

Hospice and Palliative Care Resources for the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 10/06/21

NHPCO has created this update for hospice and palliative care providers to share recent news and helpful links. Please note, these Updates are published when there is helpful news to share.

"You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it."

– Margaret Thatcher

Policy Updates

Meeting on Janssen and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters

On Oct. 14 and 15, the Vaccines and Related Biological Products advisory committee will meet to discuss the use of booster doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine and the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine. Both vaccines are currently authorized for emergency use to prevent COVID-19 in individuals 18 years of age and older. The committee will also hear presentations and discuss the available data on the use of a booster of a different vaccine than the one used for the primary series of an authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccine (heterologous or “mix and match” booster). [Read more in the FDA news release.](#)

FDA Authorizes Additional OTC Home Test to Increase Access to Rapid Testing for Consumers

The FDA issued an emergency use authorization for the ACON Laboratories Flowflex COVID-19 Home Test, an over the counter (OTC) COVID-19 antigen test, which adds to the growing list of tests that can be used at home without a prescription. The FDA is committed to increasing the availability of appropriately accurate and reliable OTC tests to meet public health needs and increase access to testing for consumers. [Read more in the FDA statement.](#)

New HHS Report: Vaccination Linked to a Reduction of Over a Quarter Million COVID-19 Cases, 100,000 Hospitalizations, and 39,000 Deaths Among Seniors

A new report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) shows that COVID-19 vaccinations may have helped prevent hundreds of thousands of new COVID-19 infections and tens of thousands of deaths among seniors. The study found that vaccinations were linked to a reduction of approximately 265,000 COVID-19 infections, 107,000 hospitalizations, and 39,000 deaths among Medicare beneficiaries between January and May 2021. [Read more in the HHS news release.](#)

OCR Issues Guidance on HIPAA, COVID-19 Vaccinations, and the Workplace

The HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued guidance to help the public understand when the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy Rule applies to disclosures and requests for information about whether a person has received a COVID-19 vaccine. The guidance reminds the public that the HIPAA Privacy Rule does not apply to employers or employment records. This is because the HIPAA Privacy Rule only applies to HIPAA covered entities (health plans, health care clearinghouses, and health care providers that

conduct standard electronic transactions), and, in some cases, to their business associates. [Read more in the HHS news release.](#)

Provider Updates

US COVID-19 Deaths Level Off as Delta Variant Surge Drops

"COVID-19 deaths are beginning to plateau in the US, adding another promising sign that the latest coronavirus surge has peaked. The 7-day average of daily deaths has hovered around 2000 for more than a week and dropped below 1900 on Thursday. The trend follows a 2-month climb in deaths as the Delta variant hit unvaccinated populations, particularly in Arkansas, Florida, and Louisiana. Now, the Delta variant surge has moved to the northern part of the country, with hot spots in Idaho, Montana, and Maine. But as case numbers drop in populous Southern states such as Florida, the daily death toll should continue to decline." [Read more in Medscape.](#)

Fauci says data from NIH's mix-and-match Covid vaccine booster trials will soon be ready

White House chief medical advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci said that safety and efficacy data on pairing a primary regimen of COVID vaccines from one manufacturer with boosters from another could be available within the next two weeks, [CNBC reports.](#)

COVID-19 death rate much higher in rural populations

Data from the Rural Policy Research Institute show that rural US residents are more than twice as likely as urban residents to die of COVID-19. Even before the pandemic, the death rate for rural populations was 20% higher than for urban ones, [Kaiser Health News reports.](#)

Study tracks efficacy of Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine over time

"The effectiveness of the Pfizer/BioNTech SE vaccine in preventing infection by the coronavirus dropped to 47% from 88% six months after the second dose, according to data published on 10/4/2021 that U.S. health agencies considered when deciding on the need for booster shots. The analysis showed that the vaccine's effectiveness in preventing hospitalization and death remained high at 90% for at least six months, even against the highly contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus...The data suggests that the drop is due to waning efficacy, rather than more contagious variants," [Reuters reports.](#)

COVID-19 numbers are improving. Don't let history repeat itself with yet another resurgence, doctors say

Multiple times throughout the pandemic, Covid-19 numbers have dropped, only to surge again, sometimes with a new variant. "The best way to assure that we'll be in good shape as we get into the winter would be to get more and more people vaccinated," Dr. Anthony Fauci told CNN. As of Sunday, 55.9% of the US population has been fully vaccinated, according to CDC data, [CNN reports.](#)

Disproportionate Share of Pandemic-Associated Excess Deaths in 2020 Were Minorities

During most of 2020, excess deaths in the U.S. - both COVID-19-related and not - occurred at higher rates among Black, Native American, and Latino men and women, a large new study finds. An analysis of the 477,200 excess

deaths in the U.S. from March through December 2020 revealed that age-standardized excess deaths per 100,000 persons among Black, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) and Latino individuals were more than twice as high, overall, than among white and Asian individuals. Among non-COVID-19 deaths, rates were two to four times higher in minority groups, according to the report published in the Annals of Internal Medicine. [Read more in Medscape.](#)

Resources

The Work of Hospital Allied and Supportive Care Providers During COVID-19 (ASPR TRACIE)

[Issue 13 of The Exchange](#), published by ASPR TRACIE, is now available. This issue includes COVID-19 resources for Acute Hospital Care, Home Care, and Hospice.

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