

Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

April 2022--3



From the Editor: As America unmasks and the DoJ appeals, this issue's article summaries include news on the drug abuse epidemic, measures being taken to improve quality and patient safety as well as preventing the next pandemic. To access the full article, just click on the headline.



[White House unveils national drug control strategy amid rising overdoses](#), by Peter Sullivan, The Hill, 4/21/22

TMR Topline – The CDC reported a record 106,000 deaths from drug overdoses in the 12 months ended November 2021. While many of the deaths are due to synthetic opioids like fentanyl, cocaine and meth also contribute to the increase. President Biden's budget calls for a \$3 billion increase for drug control efforts. The White House plan focuses on increased treatment for addiction while fighting drug trafficking. It calls for greater access to naloxone (Narcan) and boosting treatment for people at highest risk for overdoses. Legal settlements with opioid makers and drug distributors are providing new funding to states to be able to put toward fighting the epidemic.



[CMS leaders explain final plans to restrict Medicare coverage of new Alzheimer's drug](#), by Nick Hut, HFMA, 4/14/22

TMR Topline – CMS's recent [final coverage determination](#) for Aduhelm, the new Alzheimer's drug, will cover the administration of all such drugs in randomized controlled trials authorized by the FDA or National Institutes of Health. Given the mixed results of the trials that had led

to FDA approval last year and Biogen's initial pricing of \$56,000/year, a preponderance of providers and insurers had supported coverage restrictions.



2022 IPPS Proposed Rules by CMS

[5 ways CMS' proposed hospital rule could affect patient safety and quality](#), by Mari Devereaux, Modern Healthcare, 4/20/22

TMR Topline – The CMS is using its Inpatient Prospective Payment rule to begin to assess disparities in care quality and improve patient outcomes. The proposed rule encourages hospitals to adhere to reporting measures and document data in order to benefit underserved communities. Its focus on quality and patient safety includes

1. Address social determinants of health and establish a culture of equity.
2. Commit to improving maternal health.
3. More patient-reported outcome performance measures, specifically for joint replacement procedures.
4. Resume readmission measures but exclude Covid-19 diagnosed patients.
5. Prepare for the effects of climate change on operations as well as on Medicare beneficiaries and consumers.

TMR's Take – This isn't the first time that CMS has used Medicare to foster positive change. The 2008 addition of a "Present on Admission" indicator to identify hospital-acquired conditions was critical to the patient protection provisions of the ACA that resulted in improved quality.



[FDA grants emergency authorization for first Covid-19 breathalyzer test](#), by Jeanine Santucci, USA Today, 4/14/22

TMR Topline – The FDA has granted an emergency use authorization to a test produced by InspectIR Systems that collects a breath sample and analyzes for chemical compounds associated with the coronavirus. In a study of 2,409 people, the test correctly identified a positive Covid infection in 91.2% of cases and

correctly identified negative samples 99.3% of the time. The FDA said a positive Covid-19 breathalyzer result also should be confirmed with a molecular test.



[Justice Dept. to appeal order voiding travel mask mandate](#), Associated Press, 4/21/22

TMR Topline - A federal judge in Florida struck down the national mask mandate for mass transit on 4/18, and airlines and airports quickly allowed passengers to go mask-free. At the CDC's request, the Justice Department is appealing the ruling. The CDC is assessing whether "an order requiring masking in the indoor transportation corridor remains necessary for the public health."

TMR's Take - As pandemic evolves to endemic, the CDC needs to be more granular in its masking recommendations. Continued masking may be the prudent course in a crowded subway car, but less needed in other congregate settings.



[CDC launches new forecasting center for infectious diseases](#), Associated Press, 4/19/22

TMR Topline - The CDC's new Center for Forecasting and Outbreak Analytics aims to become the National Weather Service for infectious diseases. That will require overcoming the data collection problems that hampered the CDC response to Covid-19 and starting regular population sampling with swab tests as well as blood draws to get a clearer picture of who's been infected. Currently, the CDC relies on voluntary reporting and complex data agreements with states.



[Efforts to make protective medical gear in U.S. falling flat](#), Associated Press, 4/11/22

TMR Topline - At the outset of the pandemic, the U.S. was highly dependent on foreign countries for disposable personal protective equipment (PPE). China limited exports due to its own need for these products as Covid-19 spread among its population and U.S. stockpiles plummeted. Prices skyrocketed as states, the federal government and providers [competed for supplies](#). In 2020 as Covid-19 patient admissions were stressing

hospitals, elected officials [touted the need to boost U.S. production](#) of protective gear.

Many domestic manufacturers received grants and were motivated to meet this need, but have faced logistical hurdles, regulatory rejections, slumping demand and fierce competition from foreign suppliers. After the initial scramble for PPE subsided, many industry newcomers who had pivoted to produce PPE had difficulty selling products and have abandoned this effort. *"If the federal government doesn't come in and help support the U.S. manufacturing base, it's almost certainly going to go back to China, and we'll be just as vulnerable as we were in early 2020 and 2019,"* said Brent Dillie, Chairman of the newly formed American Mask Manufacturers Association.

[With UV Light, N95 Masks Can Be Cleaned and Reused Safely](#)

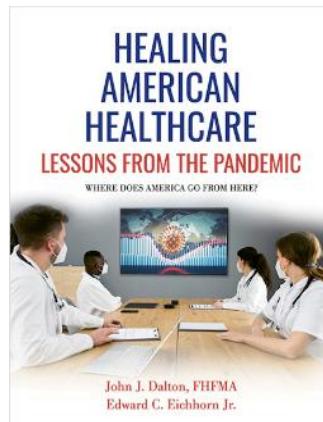


[N95 Respirators Prove Effectively Disinfected With Ultraviolet Radiation](#), by Tori L. Whitacre, Infection Control Today, 4/12/22

TMR Topline - A study published in the [Journal of Research of the National Institute of Standards and Technology](#) has demonstrated that N95 face filtering respirators (FFRs) can be disinfected with little impact on their form or function. Given the increased demand for N95 FFRs, using UV-C radiation for disinfection and reuse is an important breakthrough.

TMR's Take - It's a mixed bag – positive news on expanding N95 mask supply and forecasting future pandemics but discouraging news for U.S. businesses that leaped into the breach when China held back PPE supplies.

"Healing American Healthcare: Lessons from the Pandemic" draws seven important lessons from



America's Covid-19 pandemic experience. They include reducing reliance on low-cost foreign producers of vital equipment and supplies and not allowing politics to trump public health. It is available in both softcover and eBook versions. Click [here](#) to order the book at a discounted rate for TMR readers.