



# Around the world of U.S. healthcare in 360 words or less

Center for Healthcare Regulatory Insight



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Editor's note

*This note is produced every Friday by the [KPMG Center for Healthcare Regulatory Insight](#) and is intended to be short and succinct, no more than 360 words, to provide a digestible bite of healthcare and life sciences news from the past week. Please share this email with colleagues and other interested individuals, and encourage them to [subscribe to our mailing list here](#).*

We welcome your feedback. Let us know if KPMG can help. Please [reply here to me](#), **Larry Kocot**, principal and national leader, KPMG Center for Healthcare Regulatory Insight or simply reply to this email with any comments or requests.



## Special Supplement: COVID-19 News

In light of the continuing daily volume of COVID-19 activity and news, we have summarized [COVID-19 news for the week in this special supplement](#).



## Healthcare regulatory news

CMS will [rescind Trump Administration state](#) Medicaid work requirements.

FDA [approved Bristol-Myers Squibb's CAR-T therapy](#) for relapsed/refractory large B-cell lymphoma and a [Regeneron cholesterol](#)

[treatment](#)... An FDA advisory panel [voted unanimously to not recommend](#) Merck's Keytruda for early-stage triple-negative breast cancer.

GAO [recommended a pause](#) in the \$16B VA EHR overhaul until it addresses "critical" issues.

OCR [fined Renown Health \\$75,000](#) for failing to provide timely patient access to medical records.



## Healthcare law and policy news

The Biden Administration reversed the [federal government](#) position on the [Supreme Court case challenging the ACA's constitutionality](#)... Hospitals [asked the Supreme Court to hear](#) 340B payment cut and site-neutral policy cases.

House [Ways & Means](#), [Energy & Commerce](#), and [Education & Labor](#) committees released recommendations for the pandemic response reconciliation bill, including expanding scope/size of ACA subsidies, providing COBRA subsidies, incentivizing states to expand Medicaid, and providing COVID-19 vaccine, testing, and tracing funding.

The US Court of Appeals ([DC Circuit](#)) [approved](#) the Justice Department's [60-day delay request on proceedings](#) over the association health plan rule... the Court also [barred hospitals from reviving](#) a \$840M lawsuit over Medicare payment cuts... The US Court of Appeals (Federal Circuit) [agreed to rehear](#) a "skinny labeling" case over [Teva's alleged infringement of a GlaxoSmithKline patent](#).

Nuance [acquired AI startup Saykara](#)... Oscar Health [filed to go public](#)... Mercy Hospital and Medical Center [filed](#) for [bankruptcy protection](#)... Tenet will [delay spinning off](#) its Conifer [business by 12 months](#).

Healthcare [lost 30,000 jobs in January](#), the first decline since April 2020.

An [NBER working paper](#) found that increasing prescription out-of-pocket cost by \$10.40 reduced drug consumption 23%... Chartis reported that [453 rural hospitals are "vulnerable to closure"](#)... [One-Percent Steps for Health Care Reform Project](#) released policy briefs on 16 incremental reforms to reduce healthcare spending... Friends of Cancer Research and ASCO [issued recommendations to broaden](#) cancer clinical trial participant pools... Eight organizations [urged Congress to extend increased Medicaid FMAP](#) and enact a "glidepath" for future reductions.

CDC reported [70,630 drug overdose deaths](#) (driven by synthetic drugs) in 2019, up 56.5% from 2013... CBO [projected that the federal budget deficit will total \\$2.3T](#) this year and national debt will reach a record 107% of GDP by 2031.



Questions or comments, please send to [us-hcinsight@kpmg.com](mailto:us-hcinsight@kpmg.com).

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# COVID-19 News Supplement

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## COVID-19 by the Numbers

There are now over 27.4 million confirmed COVID-19 cases in the US, with a [death toll over 475,000](#)... average daily infections [dropped to 108,000](#), down 24% from last week, while hospitalizations decreased 8% and deaths decreased 3% to roughly 3,000/day.

Incidence of the UK COVID-19 variant is [doubling roughly every 10 days in the US](#), with a transmission rate roughly 30-40% higher than more common variants... A JAMA study found that nursing homes with the highest proportion of [non-White residents experienced 3.3 times higher rates of COVID-19 deaths](#) than facilities with the highest proportion of White residents... A CDC study found that [statewide mask mandates slowed](#) the rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations by up to 5.5 percentage-points in the three weeks after mandate implementation.

48 million COVID-19 [vaccine doses have been administered](#) in the US (1.62M/day over the last week)... KFF reported that only [29% of vaccine recipients in the first month were 65 or older](#), despite the fact that the age group accounts for at least 75% of all COVID-19 deaths since the start of the pandemic... NIAID Director Anthony Fauci said that [20,000 pregnant women have received COVID-19 vaccines](#) without complications... CDC reported that [in December, 49.1% of Americans polled intended to get vaccinated](#), up from 39.4% in September.

## Executive and Administrative Action

President Biden said it would [be “very difficult” to achieve herd immunity](#) in the US before the end of the summer due to vaccine rollout challenges... The Biden Administration is [considering a requirement that domestic air travelers](#) test negative for COVID-19... the Administration will launch [a public safety campaign focused on social distancing and mask wearing](#), while delaying a campaign on vaccine awareness until more doses are available.

CDC recommended [wearing a cloth mask over a medical mask or adjusting a mask to fit more snugly](#) in order to [prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)... CDC guidance states that individuals exposed to COVID-19 [more than two weeks after receiving their final vaccine dose are no longer required](#) to quarantine... CDC is [expected to release guidance](#) today recommending phased reopening of schools based on community spread levels.

President Biden unveiled the [White House COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force](#) that includes 12 non-federal members; the task force will [meet for the first time on February 26](#).

The Defense Department [approved deployment of more than 1,900 active duty troops](#) to help with COVID-19 vaccine delivery.

## Healthcare Regulatory News

The FDA [granted emergency use authorization to Eli Lilly's COVID-19](#) combination (bamlanivimab and etesevimab) monoclonal antibody therapy and [Visby Medical's rapid point-of-care](#) COVID-19 test.

## Healthcare Law, Business, and Policy News

A [survey from The Conference Board](#) found that 19% of workers haven't decided if they will take the COVID-19 vaccine and 6% do not plan to take the vaccine; only 67% of lower-ranking workers plan to take the vaccine, compared to 85% of CEOs... 28% of respondents to an Axios/Ipsos poll [have resumed in-person gatherings outside the home](#); 66% believe returning to a pre-COVID life is a moderate or large risk, the highest rate since October... Littler Mendelson reported that [less than 1% of employers currently mandate COVID-19 vaccinations](#) for employees, and only 6% plan to do so once vaccines are readily available and fully approved by FDA.

Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security [released recommendations for how to equitably distribute](#) vaccines.

Uber and Walgreens will partner to offer communities of color [free rides to vaccination sites](#).

The House Energy and Commerce Oversight and Investigations subcommittee will hold [a hearing February 23 with officials](#) from Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca, and Novavax over COVID-19 vaccination production.

## Surveillance, Testing, and Treatment

President Biden announced that the [federal government secured deals for another 200 million](#) COVID-19 vaccine doses, and that the country would have enough vaccines for 300 million people by the end of July... The Administration will also [increase weekly vaccine shipments to states, tribes, and territories from 10.5 million to 11 million](#) and [launch a community health center vaccination program](#), beginning with 250 centers and growing to potentially 1,400 sites... CDC is planning [a three-day virtual event](#) to bolster public confidence in COVID-19 vaccines... Anthony Fauci said that by [April it will be "open season" for vaccines](#), as "everybody, anybody, in any category, could start to get vaccinated."

The Administration is [finalizing contracts](#) with six companies to produce 61 million at-home COVID-19 tests by the end of the summer... NIH will [fund studies](#) on long-term symptoms of COVID-19.

The World Health Organization (WHO) [recommended](#) AstraZeneca-Oxford's [vaccine for emergency use](#) and [expressed confidence that that the vaccine](#) can prevent severe cases, hospitalizations, and death... A University of Oxford [study concluded](#) that its COVID-19 vaccine developed with AstraZeneca is effective against a new virus strain first identified in Britain; meanwhile, [South Africa halted rollout of the vaccine](#) after a small clinical trial found that it "provides minimal protection" against mild to moderate cases caused by a strain originating in that country... AstraZeneca is [developing an adapted vaccine](#) to combat new virus variants, which it hopes to have ready by the fall... AstraZeneca is addressing issues with manufacturing of its vaccine and [expects to double monthly production](#) to 200 million doses by April.

Pfizer expects to [reduce production time for a batch](#) of its COVID-19 vaccine from 110 days to roughly 60 days.

Teva is in conversation with other drug manufacturers [to co-produce some existing COVID-19 vaccines](#), while [Merck is discussing with governments](#) about also supporting vaccine production.

Dermapharm hopes to [begin producing Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at a second site](#) in Germany beginning in May.

The asthma and COPD drug inhaled budesonide [reduces hospitalizations](#) for COVID-19 in a clinical trial... A UK trial found that [the rheumatoid arthritis drug tocilizumab could reduce the risk of death](#) in severely ill COVID-19 patients.

A WHO investigative team said [it is "extremely" unlikely the virus leaked from a Chinese lab](#) and that it probably jumped to humans via an animal or animal product.