

September 22, 2020

Summary

The United States has 6,867,960 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 200,182 reported related deaths. CDC published and then rescinded guidance advising COVID-19 can spread via respiratory droplets that linger in the air; prior guidance said that COVID-19 is spread primarily via close contact with infected individuals. CDC said the guidance was accidentally published prematurely and will be re-published once it is finalized. A group of pediatricians called on drug makers to begin clinical trials of their vaccine candidates in children. Operation Warp Speed Chief Dr. Slaoui said that if FDA approves a COVID-19 vaccine in late 2020, the U.S. will be able to vaccinate health care workers and “most of the elderly” in January 2021. National Medical Association (NAM), an organization of African American doctors, is forming a task force to review the federal government’s approval of COVID-19 treatments and vaccines; NAM hopes that by providing independent scientific analysis, it can assuage fears that development processes have been corrupted by political influence.

In the week ending September 19, new COVID-19 cases increased by at least 10% in 31 states. Utah and Wisconsin recorded new record highs of 1,117 and 2,533 cases respectively on September 18. In Missouri, thousands of peoples attended a motorcycle rally at the Lake of the Ozarks from September 16 to September 20, sparking fears of a super-spreader event. In Hollywood, several major unions and studios reached a deal regarding COVID-19 protections that will allow the studios to resume making films and television programs. Across the country, hundreds of ACT and SAT testing centers have been forced to cancel exams due to the pandemic. There are now more than 88,000 COVID-19 cases on U.S. college campuses.

New York reported 3 deaths, 470 hospitalizations, and 133 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Monday, September 21. Approximately 754, or 0.89%, of the 83,997 tests administered in New York on September 21 were positive for COVID-19. New York added Arizona, Minnesota, Nevada, Rhode Island, and Wyoming to the travel advisory list. Governor Cuomo extended a moratorium on COVID-related commercial evictions and foreclosures to October 20. In New York City, public schools re-opened September 21 for students in pre-K and those with advanced disabilities. Indoor swimming pools can re-open on September 30, subject to limited capacity and other safety restrictions. The New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) issued guidance for facilities that perform COVID-19 testing, requiring providers to send test results to New York State via Electronic Clinical Laboratory Reporting System (ECLRS). City landlords are facing a growing financial crisis as tenants remain unable to pay rents. Several major hotels announced they will close permanently; more hotel closures are expected to follow.

Presidential updates

- [President Trump Comments on Economic Recovery](#), September 19
 - In a statement declaring the week of September 20 “National Small Business Week,” President Trump commented on the importance of the small business sector and the economic damage it has suffered due to the pandemic.
 - President Trump highlighted that his administration has delivered \$525 billion in Paycheck Protection Program loans, \$190 billion in COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL), and \$20 billion in EIDL Advance grants to small business to help them weather the economic effects of the pandemic.
 - President Trump expressed that his administration remains “committed to investing in small business owners.”

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [WHO COVID-19 Updates](#), September 22
 - WHO issued technical [guidance](#) on the Emergency Global Supply Chain System. The guidance lists important medical devices, medical equipment, and personal protective equipment for the treatment of COVID-19 with estimated prices to help health care providers with essential resource planning.
 - Director-General Tedros [emphasized](#) the need for international cooperation regarding eventual vaccine distribution, reiterating that “the fastest route to ending the pandemic and accelerating economic growth is to ensure some people are vaccinated in all countries, not all people in some countries.”

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

- [COVIDView Weekly Surveillance Summary of U.S. COVID-19 Activity](#), September 18
 - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the week ending September 12.
 - The national average of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 decreased from 5.2% to 4.8% from September 6 to September 12.
 - Regionally, the percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 declined or remained the same in eight of ten regions, but increased in Regions 2 (New Jersey/New York/Puerto Rico) and 8 (mountain). The highest percentages of positive specimens were seen in the southeast (7.5%), south central (8.3%), and central (8.9%) regions.
 - The overall cumulative hospitalization rate is 170.4 per 100,000, up from 166.9 per 100,000 during the previous week. The highest rates were in people 65 years and older, at 460.7 per 100,000, up from 412.9 per 100,000.
 - Based on death certificate data, the percentage of total deaths attributed to pneumonia, influenza, or COVID-19 decreased from September 5 (9.3%) to September 12 (3.1%). The percentage remains above the epidemic threshold and will likely increase as more death certificates are processed.

- [CDC Publishes and Later Rescinds Guidance Regarding COVID-19 Transmission](#), September 21
 - CDC published guidance advising that COVID-19 can be spread via respiratory droplets that linger in the air and can travel more than six feet.
 - Previous CDC guidance said that COVID-19 is spread mainly via close contact with infected persons.
 - CDC later deleted the guidance from its website, [explaining](#) that it was accidentally posted to the website prematurely. CDC Deputy Director Butler [said](#) that the guidance had not yet undergone technical review.
 - CDC said that updated guidance regarding airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 will re-posted once it is finalized.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), September 22
 - New York reported 3 deaths, 470 hospitalizations, and 133 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Monday, September 21.
 - Approximately 754, or 0.89%, of the 83,997 tests administered in New York on September 21 were positive for COVID-19.
 - State Liquor Authority officials conducted 1,023 compliance checks at bars and restaurants in New York on September 21, observing 3 social distancing violations. The State [suspended](#) liquor licenses for 33 bars and restaurants after finding egregious violations last week. The State has now suspended a total of 201 liquor licenses.
 - New York [added](#) five states to its travel advisory: Arizona, Minnesota, Nevada, Rhode Island, and Wyoming. No states were removed. Visitors from states on the travel advisory must quarantine for 14 days.
 - Governor Cuomo [announced](#) an executive order extending the State's moratorium on COVID-related commercial evictions and foreclosures until October 20. Commercial evictions have been stayed since March 20.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), September 22
 - Public schools [re-opened](#) on Monday, September 21 for students in pre-K and certain children with advanced disabilities. Elementary school students will begin in-person classes on September 29, and middle and high school students can return on October 1.
 - Mayor de Blasio [announced](#) that indoor swimming pools can re-open at 33% capacity on September 30. The City provided [guidance](#) for pool operators, including attestation and certification requirements. Saunas, steam rooms, and indoor spa pools must remain closed.
 - The New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) issued [guidance](#) requiring facilities that perform point-of-care COVID-19 testing to report all results to New York State via Electronic Clinical Laboratory Reporting System (ECLRS). Providers are also required to report school, employment, and address information, and influenza test results.
 - City landlords face a growing [crisis](#) as small commercial renters remain unable to pay rents. Analysts say landlords have lost tens of millions of dollars in income since the city's lockdown began in March.

- [*Pandemic Puts City Hotels on the Brink*](#), September 21
 - Several major New York City hotels announced they were [closing](#) for good after months of struggling with low occupancy during the pandemic.
 - In the last two weeks, the 478-room Hilton Times Square and two Courtyard by Marriot hotels in Manhattan said they would not re-open, and several others announced they were closed for good in recent weeks, including the 399-room Omni Berkshire Place in Midtown.
 - More than 25,000 hotel employees have been out of work for more than six months, as occupancy rates dropped to 40% of the roughly 120,000 hotel rooms in the city, down from 80% a year before.
 - The biggest sources of guests this summer were health care workers and the homeless people the City put up in hotels to limit the spread of the virus. Traditional guest counts remain extremely low, and will likely remain low as travelers are limited by state quarantine orders and international travel restrictions.
 - According to the New York Times, financial experts say they “expect the pace of hotel failures to accelerate” as occupancy rates remain low and “lenders lose patience half a year into the pandemic.”

Other Related Updates

- [*DOL COVID-19 Updates*](#), September 21
 - Department of Labor (DOL) is [conducting](#) a public awareness campaign regarding workplace rights amid the coronavirus pandemic. The campaign includes a series of public service announcements in English and Spanish with information about the expanded leave benefits available under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and other workplace protections.
 - DOL [ordered](#) a Smoothie King Franchise in Mobile, Alabama to pay seven employees \$918 in back wages after the franchise refused to grant the employees emergency paid sick leave so they could seek treatment for COVID-19 in violation of the FFCRA.
 - DOL’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) [cited](#) Georgetown Dental in Georgetown, Massachusetts for violating respiratory protection and other standards.

- [*Pediatricians Call for COVID-19 Vaccine Trials in Children*](#), September 18
 - A group of pediatricians published [commentary](#) in the medical journal Clinical Infectious Diseases calling on drug makers to begin clinical trials of their COVID-19 vaccine candidates in children.
 - The pediatricians noted that, though some drug makers have begun Phase 3 trials in adults, no drug makers have begun Phase 2 trials in children.
 - One of the pediatricians, Dr. Evan Anderson, [told](#) the media that the United States may not have a COVID-19 vaccine approved for pediatric use until Fall 2021 as a result of the delay.
 - The pediatricians cited the fact that 103 American children died of COVID-19 during the first five months of the pandemic.
 - Though the pediatric fatality rate is significantly lower than the adult fatality rate, it is higher than the fatality rates associated with diseases, like Hepatitis A and rubella, against which children are routinely vaccinated.

- The pediatricians also cited mounting evidence that children play a role in transmitting COVID-19. The pediatricians expressed that, “without a COVID-19 vaccine, children will likely serve as a reservoir which would undermine efforts to end the pandemic.”
- [*Nasal Antiseptic Causes Rapid Inactivation of COVID-19 Virus*](#), September 17
 - A [study](#) reported in JAMA Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery found that a 15-second treatment with an experimental povidone-iodine nasal antiseptic solution inactivates SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - The study was conducted in a controlled, in vitro laboratory setting to test the efficacy of the antiseptic solution at various concentrations and contact times.
 - The study concludes “transnasal viral inactivation may not only prevent person-to-person spread of SARS-CoV-2, but may also diminish the severity of the disease in patients by limiting spread and decreasing viral load delivered to the lungs.”
 - The study specifically discusses antiseptic use for patients prior to intranasal procedures to protect medical staff and others at the facility, but also notes widespread use may “be beneficial for the population at large as an adjunct to mask usage as a means of virus mitigation.”
 - Randomized clinical trials are now under way to prove that viral transmission is mitigated with intranasal use.
- [*National Medical Association Establishes Task Force to Review COVID-19 Treatments and Vaccines*](#), September 21
 - National Medical Association (NAM), an organization of African American doctors, announced that it will form a task force to view the federal government’s approval of COVID-19 treatments and vaccines.
 - In a media [interview](#), NAM President Dr. Leon McDougle explained that, “it’s necessary to provide a trusted messenger of vetted information to the African American community...There is a concern that some of the recent decisions by the Food and Drug Administration have been unduly influenced by politicians.”
 - Dr. McDougle highlighted that many Americans are concerned that the federal government will approve COVID-19 vaccines before they are properly tested for safety and efficacy.
 - Dr. McDougle expressed hope that a stamp of approval from the task force will improve COVID-19 vaccine uptake among the African American community.
- [*FDA COVID-19 Updates*](#), September 22
 - Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [reissued](#) an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the Abbott ID Now COVID-19 test. The letter clarified that testing is authorized for labs certified under Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA), and that testing facilities within the United States are required to report all results to the appropriate public health authorities.
 - FDA [updated](#) question-and-answer guidance on Conduct of Clinical Trials of Medical Products during COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The updated guidance indicates that clinical trial investigators are obligated to review all investigational new drug safety reports, including reports that will not result in a change to the investigator brochure, informed consent, or protocol. Investigators must also report all

“unanticipated problems involving risk to human subjects” to the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

- FDA published a new [video](#) to consumers explaining that there are currently no FDA-approved drugs or vaccines to treat or prevent COVID-19.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [International Reference Pricing for Medicare Drugs: New Lease on Life or Least Likely to Succeed?](#), September 16

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