

# Three Minute Read™

## Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

November 2021-1



**From the Editor:** With good news on the Covid-19 vaccine and treatment fronts, the need for caution remains. Breakthrough infections threaten the immunocompromised, West Virginia went from first to worst in vaccine efforts and developed countries rate US healthcare poorly. To access an article, click on the headline.



[Merck will allow drugmakers in other countries to make its Covid-19 pill](#), by Scott Neuman, NPR, 10/27/21

**TMR Topline™** - Merck announced that it will license drugmakers worldwide to produce [molnupiravir](#). An agreement with the UN-backed Medicines Patent Pool will allow them to license qualified pharmaceutical companies to manufacture the pill. Under the agreement, Merck and Ridgeback will receive no royalties as long as Covid-19 is considered a global emergency by the World Health Organization. Makers of coronavirus vaccines have yet to make similar agreements, despite pressure from governments and the WHO.



[Pfizer antiviral drug could nearly end deaths from Covid-19, company study suggests](#), by Karen Weintraub, USA Today, 11/5/21

**TMR Topline™** - A Pfizer study found that when given within five days of the onset of symptoms, [Paxlovid](#) prevented almost 90% of deaths from Covid-19 compared to a placebo. The results are comparable to

Merck's molnupiravir. Paxlovid is given twice a day for five days. Pfizer expects to complete two other studies of the pill by year-end and is submitting its data to the FDA. Both the Pfizer and Merck-Ridgeback drugs were so effective that independent boards reviewing their data stopped the studies early. The UK has authorized use of molnupiravir for adults with confirmed mild-to-moderate Covid-19 who have at least one risk factor for developing severe disease. An FDA advisory committee is scheduled to meet later this month to discuss Merck's application for an Emergency Use Authorization.

**TMR's Take** – Having two affordable and effective Covid-19 treatments available is a game changer. Kudos to Merck for allowing its pill to be made in other countries.



[Eager parents rush to get kids pediatric Covid-19 vaccines](#), by Rebecca Boone, Associated Press, 11/3/21

**TMR Topline™** - In the hours following CDC approval of Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine for children ages 5-11, social media pages lit up with eager parents seeking appointments for their grade-schoolers. In Boise, Primary Health Group CEO Dr. David Peterman said traffic to his company's website picked up early Wednesday morning and clinics were getting walk-in visits from parents and children looking for the shot. Primary Health Group has 21 family medicine and urgent care clinics in southwestern Idaho. *"That's very exciting, to see that there is a group of parents that are very anxious to get their children vaccinated. It's great,"* Peterman said. Since the pandemic began, more than 6 million children have been infected with Covid-19; over 20,000 of them required hospitalization and over 600 died, Peterman said. The Pfizer vaccine approved for 5- to 11-year-old kids is a different dose and formulation than the version approved for older patients, using different syringes and with different storage requirements. The state of Idaho sent out information on the vaccine's requirements to medical providers 10 days ago.



## Breakthrough Covid-19 Infection Kills Colin Powell, by Frank Diamond, Infection Control Today, 10/19/21

**TMR Topline™** - Former Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell died of complications from Covid-19 at age 84. Although fully vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2, Powell was also fighting underlying health conditions, including multiple myeloma and Parkinson's disease. Coincidentally, an [article](#) published in the *American Journal of Infection Control* (AJIC) looked at veterans to determine level of vulnerability to break-through infections. Conducted at the VA's Ann Arbor Healthcare System, the study concluded, *"Individuals at risk of diminished response to vaccines and severe Covid-19 may also benefit from selective serologic testing after vaccination to guide risk mitigation strategies in a post-pandemic environment."* The study cautioned that even in areas with high vaccination rates, *"surging case counts within the community will lead to an increase in breakthrough infections and hospitalizations. As the Delta strain and other highly virulent strains become more prevalent, this report reinforces the need to not only rapidly vaccinate entire communities, but also practice other risk mitigation strategies if local Covid-19 case volumes are high."*



## West Virginia: First to worst in Covid-19 vaccine efforts, by John Raby, Associated Press, 10/28/21

**TMR Topline™** - When Covid-19 vaccines first became available, 250 mom-and-pop pharmacies helped West Virginia get off to the fastest start of any state (see TMR January 2021-3). Gov. Jim Justice went on national news shows to declare his state *"a diamond in the rough."* Nine months later, demand for the vaccine has almost dried up and the question of whether to get a shot has become a political hot button. According to the CDC, 41% of West Virginia's 1.8 million residents are fully vaccinated against Covid-19, while 49% have had at least one dose, the lowest rate in the country. Nationally, 57.5% of the population is fully vaccinated and 66.5% has gotten at least one dose. Nearly 20% of the state's residents are over 65 and most of the deaths have been in that vulnerable age group. The governor continues to encourage residents to wear masks and stay out of crowds and has scolded the unvaccinated. *"We should be*

*very respectful of others,"* he said recently. *"The more of us that are vaccinated, the less will die."* But Justice also ended a statewide indoor mask mandate in June and has opposed vaccination and mask requirements since.

**TMR's Take** – Having safe and effective vaccines available for the overwhelming majority of Americans gets us closer to moving from pandemic to endemic. But Covid-19 is an unrelenting foe, keeping the vulnerable at risk. Until the US reaches herd immunity, targeted mitigation measures will need to be followed to protect vulnerable Americans.

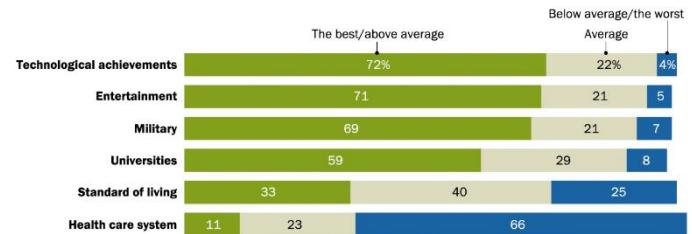


## What People Around the World Like – and Dislike – About American Society and Politics, by Richard Wike, Laura Silver, Janell Fetterhoff, Christine Huang and J.J. Moncus, Pew Research Center, 11/1/21

**TMR Topline™** - For the past two decades, Pew Research Center surveys have documented the US's global reputation in categories including technological achievements, entertainment, military, universities, standard of living and healthcare systems. In its latest survey of 16 other advanced economies, the US healthcare system gets poor reviews. A median of 48% say it is below average and 18% consider it the worst among developed nations. Their polls over the past two

**American tech, entertainment and military seen in high regard; few see the U.S. health care system as above average compared with other developed nations**

*% who say the United States' \_\_\_, compared with other developed nations, is/are ...*



Note: Percentages are medians based on 16 publics.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey, Q15a-f.

"What People Around the World Like – and Dislike – About American Society and Politics"

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years have found that foreign publics are [widely critical](#) of how the U.S. has handled the [Covid-19 pandemic](#). And roughly four-in-ten Americans say it is either below average (32%) compared with other developed nations or it is the worst (7%).

**TMR's Take** – The Pew Research Center results come as no surprise. Since 2004, the U.S. has ranked last in the Commonwealth Fund's periodic evaluation of healthcare in 11 high income countries.