

September 11, 2020

Summary

The United States has 6,430,860 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 192,616 reported related deaths. Over 513,000 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in U.S. children, accounting for nearly 10% of all U.S. cases. CDC announced that the federal government will no longer screen travelers from global hotspots for COVID-19 symptoms. National Institutes of Health Director Collins and U.S. Surgeon General Adams testified before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions regarding vaccine safety. Collins reassured the Committee that the government will not release a COVID-19 vaccine prematurely for political purposes and expressed that “science and science alone will be the way in which this decision is made.” AstraZeneca paused clinical trials of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate to conduct a safety review after a participant developed severe neurological symptoms. The Senate voted on a second round of stimulus spending. The bill, a scaled-back version of a \$1 trillion package proposed by Senate Republicans in July, did not receive the 60 votes it needed to advance; the bill’s opponents argued that it was insufficient to address the economic damage caused by the pandemic.

Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine published a study indicating that COVID-19 poses a serious health risk to young adults. In Iowa, the Des Moines school district sued the state government challenging a rule requiring schools to hold 50% of classes in-person as long as the local COVID-19 positivity rate remains below 15%. A state judge denied the district’s request for an injunction to allow it to hold 100% of its classes remotely while the case is pending, but Des Moines schools held the first week of classes 100% remotely anyway. Colorado announced a partnership with Apple and Google to offer residents a contact tracing application for Apple and Android smartphones.

New York reported 5 deaths and 474 hospitalizations on Thursday, September 10. Approximately 880, or .98%, of the 89,722 tests administered in New York on September 10 were positive for COVID-19. Governor Cuomo announced that indoor dining can re-open in New York City starting on September 30. Restaurants will be restricted to 25% occupancy and subject to other strict safety protocols. The state announced two substantial new aid packages under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act: an \$88.6 million fund to help child care providers meet safety standards while re-opening, and a \$2.3 million grant to help small and mid-size manufacturers recover from the shut down. Governor Cuomo issued an executive order directing the Metropolitan Transport Authority (MTA) to bolster mask compliance. Starting Monday, September 14, any MTA riders that refuse to wear a mask will be subject to a \$50 fine. In New York City, the Department of Social Services announced that nearly 300 homeless individuals who were being housed at a hotel on the Upper West Side will

be relocated. Executives from 150 large businesses signed a public letter to Mayor de Blasio warning that the City was facing major quality of life issues following the long city-wide shutdown, with high unemployment and economic anxiety. The letter demands that the mayor take decisive action to restore city services and encourage residents to return.

Presidential updates

- [President Trump Comments on School Openings and Progress Against the Virus](#), September 10
 - In a recent press [briefing](#), President Trump commented said that the White House wants schools to safely re-open and stay open.
 - Trump expressed that “children are at extremely low risk of complications from the virus” and “there is no substitute for in-person learning.”
 - President Trump cited a study showing that students’ learning progress in math decreased by half when they received online instruction instead of attending school in-person. President Trump also noted that, according to CDC, school closures disproportionately harm low-income and minority children and children with disabilities.
 - President Trump said that the United States has “rounded the final turn” on the virus.
 - In a media [interview](#), Dr. Fauci expressed disagreement, noting that “we’re plateauing at around 40,000 cases a day and the deaths are around 1,000.”
 - Fauci said that the United States should not expect a return to normal until “well into 2021, maybe even towards the end of 2021.”

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [WHO COVID-19 Updates](#), September 11
 - WHO [launched](#) a global [database](#) consolidating scientific knowledge on COVID-19, described as a “comprehensive multilingual source of current literature on the topic.” New research will be added regularly.
 - WHO Director-General Tedros [cohosted](#) the inaugural meeting of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator Facilitation Council. The ACT-Accelerator “is the proven, up-and-running, global collaboration accelerating the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines.”
 - Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) [warned](#) that COVID-19 may exacerbate suicide risk factors, including distress, anxiety, and depression.

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

- [CDC Announces Revised Rules for International Travelers](#), September 10
 - CDC [announced](#) that the Department of Homeland Security is relaxing restrictions on individuals traveling to the United States from global hotspots.
 - Currently, travelers from China, Iran, Brazil, and parts of Europe are required to enter the country via one of 15 designated airports so government officials can screen them for COVID-19 symptoms. Effective September 14, the government will stop conducting these screenings.
 - CDC explained that, “We now have a better understanding of COVID-19 transmission that indicates symptom-based screening has limited effectiveness because people with

COVID-19 may have no symptoms or fever at the time of screening, or only mild symptoms.”

- The government will redirect resources previously used to screen passengers for COVID-19 symptoms to alternative risk mitigation strategies including educating travelers about COVID-19 and improving airports’ illness response.
- [*CDC Interpretation of Forecasts of New Deaths and Hospitalizations*](#), September 10
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from 39 models projecting the COVID-19 death rate. Predicted rates of increase differ among the forecasts, depending on assumptions about the prevalence and rigor of social distancing behaviors.
 - CDC’s national ensemble forecast indicates an uncertain trend in new COVID-19 deaths over the next four weeks. CDC predicts that the number of cumulative COVID-19 deaths will be between 205,000 and 217,000 by October 3.
 - CDC [consolidated](#) data from seven models projecting the number of daily COVID-19 hospitalizations. Three models predict an increase in daily hospitalizations over the next four weeks, three models predict a decrease, and one model is uncertain about the direction of the trend. The forecasts estimate 1,600 to 6,000 new COVID-19 hospitalizations per day by October 5.

New York State

- [*New York State COVID-19 Updates*](#), September 11
 - New York reported 5 deaths and 474 hospitalizations on Thursday, September 10.
 - Approximately 880, or .98%, of the 89,722 tests administered in New York on September 10 were positive for COVID-19.
 - Governor Cuomo [announced](#) \$88.6 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds to “assist child care providers through NY Forward grants as they adjust their programs amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.” The [application](#) period opens in late September and will remain open until December 31, 2020.
 - Governor Cuomo [issued](#) an executive order directing Metropolitan Transport Authority (MTA) to bolster mask compliance on public transit. Starting Monday, September 14, “riders who refuse to wear a mask on public transport will be subject to a \$50 fine.”
- [*\\$2.3 Million in Funding for Small and Mid-Sized Manufacturer Recovery*](#), September 10
 - Governor Cuomo announced \$2.3 in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding for small and mid-sized manufacturers.
 - Four organizations were given funds by Empire State Development to award to manufacturers: Center for Economic Growth, ITAC, Manufacturing and Technology Enterprise Center, and FuzeHub.
 - The organizations were instructed to “use the funds to assist companies in reshoring and rebuilding supply chains, securing personal protective equipment, improving safety and efficiency, adopting new technologies and enhancing resilience for future disruptions.”

New York City

- [*New York City COVID-19 Updates*](#), September 11
 - The New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) [published](#) a one-page guide on what mall operators need to know before they re-open.
 - A spokesperson for Department of Social Services [announced](#) nearly 300 homeless men will be relocated out of temporary housing at the Lucerne on the Upper West Side. The move follows backlash from local residents who complained their new neighbors were “diminishing the quality of life in the area.”
 - Executives from 150 big businesses signed a [letter](#) to Mayor de Blasio addressing concerns over quality of life issues in the City, and warning that he needed to take “immediate action to restore essential services.”
- [*Indoor Dining Permitted in New York City Starting September 30*](#), September 9
 - Governor Cuomo [announced](#) restaurants in the city can open for indoor dining on September 30, subject to certain [rules](#).
 - Restaurants may only operate at 25% occupancy and must implement strict safety protocols.
 - Restaurants must provide temperature checks at the door for all customers, collect contact information for contact-tracing purposes, require masks when customers are not seated, keep tables six feet apart, close at midnight, operate with enhanced air filtration, ventilation, and purification standards, and allow outside air ventilation. Bar service is not permitted.
 - Mayor de Blasio [said](#), “we’ve achieved a plan that puts health and safety first . . . Science will guide our decision-making as we continue to monitor progress.”
 - If New York City hits 2% positive test rates, the City will immediately reassess.

Other Related Updates

- [*Health Department Issues Guidance Authorizing Pharmacists to Administer COVID-19 Vaccine*](#), September 9
 - Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) issued [guidance](#) under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act to facilitate the administration of COVID-19 vaccines when they become available.
 - The guidance authorizes state-licensed pharmacists and state-licensed or registered pharmacy interns to administer COVID-19 vaccines to patients aged three or older.
 - To be covered under the guidance, pharmacists, and pharmacy interns must complete a training program in vaccination administration approved by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education and be certified in CPR. Pharmacy interns may only administer vaccines under the supervision of a pharmacist.
 - Assistant Secretary for Health Giroir, expressed that the guidance “will greatly expand convenient access [to COVID-19 vaccines] for the American people.”
- [*AstraZeneca Pauses COVID-19 Vaccine Trials Amid Safety Concerns*](#), September 8
 - AstraZeneca paused clinical trials of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate to conduct a safety review after a participant developed severe neurological symptoms.

- The participant’s symptoms were consistent with transverse myelitis, a disease that causes inflammation of the spinal cord, but AstraZeneca [noted](#) that the participant has not received an official diagnosis.
 - An independent panel of experts is conducting the safety review. The panel will determine whether there is a link between the vaccine and the participant’s illness and will advise AstraZeneca regarding restarting trials.
 - The company [emphasized](#) that “this is a routine action which has to happen whenever there is a potentially unexplained illness in one of the trials, while it is investigated, to ensure the integrity of the trials.”
 - National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Collins [said](#) that the pause is a sign that researchers are adhering to sound scientific principles.
 - Prior to the pause, AstraZeneca’s vaccine candidate was in Phase 2/3 trials in England and India and Phase 3 trials in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States.
 - AstraZeneca [said](#) that it is trying to expedite the review to “minimize any potential impact on the trial timeline.” AstraZeneca CEO Soriot [highlighted](#) that if trials resume soon, the company should know by the end of the year whether its vaccine candidate is effective.
- [Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report](#), September 10
 - Department of Labor (DOL) [reports](#) that another 884,000 workers filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week.
 - The number of new claims had been steadily declining since March, when nearly seven million people filed for unemployment insurance in a single week. The numbers spiked for two weeks in July, briefly marking a reversal of that trend. This week’s report marks the lowest weekly total since March.
 - 838,916 new claims were filed for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the federal program intended to help freelancers, gig workers, the self-employed, and others not normally eligible for state jobless benefits.
- [Study on SARS-CoV-2 Infection in Young Adults](#), September 9
 - A recent study, published in Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Internal Medicine, examined clinical outcomes in young adults with COVID-19.
 - Researchers collected data on 3,222 patients between the ages of 18 and 34 hospitalized for COVID-19 in the United States.
 - Approximately 60% of patients were male and approximately the same percentage were Black or Hispanic. 1187 patients (36.8%) had obesity, 789 (24.5%) had morbid obesity, 588 (18.2%) had diabetes, and 519 (16.1%) had hypertension.
 - 684 patients (21%) required intensive care, 331 (10%) required mechanical ventilation, and 88 (2.7%) died.
 - Male patients and patients suffering from morbid obesity were more likely to require mechanical ventilation and had higher mortality rates. Odds of death or mechanical ventilation did not vary significantly with race or ethnicity.
 - 99 patients (3% of survivors) were not well enough to return home at the end of their hospitalization and were discharged to non-acute care facilities.
 - JAMA Internal Medicine [commentary](#) noted that the study “establishes that COVID-19 is a life-threatening disease in people of all ages and that social distancing, facial

coverings, and other approaches to prevent transmission are as important in young adults as in older persons.”

- [Childhood Cases Pass Half Million](#), September 3
 - As of September 3, over 513,000 cases of COVID-19 had been [reported](#) in U.S. children, accounting for nearly 10% of all U.S. cases.
 - The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that hospitalization rates for children vary widely, from 0.3% in North Dakota to 8.3% in New York City.
 - Children represented 0%-0.3% of all COVID-19 deaths, and 18 states reported zero child deaths.
 - The age range definition of “child” varies from state to state.

- [NIH ACTIV Initiative Launches Adaptive Clinical Trials of Blood-Clotting Treatments for COVID-19](#), September 10
 - National Institutes of Health (NIH) has launched two phase three clinical trials evaluating the safety and effectiveness of varying types of blood thinners to treat adults diagnosed with COVID-19 through the Accelerating COVID-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines (ACTIV) initiative.
 - NIH noted that many patients who died from COVID-19 “formed blood clots throughout their bodies,” and that “this unusual clotting . . . has caused multiple health complications, from organ damage to heart attack, stroke, and pulmonary embolism.”
 - The blood thinners, called antithrombotics, should help prevent clotting but “doctors have not yet figured out if, and at what point during the course of the disease, blood thinners might be effective.”
 - The trials will be conducted at more than 100 sites around the world. There will be one trial for each of the following populations: patients who have not been hospitalized, those currently hospitalized, and those discharged after hospitalization.

- [FDA COVID-19 Updates](#), September 11
 - FDA and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) jointly issued a warning [letter](#) to Pharmacy Plus, Inc. d/b/a Vital Care Compounder for selling unapproved “COVID PACKS.” The company claimed their products could “mitigate, prevent, treat, diagnose, or cure COVID-19.”
 - FDA [published](#) a consumer update providing answers to frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19 food safety and nutrition. The Q&A explains that “there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19.”
 - Eight FDA regulators [published](#) an opinion column pledging to defend the agency’s independence and continue making decisions based on the best available science.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [Turning Over a New Lease? Are Turnover-Based Leases the Answer for Tenants Facing COVID-19 Related Business Disruption?](#), August 27
- [HHS Prohibits FDA from Requiring Premarket Review of LDTs, Including During the COVID-19 Emergency](#), August 25

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