

COVID-19 Daily Update

July 29, 2020

Summary

The United States has 4,380,871 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 149,684 reported related deaths. President Trump announced an agreement to loan \$765 million to Eastman Kodak to retrofit its factories to manufacture ingredients used in pharmaceuticals. The agreement marks the first investment from the International Development Finance Corporation, a new investment agency working with Department of Defense to rebuild the national stockpile of medical supplies depleted by the pandemic, using manufacturing plants in the United States to reduce reliance on foreign factories. Representative Louie Gohmert tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday, ahead of a planned trip with President Trump on Air Force One. Gohmert participated in multiple congressional hearings this week, during which he intermittently wore a mask, including a Judiciary Committee session with Attorney General Barr and a hearing held by the Natural Resources Committee. The Federal Reserve announced plans to extend its pandemic emergency lending programs through the end of 2020.

Daily death counts are rising in 24 states and Puerto Rico. Texas reported more than 2,100 deaths in the past week. According to the New York Times, Texas has the highest recent death toll relative to its population, followed by Arizona and South Carolina. Dr. Fauci noted that the outbreak in the Sun Belt may be leveling off but warned that the number of positive tests is rising in the Midwest. States including Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky are “starting to have that very early indication” of a surge and Fauci cautioned that this is a “surefire sign that you’ve got to be really careful.” Tennessee Governor Lee announced that he would not close bars or limit indoor dining options, despite warnings from Dr. Birx that the State is on the brink of a major uptick in new cases. The President of the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union, representing workers at Macy’s and Bloomingdales in New York, called on retailers to bolster enforcement of store mask policies by hiring additional security guards or empowering management to confront non-compliant shoppers.

New York reported five deaths, 619 hospitalizations, and 154 patients in intensive care units on Tuesday, July 28. Approximately 715, or 1.14%, of the 62,276 tests administered in New York on July 28 were positive for COVID-19. New York authorities issued 29 violations to bars and restaurants for failing to comply with social distancing guidelines on Tuesday, July 28. Mayor de Blasio commented that “the vast majority” of New Yorkers, restaurant and bar owners, and dining patrons are “doing the right thing.” The State announced that its COVID-19 Technology “SWAT Team,” a volunteer effort by tech-industry workers, has performed about \$14 million worth of pro bono work, such as developing applications to schedule COVID-19 tests and creating websites to track the pandemic.

Presidential updates

- [Remarks by President Trump in Press Briefing](#), July 28
 - President Trump held a press conference on COVID-19.
 - Trump expressed concern over high COVID-19 case levels in California, Arizona, Texas, and Florida, but stated that the trends are “starting to head down in the right direction, and I think you’ll see it rapidly head down very soon.”
 - President Trump announced an [agreement](#) to loan \$765 million to Eastman Kodak for the company to manufacture ingredients used in pharmaceuticals. The loan, which will be secured by the company’s assets and will include performance contracts, is still going through due diligence before it is finalized.
 - The agreement marks the first investment from the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), a new investment agency working with Department of Defense to rebuild the national stockpile of medical supplies depleted by the pandemic, using manufacturing plants in the U.S. to reduce reliance on foreign factories.
 - DFC Head Boehler described Kodak as a “storied brand” with expertise in making chemicals for film that it can apply to making chemicals for pharmaceutical drugs by reconfiguring plants in Rochester, NY, and St. Paul, Minnesota.
 - Once fully operational, “Kodak will have the capacity to produce 25% of the generic active pharmaceutical ingredients necessary for all non-biologic and non-antibacterial pharmaceuticals used in the United States.”

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [COVID-19 Situation Report – 190](#), July 28
 - Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) [launched](#) a campaign to promote mental wellbeing during times of stress and crisis. PAHO noted that the pandemic has triggered “reactions of fear, depression, anxiety, and worry” and stressed that “personal resilience is a key requirement for sustainable human development.”

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [CDC COVID-19 Updates](#), July 29
 - CDC highlighted [answers](#) to frequently asked questions on COVID-19 and HIV.
 - CDC published a [summary](#) of evidence used to update its list of underlying medical conditions that put individuals at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including asthma, cancer, chronic kidney disease, diabetes, and HIV.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), July 29
 - New York reported five deaths, 619 hospitalizations, and 154 patients in intensive care units on Tuesday, July 28.
 - Approximately 715, or 1.14%, of the 62,276 tests administered in New York on July 28 were positive for COVID-19.
 - New York sent 7,500 COVID-19 tests to Florida and set up a COVID-19 testing site in St. Petersburg, Florida, with the capacity to perform up to 500 tests per day.
 - Governor Cuomo announced that the U.S. Open Championship will be held at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, New York from September 14 to September 20, without fans. USGA will put protocols in place to protect players and staff, including

rigorous protocols for testing, cleaning, the use of face coverings, and social distancing.

- Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that the State’s COVID-19 Technology “SWAT Team,” a volunteer effort by tech-industry workers, has performed about \$14 million worth of pro bono work, including developing applications to schedule COVID-19 tests and creating websites to track the pandemic.
- New York Attorney General James [submitted](#) a proposed consent order settling a lawsuit filed against a company that sold non-existent personal protective equipment (PPE) to the State and medical facilities in March and April. The agreement will bar the company from selling PPE until at least January 2023.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), July 29
 - The City reported 198 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, July 29, which Mayor de Blasio [described](#) as “strikingly low.”
 - De Blasio commented that “the big picture is positive” because “the vast majority” of New Yorkers, restaurant and bar owners, and dining patrons are “doing the right thing.”
 - The Mayor described the City’s Test and Trace Corps as “the largest test and trace program in the United States” and praised the program as “achieving extraordinary things.”
 - A recent New York Times [investigation](#) into the Corps uncovered evidence of early dysfunction in the program, including inexperienced supervisors, computer programs that caused patient records to vanish, and confusing training regimens.
 - Within the first few weeks of the program, one tracer commented that the program’s “lack of communication and organization is crazy” while another claimed that the City is “putting out propaganda” about the program’s effectiveness.

Other Related Updates

- [Experimental COVID-19 Vaccine Protects Upper and Lower Airways in Primates](#), July 29
 - National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) released results from a phase one clinical trial of Moderna’s mRNA-1273 vaccine, which was conducted in rhesus monkeys.
 - The phase one trial found that two doses of Moderna’s vaccine induced robust immune responses in monkeys exposed to SARS-CoV-2. The results were published in the New England Journal of Medicine.
 - Three groups of eight monkeys received two injections of 10 or 100 micrograms of mRNA-1273 or a placebo. Injections were spaced 28 days apart. Vaccinated monkeys produced high levels of neutralizing antibodies directed at the surface spike protein used by SARS-CoV-2 to attach to and enter cells.
 - Notably, animals receiving the vaccine candidate produced neutralizing antibodies in the blood at levels well above those found in people who recovered from COVID-19.
 - Researchers in the phase one trial noted that this is the first time an experimental COVID-19 vaccine tested in primates has been shown to produce such rapid viral control in the upper airway.
 - The investigational vaccine entered phase three trials in humans this week.

- [Health Care Leaders Nationwide Respond to the COVID-19 Crisis](#), July 29
 - An article published in the New England Journal of Medicine collected insights on COVID-19 from the CEOs of health care organizations across the United States, including New York-Presbyterian, Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic, and Brigham Health.
 - The CEO of Mayo Clinic highlighted that “health care systems can, and will, improvise even in suboptimal environments” as they have during the pandemic by reconfiguring older buildings to increase hospital beds, finding alternative ventilator sources and respirators, and implementing protocols to protect staff.
 - The CEO of Nemours Children’s Health System stated that COVID-19 exposed “massive waste” in the health care system as many patients deferred procedures and later cancelled such procedures after they “proved to be unnecessary in the first place.” In this way, the pandemic “shines a very bright light on how much of our ‘sickness care’ system does not contribute to health.”
 - Other commentators touched on how to improve leadership; staff engagement; technology and telehealth visits; health care disparities; and predictive analytics.

- [Health Department Issues Report on Telehealth Utilization During the Pandemic](#), July 28
 - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a new [report](#) on telehealth utilization trends for primary care delivery in Fee-for-Service (FFS) Medicare from January through early June.
 - In April, nearly half (43.5%) of Medicare primary care visits were provided through telehealth compared with less than one percent (0.1%) in February before the pandemic.
 - Providers in both rural and urban counties reported increases in telehealth adoption and utilization. Providers in rural counties, however, reported a smaller growth in telehealth visits as a proportion of all primary care visits in March and April, with a decrease again in May.
 - HHS highlighted the potential interest for telehealth post-pandemic as a supplemental means of care delivery. A survey of about 300 practitioners (oncologists, specialists, and primary care) reported that only 9% of their patient interaction was via telehealth prior to the pandemic; telehealth interactions increased to 51% during the pandemic, and practitioners expected that it would remain at around 21% after the pandemic ends.

- [FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup](#), July 28
 - FDA issued emergency use authorizations (EUAs) for two molecular diagnostic tests for the detection of COVID-19.
 - FDA [released](#) an interview with Dr. Peter Marks, Director of FDA Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER). Marks answered questions about a prospective COVID-19 vaccine, including potential safety concerns. Marks estimated that the timetable for a commercially available vaccine is at least “a number of months from now.”

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Remote Control: Best Practices for Litigating and Investigating During COVID and Beyond](#), July 29

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