

Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

September 2021-2



From the Editor: On 9/20, the number of Americans who have perished from Covid-19 surpassed the 675,000 who died during the 1918-19 pandemic. The “pandemic of the unvaccinated” continues to rage and Mississippi has replaced New Jersey as the state with the highest fatality rate and Montana is the latest hot spot. The U.S. is again active on the global stage holding a Covid-19 summit during the U.N. General Assembly in New York. To access each article, just click on the headline.



[Mississippi Now Has Country's Highest Rate for COVID Deaths](#), by Leah Willingham, Associated

Press, 9/15/21

TMR Topline™ - Mississippi has surpassed New Jersey as the state with the highest rate of Covid-19 deaths in the U.S. Since the start of the pandemic, at least 9,165 people in Mississippi have died of the virus. The state has a population of roughly 3 million and has had one of the worst vaccination rates in the country. New Jersey was hit hard in the spring of 2020 at the start of the pandemic, long before vaccines were available. State Health Officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs said that pregnant women were of particular concern: 15 pregnant women have died, and none were fully vaccinated. State Epidemiologist Dr. Paul Byers said 2% of people with COVID-19 in Mississippi will die. The mortality rate for those who are hospitalized in Mississippi increases to around 14.8% and 37% if a patient is in the ICU.

TMR's Take – The news that mostly rural Mississippi has surpassed the most densely populated state in the U.S. is deeply disturbing. When the Northeast was hit hard in March 2020, little was known about treatment, PPE shortages were rampant, vaccines were not available, and a patient hospitalized in New Jersey had a 26.7% likelihood of death. By February 2021, that had dropped to 11.4%. Mississippians should be outraged that their leaders failed at job 1: protecting their residents!



[At an Overrun ICU, 'the Problem Is We Are Running Out of Hallways'](#), by Nick Ehli, Kaiser Health

News, 9/22/21

TMR Topline™ - Montana is now a national hot spot for Covid infections, recording the highest percentage increase in new cases over the past seven days. The state announced 1,209 new cases on Friday, and Yellowstone County, home to Billings Clinic, is seeing the worst of it. The ICU has space for 28 patients but last Friday was operating at 160% capacity said Christy Baxter, the hospital's director of critical care, with the vast majority unvaccinated. In the lobby of the ER, rooms roughly 6' x 6' have been fashioned with makeshift plastic walls. Ten members of the Montana Army National Guard arrived last week to help however they can. Beds line hallways. “The problem is,” said Brad Von Bergen, the hospital's ER manager, “we're running out of hallways.” Many Montana hospitals are on the verge of implementing “crisis standards of care.” Billings Clinic would hire more than 100 additional nurses if it could, but there's a nationwide shortage. Worse, patients or their loved ones are mistreating doctors and nurses. Screaming, profanity-laden insults are a daily occurrence. Dr. Scott Ellner, the clinic's CEO, said he doesn't understand what happened to civility. “There is a part of the society that wants to pretend that the Covid surge isn't really happening,” he said. “But this is our reality every single day.”



[Providers challenge only U.S. law banning vaccine mandates](#), by Amy Beth Hanson, Associated Press, 9/23/21

TMR Topline™ - Medical providers and Montana residents with compromised immune systems are challenging the law that prevents employers from mandating workers get vaccinated amid a surge of Covid-19 infections, claiming it violates federal requirements for safe workplaces and reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities. It inhibits providers' ability to "practice ethical and effective medicine" by requiring them to employ unvaccinated workers who are more likely to spread infections and diseases than vaccinated workers. Montana's Republican-controlled Legislature passed the law this year that says requiring vaccines as a condition of employment is discriminatory and violates the state's human rights laws. The complaint also argues that the law prevents medical providers from taking steps to protect employees and patients who have compromised immune systems and violates the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which requires employers to provide workplaces free from hazards. It does not challenge the law as it applies to employers other than medical providers.

TMR's Take – Welcome to the Wild West! Northern Idaho also has run out of ICU beds forcing patients to seek care in Washington state.



[The U.S. Is Donating More COVID Vaccines And Wants Other Rich Nations To Pitch In](#), by Tamara Keith, NPR, 9/22/21

TMR Topline™ - President Biden convened a virtual Covid-19

summit to coincide with the U.N. General Assembly in New York at which he announced that the U.S. will buy 500 million more doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to donate to countries around the world for delivery by next September. The White House said the goal is to vaccinate 70% of the world's population for COVID-19 by this time next year. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres reiterated a call for a more ambitious goal: vaccinating 40% of people in all countries by the end of this year and 70% in the first half of 2022. "High-income countries have administered 61 times more doses per inhabitant than low-income countries," Guterres said, noting earlier pledges by Group of Seven leaders have

not yet fully materialized. "Just 3% of Africans have been vaccinated." Biden's pledge will bring the total promised U.S. vaccine donations to more than 1.1 billion. So far, the U.S. has shipped almost 160 million doses to 100 countries around the world, a number that exceeds all other donations combined. Biden defended the U.S. response, saying his first responsibility was to make sure Americans were protected and arguing that the U.S. donations have been generous. "For every one shot we've administered to date in America, we have now committed to do three shots to the rest of the world," Biden said. The new tranche of Pfizer doses will be manufactured in U.S. plants and will be bought at a "not-for-profit" price, officials said.



[Harris announces \\$250 million in global funding to fight future pandemics](#), by Dan Levin and Elian Peltier, New York Times, 9/22/21

TMR Topline™ - Vice-President Kamala Harris announced that the U.S. will contribute at least \$250 million to a new global health security fund that the administration hopes will raise \$10 billion to fight future pandemics. Ms. Harris called for international unity to address a lack of funding for pandemic preparedness highlighted by the flaws in the global response to Covid-19. The collective goal of \$10 billion would be spent on a range of issues, like disease surveillance, vaccine development and health care worker support, in order to counter future biological threats. Ms. Harris said the administration supports the creation of a "global health threats council" to ensure transparency and accountability for all nations that commit to financing the fund. The European Union said it would donate 500 million coronavirus vaccine doses and ramp up coordination efforts with its American counterparts to deliver and administer them. The European Union has pledged to donate 200 million doses by the end of 2021, but its member countries had only donated 21 million doses as of early September, according to official figures.

TMR's Take – It's refreshing to see the U.S. once again showing concerned leadership on the global stage. And kudos to President Biden for negotiating a "not-for-profit" price from Pfizer, using the threat of the Defense Production Act to do so. Imagine the savings for Americans if Medicare were allowed to negotiate drug prices like the Medicare Advantage plans do.