AAMC Novel Coronavirus Update
June 8, 2020

To help filter through the large volume of news about the novel coronavirus, Ross McKinney Jr., MD, AAMC chief scientific officer, with assistance from his team in the Scientific Affairs unit at the AAMC, has initiated a new, science-focused newsletter. This limited-run newsletter will be issued every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for the foreseeable future.

If you would like to opt-in to receive future updates, add your name, email, and institution to this survey.

Contact AAMC Senior Science Policy Specialist Amanda Field, PhD, with any other questions or requests.

To access the latest AAMC updates and resources on COVID-19, visit aamc.org/coronavirus. For resources on COVID-19 medical research, read more here.

Please share/forward this newsletter freely.

Today's Numbers

- World: 7,062,464 (409,886 deaths)
  - 1.1 times the number of cases and 1.1 times the number of deaths over the past week
- United States: 1,946,555 (110,689)
  - 1.1 times the number of cases and 1.1 times the number of deaths over the past week
  - 20,235,678 total tests
- States With Most Confirmed Cases:
  - New York: 378,097 (30,374)
  - New Jersey: 164,164 (12,176)
  - California: 130,931 (4,633)
  - Illinois: 127,757 (5,904)
  - Massachusetts: 103,436 (7,316)

For the most up-to-date data, refer to the Johns Hopkins COVID-19 Map.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington Medicine is projecting hospital resource use in the United States based on COVID-19 deaths.

Lead News
Shut downs and social distancing have been painful, but researchers, primarily from Berkeley, believe that distancing strategies may have prevented or delayed 62 million confirmed cases, which would correspond to 530 million total infections. A second study in Nature from Imperial College London that focused on death rates found that “non-pharmacological interventions and lockdown in particular have had a large effect on reducing transmission.”

Treatment News

The off-label use of a cancer drug that blocks the Bruton tyrosine kinase protein was associated with reduced respiratory distress and a reduction in the overactive immune response in most of the treated patients based on early data from a small group of severe COVID-19 patients in Science Immunology.

Several studies have shown that COVID-19 patients will sometimes continue testing positive for the coronavirus for weeks after recovery. But the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test “cannot determine whether the person being tested is emitting whole virus capable of infecting someone else, or if the swabs instead are collecting the viral debris that can be shed after an infection.” The World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) both “estimate that people can be considered recovered and non-infectious 10 days after their symptoms began, as long as they have been symptom-free for three days.”

Clinical News

Although the full study has not yet been published, the results of a randomized trial of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) in patients hospitalized for COVID-19 showed no benefit. The study, called RECOVERY, was funded by the British government and enrolled 4,674 patients — large enough to show an effect if one was present. [Editor’s comment: Added to the recent Minnesota-led study on prophylaxis after exposure, where HCQ also had no benefit, it’s clear the drug should not be prescribed for either treatment or prevention of COVID-19. It has taken time for randomized trials to define the role for what has become a far-too-political drug. Drug recommendations should be made based on clinical trials, not hunches.]

Not surprisingly, given that it’s a respiratory virus, SARS-CoV-2 is a particular problem for large families and regions with a high density of crowded homes.

Policy News

Although Congress approved $175 billion in emergency aid to health care providers months ago, the Department of Health and Human Services still hasn’t distributed nearly $100 billion to hospitals and clinics during internal confusion over how best to distribute the funds. In addition, the New York Times did an analysis of how the funds were distributed and found that hospitals with substantial reserves received most of the money and that those hospitals were furloughing staff while continuing to pay senior executives well.

Coronavirus and Health Equity
A new paper in *Health Affairs* found that “jail cycling” — cycling in and out of jails as people await trials and hearings — *accounts for 55% of the SARS-CoV-2 case rate variance across zip codes in Chicago*. The authors say data suggest “…that cycling through Cook County Jail alone is associated with 15.7 percent of all documented novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases in Illinois and 15.9 percent in Chicago as of April 19, 2020.”

In Hawaii, Pacific Islanders comprise 4% of the state’s population but 13% of coronavirus cases according to [new data from the Hawaii State Department of Health](https://health.hawaii.gov/hsd/). Filipinos are also overrepresented in Hawaii’s coronavirus caseload.

### Research News

It may be a stretch, since antibodies react with host cells when they participate in host defense, as well as with viral antigens, but at least one research group is exploring the use of cows as anti-SARS-CoV-2 antibody producers.


### Other COVID-19 News

While the spread of the coronavirus has been decreasing in the United States, “23 states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, [have seen an increase in the rolling seven-day average of coronavirus cases](https://www.cdc.gov/mmWR/archive/mmwrhtml/mm6914a6.htm) compared with the previous week.”

*STAT: CDC: Some Americans Are Misusing Cleaning Products — Including Drinking Them — in Effort to Kill Coronavirus*

*Associated Press: With Recovery of Last Case, New Zealand Has Eradicated Virus*

For questions, contact **Amanda Field**, PhD, AAMC senior science policy specialist.

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