

Health News: October 11, 2020

- Scientists may have discovered a new treatment for **tinnitus**: "zapping" the **tongue** with **electrical shocks** that are not painful but "feel a bit like pop rocks candy fizzing in the mouth." In a study, subjects wore a tongue device along with headphones that delivered a targeted treatment to the auditory system of the brain. Tinnitus, or ringing in the ears, can be extremely bothersome, affecting 10 to 15% of the population. There is no approved drug or device for the condition. Some patients have treated the **anxiety** caused by chronic tinnitus by using medications like [lorazepam](#) (click for reviews) or [Xanax](#).

[Scientific American](#)

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/new-tinnitus-treatment-alleviates-annoying-ringing-in-the-ears/>

- California Governor Gavin Newsom **vetoed a bill** (SB 980) that would have established strong **privacy protections for genetic data** collected by direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic testing companies like **23andMe** and **Ancestry**. Many consumers don't realize that DNA information collected through these companies is largely not protected by HIPPA or other laws. The bill had bipartisan support by the California legislature. Newsom explained that his veto was due to concern about the law's potential effect on mandatory reporting of COVID-19 test results to the state; most likely the bill will have to be fine-tuned before a version is signed into law.

<https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/california-governor-vetoes-bill-to-65631/>

[Consumer Reports](#) advocacy group wrote a letter of support for the bill.

Related article from *MinnPost*:

"As genetic testing companies increasingly engage in medical and pharmaceutical ventures, a **regulatory gap in consumer privacy protections** is drawing calls for change and even legislative proposals. A lack of strict data privacy protections has allowed these companies to rack up hundreds of millions in revenue through the collection of DNA samples and sales of genetic data, all with the consent of customers who may not have read the fine print."

[MinnPost](#)

<https://www.minnpost.com/other-nonprofit-media/2020/09/privacy-fears-rising-as-dna-test-companies-shift-to-new-ventures/>

- **eResearchTechnology** (ERT), a Philadelphia company that sells **software used in hundreds of clinical trials** in North America, Europe, and Asia, including coronavirus-related studies, was hit by a **ransomware attack** that has slowed some of those trials over the past two weeks. While clinical trial patients were never at risk, the attack forced trial researchers to track their participants with pen and paper. On its website, ERT reports that its software was used in three-quarters of trials that led to drug approvals by the Food and Drug Administration last year.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/03/technology/clinical-trials-ransomware-attack-drugmakers.html>

- The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** and its regulatory counterpart in **Mexico** broadened and enhanced a partnership to work together on **food safety** in both countries. "U.S. consumers rely on imports from Mexico for much of the **fresh fruit and vegetables** that they eat as well as other foods. Our enhanced food safety partnership with our Mexican colleagues will play an important role in helping each country's respective efforts to create a modernized food safety regulatory framework," said FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn. About one-third of all food imported into the U.S. is from Mexico.

[FDA Press Release](#)

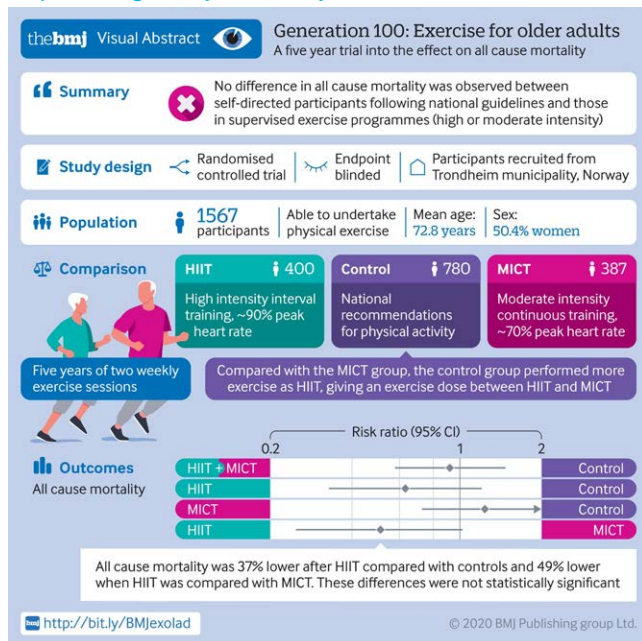
- A five-year Norwegian study of patients born between 1936 and 1942 found that **exercise regimen intensity is not linked to all-cause mortality risk in older adults**. The study, published in *BMJ*, includes a linked opinion piece by the study authors: "It's never too late for older adults to start exercising." The authors explain **limitations of their study**, such as the serious challenge of finding a suitable control group, since people signing up for lifestyle-related studies are in general healthy and/or very motivated to change lifestyle. They emphasize that the study did reveal larger health benefits in those that undertook mainly high intensity exercise when compared to those that mainly undertook exercise with moderate intensity. Finally, the study showed that a yearly checkup that includes a **focus on the importance of physical activity** can motivate older adults to stay physically active.

Study summary:

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/10/201007193656.htm>

Authors' opinion piece:

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2020/10/07/its-never-too-late-for-older-adults-to-start-exercising/>



- What kind of chair do you use in your home office? Some experts say that the trendy "**stability ball**" may not have significant health benefits and in fact has some drawbacks, including discomfort and the risk of falls. A physical therapist conducted a study comparing balance balls with desk chairs and found that the ball **did not reduce lower back pain** but did improve endurance in muscles that control forward and backward movement. Many therapists recommend that we vary posture during the day; this could mean switching between a traditional chair, stability ball, backless stool and standing.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/stability-ball-balance-core-calories/2020/09/29/0b485c74-feb4-11ea-9ceb-061d646d9c67_story.html



source: <http://azchiroortho.blogspot.com/>

- An inexpensive **paint-on dental treatment** that lets **cavities be treated without drilling** is rapidly gaining momentum nationwide as the cavity treatment of choice for patients who can't easily get a filling, such as the very young or the very old. **Silver diamine fluoride** (SDF) has been used safely in other countries for decades but has a cosmetic downside in that it permanently turns the decayed area black. However, there are methods of covering the spot (at an extra cost). Another plus: dental hygienists can be trained to administer the treatment, which means more patients can receive the care onsite in nursing homes or in mobile clinics.

[Kaiser Health News](#)

<https://khn.org/news/new-dental-treatment-helps-fill-cavities-and-insurance-gaps-for-seniors/>

COVID-19 News

- **President Donald Trump** was released from Walter Reed Medical Hospital after receiving treatment with an experimental therapy, "REGN-CoV-2." While he credits the drug for the improvement in his health, doctors cannot discern, however, if the **Regeneron drug** is the reason. He has taken two other drugs (newly authorized remdesivir and the steroid [dexamethasone](#)). In Phase 3 clinical trials, the drug is considered to be an "**antibody cocktail**" because it is a combination of two antibodies that target the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2. In a press release dated 9/29/2020, Regeneron said that its first results of testing on 275 patients demonstrate a greater decrease in viral load, reduction in symptoms, and hospital visits. Eli Lilly has also developed its own antibody treatment. Both companies are applying to the FDA for **Emergency Use Authorizations** (EUA) for their drugs.

["Pittsburgh doctor explains Regeron antibody cocktail given to President Trump"](#)

<https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2020/10/03/regeneron-antibody-cocktail-president-donald-trump/>

Complete list of covid-19 drugs in development maintained by Regulatory Affairs Professional Society (RAPS):

<https://www.raps.org/news-and-articles/news-articles/2020/3/covid-19-therapeutics-tracker>

- Two separate studies reported by the AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) have found that **antibodies remain in both blood and saliva** in hundreds of patients with COVID-19 for at least 3 months after symptom onset.

[Eureka Alert](#)

https://www.eurekaalert.org/pub_releases/2020-10/aaft-sdl100820.php

- The FDA, CDC, NIH, and other authoritative organizations have enormous amounts of COVID-19 information; use our newly updated "**Patient Guide to Coronavirus Websites**" to land quickly on the page or dashboard that answers your questions about tests, prevention, cases, and studies. For example: find a list of all COVID-19 vaccines in development; find a list of all COVID-19 drugs in development; find electron microscope images of the coronavirus; find test positivity trends in your region; find caseloads by country; find travel status situations throughout the world, and more.

[Directory of Coronavirus Websites](#)

WHERE TO GO FOR COVID INFO
Learning about the virus
Staying safe: Preventing COVID-19
Testing Types and Where to Go
Current Drugs and Treatments for COVID-19
List of Vaccines and Drugs in Development
Where to find Medical and Scientific Publications
Statistics on Testing, Cases, Hospitalizations, Deaths
Volunteering: Vaccine Trials or Donating Blood
44 sources including: CDC (11), FDA (7), NIH (6), EPA (2), WHO (2), CM (2), Canada and EU (2), nonprofits and associations (8), investigative organizations (6). Last update: October 9, 2020
www.askapatient.com/news/patient-guide-coronavirus-websites.asp

Updated Covid-19 stats for Sunday, October 11, 2020

Globally: 37 million cases and over 1.07 million deaths. **United States totals:** 7.7 million cases and more than 214000 deaths. **India** has recorded over 6.98 million cases. **Brazil** has the third-highest number of cases globally with over 5.06 million cases.

Source: [Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Dashboard](#)

Ask a Patient Weekly Healthcare Newsletter: October 11, 2020

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The CDC reports that as of 2020 October 2, **124.2 million doses of flu vaccine have been administered in the U.S.** For the entire flu season in 2019-2020, 174.5 million doses were given. **Don't forget to get your flu shot this month!** Check out our [flu season information page](#), including flu vaccine descriptions. There are ten choices, but some have age restrictions and you will need to check with your drugstore or flu shot provider to find out which products they offer.

2020-2021 Flu Shot Options Amid Covid-19

2020-2021 Flu Vaccine Choices				
FLU VACCINE	AGE RANGE	TYPE	PRODUCTION METHOD	COMPANY
AFLURIA QUADRIVALENT*	6 months and up	shot**	egg-based	Seqirus
FLUAD QUADRIVALENT (adjuvanted)	65 and up	shot	egg-based	Seqirus
FLUAD TRIVALENT (adjuvanted)	65 and up	shot	egg-based	Seqirus
FLUARIX QUADRIVALENT*	6 months and up	shot	egg-based	Glaxo
FLUBLOK QUADRIVALENT	18 and up	shot	genetic recombining process	Sanofi
FLUCELVAX QUADRIVALENT*	4 and up	shot	cell-based	Seqirus
FLULAVAL QUADRIVALENT*	6 months and up	shot	egg-based	Glaxo
FLUMIST QUADRIVALENT	2 and 49	nasal spray	egg-based with live weakened vaccine	AstraZeneca
FLUZONE QUADRIVALENT (High Dose)	65 and up	shot	egg-based	Sanofi
FLUZONE QUADRIVALENT*	6 months and up	shot	egg-based	Sanofi

chart by AskAPatient.com, September 2020 from CDC, FDA Vaccine and DailyMed database
*Doses obtained from vials contain preservatives; prefilled syringes do not; **Afluria jet injector available for age 18 and up

Did you miss our article on the **new shingles vaccine**? It is posted on the web site: "[Shingrix: the New Vaccine for Shingles: Frequent Side Effects but Highly Effective](#)"

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