

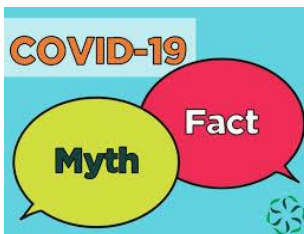
Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

December 2020-2



From the Editor: Vaccine D-Day (12/14) coincided with COVID-19 deaths surpassing 300,000, equivalent to the population of Pittsburgh or St. Louis. With two vaccines now approved for use, the articles summarized in this issue of **TMR** dispel eight myths about the coronavirus, provide added evidence for how the Northeast became the global epicenter of the pandemic last Spring, and update vaccine development. To access each article, click on the headline.



[8 facts about the coronavirus and COVID-19 to counter misinformation](#), by Marisa Iati, The Washington Post, 12/6/20

TMR Topline™ - Social media spreads misinformation about COVID-19. The writer documents 8 key facts:

Masks help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

[Several studies](#) support the theory that face coverings reduce the risk of infection. In Senate testimony in September, CDC Director Dr. Redfield said that masks are “*the most important, powerful public health tool we have*” for combating the pandemic.

There are no known cures for COVID-19. Many false rumors have circulated about potential cures, ranging from [drinking bleach](#) to [snorting cocaine](#). The FDA [has issued nearly 150 warning letters](#) to companies making fraudulent misrepresentations.

Hospitals have no reason to purposely diagnose COVID-19 inaccurately. Rumors persist that hospitals are gaming the system to obtain higher payments. The CARES Act did include a provision to reimburse hospitals more for uninsured coronavirus patients and those with Medicare. The reality is that hospitals are probably losing money on COVID-19 patients because [the illness is difficult to treat](#) and many hospitals have been overwhelmed by a surge of people needing care.

The coronavirus is more deadly than influenza. [About 2 percent](#) of diagnosed coronavirus cases are lethal, but only 0.1 percent of seasonal flu cases are lethal.

The coronavirus vaccine candidates do not affect people’s DNA. Both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are based on genetic material called messenger RNA. That mRNA teaches the body’s cells to build protein on the surface of the coronavirus, therefore making the immune system recognize and block the true virus. According to the CDC, vaccines using mRNA [do not “affect or interact with”](#) a person’s DNA.

Staying home, using hand sanitizer, and washing our hands more often are healthy. The assertion that limiting time with people outside our households could damage our ability to fight diseases may stem from the “[hygiene hypothesis](#).” Scientists at the Cleveland Clinic [say there is no evidence](#) that temporarily increasing these hygiene routines is damaging.

Scientists believe the coronavirus originated in animals. Scientific evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the virus was not man-made in a Chinese laboratory; its genome suggests that it is naturally occurring in nature. The CDC, WHO and DNI investigations also support this conclusion.

Urging high-risk people to stay home and letting everyone else live normal lives would not “solve” the crisis. Letting people interact freely, as if there were no pandemic, would enable the virus to travel through the

population even more quickly, straining the capacities of [already overwhelmed hospitals](#) and burned-out health-care workers. About 21% of adults over 65 live in multigenerational households – isolating the vulnerable simply is not practical.

TMR's Take – It's no surprise that the fact-checking site Politifact named “*Coronavirus Downplay and Denial*” as its [Lie of the Year](#). It's well worth reading.



[Boston conference in February linked to as many as 300,000 coronavirus cases worldwide](#), by Morgan Gstalter, The Hill, 12/11/20

TMR Topline™ - The 175 attendees at Biogen's 2/27-28 international business conference in Boston have been linked to as many as 300,000 coronavirus cases worldwide according to a study published in [Science](#). Lead author Jacob Lemieux, an infectious disease specialist at Massachusetts General Hospital, used the virus's unique genetic signature to link it to COVID-19 cases in several countries and 29 states, including about 71,450 cases in Florida.

TMR's Take – And all along we thought it was Spring Break that started the Sunbelt's summer surge.



[GSK/Sanofi Covid vaccine delayed until end of next year](#), by Ian Sample, Science Editor, The Guardian, 12/11/20



TMR Topline™ - After interim results from a phase 1/2 trial revealed that it failed to produce a strong immune response in older people, GlaxoSmithKline and its French partner, Sanofi, decided to reformulate the vaccine and launch another phase 2 trial in February with an aim to deliver approved shots in the last quarter of 2021, barring any further setbacks. The setback is a reminder of the difficulty of developing a safe, effective vaccine.



[Some vaccine doses kept too cold, Pfizer having manufacturing issues, U.S. officials say](#), by Carl O'Donnell, Rebecca Spaulding,

Reuters, 12/16/20

TMR Topline™ - The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine rollout has encountered some speed bumps. At least two trays of doses delivered in California needed to be replaced after their storage temperatures dipped below -80C. Officials are investigating whether storing the vaccines at temperatures below -70C poses a safety or efficacy risk. Pfizer also has reported some production issues and CEO Alfred Bourla is asking the U.S. government to use the Defense Production Act to relieve some “*critical supply limitations*.” UPS and FedEx are developing contingency plans for vaccine deliveries given forecasts of severe winter weather in some parts of the U.S.



[When will other coronavirus vaccines in the pipeline come to N.J.?](#), by Karin Price Mueller, Star-Ledger, 12/16/20

TMR Topline™ - With the Pfizer vaccine now in use and Moderna's vaccine recently approved, the writer provided an update on three others in the pipeline.

Johnson & Johnson – J&J's vaccine is currently in a Phase 3 study using some 42,000 participants. Its vaccine contains the adenovirus and only requires one dose. It uses genetic material from COVID-19 that should cause the immune system to create antibodies against it. First results from the trial are expected in January.

AstraZeneca - Its two-dose vaccine also uses an adenovirus, has completed Phase 3 clinical trials on 20,000 people, and deemed safe and effective by an independent scientific analysis published last week in The Lancet. While a standard two-dose regime was 62% effective, when people received a low dose followed by a standard dose it was 90% effective.

Merck - Merck CEO Kenneth Frazier stated that its work is “*not nearly as advanced*” as Pfizer and Moderna, but its antiviral has moved into Phase 3 trials.

TMR's Take – With both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines receiving EUA approval from the FDA, and others far along in the pipeline, there's a light at the end of the tunnel as this pandemic year ends. The New York Times [Coronavirus Vaccine Tracker](#) reports 63 vaccines in clinical trials on humans with 18 in the final stages of testing. Nonetheless, challenges remain. **TMR** hopes that 2021 will bring a return to a new normal by mid-year. **Have a safe and healthy holiday season!**