

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



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 12/08/21

NHPCO publishes the COVID-19 Update once a week on Wednesdays. Should there be breaking news of importance to the provider community, we will communicate that as needed.

"Bob Dole was a friend and partner in passing the bill to provide Medicare coverage for Hospice services. The bill would not have become law without his leadership." – Secretary Leon Panetta

Policy Updates

Administration Announces New Actions to Protect Americans Against the Delta and Omicron Variants

New actions aim to get Americans boosted for even greater protection against the Delta and Omicron variants, keep schools and businesses open, and help quickly respond to surges if needed during the colder months. Read the statement on the [White House website](#).

Judge Temporarily Blocks Biden's Vaccine Mandate for Federal Contractors

[WebMD reports](#), "A federal judge in Georgia temporarily blocked President Joe Biden's vaccine mandate for federal contractors on Tuesday, setting back the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine requirements."

Provider Update

COVID-19 Vaccine Does Not Increase Risk of Heart Attack or Stroke in Older Adults

"COVID-19 vaccines are not associated with a heightened risk of adverse cardiovascular events among older adults, according to new research out of France. The analysis, published in *JAMA*, examined data from nearly 3.9 million adults 75 years old or older in France who received at least one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and 3.2 million who had received both doses." Read more in an article available on the [Cardiovascular Business website](#).

U.S. has Lost More Lives to COVID this Year than Last

[The New York Times](#) reports, "More people in the United States have died from COVID-19 this year than died last year, before vaccines were available."

New HHS Study Shows 63-Fold Increase in Medicare Telehealth Utilization

A new [report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) found that massive increases in the use of telehealth helped maintain some health care access during the COVID-19 pandemic, with specialists like behavioral health providers seeing the highest telehealth utilization relative to other providers. The report, which was produced by researchers in HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) and analyzes Medicare fee for service (FFS) data in 2019 and 2020, also highlights that telehealth services were accessed more in urban areas than rural communities, and Black Medicare beneficiaries were less likely than White beneficiaries to utilize telehealth.

Preliminary Data Suggest Omicron is More Transmissible, Causes Milder Disease than Delta

[The Washington Post](#) reports, “World Health Organization officials said Wednesday morning that preliminary data suggest omicron presents a rapid increase in transmission but the variant causes milder cases of covid-19 than delta, which is still spreading across the globe. Although the emerging data is a cause of relief, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned against drawing ‘firm conclusions,’ as he said it is ‘too early to be sure’ and more data and time is needed to have a ‘complete picture’ on the risks and impact of the variant.”

Resources

Omicron Variant: What You Need to Know

“CDC has been collaborating with global public health and industry partners to learn about Omicron, as we continue to monitor its course. CDC has been using genomic surveillance throughout the course of the pandemic to track variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and inform public health practice. We don’t yet know how easily it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, or how well available vaccines and medications work against it. Despite the increased attention of Omicron, Delta continues to be the main variant circulating in the United States.” Learn more on the [CDC website](#).

FDA Working to Investigate, Address Impacts of Omicron; Urges Vaccination and Boosters

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is actively working with federal partners, international regulators and medical product companies to quickly address any potential impacts of the new omicron variant on the tools to fight the pandemic. The agency is working as quickly as possible to evaluate the potential impact of this variant on the currently available diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines. Learn more on the [FDA website](#).

The Johns Hopkins 30-Minute COVID-19 Briefing

Join experts from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (CRC) at 12:00 p.m. ET on Fridays for timely, accessible updates on the state of the pandemic and the public health response. The next briefing is [Friday, December 3, 2021](#), 12:00-12:30 p.m. ET.

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