

News Highlights:

- After six months of recalling specific lots of the **stomach acid drug ranitidine** (brand name **Zantac**) because of NDMA (cancer-causing) impurities, the FDA has decided to **recall ALL prescription and OTC versions** from the market, effective immediately. **NDMA** concentrations have been found to **increase over time** and **increase when stored at higher than room temperature**.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-requests-removal-all-ranitidine-products-zantac-market>

- A new **blood test** has been developed that can detect 50 different kinds of **cancer** by finding cancer DNA that has been shed in the blood. The associated clinical study, conducted by Harvard University and called **PATHFINDER**, will enroll about 6,200 participants across the U.S. *Enrollment in the PATHFINDER study is temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/03/in-clinical-study-blood-test-can-detect-range-of-cancers>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-52090359>

- Columbia University researchers discovered that an experimental compound for treating a rare kidney stone disease may also have potential for treating **pancreatic cancer**. The compound starves cells of cysteine (which pancreatic cancer cells depend on) and kills pancreatic tumor cells without damaging healthy cells.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/04/200402144528.htm>

Coronavirus – Advisories and Guidance

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued a warning about **COVID-19-related phone scams** and **email "phishing" attacks**. Calls appear to be coming from the CDC and sometimes ask for donations. Emails may contain links and downloads for malware that can damage users' computers and steal information.

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/phishing.html>

- These newly identified early-onset symptoms have been associated with COVID-19: **loss of taste and smell** and **pinkeye**. Like fever and dry cough, which are more common, the symptoms can develop within two to fourteen days after infection.

<https://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2020/03/31/coronavirus-early-symptoms-pink-eye-loss-taste-smell-covid-19/>

- New evidence suggests that the novel coronavirus can spread simply by breathing. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) says that although current studies aren't conclusive, "the results of available studies are consistent with **aerosolization of virus from normal breathing**."

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/04/you-may-be-able-spread-coronavirus-just-breathing-new-report-finds>

- The CDC is now recommending that people wear **cloth face masks** in public places since they provide a level of protection from people who are asymptomatic carriers of the virus. Here is a 45-second video of U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams demonstrating how to make your own face covering (scroll down the page to see the video):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

Patterns for making your own masks, including sew and no-sew versions:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

- The European Medical Agency (EMA) cautioned that **hydroxychloroquine** and **chloroquine** (used for autoimmune diseases as well as malaria and also being tested against coronavirus disease) should only be used in clinical trials or national emergency use programs, citing side effects and uncertain efficacy. One brand name of hydroxychloroquine is [Plaquenil](#), which is frequently taken for rheumatoid arthritis. (link for patient reviews) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-ema/ema-urges-caution-on-malaria-drugs-use-for-covid-19-in-absence-of-evidence-idUSKBN21J5XN>

- A food science professor reassured *Consumer Reports* readers that coronavirus is **not transmitted through food**, and that unlike bacteria, viruses don't multiply on food. "Inactivation of a virus can take place—from 10,000 virus particles down to 1—after 3 minutes at 149 degrees." Here is a Q & A on food safety during the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://www.consumerreports.org/food-safety/coronavirus-common-questions-about-the-food-you-eat-food-safety/>

- **Blood donations have decreased** dramatically in the U.S. due to the implementation of social distancing and the cancellation of blood drives. Health experts from the FDA say that donating blood by appointment is safe, and encourage people to donate blood during the pandemic.

These organizations have directories of blood centers that will take donations by appointment.

AABB: <http://www.aabb.org/tm/donation/Pages/Blood-Bank-Locator.aspx>

America's Blood Centers: <https://americasblood.org/for-donors/find-a-blood-center/>

American Red Cross: <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive>

Blood Centers of America: <http://bca.coop/about-us/member-list/>

- The FDA has responded to the nation's blood supply shortage by **modifying the donation guidelines** for individuals with increased risk for transmitting human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and transfusion-transmitted malaria. The new guidelines reflect the agency's current thinking on the issues and are expected to remain in place after the pandemic ends.

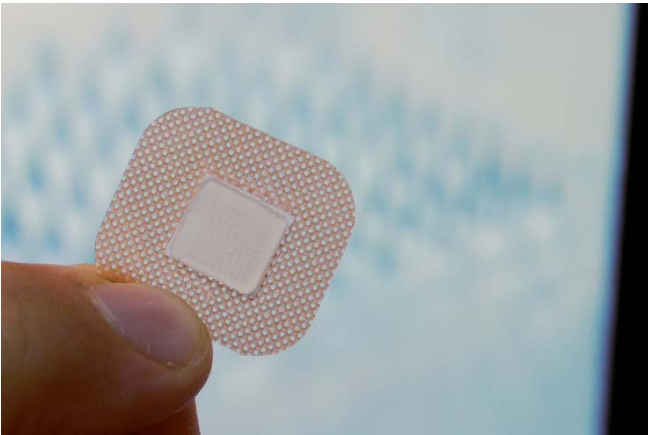
<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-provides-updated-guidance-address-urgent-need-blood-during-pandemic>

- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) eased facility safety rules and **licensing requirements** in order to expand the number of **hospital beds** and health workers to treat the growing number of patients in "hot spots." Hospitals may now operate inside surgery centers, and even in dorms, gyms, and schools if necessary. This will allow hospitals to **safely triage sick patients** at community locations, and then send them to the most appropriate facility.

<https://khn.org/news/more-than-5000-surgery-centers-can-now-serve-as-makeshift-hospitals-during-covid-19-crisis/>

Coronavirus – Vaccines and Treatments

- University of Pittsburgh scientists announced significant progress towards a vaccine effective against SARS-CoV-2. Their vaccine, called PittCoVacc, is delivered using a "**microneedle vaccine**," a fingertip-sized patch of 400 tiny needles—which are made entirely of sugar and spike protein pieces and applied like a Band Aid on the skin. The researchers anticipate starting a Phase I human clinical trial for the vaccine in the next few months.



Source: University of Georgia (example of microneedle vaccine)

<https://www.pittwire.pitt.edu/news/covid-19-vaccine-candidate-shows-promise-first-peer-reviewed-research>

(includes video of the press briefing)

- About 35 companies and research institutions worldwide are racing to create a vaccine to protect against COVID-19. Scientists are using both old and new approaches, and some are taking advantage of **preexisting vaccine research** from two other coronavirus outbreaks - **2003 SARS and 2012 MERS** -- that were "in progress" but halted when those outbreaks were contained.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/04/when-will-a-coronavirus-vaccine-be-ready>

- Duke Clinical Research is conducting a large scale study on the effectiveness of **hydroxychloroquine** to prevent COVID-19 infection in U.S. healthcare workers.

<https://www.pcori.org/news-release/pcori-funds-registry-study-effectiveness-hydroxychloroquine-prevent-covid-19-healthcare-workers>

- Austria-based APEIRON Biologics will soon begin Phase II of a clinical trial of a novel drug called **APN01** to treat Covid-19. Regulatory approvals from Austria, Germany, and Denmark have been obtained for the treatment of 200 COVID-19 patients; the drug has the potential to block the infection of cells by the virus and to reduce lung injury. APN01 is a recombinant human Angiotensin Converting Enzyme2 and was originally developed for the treatment of acute **lung injury** and **acute respiratory distress syndrome**.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-04/msa-abi040220.php

- French drug maker Sanofi has stepped up production of drugs in low supply and said it will provide **millions of doses of hydroxychloroquine** for patients with COVID-19 if the drug proves successful in clinical trials.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-sanofi-exclusive/exclusive-sanofi-can-produce-millions-of-doses-of-potential-coronavirus-drug-ceo-idUSKBN21K3AD?f>

Coronavirus – Concerns from Researchers

- Two California scientists have concerns about the potential for the virus to be **lurking in water supplies**. A University of California researcher and the director of Sanitary Environmental Engineering Division at the University of Salerno are calling for more testing to determine whether water treatment methods are effective in killing SARS-CoV-19 and coronaviruses in general.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-04/uoc--rt040320.php

- Could a **patient's medications** be increasing their risk for COVID-related hospitalization? In this document,

"Medications Compromising Covid Infections," a medical doctor argues that not enough attention is being paid to drugs' effects on disease progression, and reviews some classes of medications that may double the risk of developing pneumonia in COVID-19 patients.

<https://rxisk.org/medications-compromising-covid-infections/>

Coronavirus: New Cases and Stats

- In its weekly surveillance summary of COVID-19 for the week ending March 28, 2020, the CDC reported that the national percentage of **respiratory specimens** testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 is increasing. 16.5% of specimens tested at public health laboratories and 8.8% of those tested at clinical laboratories were positive. Since the start of the outbreak, commercial laboratories have reported testing 825,830 specimens; 136,099 (16.5%) tested positive for SARS-COV-2.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/pdf/covidview.pdf>

- The CDC released data about the extent to which **underlying medical conditions** are associated with patients' increased risk for being hospitalized and put into intensive care if infected with COVID-19. Of those admitted to an ICU, 78% had at least one underlying health condition. Of those hospitalized but not admitted to an ICU, 70% had an underlying medical condition. Diabetes, chronic lung disease, and cardiovascular disease were the most common underlying conditions.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/new-cdc-data-on-underlying-health-conditions-in-coronavirus-patients-who-need-hospitalization-intensive-care/2020/03/31/0217f8d2-7375-11ea-85cb-8670579b863d_story.html

- About 90% of Americans (297 million people in 38 states) have been ordered to stay at home amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Worldwide, the number is estimated at about 20%.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/us-map-stay-at-home-orders-lockdowns-2020-3?op=1>

- The number of cases more than doubled and the number of deaths more than quadrupled this week in the U.S. More than **320,000 (up from 124,000 last week) COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in the U.S.**, with **9,132 deaths** (up from 2,109 last week), as of April 5 at 12:00 noon EST, according to the **Johns Hopkins Coronavirus** dashboard. **Worldwide cases: 1,237,420 (up from 681,706 last week).**

Here is an update of last week's chart, which features states with at least **2,000 cases as of March 29**. All reported **at least a doubling** and some a **tripling of cases** since last week, with the exception of **Washington**, where the increase in number of cases may be leveling off.

**Weekly Change in Number of
COVID-19 Cases in States with
2,000 or More Confirmed Cases on
March 29, 2020**

March 29		April 5
53,520	New York	122,056
11,124	New Jersey	34,154
5,648	California	13,929
4,659	Michigan	14,225
4,311	Washington	7,632
4,257	Massachusetts	11,736
4,038	Florida	12,151
3,498	Illinois	10,360
3,315	Louisiana	12,496
2,909	Pennsylvania	10,507
2,534	Texas	6,872
2,446	Georgia	6,383
2,063	Colorado	4,565

As reported March 29, 2020, 9am EST, April 5,
2020 12 noon EST Johns Hopkins Coronavirus
Dashboard; compiled by AskaPatient.com

The following states had reports of more than 2,000 but less than 4,000 COVID-19 cases as of April 5, 2020: Indiana, Ohio, Maryland, Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina, Missouri, Arizona, and Wisconsin.

[Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Dashboard](#)

Please vote in our latest opinion poll and share the link:

**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!](#)

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