

Health News

- A **"technology divide"** among seniors has become increasingly apparent during the coronavirus pandemic. Some older folks have successfully adapted to virtual interactions like buying groceries, family zoom meetings, and tele-doctor appointments. But others, many of whom have **hearing and/or vision loss or dementia**, have not been able to cope as well in a socially distanced society. These "technology have-nots" are at greater risk of social isolation, food insecurity, and inadequate medical care. When SCAN Health Plan, a Medicare Advantage plan with 215,000 members in California, surveyed its most vulnerable members after the pandemic hit, it discovered that about one-third did not have access to the technology needed for a telehealth appointment. Products like the **"GranPad"** tablet for seniors and innovative procedures have emerged that can help.

<https://khn.org/news/technology-divide-between-senior-haves-and-have-nots-roils-pandemic-response/>

- The FDA announced that labels for **opioid pain drugs** and medicine used to treat opioid addiction must now include information about the availability of **Naloxone (brand name Narcan)**, a drug (nasal spray or shot) that can reverse an opioid overdose. Physicians must also discuss the availability of the drug with their patients and consider co-prescribing naloxone to patients who are at increased risk of opioid overdose.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-requiring-labeling-changes-opioid-pain-medicines-opioid-use-disorder-medicines-regarding>

- Would you want to be told if your doctor was using an **artificial intelligence tool to make decisions about your care**? At prominent hospitals and clinics around the country, clinicians are turning to AI-powered decision support tools -- many of them unproven -- to help predict whether hospitalized patients are likely to develop complications or deteriorate, whether they're at risk of readmission, and whether they're likely to die soon. But these patients and their family members **are often not informed about or asked to consent to the use of these tools in their care**, a STAT examination has found.

<https://medtelligence.net/news/an-invisible-hand-patients-arent-being-told-about-the-ai-systems-advising-their-care/1637919/>

- The FDA released new draft guidance to encourage companies to conduct **cannabis-related clinical research**. The confusion over where to source the cannabis for clinical trials research was clarified: if the product contains **THC** (the ingredient in marijuana that makes you "high") specifically if the "delta-9 THC is at more than 0.3 percent" then the cannabis must be obtained from the National Institute on Drug Abuse Drug Supply Program (DSP). If it has less than that, it does not have to be obtained from the DSP.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/fda-brief/fda-brief-fda-issues-draft-guidance-encourage-cannabis-related-clinical-research?>

FDA's consumer information on **cannabis and cannabidiol**:

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/public-health-focus/fda-regulation-cannabis-and-cannabis-derived-products-including-cannabidiol-cbd>

AskaPatient's article comparing retail **CBD oil** with **prescription cannabidiol, Epidiolex**:

<https://www.askapatient.com/news/cbd-oil-drug-comparison.asp>

- National Institutes of Health (NIH) researchers found that a single shot of **cabotegravir** every two months prevents HIV better than the daily pill **Truvada**. The **HIV Prevention Trials Network** conducted the randomized, double-blind trial, and found that the shot was 66 percent more effective than Truvada. Viiv Healthcare plans to

apply for FDA approval of cabotegravir as a pre-exposure prophylactic (PrEP) in early 2021.

<https://www.hiv.gov/blog/long-acting-injectable-form-hiv-prevention-outperforms-daily-pill-nih-study>

- President Trump signed an executive order containing four plans that **aim to lower drug prices for U.S. consumers**. Independent healthcare analyst Joshua Cohen reviews the caveats and limitations of each of the four parts of the executive order, some of which have been in motion since 2018. The four plans are: 1) Speed up the timeline that will **allow importation** by states, pharmacies, and wholesalers of **certain high-demand** drugs from Canada. 2) Eliminate or reduce certain **rebates** granted to insurance middleman called **Pharmacy Benefit Managers**. 3) Provide **insulin and Epipen free through community health centers and hospitals** that serve large numbers of low income patients. 4) Adopt an **international pricing index model** (similar to what is used in Europe and Canada) to be used for setting price limits for what Medicare pays for drugs.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/joshuacohen/2020/07/25/trumps-executive-orders-on-drug-pricing-contain-caveats-and-limitations/#7e831ba50011>

- Consumers overwhelmingly support regulatory actions that would result in lower drug prices, but Merrill Goozner, former editor of *Modern Healthcare* laments that large, **organized patient groups** that could be a force of reckoning are **largely silent on the issue of high drug prices**. This is because many of the organizations receive an enormous amount of funding from large pharmaceutical companies.

<https://washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/april-may-june-2020/why-are-patient-groups-silent-on-high-drug-prices/>

- A proposed law would finally give **authority to the FDA to recall prescription and over-the-counter drugs**. Currently, the FDA can only **suggest** that a drug maker issue a recall for safety reasons. Manufacturers usually comply, but it is almost always communicated to the public as a "**voluntary recall**."

<https://www.politico.com/newsletters/prescription-pulse/2020/07/10/fda-could-recall-drugs-under-new-spending-bill-489762>

Coronavirus News

- Experts caution that **N95 face masks with front valves** should not be worn as personal protective gear against the coronavirus. While they protect the people wearing them, they don't stop the virus droplets from escaping and infecting others. Such masks are not designed for use as healthcare PPE, but as masks for construction workers and others who need to filter work dust and other fine particles.

<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/certain-type-n95-mask-harm-covid19-spread>

- Could **copper-infused cloth face masks** provide better protection against the coronavirus than regular cloth face masks? After all, it has been scientifically shown that bacteria and viruses are killed in a short amount of time once they land on metallic copper surfaces. The *Today Show* interviewed two scientists, a microbiologist and a the medical director of the National Institute for Infectious Disease, who had differing opinions about copper face masks' potential in stopping the spread of coronavirus.

<https://www.today.com/health/copper-face-masks-protect-against-coronavirus-do-they-work-t182589>

- **Oxford University** and partner **AstraZeneca** had good news to report in the *Lancet* on the results of initial phases of their experimental coronavirus vaccine clinical trial: the vaccine appears to be both safe and promotes antibody and t-cell immune response. Half of the more than 1,000 volunteers received a meningitis vaccine as a control while the other half received the test coronavirus vaccine. **Flu-like side effects** were not long-lasting, but were more severe with the test vaccine than with the meningitis vaccine. Ten of the volunteers received "booster shots" after 28 days, which resulted in increased levels of antibodies. A vaccine under development in China

using similar technologies also reported promising results in the same issue of the *Lancet*.

<https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectiousdisease/covid19/87644>

- Want to know if your **surface cleaning product** is effective at killing the coronavirus? The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a database of 460 products (including sprays, concentrates, and wipes) that meet EPA criteria for residential and institutional use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. 50 products kill it in a minute or less, and 177 do so within 5 minutes or less. There are 64 products containing the name "**Clorox**," and 17 products containing the name "**Lysol**." When searching this mobile-friendly database, simply enter in a word from the product name in the "keyword" box.

<https://cfpub.epa.gov/giwiz/disinfectants/index.cfm>

- The **Environmental Protection Agency** recently updated its page on **indoor air quality**. There is growing evidence that the SARS-CoV-2 virus remains airborne in indoor environments for hours, potentially increasing in concentration over time. Lowering the concentration of SARS CoV-2 by means of ventilation and filtration can play a role in controlling transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19, in addition to social distancing, cleaning and disinfection. Check out these tips on how to improve the air quality in your home.

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/indoor-air-homes-and-coronavirus-covid-19#natural>

Updated Covid-19 stats for Sunday, July 26, 2020: Worldwide: 16.1 million cases and over 646,000 deaths.
United States: 4.22 million cases and more than 146,000 deaths. Brazil has the second-highest number of cases globally with over 2.39 million cases. India has 1.38 million cases.

Source: Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Dashboard

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

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