

What You Need to Know

Having better access to your electronic health records may improve care, tackling antimicrobial resistance, following the life cycle of a COVID-19 vaccine lie, and more

Sharing Means Caring



Good communication between a patient and a healthcare provider is essential to [patient engagement](#): involving patients in their own care often results in better outcomes. Sharing complete information about your medical history is a big part of that, and it needs to go both ways, but for a long time, the provider’s notes in your electronic health record (EHR) about you, your healthcare encounters, and treatments has been difficult or expensive to obtain.

The recently passed 21st Century Cures Act changes all that. Now, **[federal law requires most healthcare providers to make some information from your EHR available to you for free](#)**. These “shared visit notes” include clinical details like your medical history and physical, consultation notes, procedure notes, progress notes, lab reports, and more. However, in today’s age when we have access to more data about everything, it’s important to know what information you really want to have and make sure you understand it. This unprecedented open access to your medical charts should be a conversation starter that can lead to more transparency regarding your care and better relationships with your doctors.

Source: AARP

Infection Prevention — Acid Reflex



Antimicrobial resistance has been identified as one of the biggest dangers to public health. Superbugs (bacteria or other organisms that cannot be killed by available medications) could be responsible for 10 million deaths a year by 2050. Hope may lie in unorthodox treatments, such as **bacteriophage therapy**—but what if we could also make our existing antibiotics more effective?

To do that, we need to understand why some bacteria are more resistant to them in the first place. A team of researchers at the University of Exeter may **have found a key to answering this question: bacterial acidity**. They have discovered that antibiotic resistant *E. coli* cells have a lower pH (indicating higher acidity) compared to other cells that are eliminated by the treatment. They have also identified the cell mechanisms that create this acidity, the first step toward learning how to manipulate the pH levels in bacteria to make them more susceptible to antibiotic treatment.

Source: ScienceDaily

Medication Safety — How to Spread Lies in Six Easy Steps



Information is everywhere on the internet. Unfortunately, so is misinformation. But how do lies and misconceptions spread so widely anyway? NPR did a deep dive into internet research data and tracked the **life cycle of one of the most persistent lies about COVID-19 vaccines**. It all begins with a hint of truth, for example, that the vaccine can affect people’s menstruation. Because there is only anecdotal evidence that those who menstruate experienced heavier periods after vaccination, but no hard data or research yet, it’s easy for some to latch onto this “fact” and spin it into the claim that the vaccine can affect female fertility.

That brings us to step 2: a high-profile social media “influencer” questions it, suggesting there needs to be more investigation—which is enough to raise doubt. This is a fascinating look at how false information can take on a life of its own, even receiving mainstream coverage that spreads it further and lends an air of legitimacy. The lie may eventually fade away, but the damage has already been done, and it will always soon be replaced with another hot conspiracy theory.

Source: NPR



Mental Health — How the Brain Creates Pain



Maura Kelly shares what it was like to grow up with a father who was experiencing chronic, debilitating gastrointestinal pain, yet how impossible it was for her or anyone else to truly understand what he was going through. In fact, it was hard to believe that his complaints about his health weren't all just "in his head." But even if it was, that wouldn't have made it any less real: As it turns out, **physical pain can be linked to mental health**, and her father's ongoing depression could have been responsible for what he was feeling.

The unknowable pain he was going through, both mental and physical, affected his relationships and daily activities, and ultimately led to him taking his own life. Perhaps better understanding the causes of his suffering could have led to a different outcome.

Source: The New York Times

Emergency Care — Things Are Heating Up in the ER



Experts predict that as temperatures rise, so too will the incidence of heat-related illnesses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that **on June 28, at the peak of a recent heat wave in the Northwest, there were 1,038 heat-related visits to emergency rooms**—compared to nine such visits exactly two years earlier. With record-breaking heat recorded in the region, 40 degrees higher than the average in Portland, this could be a harbinger of more deaths to come from heat illness.

This will pose a bigger threat for parts of the world that don't typically experience such hot temperatures, where people are more vulnerable to heat-related illness—especially men and people over the age of 75. This looming threat will require more efforts from health departments to raise awareness of the risks, educate people about how to protect themselves in hot weather, and direct resources toward developing heat response plans and opening cooling centers.

Source: Fox News

Pediatrics — Orphaned by the Pandemic



The loss of in-person learning has had a terrible impact on children during COVID-19 lockdowns, but even worse is the loss of a parent. A new study in *The Lancet* estimates that **1.5 million children worldwide have lost at least one caregiver to COVID-19**: a parent, custodial grandparent, or grandparent in their household.

The trauma of losing a parent or caregiver could have lasting adverse consequences on children for the rest of their lives, increasing their risk for substance use, behavioral health issues, and chronic health conditions. While most of the children in the study lost one parent, not both (and five times more children lost a father than a mother), a study author cautions that "loss of a parent or caregiver can upend children's lives and potentially affect their development if they are not in a stable home setting."

Source: ScienceDaily

Long-Term Care — Forecasting COVID



There's no Magic 8-Ball that can tell long-term care (LTC) facility managers how COVID-19 mitigation efforts will affect their residents, but a new tool developed by researchers at Colorado State University may come close. Building on extensive data collected from skilled nursing facilities and COVID-19 models created to help decision-makers on campus during the pandemic, they are working on **a modeling system that can help assess a facility's risk for a COVID-19 outbreak.**

The dashboard allows managers to input the many variables in play—such as the number of vaccinated residents and staff, number of people in the facility, staff shifts, masking policies, visitation policies, testing, etc.—and adjust them to anticipate what impact they will have on preventing and controlling infection. It even accounts for new variants of the virus and local vaccination and transmission rates. This initiative promises to remove some of the guesswork in determining the best practices for a particular facility with its own unique characteristics and challenges, helping protect one of our most vulnerable populations.

Source: Colorado State University

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