

## Ask a Patient Health News February 21 2023

### Health News: February 21, 2023



Image of recalled infant formula product. Source: FDA

- A catastrophic **7.9 magnitude earthquake** on February 6 and its aftershocks (including a 6.4 aftershock February 20), caused thousands of buildings to collapse in **Turkey** and **Syria**, killed more than 43,000 people, injured more than 100,000, and left millions more homeless. Medical relief organization **Doctors Without Borders** (Médecins Sans Frontières) was able to quickly mobilize medical aid in Syria as 500 staff were already in the country tending to civil war refugees. Lack of access to rebel-controlled areas of northern Syria in the war-torn country have hindered relief efforts, but more access has recently opened up. The **Turkish Red Crescent** and **Syrian Arab Red Crescent** (affiliates of American Red Cross) have deployed volunteers with stocks of food and basic aid items to support those injured and evacuated. *USA Today* compiled a list of organizations that are directly providing help to the disaster regions along with links where the public can donate to **support the relief efforts**.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2023/02/06/turkey-syria-earthquake-how-to-help-donate/11196567002>

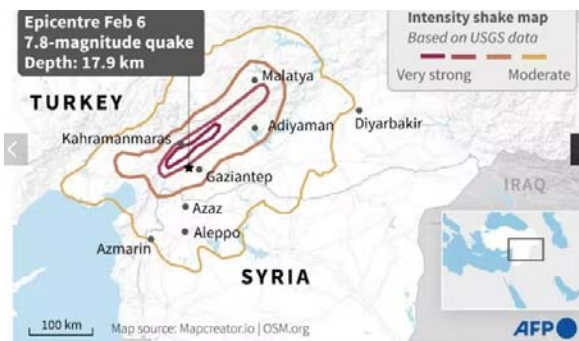


Image Source: Agence France Presse

- After a 50-car train derailment caused a **chemical leak and fire** in **East Palestine, Ohio** on February 3, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sent a team to the town and disaster site to **assess the public health needs**. Residents who rely on well water have been told to drink bottled water for now, while municipal water has been deemed to be safe to drink. Many residents say they are experiencing respiratory issues, sore throats, irritated eyes, headaches, and other ailments due to fumes released after the derailment. Some residents of East Palestine have filed class action lawsuits alleging that the actions such as the "slow burn" of the chemicals to mitigate a potential explosion have instead worsened the situation.

<https://abc7ny.com/train-derailment-ohio-video-east-palestine-chemical/12834075/>

2

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- A coalition of public health advocacy groups, including Public Citizen, filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) and its Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM), challenging their refusal to phase out **unnecessary use of antibiotics in animal agriculture**. Approximately two-thirds of medically important antibiotics sold in the U.S. are for use in food-producing animals, and are often administered to healthy animals en masse to compensate for the higher risk of infections typically caused by cramped, unsanitary or stressful conditions.

<https://www.citizen.org/news/fda-can-curtail-antibiotic-crisis-by-ending-misuse-in-livestock-animals-say-health-advocate-groups-in-new-lawsuit/>

- The use of antibiotics in animal farming — a major contributor to **antimicrobial resistance** — is expected to grow by 8% between 2020 and 2030 despite ongoing efforts to curtail their use, according to an analysis.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00284-x>

- AquaBounty announced that it will stop farming its **genetically engineered Atlantic salmon** in its Canadian Prince Edward Island (PEI) facility. Instead, its PEI facility will be used only for production of eggs (both genetically engineered and non-GMO) and broodstock, which are adult fish used for breeding. The company says that its transgenic salmon eggs produced for its farms in the United States are female and sterile. The AquaBounty salmon grows to adult size twice as fast as regular Atlantic farmed salmon because it has been genetically engineered with a "growth" gene from the Chinook salmon. Its [approval by the U.S. FDA](#) in 2015 has been controversial because of worries about its safety and potential to cause permanent changes in salmon species if it ever cross-breeds with regular farmed or wild salmon. AquaBounty has a land-based "aqua farming" facility in **Albany, Indiana** and another that is expected to open in late 2023 in **Pioneer, Ohio**. The farmed fish are sold in Canada and the U.S. to food wholesalers, including restaurant suppliers.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/life/health/2023/02/07/gm-salmon-opponents-herald-end-of-large-scale-production-of-adult-fish-on-p-e-i>



Photo shows 18-month old non-GMO farmed Atlantic salmon (bottom) and 18-month old AquaBounty genetically engineered salmon (top). A non-GMO salmon takes 36 months to grow to full size.

Image source: AquaBounty.com

- Researchers at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus found that nearly half of Medicare patients with **non-small cell lung cancer** (NSCLC) were not staged according to national guidelines prior to receiving radiation therapy. The retrospective study was based on 5,000 patients with NSCLC in the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER)-Medicare linked database. Significant improvement in overall and cancer-specific survival rates was found in patients who had **FDG PET/CT imaging**—which is recommended by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN)—compared to those who underwent **CT imaging alone**. The study was published in *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*.

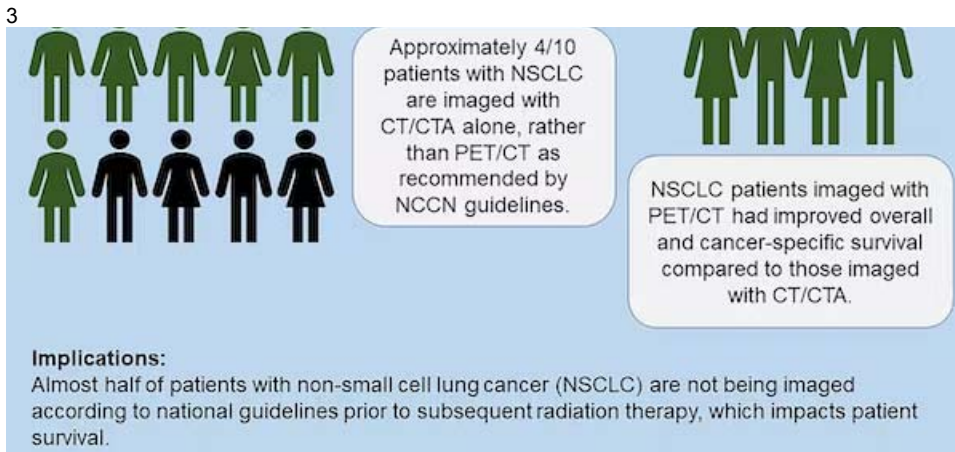
<https://www.snmmi.org/NewsPublications/NewsDetail.aspx?ItemNumber=43163>



2

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

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Infographic Source: [SNMML.org](https://www.snmml.org)

- The number of young children accidentally **ingesting marijuana** is rising in Colorado despite regulations meant to keep edibles out of kids' hands. State leaders said they have no plans to revisit those rules this year. Since legalized recreational marijuana sales began in **2014**, Colorado has implemented a handful of directives to stop children from mistaking these products for treats. With more states now allowing recreational cannabis, cases of illness caused by accidental ingestion will continue to grow.

<https://khn.org/news/article/more-young-colorado-children-are-consuming-marijuana-despite-efforts-to-stop-them/>

- While Covid-19 cases were skyrocketing, so were cases of **sepsis in hospitals**, according to California state data. Across the country, sepsis kills more people annually than breast cancer, HIV/AIDS and opioid overdoses combined, said Dr. Kedar Mate, president and chief executive of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. "Sepsis is a leading cause of death in hospitals. It's been true for a long time — and it's become even more true during the pandemic," Mate said.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-02-05/sepsis-california-hospitals-pandemic>

- **Pharmacy Benefit Managers'** (PBM) revenue has grown to the point that it exceeds the revenues of their parent organizations, according to a Wendell Potter, a former health insurance industry executive-turned industry critic and whistleblower. His review of 2022 company financials showed that the big three health insurance companies in the U.S. (United, Cigna, and CVS/Aetna) **derive 60% of their revenues from their Pharmacy Benefit Management (PBM) businesses, not from health insurance**. Together, their (PBM) businesses contributed \$492.3 billion, almost half a trillion dollars, to their total revenues during 2022. These three PBMs control 80% of the U.S. prescription drug benefit market. PBMs determine which drugs are covered and how much Americans with insurance have to pay out of their own pockets.

<https://wendellpotter.substack.com/p/unitedhealth-cvsaetna-cigna-pulled>

- Community Health Systems (CHS), one of the largest healthcare providers in the United States with almost 80 hospitals in 16 states, said that criminal hackers accessed the personal and protected health information of up to 1 million patients. The Tennessee-based healthcare giant said that the **data breach** stems from its use of a popular file-transfer software called **GoAnywhere MFT**, developed by Fortra (previously known as HelpSystems).

<https://techcrunch.com/2023/02/15/clop-ransomware-community-health-systems/>

Consumers may check this database of large U.S. health care breaches that have been reported.

[https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/breach/breach\\_report.jsf](https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/breach/breach_report.jsf)

- As the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) points out in its explanation about [medical privacy issues](#), the U.S. **HIPAA** (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) is not really a **privacy law**, it's a **disclosure regulation law**, and it doesn't apply to many entities who may receive your medical information. This includes many apps on your cell phone, wearable devices, and even genetic testing services. A recent Duke University study found that personal health information is readily for sale by data brokers. The research, conducted over two months at Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy, which studies the ecosystem of companies buying and selling personal data, consisted of asking 37 data brokers for bulk data

4

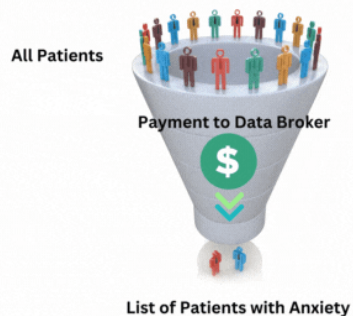
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on people who have certain mental health conditions. **Eleven of the companies had vast data troves of such information they were willing to sell**, sometimes for as little as \$275 for information on 5,000 people. Vermont and California are the only states in the U.S. that require data brokers to register if they do business in the state. California has more than 440 registered data brokers on its list.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/security/researcher-tried-buy-mental-health-data-was-surprisingly-easy-rcna70071>

The report: <https://techpolicy.sanford.duke.edu/data-brokers-and-the-sale-of-americans-mental-health-data/>

## Consumer Health Data for Sale



Infographic by Ask a Patient

## Covid-19 News and Stats

President Joe Biden announced that he will end the U.S. Covid-19 public health emergency on **May 11, 2023**. After facing criticism about plans to charge over \$100 per vaccine dose, **Moderna** announced that it would continue to provide free vaccines to those without insurance even after the public health emergency (and subsidies) end. **Pfizer** may raise prices on its Covid vaccine to as much as \$130 per dose, though insurers and government health programs could negotiate lower rates

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/moderna-covid-vaccine-remain-free-consumers-uninsured/story?id=97226324>

The FDA is encouraging people to voluntarily and anonymously report their positive or negative at-home Covid-19 test results at **MakeMyTestCount.org**. The FDA says that data from the reporting can help public health departments know how fast the virus is spreading. More than 25,000 people (the majority of them women) so far have reported covid test results on the website, with 3/4 reporting positive test results. **Test Result** (positive or negative), **Age**, and **Zip code** are the only required items, while sex and ethnicity are optional survey items.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/24k-people-reported-covid-test-results-new-nih/story?id=96266401>

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4

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