

Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

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From the Editor: Americans gathered in smaller than usual groups for a pandemic Thanksgiving gave thanks for a light at the end of the tunnel: three vaccines have completed Phase 3 clinical trials with a high degree of effectiveness. The next three months will be challenging, but scientists are cautiously optimistic for a return to near normal by mid-Spring. The articles summarized in this issue of **TMR** highlight the status of vaccine development and what life might be like with the coronavirus under control. To access each article, click on the headline.



[Moderna, Pfizer Shots Look Strong. Here's How They Stack Up](#), by James Paton, Bloomberg 11/16/20

TMR Topline™ -The encouraging late-stage

trial results from [Pfizer and Moderna](#) have set a high bar for rival vaccines soon to follow.

How do the results compare? Moderna's vaccine was 94.5% effective in a preliminary analysis, slightly higher than the 90% reported earlier by Pfizer and its partner, [BioNTech SE](#). Both use [messenger RNA](#) technology that instructs cells to make copies of the coronavirus spike protein stimulating the creation of protective antibodies.

What are the storage and distribution challenges?

Pfizer's vaccine requires deep freeze storage but can be kept at refrigerator temperatures for as much as five

days. Moderna's vaccine is stable at refrigerator temperatures for 30 days.

When could they be ready to deploy? Both companies are expected to seek emergency-use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

What are the big questions that remain? It's unclear how long protection will last or how many will refuse to be vaccinated. Ramping up production and distributing the doses also pose challenges.

TMR's Take – On 11/23, [Astra-Zeneca](#) announced that its vaccine developed in the UK with Oxford University can protect 70.4% of people from becoming ill and up to 90% if a lower first dose is used. The development of three promising vaccines in so short a period of time is an incredible achievement. Production and distribution challenges remain, but this is an important first step.

Health Affairs

[Clinical Outcomes Of A COVID-19 Vaccine: Implementation Over](#)

[Efficacy](#) by A. David Paltiel, Jason L. Schwartz, Amy Zheng and Rochelle P. Walensky, Health Affairs 11/19/20

TMR Topline™ - Researchers from Yale and Harvard. examined vaccine efficacy, with variables of implementation effectiveness and background epidemic severity. They reviewed how these potential outcomes could impact total infections, hospitalizations, and deaths. Using mathematical simulations, they found that factors related to implementation will contribute more to the success of vaccination programs than a vaccine's efficacy as determined in clinical trials. They learned that the benefits of a vaccine will decline if manufacturing or deployment delays, significant concerns in the public about getting vaccinated or greater epidemic severity develops. They found that there is an urgent need for health officials to continue and expand efforts to promote

public confidence in COVID-19 vaccines, and to encourage continued adherence to other mitigation approaches, even after a vaccine becomes available.

When interviewed by [The New York Times](#) about the study, Dr Paltiel said “Vaccines don’t save lives. Vaccination programs save lives.” His study team concluded that to reduce the pandemic’s infections, hospitalizations and deaths, a successful vaccine rollout was just as important as the vaccine’s efficacy. Dr. Paltiel is concerned that the US has not done enough to prepare for successful distribution of the vaccine in the months to come after one or more vaccines are approved for use.

TMR’s Take – This study makes it clear that mitigation recommendations (wear masks in public, avoid crowds, wash hands frequently) along with a successful rollout of approved vaccines and public commitment to getting vaccinated are all important to controlling COVID-19.



[OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma pleads guilty in criminal case](#), by Geoff Mulvihill, Associated Press, 11/24/20

TMR Topline™ - Taking responsibility for its part in

an opioid epidemic that has taken more than 470,000 lives over the past two decades, Purdue Pharma pleaded guilty to three criminal charges, admitting to: 1. Impeding the DEA’s efforts to combat the addiction crisis; 2. Not maintaining an effective program to prevent drugs from being diverted to the black market; 3. paying doctors through a speakers program to induce them to write more prescriptions for its painkillers; and 4. paying an electronic medical records company to send doctors information on patients that encouraged them to prescribe opioids. The pleas were part of a criminal and civil settlement with the Justice Department that includes \$8.3 billion in forfeitures and penalties. The attorneys general for about half the states opposed the federal settlement, as well as the company’s proposed settlement in bankruptcy court. Critics also want to see individuals held accountable. The wealthy Sackler family agreed to give up control and pay \$225 million to the federal government to settle civil claims, but no criminal charges have yet been filed. Internal Purdue documents obtained as part of the investigation show family members pushing for OxyContin sales even as opioid-related deaths rose.

TMR’s Take – The proposed settlement tops Purdue’s \$601 million 2007 settlement for off label promotion of Oxycontin, joining Glaxo Smith Kline, Pfizer, Abbott and Eli Lilly in the [billion-dollar settlement club](#).



[No lockdowns, no downturn: Taiwan attracts skilled expats with \(mostly\) COVID-free life](#), by Ralph Jennings and Kim Hjelmgaard, USA TODAY, 11/21/20

TMR Topline™ - Taiwan, a bustling technology hub home to about 24 million people off the coast of southeastern China, is attracting a growing community of expatriates due to its success in controlling the coronavirus. There have been no lockdowns or curbs on economic activity, but masks and fever-checks are ubiquitous. With roughly the same population as Florida, Taiwan has had a total of 607 confirmed cases and seven deaths compared with Florida’s more than 897,000 cases and 17,600 deaths. More than 820 entrepreneur residency permits have been approved this year, for example, up from 358 in 2019. Settling in Taiwan does have some downsides – it’s densely populated and its English fluency lags Hong Kong and Singapore.



[I Am Living in a Covid-Free World Just a Few Hundred Miles From Manhattan](#), by Stephanie Nolan, New York Times, 11/18/20

TMR Topline™ - Freelance journalist Stephanie Nolan works out at the gym, sends her children to school and gathers friends for dinner without restrictions in virus-free Nova Scotia. A March lockdown included closing provincial borders and even hiking trails. It worked, and restrictions gradually were lifted in June. The pandemic has changed the way people live - social distancing and mask wearing in public are universal. Asked the reasons for the province’s success in controlling the virus, Public Health Minister Robert Strang attributed it to public health officials, not politicians, setting policy: “The message has been that we need to do it to keep each other safe... people accept that.” Heavily dependent on tourism, the economy has recovered only 80% of the jobs lost in April, businesses have closed, and eviction rates are climbing.

TMR’s Take – There is a light at the end of the tunnel, but the new normal will be quite different once the US hunkers down through the next three challenging months.