

Ask a Patient Health News May 15 2022

Health News: May 15, 2022

Examples of Products



- Psychology instructor Richard Sears wrote about the *Psychological Medicine* study and the subjective phenomenon of "**emotional blunting**" associated with SSRI antidepressants.

<https://www.madinamerica.com/2022/04/patient-reports-reveal-ssri-antidepressants-often-lead-emotional-blunting/>

- Researchers at University of Colorado and University of Saskatchewan are studying how "patient influencers" are affecting health care and causing consumer misinformation. **Patient influencers** produce videos, provide advice, and even recruit clinical trials participants in exchange for payment from the pharmaceutical industry. Questions raised include: Are the Ethical Issues the Same for Influencer Marketing as Traditional Direct-to-Consumer Advertising Channels? Who Is Responsible for Harm Caused in These Forums of Misinformation? The research was published in *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.

<https://www.jmir.org/2022/3/e29422/>

- While patient stories and patient perspective can be important, do consumers always know that the perspectives being highlighted are the ones that back marketing goals? Wego Health, whose business model centers around pharma-sponsored patient influencers, offers their perspective in this *HealthDay News* article. **PharmedOut**, a non-profit concerned with pharmaceutical marketing's oversized influence on healthcare, offers a different perspective.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-04-15/who-are-the-new-patient-influencers-on-social-media>

Note: Ask a Patient website's [terms of use](#) prohibit submission of reviews by those employed or connected to a pharmaceutical-related organization that would influence a posting in any way.

- RaDonda Vaught, a former Vanderbilt Medical Center nurse convicted of **criminally negligent homicide** because of a **medication error** resulting in the 2017 death of a hospital patient, avoided jail time but was sentenced to probation for 3 years. However, many in the health care community think she should never have received a criminal charge in the first place, and that Vaught's prosecution was a smokescreen that distracted from her employer's inadequate safety systems.

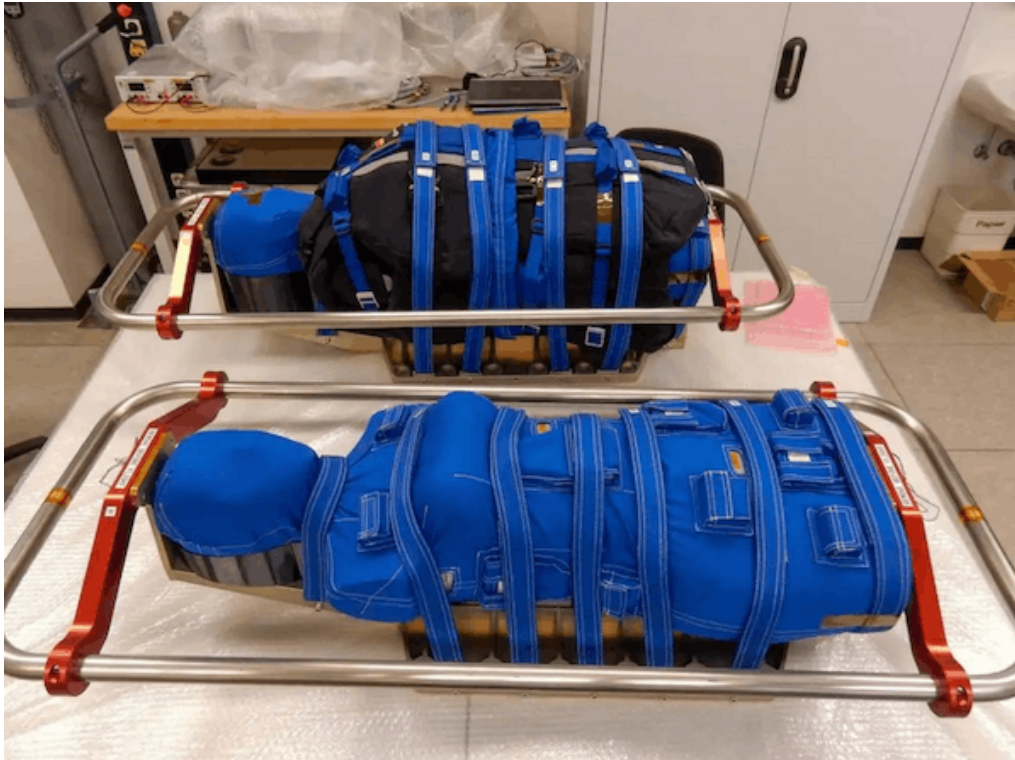
Patient safety experts are concerned that punishment for medical errors — as in Vaught's case — will lead to reduced error reporting by other nurses due to fear of being fired, or fear of prosecution. Hundreds of nurses showed up in Nashville for the sentencing in support of Vaught.

<https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2022/5/13/23066994/radonda-vaught-sentence-medication-error-patient-safety-lawsuit-vanderbilt-probation>

In our next newsletter: a look at how medications are dispensed in hospitals.

- Helga and Zohar, an inanimate pair of mannequin "torsos," are headed for a trip around the moon on Artemis 1, an mission to measure **radiation risks for female astronauts**. The mannequins are made from materials that mimic the bones, soft tissues, and organs of an adult woman, all of which will be tracked by more than 10,000 passive sensors and 34 active radiation detectors. Helga will fly to the Moon unprotected while the other mannequin, Zohar, will wear a radiation protection vest called the AstroRad. A third mannequin will collect data about flight accelerations and vibrations. NASA's Artemis 1 is scheduled to blast off later this year.

<https://gizmodo.com/nasa-is-sending-artificial-female-bodies-to-the-moon-to-1848861579>



Mannequins to be sent into space. Image Source: gizmodo.com

Research Studies

- In the search for eternal youth, fecal transplants may seem like an unlikely way to reverse the aging process. But University of East Anglia researchers were able to **reverse** the hallmarks of aging in the gut, eyes, and brain by transplanting **fecal microbiota from young into old mice**, essentially changing the gut microbiota. In the reverse experiment, microbes moved from old mice induced inflammation in the brain of young recipients and depleted a key protein required for normal vision. These findings show that gut microbes play a role in the regulating some of the detrimental effects of aging and open up the possibility of gut microbe-based therapies to combat decline in later life. The results were published in *Microbiome*.

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/news/-/article/faecal-transplants-reverse-hallmarks-of-ageing>

- Normal recovery from a painful injury involves inflammation – the body's natural reaction to injury and infection. A small study from McGill University suggests that inflammation may actually have a protective effect, such as preventing acute pain from becoming chronic, and that overly-reducing it may be harmful.

To understand the transition from **acute to chronic lower-back pain**, researchers followed 98 patients with acute lower-back pain for three months. They also examined the mechanisms of pain in both humans and mice, and found

that neutrophils – a type of white blood cell that helps the body fight infection – play a key role in resolving pain.

Blocking these cells in mice prolonged the pain for up to 10 times the normal duration. Treatment with anti-inflammatory drugs and steroids such as dexamethasone and diclofenac also produced the same result, although they were effective against pain early on. The study was published in *Science Translational Medicine*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/11/short-term-use-of-ibuprofen-may-increase-chance-of-chronic-pain-study-suggests>

- Researchers at Sheffield University are studying a potential cancer treatment using a common virus paired with soil bacteria that have the ability to "manufacture" magnets which are used to align themselves in the Earth's magnetic field. "The essence of this approach is straightforward: we are using **bugs as drugs**," said Dr. Munitta Muthana, one of the project's leaders. The anti-cancer viruses are known as **oncolytic viruses**. They occur naturally but can also be modified to improve their efficacy and to limit the chances of them infecting healthy cells; After infection with an oncolytic virus, a cancer cell will burst open and die. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has already approved the use of T-Vec, a modified herpes simplex virus that infects and kills tumour cells and is now being used to treat people with certain types of melanoma, a skin cancer.

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/may/08/magnets-made-by-soil-bacteria-offer-hope-for-breast-and-prostate-cancer>

- Researchers at Washington University School of Medicine found that women who have recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) may be caught in a vicious cycle in which **antibiotics** given to eradicate one infection predispose them to develop another infection. The women with recurrent UTIs in the study had **less diverse microbiomes** that were deficient in an important group of bacteria that helps regulate inflammation. They also had a distinct immunological signature in their blood indicative of inflammation.

The lead co-author said that often physicians will emphasize the importance of good hygiene for infection prevention, when instead the recurrences are often due to the disease's connection between the gut, bladder and levels of inflammation. The study was published in *Nature Microbiology*.

<https://medicine.wustl.edu/news/recurrent-utis-linked-to-gut-microbiome-chronic-inflammation/>

Covid-19 News

- An ABC News investigation into **vaccine inventory and disposal** practices in all 50 states found that millions of COVID-19 vaccine doses in the U.S. have either gone to waste, remain unused, or will expire in the coming weeks and months. It also highlights the country's challenged logistical platforms. John Brownstein, epidemiologist at Boston Children's Hospital said "Once a vaccine ends up at a site, it is administered or thrown out. There is usually no third option of sending it to another site and even lower chance it could go to another state let alone another country."

In California, nearly 3.6 million shots are sitting in the state's stockpile, according to state data. In North Carolina, 856,000 shots are currently available under state inventory, while 1.7 million shots have been wasted after the doses expired or were improperly opened.

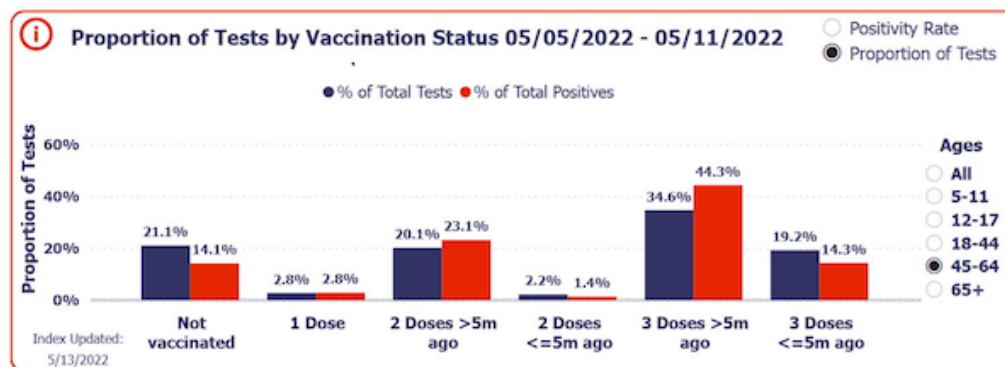
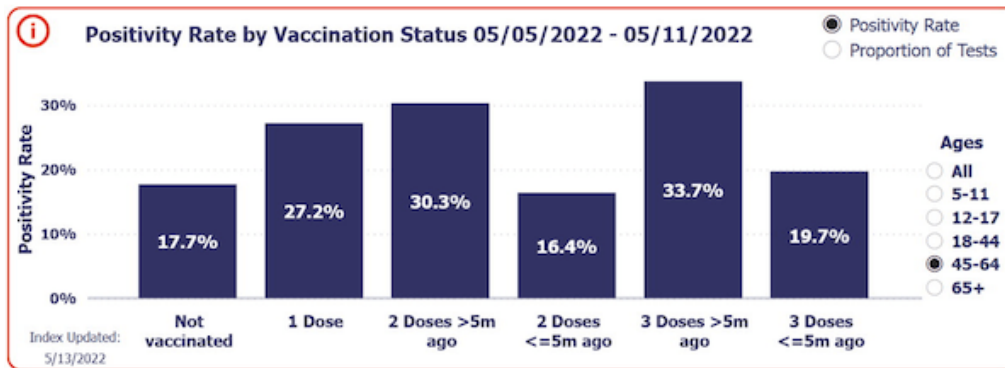
<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/millions-covid-19-shots-set-waste-vaccine-rollout/story?id=84111412>

- Some infectious disease experts are concerned about the mounting pressure to move to a system of **annual Covid boosters**. They say there is **insufficient data** to back up the practice. Antibody data alone is not enough to design better vaccines or identify when and how often to boost, according to a member of FDA's vaccine advisory panel. "We're making decisions based on very short-term data," she said. "The more that we do that, the more that we get in a cycle of doing that because the more we can't learn. Those decisions make it tough to wait and see if there are better options." Stat's Helen Branswell interviewed concerned experts.

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/04/26/experts-fear-us-may-default-to-annual-covid-boosters-without-sufficient-data/>

Curious Covid Data from Walgreens

- These charts from Walgreen's Covid-19 dashboard **surprisingly** indicate that for the week ending May 11, 2022, unvaccinated people had, across most categories, the lowest rate of positive cases for PCR tests conducted by Walgreens and their lab partner, Aegis. For the age group 65+, unvaccinated people had the lowest rate of positive cases. Also surprising is that the positive rates are so high across all groups.



Walgreens does not provide commentary or an explanation about the dashboard data for positivity based on vaccination status. Maybe those tested at Walgreens tended to be symptomatic while the 27 jurisdictions included on CDC charts include routine (asymptomatic) testing. An Aegis Science and Walgreens [press release](#) announces the dashboard launch in January 2022 and provides information on Omicron variants and states with highest case loads.

Walgreens' data is based on PCR test results from over 5,000 Walgreens testing sites throughout the U.S. and tests are processed by Aegis Labs. The CDC has not released test results data by vaccination status since March 19, 2022, so it is not possible to compare the current Walgreen's data with CDC data.

Click to view the Walgreen's [dashboard](#) and explore the variant data as well as positivity rates for other age groups.

<https://www.walgreens.com/businesssolutions/covid-19-index.jsp>

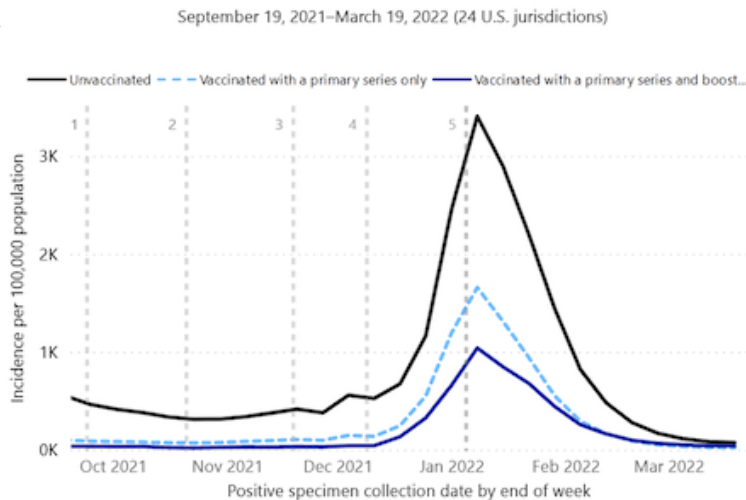
(Screen 3 of the 5-page dashboard)

In March, [CDC data](#) (see chart below, covering 24 jurisdictions) showed that those not vaccinated had higher rates of Covid cases than those not vaccinated, but the gaps in rates between the vaccinated and unvaccinated was narrowing, perhaps due to the presence of the Omicron variant, which might be more resistant to current vaccines and boosters.

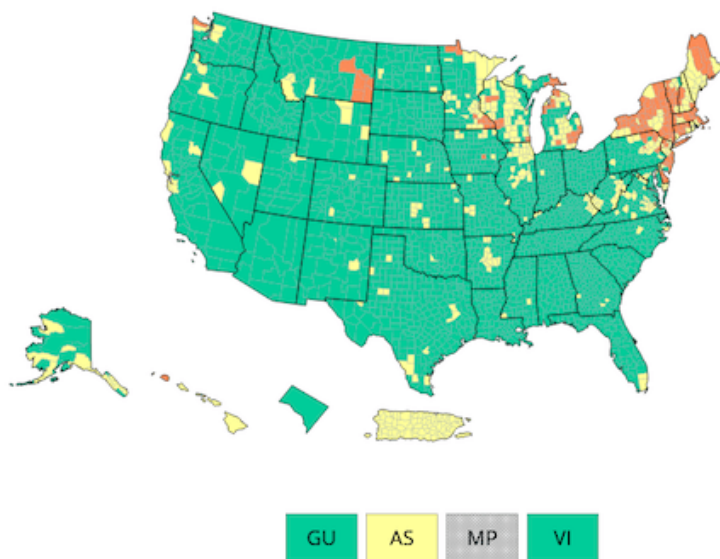
There is a much larger gap for deaths, however, between vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, highlighting the **importance of Covid-19 vaccines for reducing death and serious illness.**

Select Outcome

- Deaths
- Cases



The CDC reports that about 96% of communities in the U.S. are at a low or medium level of Covid-19 transmission. As of May 11, 2022, the 7-day moving average of daily new cases (84,778) increased 30.7% compared with the previous 7-day moving average (64,863), due to the highly contagious Omicron variant. The areas in orange on the map below depict an area of "high" transmission.



The CDC reports that the percentage of COVID-19 NAATs (nucleic acid amplification tests) that are positive increased compared to the previous week. The 7-day average of percent positivity from NAATs is now 9.1%. while last week it was 7.1%.

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

The World Health Organization reports that globally, the number of new COVID-19 cases and deaths has **continued to decline since the end of March 2022**. During the week of 2 through 8 May 2022, over 3.5 million cases and over 12 000 deaths were reported, decreases of 12% and 25% respectively, as compared to the previous week. However, an increase in the number of new weekly cases was reported from the Region of the Americas (+14%) and the African Region (+12%) and an increase in the number of weekly deaths was reported from the African Region (+84%).

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<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update-on-covid-19---11-may-2022>

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