

News Highlights:

- The FDA approved Cipla Limited's application to make the first **generic version of Proventil HFA** Metered dose Inhaler (**albuterol sulfate**) for bronchospasm in patients age four and up. The **asthma treatment** was prescribed to more than 100,000 Medicare beneficiaries in 2017.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-generic-commonly-used-albuterol-inhaler-treat-and-prevent-bronchospasm>

- Lilly announced that it is lowering the cost of its co-pay for its **insulin drugs** (including **Humalog**) to \$35 a month through its "Lilly Insulin Value Program." They are citing COVID-19 as the reason for the change, but will not make this price available to Medicare or Medicaid beneficiaries. Last month, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) started lining up drug makers willing to participate in their 2021 plan to cap the out-of-pocket cost for insulin to \$35 per month.

<https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/medical-devices-and-prescription-drug-policy/491685-drugmaker-caps-insulin-costs>

Coronavirus – Advisories and Guidance

- *In case you missed this news last week:* 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**: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html> (Scroll down halfway through the page to view the video.) 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 FDA issued guidance for health care providers and researchers on the administration and study of **convalescent plasma**, which is an investigational treatment for patients severely ill with COVID-19.

<https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/investigational-covid-19-convalescent-plasma>

- The CDC has extended its "no-sail" policy for **cruise ships**. Approximately 100 cruise ships remain at sea off the U.S. coasts, with nearly 80,000 crew onboard. In addition, the CDC is aware of 20 cruise ships at port or anchorage in the United States with known or suspected COVID-19 infection among the crew who remain onboard. The industry has been working to build an illness response framework to combat COVID-19 on ships with international crew members who remain on board and at sea.

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/s0409-modifications-extension-no-sail-ships.html>

- Globally, the demand is high but a reliable solution does not exist yet for **antibody tests** for the **novel coronavirus**. Such a test, using a sample of blood, would indicate if a person has been **exposed to** and presumably has immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19. The FDA issued a warning this week that some companies are **falsely claiming that their serological tests are FDA-approved** or authorized, when in reality they cannot accurately diagnose COVID-19. In the U.K, 3.5 million serology tests were ordered from China but provide false negative results.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-scientists-warn-that-antibody-tests-could-be-months-away-2020-4>

FDA advisory:

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-serological-tests>

Coronavirus – Hospitals and Supplies

- Hospital and other institutional **chaplains** are finding their jobs changing during this COVID-19 pandemic, as they must keep up to date with new safety regulations and deal with new worries about their own safety. In some hospitals, there may not be enough personal protective equipment (PPE) for the chaplain, making it very difficult to provide support for patients and their families and hospital staff. Certified in clinical pastoral work, **hospital chaplains provide spiritual support to people of all faiths.**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/health/coronavirus-chaplains-hospitals.html>

- While some might think that hospitals are busy and doing well financially during the pandemic, in reality many are **struggling financially** because of sharp drop-offs in regular doctor visits, emergency room arrivals, and lucrative surgeries and medical procedures that are vital to their bottom lines. To cope with lack of cash flow, many are requesting advance payments (up to three months for physicians and six months for hospitals) from **Center for Medicare Services (CMS)**. CMS said that it has received more than 25,000 requests from providers and suppliers for expedited payments and has approved more than 17,000 requests so far.

<https://khn.org/news/coronavirus-crisis-doctors-hospitals-request-advance-medicare-payments/>

- Some hospital CEOs in hard-hit areas of the country say that the **policy of advance payments from CMS based on historical share of revenue** isn't fair and should instead be based on the hospitals' COVID-19 burden.

<https://khn.org/news/furor-erupts-billions-going-to-hospitals-based-on-medicare-billings-not-covid-19/>

Coronavirus – Treatments and Testing

- In a 2.5 minute video, Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington, VA demonstrates how its **drive-thru collection process for COVID-19 testing works**. Most tests involve using a **swab on a long stick** to obtain a respiratory sample from the back of the throat.



Image source: Arlington County Government (<https://newsroom.arlingtonva.us>)

<https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/2020/04/01/coronavirus-testing-what-expect-if-youre-tested/5077039002/>

- A new web site was launched by AABB (formerly known as the American Association of Blood Banks) to educate interested donors, clinicians, and blood collectors on the rapidly evolving therapy of COVID-19 **convalescent plasma**. AABB also sent a letter encouraging hospitals to encourage recovered patients to coordinate with AABB on donating blood for use in convalescent plasma.

<https://covidplasma.org/>

- The FDA authorized the use of a **new blood purification system** to treat the most seriously ill patients with COVID-19 who have been admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) with confirmed or imminent respiratory failure. The device removes **cytokines**, which are inflammatory agents, from the blood and cycles it back to the patient after filtering.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-authorizes-blood-purification-device-treat-covid-19>

- The FDA has been notified of the availability of **33 diagnostic tests for COVID-19**, and more than 200 more tests are in the pipeline. There are also around seven "Personal Protective Equipment Solutions" that the FDA has also authorized under its emergency guidelines. A complete list is available on the FDA web site.

<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/emergency-situations-medical-devices/emergency-use-authorizations>

Coronavirus – Statistics

- The **United States has the highest number of cases** of COVID-19 in the world-- 542,023, while Spain now has the second highest number of recorded cases - 166,019, outpacing Italy, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus dashboard. The states with the highest cases in the U.S. are **New York** with 174,489 and **New Jersey** with 61,850 as of Sunday, April 12.

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

- In its **weekly surveillance summary of COVID-19** for the week ending April 4, 2020, the CDC reported that the national percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 is increasing. 18.5% of specimens tested during the week at public health laboratories and 7.7% of those tested at clinical laboratories were positive. Since the start of the outbreak, commercial laboratories have reported that 17.6% of 1,241,214 tests were positive for SARS-COV-2. Based on death certificate data, the percentage of total deaths in the U.S. attributed to COVID-19 increased from 4.0% during week 13 (week ending March 28) to 6.9% during week 14.

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

- More than 600 passengers and crew on board the **Ruby Princess** have tested positive and 15 have died since disembarking 2,600 passengers in Sydney on March 19, making the ship the single biggest source of coronavirus infections in **Australia**. New South Wales police have launched a criminal investigation into the ship's docking and whether or not the ship adequately disclosed the health situation of its crew and passengers. More than 1,000 crew members from 50 different countries remain on the ship.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/09/australia/australia-ruby-princess-cruise-coronavirus-intl-hnk/index.html>

- The number of people infected with **COVID-19 has now surpassed** the number who were infected with **H1-N1 virus** during the 2009 swine flu outbreak.

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

	COVID-19*	H1-N1**
Cases Worldwide	1,807,339	1,632,258
Deaths Worldwide	112,241	284,500
Countries Affected	185	214

*as of April 12, 2020

**2009-2010 H1-N1 influenza pandemic

Source: World Health Organization, Situation Dashboard 2020 March 21, *Business Insider*

- Check out this graphical presentation, complete with **images of ancient art**, depicting the world's deadliest **pandemics from antiquity to the modern era**:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/local/retropolis/coronavirus-deadliest-pandemics/>

Don't forget to 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)

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