

Ask a Patient Health News August 21 2022

Health News: August 21, 2022

- AstraZeneca and Daiichi Sankyo's cancer drug **Enhertu** received accelerated approval for two new indications. Originally approved in 2019 for treating **advancedHER-2 positive breast cancer**, now Enhertu may be used to treat some patients (HER2-low) with **advanced HER2-negative** breast cancer. About 60% of HER2-negative cancers also have some HER2 proteins and are known as "**HER2-low**." Enhertu also was approved as a treatment for advanced cases of HER2-positive **non-small cell lung cancer** (NSCLC). According to the [American Cancer Society](#), only a small number of NSCLC cases will have these changes in the HER-2 gene. In 2021, Enhertu was approved to treat HER-2 positive cases of **gastric cancer**.

<https://medcitynews.com/2022/08/astrazeneca-daiichi-drug-wins-another-fda-approval-this-time-in-lung-cancer/>

- Results of a study at Bichat-Claude Bernard Hospital in Paris suggest that it is possible that **asymptomatic monkeypox** infections are contributing to the **worldwide outbreak**. French researchers detected monkeypox virus in anal samples collected for routine STI testing from asymptomatic men who have sex with men. The study was published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

<https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectiousdisease/generalinfectiousdisease/100248>

- Total confirmed U.S. monkeypox cases as of August 18, 2022: 14,115, which represents a **doubling** of cases in the last two weeks. **Global case count**: 41,000 cases (27,000 two weeks ago). The U.S. has the most cases, followed by Spain, Brazil, Germany, and the U.K.

Check maps for case counts by state or country:

[U.S. Map](#) with case counts by state

[World Map](#) with case count by country

- Barbara Robinson was just trying to help her mother's friend sign up for Medicaid and move into the Monroe County nursing home in Rochester, New York. But because Robinson **signed the admissions form**, the nursing home considered her **financially responsible** for the woman's care. After the woman died, the county sued Robinson for \$21,000 in unpaid bills. Consumer attorneys in California, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio told Kaiser Health News (KHN) they regularly see such lawsuits against family and friends.

<https://khn.org/news/article/watch-how-nursing-homes-put-friends-and-families-on-the-hook-for-residents-debts/>

- A Stockholm University study concludes that **rainwater** in every part of the world is contaminated with unhealthy levels of "forever chemicals" or **PFAS**. CNET's contributing editor Eric Mack investigates whether his **rain catchment system**, part of the off-grid home his family moved into in April 2020, provides water that is actually **safe to drink**. He says that rainwater falls onto his roof in New Mexico, runs through a series of gutters, hoses, screens, filters, tanks, pumps and other plumbing before coming out of a handful of kitchen or bathroom spigots in the house.

<https://www.cnet.com/science/ive-been-drinking-rainwater-the-past-2-years-is-it-time-to-stop/>



Hearing Health

- After years of legislation and support from both the Trump and Biden administrations, the FDA has finally approved a rule that will allow **hearing aids** for people age 18 and over with mild to moderate hearing loss to be sold **without a prescription**. Such devices may be on the market by October, and will likely bring many new competitors to the table, resulting in dramatically lower prices for consumers. Hearing aids are different from **personal sound amplification products** (PSAPs), which are regulated as consumer electronics and are used to amplify sounds in certain environments (like bird watching) and have long been available online and in stores without a prescription.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/news/help-is-on-the-way-fda-finalizes-rule-that-should-usher-in-cheaper-hearing-aids/>

FDA [Press Release](#)

- Approximately 15% of American adults (37.5 million) age 18 and over report some trouble hearing. However, only about one-fifth of people who could benefit from a hearing aid use one. A person with **mild hearing loss** may hear some speech sounds but not others, especially in noisy surroundings. A person with **moderate hearing loss** may sometimes hear almost no speech when someone is talking at a normal level.

- Explore how well you hear and experience what it's like to have different kinds of hearing loss at **hear-it.org**, a non-commercial site that was established to **increase public awareness of hearing loss**. Try to identify series of spoken numbers that have various levels of sound interference on 12 different tracks and then get your score. You can also listen to classical or rock music sound clips that demonstrate what conductive hearing loss, sensorineural, and tinnitus sound like. These sound files have been provided by the Danish Information Center for Hearing Impairment and Deafness, Delta Akustik and Vibration. No sign-up is required to use these tools.

<https://www.hear-it.org/Online-Hearing-Test#main-content>

<https://www.hear-it.org/Impressions-of-hearing-loss-and-Tinnitus-#hearing-loss.>



- A new commercial by American rapper **Fat Joe** is calling out the **hospital industry** for not posting lists of prices for services. Since January 2021, a federal law requires that U.S. hospitals post publicly (online) the prices they charge for cash-paying patients as well as the insurance company negotiated rates charged for various insurance coverage. “Nobody’s enforcing that law,” Joe alleges in the foreboding commercial, which began running on television and social media in April and is still airing. The ad, paid for by consumer advocacy group **Patients for Power**, reflects a desire for accountability as policymakers increasingly view price transparency as a tool to bring down health care costs. Kaiser Health News investigates whether anyone is enforcing the law.

<https://khn.org/news/article/rapper-fat-joe-hospitals-price-transparency-fact-check/>

- Opioid drug maker **Endo** International and its lenders reached a settlement agreement that could provide a total of up to \$450 million to 36 participating states. Dublin-based Endo recently filed for chapter 11 protection in New York as lawsuits continue. Endo was accused of boosting sales of its **narcotic painkiller Opana ER** using “deceptive marketing,” which downplayed the risk of addiction and overstated the benefits.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/companies/endo-36-states-agree-to-new-24450m-opioid-settlement/ar-AA10OCDS>

- Opioid pain killers are prescribed far more sparingly than they were even a few years ago. Some patients' frustration with alternative meds like gabapentin for chronic pain relief have caused some doctors to instead prescribe low doses of an addiction

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treatment drug called **naltrexone**. At a **low dose**, naltrexone may ease the pain and inflammation associated with conditions such as fibromyalgia, chronic pain syndrome, MS and Crohn's disease, with minimal side effects, according to People's Pharmacy's Joe Graedon. <https://www.peoplespharmacy.com/articles/low-dose-naltrexone-ldn-provides-surprising-pain-relief>

2022 - 2023 Flu Season

The 2022- 2023 flu season is already here. Officially, each flu season begins August 1 and ends on July 31 of the next year. The CDC recommends getting your flu vaccine starting in **September**. Vaccine choices will be the same as last season. Two high-strength vaccines for seniors over 65, an egg-free variety called **Flucelvax** for age 6 months and up, an egg-free "recombinant" vaccine called **Flublok** for age 18 and up, and nasal mist **FluMist** will be available, along with **traditional quadrivalent vaccines**.

Chart by Ask a Patient using updated vaccines list from

[U.S. CMS](#)

Influenza Vaccine patient reviews

<https://www.askapatient.com/comparedrugs.asp?class=INFLUENZA+VACCINES>

Vaccines Approved for 2022-2023 Flu Season	
Vaccine (age)	Company
AFLURIA (6 months and up)	Seqirus
FLUAD (adjuvanted; 65 and up)	Seqirus
FLUARIX (6 months and up)	GlaxoSmithKline
FLUBLOK (egg free; 18 and up)	Sanofi
FLUCELVAX (egg free; 4 and up)	Seqirus
FLULAVAL (6 months and up)	GlaxoSmithKline
FLUMIST (Intranasal; 2-49)	Medimmune
FLUZONE HIGH DOSE (65 and up)	Sanofi
FLUZONE (6 months and up)	Sanofi

Covid-19 News and Stats

- White House Covid Response Coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha announced that **Covid booster shots** targeting the omicron's **BA.5 subvariant** could soon be available for those age 12 and up in as little as three weeks. However, National Public Radio's Rob Stein reports that the U.S. FDA is using a **controversial strategy** to evaluate these **fast-tracked boosters**. For the first time, the FDA is planning to base its decision about whether to authorize new boosters on studies involving **mice instead of humans**. "For the FDA to rely on mouse data is just bizarre, in my opinion," says John Moore, an immunologist at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York.

<https://www.tpr.org/2022-08-18/whats-behind-the-fdas-controversial-strategy-for-evaluating-new-covid-boosters>

Dr. Jha announcement: [CNBC](#)

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<https://www.askapatient.com/news/newsletter-archive/>

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As of August 18, 2022, about one-third of counties in the U.S. have a high COVID-19 Community Level (a decrease of about 6% compared with the previous week), while 41% have a medium Community Level, and 25% counties have a low Community Level.

Currently, most of the country is reporting **moderate to high** SARS-CoV-2 levels in **wastewater**. About half of sites reporting wastewater data are currently seeing some of the highest levels for those sites since December 1, 2021.

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

The highly contagious "BA.5" Omicron variant now accounts for about 90% of virus transmission in the U.S.

Chart showing how variants have changed recently:

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#variant-proportions>

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Next issue: a look at how new drug pricing legislation may help consumers; pros and cons of different kinds of probiotics; nicotine-infused products; drug safety labeling updates for a popular antidepressant and hair loss drug; health research news.

In case you missed the last newsletter,

check out monkeypox updates; reports of health data company gathering patients' credit information; CBD and epilepsy; new ultrasound invention; how hospices are changing; and Amazon in healthcare. Click [August 7 Newsletter](#) to view.