

Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

May 2021-2



From the Editor: The light at the end of the tunnel is brighter: more than 50% of Americans are fully vaccinated. The articles summarized in this issue highlight some key challenges facing healthcare post-pandemic. To access each article, just click on the headline.



[COVID-19 Was 'A Preventable Disaster,' WHO-Ordered Report Says](#), by Bill Chappell, NPR, 5/12/21

TMR Topline™ - An independent review ordered by the World Health Organization found that the Covid-19 pandemic exposed dangerous failings on both the national and international scale. The [Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response](#) said Covid-19 was "a preventable disaster." It said the WHO lacks the power to investigate and act swiftly when confronted with potential outbreaks, calling February 2020 "a lost month" when countries could have acted to contain the coronavirus and prevent the pandemic's worst effects. The panel's recommendations included asking high-income countries to provide at least 1 billion vaccine doses to middle-income countries and more than 2 billion doses by the middle of 2022. It also urged formation of a Global Health Threats Council and a system for outbreak surveillance that is based on full transparency.



[Telehealth can increase nurses' workloads, study finds](#), by Alex Kacik, Modern Healthcare, 4/30/21

TMR Topline™ - A new study

reports that while telehealth can increase access to care, it also has the potential to increase nursing workloads. A University of Missouri study reports that nurses performed about twice as many activities with [telehealth](#) patients when compared to in-person patients. Their [analysis](#) of nearly 800 nursing activities performed for Type 2 diabetes and hypertension patients found that in-person visits had follow-ups every three months, while telehealth patients submitted glucose and blood pressure levels many times a week. The study's lead author Chelsea Howland said, "For participants who had an in-home monitoring system, there were more nursing activities related to diabetes and health education, more medication adjustments and more follow-ups with nurses." Care for U.S. diabetes and hypertension patients costs about \$380 billion a year. Telehealth advocates hope that it can ease the burden of chronic diseases. Telehealth has demonstrated its convenience and flexibility for patients during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), but there are concerns that it could lead to [redundant care](#), make [health disparities](#) worse and lead to more fraud. Concerned that additional telehealth workload for nurses could cause an [already stretched](#) and [short-staffed](#) nursing population to [leave the field](#), Howland said. "There should be some additional training in how to integrate the technology into the workflow."



[Women in healthcare are at a breaking point—and they're leaving](#), by Shefali Luthra and Chabeli Carrazana,

The 19th, 5/17/21

TMR Topline™ - Women in healthcare today face enormous pandemic-related challenges, including memories of the [thousands](#) of healthcare workers and patients that have perished. Many say the coronavirus crisis caused them to leave the workforce or dramatically scale back their professional commitment. Many do not know if they will ever return. At least 1/3 have experienced burnout. In April 2020, women lost or left

more than 1.5 million healthcare jobs, 12% of all women employed in healthcare. With the recovery underway, women have been much slower to return to employment than men. In March, there were 480,000 open positions usually filled by women compared with 28,000 for men.

The Covid caregiving challenges fell largely on women healthcare workers who earn the least. Certified nursing assistant Kenya Blackburn would have been responsible for about five patients a shift 20 years ago. At the pandemic's peak, she was assigned as many as 30 patients in an eight-hour shift, earning \$15.00/hour. Many of the pandemic healthcare job losses were [concentrated](#) in lower-paying settings like home care and long-term care. CNAs like Blackburn are 82% female earning an average of \$14.82/hour. Home health aides average \$13.02/hour and are 90% female.

Currently, just over 50% of medical school students are women. After completing residencies, women are more likely to leave medicine due to burnout, harassment and pay inequities, and nearly 40% leave their jobs or take part-time positions within six years. Women leaving healthcare could pose serious challenges for the nation as the population ages and more Americans need skilled nursing or home care. *"These care and healthcare occupations are absolutely critical to supporting our entire country, and to supporting the people who are most vulnerable — who are sick, who are children and who are elderly, who need this serious and intensive medical care,"* said Diana Boesch, a women's economic policy analyst at the Center for American Progress, *"If we don't support the workers in those jobs, we will continue to face a crisis of care and a crisis of healthcare."* President Biden has proposed plans that could alleviate some of these challenges. He has called for improved access to childcare and for reforms that would pay [home care workers a \\$15 minimum wage](#), and would provide opportunities for advancement.

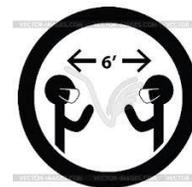


[A Primary Care Physician for Every American, Science Panel Urges](#), by Noam K. Levy, Kaiser Health News, 5/4/21

TMR Topline™ -The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine warn in a major report that the federal government must aggressively bolster primary care and connect more Americans with a dedicated source of care, calling for broad recognition that primary care is a "common good" akin to public education. About 5% of U.S. health care spending goes to primary care,

versus an average of 14% in other OECD member nations. Research shows that robust primary care systems save money, improve people's health and even save lives. Europeans with chronic illnesses reported significantly better health if they lived in a country with a robust primary care system. The report urges new initiatives to build more health centers, especially in underserved areas, and to expand primary care teams, including nurse practitioners, pharmacists, and mental health specialists. Medicare, Medicaid, and employers that provide their workers with health benefits should ask their members to declare a primary care provider. Family physician Dr. Robert Phillips, who co-chaired the committee that produced the report, said *"If we increase the supply of primary care, more people and more communities will be healthier, and no other part of health care can make this claim."*

TMR Take: The "preventable disaster" leaves American healthcare facing a perfect storm as it recovers: a critical need to expand primary care when women are leaving healthcare and telehealth may increase nurses' workloads. Dr. Yalda Jabbarpour, a primary care doctor who studies family medicine policy said *"It's really important that our healthcare system revamps and thinks about what women in the workforce need. The pandemic has brought that to light."* TMR agrees.



[Experts say those who are not inoculated against Covid-19 shouldn't rely on protection from those who are](#), by Madeline Holcombe, CNN, 5/25/21

TMR Topline™ - As the U.S. reaches major [Covid-19 vaccination milestones](#), health experts warn that unvaccinated individuals should not rely on protection from those who have been inoculated, as their infection risk remains the same as during the January surge. *"The work ahead of us is going to be really challenging, we still have to keep on convincing individuals who are not yet vaccinated that they are not safe,"* CNN medical analyst Leana Wen said. *"The pandemic is not over for them."* According to the CDC, half of the US adult population is fully vaccinated. For them, the upcoming [Memorial Day weekend](#) may be like it was before the pandemic. CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said, *"We are on a good downward path, but we are not quite out of the woods yet."* Dr. Wen advised that unvaccinated people keep masking, social distancing and practicing precautions. **TMR Take** – Sadly, the unvaccinated continue to be at risk of contracting Covid-19 and stressing an already overburdened healthcare system.