

Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

June 2022-2



From the Editor: This issue's summaries include WHO updates, FDA approval of vaccines for kids, Mark Cuban's attack on high drug prices and much more. To access each article, just click on the headline.



[Monkeypox outbreak "poses a real risk" to public health, WHO says](#), by Herb Scribner, Axios, 6/15/22

TMR Topline – [Dr. Hans Henri Kluge](#), the WHO regional director for Europe, said the [monkeypox outbreak](#) "poses a real risk" to public health with at least [1,600 people infected across 39 countries](#) this year. He listed three actions that could limit spread: 1. conduct [contact tracing](#), testing and sequencing to identify new cases; 2. stop human-to-human transmission by raising awareness; and 3. countries must collaborate on treatments, vaccines and information about the virus.



[Mysteries Linger About Covid's Origins, W.H.O. Report Says](#), News Inside Era, 6/9/22

TMR Topline – The WHO's Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens (SAGO) has [concluded](#) that bats probably carried an ancestor of the coronavirus that then spilled over into a mammal offered at a wildlife market. The report found no new knowledge pointed to a lab leak.

TMR'S Take: In a similar development, a [German disease historian](#) has pinpointed the origin of the 14th century's Black Death pandemic to Lake Issyk Kul in what

is now Kyrgyzstan, countering long-held theories that it first emerged from China.



[US: Pfizer Covid-19 shot appears effective for kids under 5](#), by Matthew Perrone and Mike Stobbe, Associated Press, 6/12/22

TMR Topline – The FDA's analysis indicates that kid-sized doses of Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccines appear to be safe and effective for kids under 5, after a similar analysis of Moderna's shots for children under 6. Given as a three-dose series, Pfizer's vaccine appeared 80% effective in preventing symptomatic Covid-19 compared with 40-50% for Moderna's two-dose series. Hospitalization and death rates in the 6 months-4-year age group are higher than those for older children.

TMR'S Take: FDA's Vaccine Advisory Group has [approved](#) both vaccines, welcome news families who want an extra tool to protect babies and young children.



[New Mark Cuban Company Slashes High Drug Prices: 'Life Changing'](#), by Emma Nolan, Newsweek, 6/7/22

TMR Topline – Instead of waiting for Congress to act, Mark Cuban has launched a new company, the [Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drug Company](#) (MCCPDC), a direct-to-consumer online company that offers more than 100 generic medications at discounted prices. The company's low costs are achieved by working directly with partners, which "allows us to only markup our costs by 15 percent. We felt by simplifying things, we could offer lower pricing for medications," Cuban explained.



[FTC to investigate CVS Caremark, Humana, other pharmacy benefit managers](#), by Lucas Manfredi, FOX Business News, 6/8/22

TMR Topline – The FTC will take aim at the [prescription](#)

[drug middlemen industry](#) and pharmacy benefit managers' business practices, including fees and claw backs charged to unaffiliated pharmacies, complicated and opaque methods to determine pharmacy reimbursement, methods used to steer patients to PBM-owned pharmacies, and more. The FTC claims says certain PBMs have "*enormous influence*" over which drugs are prescribed to patients, what pharmacies they can use and how much they ultimately pay at the pharmacy counter.

TMR'S Take: Kudos to Shark Tank's Mark Cuban for tackling high drug prices. The FTC investigation into PBM practices is long overdue.



[Oracle's Larry Ellison outlines health strategy for Cerner](#), by Jessica Kim Cohen, Modern Healthcare, 6/10/22

TMR Topline – Co-founder Larry Ellison announced that Oracle is building a national database of medical records. Its goal: helping doctors to access patient information more easily. He stated, "*That is now our primary mission here at Oracle.*" After completing its [\\$28.4 billion purchase](#) of Cerner, Ellison and other Oracle executives shared plans for the company's healthcare business and outlined three of the steps Oracle is taking in healthcare, without providing a timeline for these three goals:

1. A national EHR database. Oracle plans to create a national health records database connected to hospitals' EHRs to address the glaring lack of interoperability in competing American EHRs.

2. New technologies for Cerner's EHR. Ellison laid out plans to add technologies to Cerner's EHR platform which could include algorithms to monitor specific diseases and voice assistance for data entry and administrative tasks. This capability is of interest to competing EHRs.

3. Mobile remote patient-monitoring. Oracle is repurposing V-safe, a product it developed for the CDC during the pandemic, into a patient-engagement tool for providers.

TMR'S Take: Larry Ellison in healthcare? Providers beware – he's all about ruthlessness and ego if the Bloomberg Business Week June 13 cover story, "*The Lord of Lanai*," is to be believed.



[Northwell, Kaiser Permanente execs join CEOs backing gun legislation](#), by Mari Devereaux, Modern Healthcare, 6/9/22

TMR Topline – Northwell Health, Kaiser Permanente and other providers joined hundreds of corporate leaders urging the Senate to pass gun safety legislation in the wake of the Buffalo, Uvalde and Tulsa mass killings. *"The gun violence epidemic represents a public health crisis that continues to devastate communities—especially Black and brown communities—and harm our national economy. All of this points to a clear need for action: The Senate must take urgent action to pass bold gun safety legislation as soon as possible in order to avoid more death and injury,"* the CEOs for Gun Safety wrote.

TMR'S Take: TMR and responsible gun owners agree. Recent polls show an overwhelming majority of Americans support mandatory background checks, licensing for gun purchases, more funding for mental health screening and treatment and a national "red flag" law.



[Fines kicking in after slow start to hospital transparency rule](#), by Alex Kacik, Modern Healthcare, 6/9/22

TMR Topline – Research published in [JAMA](#) indicates that fewer than 6% of hospitals had complied with the price transparency rule during the early months of implementation. As of 1/1/21, hospitals were required to post machine-readable, consumer-friendly files of the rates they negotiate with payers, gross charges and discounted cash prices for 300 "shoppable services." By early June, CMS had issued 352 warning notices to hospitals and 157 corrective action plan requests. CMS imposed its first fines totaling \$1.1 million on two Georgia hospitals after neither submitted a corrective action plan. Many large health systems would rather [pay the fine](#) than gather and publish the data.

TMR'S Take: Tara Bogart's recent article in [garden state focus](#) (p. 6) compiled data from ten New Jersey hospitals for a CT scan of the pelvis and abdomen. Charges ranged from \$936-10,579; discounted cash prices ranged from \$270-1,446; rates with four managed care companies ranged from \$160-4,591. Caveat emptor!