

## Ask a Patient Health News October 30, 2022

### Health News: October 30, 2022

*Note: in March 2022, [Pfizer recalled](#) some lots of its Accuretic (brand name version of Quinapril and Hydrochlorothiazide) for the same reason: presence of nitrosamine.*

- **Unilever** is recalling many of its **dry shampoos** in the U.S. and Canada due to potential presence of **benzene**, a carcinogen. These include products produced prior to October 2021 from Dove, Nexxus, Suave, TITI, Bed Head, and TRESemme. **Propellant** has been identified as the source of the benzene.

#### [FDA Release](#)



- Advisers to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration voted 14-1 in favor of removing Covis Pharma's **Makena**, a **pre-term birth prevention drug**, from the market because of lack of evidence that the drug actually works to prevent pre-term births. The FDA had recommended withdrawal of Makena in 2020 but Covis asked for more time for clinical trials results. Makena was gained "**accelerated**" approval in 2011. Preterm births affect one in every ten babies born in the U.S. FDA Commissioner Robert Califf is expected to make a final decision on withdrawing the drug in the next several months.

<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/why-fda-panel-says-pregnancy-drug-makena-should-be-taken-off-market>

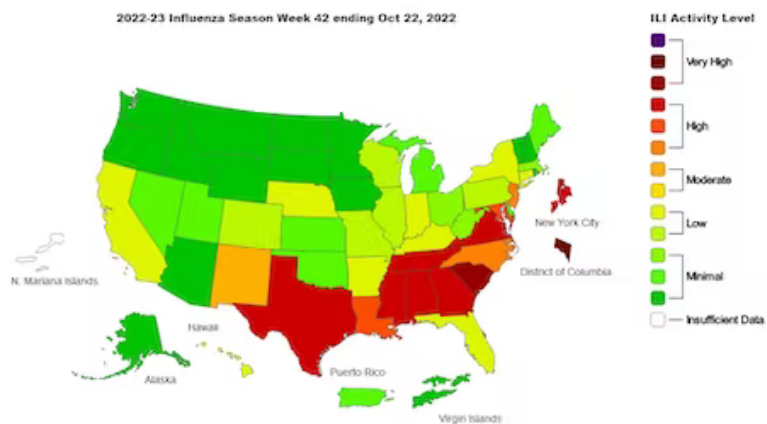
(Ask a Patient's [January 23, 2022 newsletter](#) featured examples and an explanation of FDA's controversial "[accelerated approval](#)" pathway for new drugs.)

- Babies and children, sheltered from common bugs during the pandemic lockdowns, are experiencing an increase in serious **RSV (respiratory syncytial virus)** infections, overwhelming some hospitals. Among U.S. children under age 5, RSV typically leads to 58,000 hospitalizations and up to 500 deaths in a year. Most children come down with RSV by age 2, with symptoms such as fever, cough, congestion, and runny nose.

<https://apnews.com/article/science-health-covid-pandemics-072e11e5e3af77aac19fe95773a69610>

- It is very early in the 2022-2023 flu season, but areas in the southeast and south-central areas of the country are reporting **high levels of flu activity** as of October 22. The CDC estimates, so far this season, there have been at least 880,000 flu illnesses, 6,900 hospitalizations, and 360 deaths from flu. Check out our roundup of **flu shot options** available this season

<https://www.askapatient.com/news/flu-vaccines-for-2022-2023-season.asp>



- Healthcare **privacy** concerns loom large, even at hospital websites' "secure" patient portals. **Aurora Health** and **Novant Health** recently notified millions patients of a data breach stemming from the use of **Meta's pixels** on hospital websites, including password-protected **patient portals**, which potentially led to the unauthorized disclosure of protected health information. Virginia senator **Mark Warner** wrote a letter of concern to **Meta (Facebook) CEO Mark Zuckerberg**, additionally noting that the Meta pixel has sent data from the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA). Warner requested a response from Meta by November 3.

<https://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/senator-questions-zuckerberg-over-metas-healthcare-data-collection-policies>

*(Tracking pixels can often be blocked by adjusting your internet **browser's** privacy settings or by adding a "browser extension" to block them. Internet browsers include Firefox, Safari, Edge, Chrome, and others.)*

- **Plastic recycling** is a "failed concept," according to the report called "Circular Claims Fall Flat Again" by environmental group **Greenpeace**. According to the report, only 5% of the 51 million tons of plastic waste generated by households were recycled in U.S. last year. Only two types of plastic out of the seven "recyclable" types are widely accepted at the nation's 375 material recovery facilities: polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is commonly used in water and soda bottles; and high density polyethylene (HDPE), seen in milk jugs, shampoo bottles and cleaning product containers. These are numbered "1" and "2" according to a standardized system in which there are seven plastic types. The problem has been exacerbated because of **increased production** of non-recycled plastic and because China **stopped accepting** the West's plastic waste in 2018.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/plastic-recycling-failed-concept-us-greenpeace-study-5-percent-recycled-production-up/>

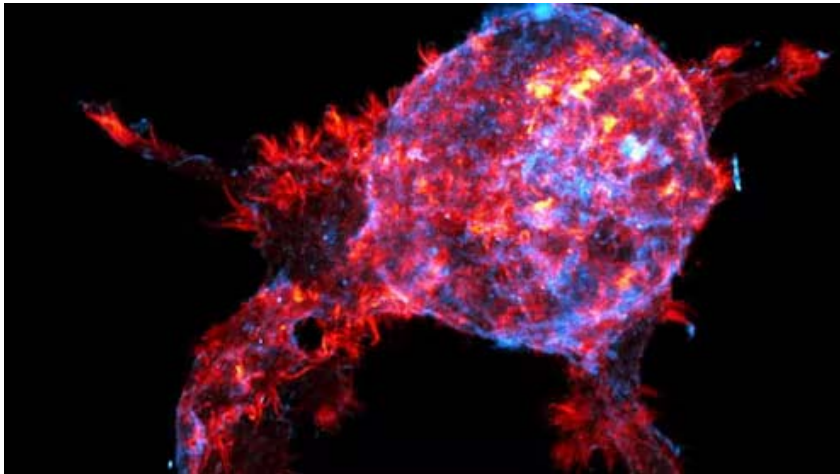
- Diagnosed with **epilepsy** when he was 28 in 2004, the Philadelphia business executive had adamantly rejected doctors' recommendations that he consider surgery to treat the frequent, uncontrolled seizures that were ravaging his brain. But when he abruptly lost consciousness on a family hike and fell head first down a rocky 15-foot embankment, he relented. A successful operation unmasked the very **unusual cause** of his seizures. Check out Sandra Boodman's latest **medical mystery**.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2022/10/15/seizures-fall-brain-surgery-relief/>

- Researchers at the University of Turku and Åbo Akademi University discovered that a cellular structure in early stage breast cancer actually helps "contain" the cancer instead of contributing to its spread. Cellular structures called **filopodia** are generated by a protein called Myosin-10 and help preserve the **basement membrane** surrounding the tumour, blocking their escape. "These results are very surprising as we previously thought that these cancer cells' **sticky**

**fingers** were only used to invade nearby tissues. Now we find that these structures can also help contain the tumour", says InFLAMES group leader Professor Johanna Ivaska, University of Turku. The findings were published in *Developmental Cell*.

<https://healthcare-in-europe.com/en/news/sticky-fingers-cells-breast-cancer.html>



"Breast cancer cells break through the basement membrane acting as a biological barrier. In the image, the finger-like projections formed by the actin of cancer cells invading the surrounding cell medium are coloured red and the basement membrane protein is coloured blue." Image source: Aleksu Isomursu, Turku Bioscience

- Adults aged 60 and older who sit for **long periods watching TV** or engaged in long periods of passive, sedentary behaviors may be at increased risk of developing **dementia**, even if they also engage in physical activity during their day, according to a study by University of Southern California and University of Arizona researchers. However, sitting while doing more brain-intensive activities like using a computer or reading did not have the increased risk. The study was published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

<https://news.usc.edu/201714/what-older-adults-do-while-they-sit-affects-dementia-risk/>

- Researchers with nonprofit policy research institute PSE Healthy Energy found that **gas stoves** often leak **benzene**, a commonly used chemical that has been linked to certain cancers, including leukemia, multiple myeloma and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. The amount emitted from some stoves was up to seven times California's recommended safe exposure limit. The study was small, and involved 185 individual samples of unburned gas from kitchen stoves across the state. The study was published in *Environmental Science & Technology*.

News release: <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/968499>

- Boston University (BU) virologists created and tested a **lab-made hybrid version** of the SARS-Cov2 virus that some experts find troubling, given that the **hybrid variant is more dangerous than currently circulating variants**. The university is pushing back against criticism of the study and said that it conducted the work safely using biosecurity level 3 precautions, and that the study was approved by both an internal biosafety review committee and Boston's Public Health Commission. Nevertheless, the **National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases** (NIAID), which partially funded the study, is not coming to BU's defense at the moment, saying that the original application did not specify this particular work and that they are looking into the communications.

In the study, researchers created a **chimeric** virus in which the spike protein of an **Omicron strain** of SARS-2 was fused to a virus of the **Wuhan-Hu-1 strain**, the original version that emerged from China in 2020. This hybrid virus was injected into mice, 80% of which died. The Omicron strain, however, didn't result in any deaths. The study, which was posted online but not yet peer-reviewed, concludes that mutations in the spike protein of the Omicron variant are

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responsible for the strain's ability to evade immunity people have built up via vaccination, infections, or both, but they are not responsible for the apparent decrease in severity of the Omicron viruses.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/boston-university-covid-experiments-nih-investigation/>

Biomedical Engineering Professor at Johns Hopkins University and *Forbes* contributor **Steven Salzberg** explains why he is troubled by the research:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevensalzberg/2022/10/24/gain-of-function-experiments-at-boston-university-create-a-deadly-new-covid-19-virus-who-thought-this-was-a-good-idea/>

### **Covid-19 Statistics**

- The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) reports that at least five European countries have detected the Omicron variant **BQ.1** and that modelling forecasts predict that BQ1 and its sub-lineage **BQ1.1** will become the dominant SARS-CoV2 strains in the EU/EEA by mid-November or early December. This will likely contribute to an increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in the coming weeks to months. Preliminary laboratory studies in Asia indicate that BQ.1 has the ability to considerably evade the immune system response, but there is no evidence so far of it being associated with increased infection severity compared to the circulating Omicron variants BA.4/BA.5.

<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/new-omicron-sub-lineage-likely-cause-further-increase-covid-19-cases>

- In the U.S., it is estimated that BQ1 and BQ.1.1 together account for 27% of Omicron circulating variants in the U.S. as of October 29, 2022. Just two weeks ago, these variants accounted for only about 5% of circulating Omicron variants in the U.S.

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

- As of October 28, 2022, the CDC reports that almost **76% of U.S. communities have a "low" Covid-19 "Community Level."** Only 2.3% of counties, districts, or territories have a high "**COVID-19 Community Level**," and 705 (21.9%) counties have a medium Community Level. These represent small increases in community levels compared with two weeks ago. Under the CDC's "**Community Transmission**" metric (now used only for health care settings), **levels are high or substantial in 61% of counties** in the U.S., down from 71% two weeks ago.

Check your city or county's **community level** here:

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>

Check your county's **transmission level** [here](#)

**Globally**, the World Health Organization reports the number of new weekly cases **decreased by 15%** during the week of 17 to 23 October 2022 as compared to the previous week, with over 2.6 million new cases reported.

<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update-on-covid-19---26-october-2022>

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