread closures make sense.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/states-are-rushing-to-close-schools-but-what-does-the-science-on-closures-say/2020>

## Treatment News for COVID-19

- A Phase 1 clinical trial for an **investigational vaccine** to protect against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has begun at Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute (KPWHRI) in Seattle.

<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/news-events/nih-clinical-trial-investigational-vaccine-covid-19-begins>

- Several medications are being studied as potential **"repurposed" treatments** for coronavirus. They are listed in the chart below. In addition, researchers are in the beginning stages of investigating **new preventative treatments** derived from **monoclonal antibodies**. A new survey by Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology News (*GEN*) reveals 35 active drug development programs in North America, Europe, and China.

<https://www.genengnews.com/a-lists/how-to-conquer-coronavirus-top-35-treatments-in-development/>

### Repurposing Drugs for COVID-19

*Products being Tested*

Drug	Used for
<a href="#">Actemra</a>	<a href="#">Anti-inflammation</a>

<a href="#">Plaquenil (Hydroxychloroquine)</a>	<a href="#">Malaria, RA, lupus</a>
<a href="#">Aralen (Chloroquine)</a>	<a href="#">Malaria, RA, lupus</a>
<a href="#">Cozaar (Losartan)</a>	<a href="#">high blood pressure</a>
<a href="#">Redesivir</a>	<a href="#">Ebola</a>
<a href="#">Kaletra</a>	<a href="#">HIV</a>
<i>Links go to article</i>	<i>Links patient reviews</i>

- Various companies are donating drugs that might help in the fight against the coronavirus. Novartis said it will donate the drug **hydroxychloroquine** if it wins approval for treating COVID-19. A **1,500-person clinical trial**, led by the University of Minnesota, is being launched to study whether hydroxychloroquine can prevent or reduce the severity of COVID-19.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-novartis-idUSKBN2172ZW>

- Supplies of two **antimalarial drugs** (**hydroxychloroquine** - brand name **Plaquenil** and **chloroquine** - brand name **Aralen**) are being depleted as doctors and hospitals prescribe them off-label for treating or preventing COVID-19.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/20/hospitals-doctors-are-wiping-out-supplies-an-unproven-coronavirus-treatment/>

- Other types of **shortages** reported across the U.S. and worldwide include **hospital supplies** like masks, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, blood donations (due to cancellations of blood drives), and more.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/03-03-2020-shortage-of-personal-protective-equipment-endangering-health-workers-worldwide>

- News circulated around the world that **ibuprofen** can make COVID-19 symptoms worse, but the European Union, the U.S. FDA, and the WHO recently stated that there is **no evidence** of that effect.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-fda/fda-says-no-scientific-evidence-that-ibuprofen-worsens-coronavirus>

### Weekly Stats:

- The cases continue to grow: more than **33,000 COVID-19 cases have been reported in the U.S**, with 417 deaths, as of March 22, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus dashboard. There are **335,972 cases worldwide** according to the [Johns Hopkins Coronavirus](#) dashboard.

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) reports a smaller numbers of cases, but that is likely due to "case" definition. For example, on the Johns Hopkins database, "confirmed cases" include "presumptive positive" cases.

Updated chart comparing **COVID-19 pandemic with 2009's H1N1 pandemic**, based on **WHO data** posted March 21, 2020:

## Comparing COVID-19 with 2009-2010

	COVID-19*	H1-N1**
Cases Worldwide	267,013	1,632,258
Deaths Worldwide	11,201	284,500
Countries Affected	184	214

\*as of March 21, 2020

\*\*2009-2010 H1-N1 influenza pandemic  
Source: World Health Organization, Situation Dashboard 2020 March 21, *Business Insider*

**Don't forget to vote in 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)

**[Vote!](#)**

*AskaPatient Weekly Healthcare News: March 22, 2020*

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