

Seqirus Media Monitoring

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Seqirus mentions

Savvy Senior: Do pneumonia vaccines protect seniors from coronavirus?

A reader is advised that as a senior citizen, they should ensure their vaccinations are up-to-date, including the flu vaccine: "While annual flu shots are recommended each fall to everyone, they are very important for older adults to get because seniors have a much greater risk of developing dangerous flu complications. According to the CDC, last year up to 647,000 people were hospitalized and 61,200 died because of the flu – most of whom were age 65 and older. To improve your chances of escaping the seasonal flu, this September or October consider a vaccine specifically designed for people 65 and older. The Fluzone High Dose or FLUAD are the two options that provide extra protection beyond what a standard flu shot offers. And all flu shots are covered under Medicare Part B"

<https://www.lmtonline.com/news/article/Savvy-Senior-nbsp-Do-pneumonia-vaccines-protect-15256609.php>

Additional sources: ([Huron Daily Tribune](#))

Industry News

A Look at the Most Promising Candidates for a Covid-19 Vaccine

From the U.S. to China to Germany, scientists are working around the clock to find a vaccine against the novel coronavirus. Among the companies involved are Sanofi and Glaxo: Sanofi is testing technology that's already used in a flu shot, with Glaxo providing some of the ingredients. Patient trials could start in the second half of this year.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-05-08/coronavirus-vaccine-most-promising-candidates>

Pandemic Influenza News

The real scandal isn't what China did to us. It's what we did to ourselves

As human civilization expands — building roads, clearing farmland, constructing factories, excavating mines — we are also destroying the natural habitat of wild animals, bringing them closer and closer to us. Some scientists believe this is making the transmission of diseases from animals to humans far more likely. The virus that causes covid-19 appears to have originated in bats, which are particularly good incubators for viruses. Scientists are still studying what happened, but in other cases, we have seen how human encroachment can lead bats to look for food around farmland, where they infect livestock — and through them, humans.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/the-real-scandal-isnt-what-china-did-to-us-its-what-we-did-to-ourselves/2020/05/07/70b4e0ea-9097-11ea-9e23-6914ee410a5f_story.html

Academic studies

How influenza virus hijacks our defence

New research has revealed influenza A virus can kill key white blood cells and hide among them like a Trojan Horse to aid its spread in the body. Published in *Communications Biology*, La Trobe University researchers found the virus can kill white blood cells – monocytes – through programmed cell death (apoptosis) and induce their fragmentation. La Trobe Institute for Molecular Science researchers used a series of biochemical approaches and high-resolution microscopy to capture the virus hiding within and on these dying cells fragments. Lead researcher Dr Georgia Atkin-Smith said this "Trojan Horse" phenomenon may allow the virus to efficiently spread within the body.

<https://www.miragenews.com/how-influenza-virus-hijacks-our-defence/>

Additional sources: ([Xinhua](#)) ([Nature](#))

Flu diagnosis, vaccination curbs unnecessary antibiotic use

Accurate influenza diagnosis and vaccination could curtail unnecessary antibiotic use and help reduce the global threat of antibiotic resistance, according to findings in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. "Direct evidence for the association of routine influenza vaccination and antibiotic prescribing, particularly in the real-world setting, is insufficient and predominantly from ecological studies or small studies of focused conditions (eg, acute otitis media) or specific age groups," Manish M. Patel, MD, team lead of the influenza prevention and control team at the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, told Healio.

<https://www.healio.com/infectious-disease/influenza/news/online/%7B6d35caa1-7319-4297-a3a2-f835696aec67%7D/flu-diagnosis-vaccination-curbs-unnecessary-antibiotic-use>

Association between Angiotensin Blockade and Incidence of Influenza in the United Kingdom

Some researchers have hypothesized that drugs that interfere with the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS), including angiotensin-converting-enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and angiotensin-receptor blockers (ARBs), may increase susceptibility to coronaviruses. This hypothesis is based on the observation that coronaviruses engage ACE2 for cell entry and that altered expression of ACE2 is influenced by the use of ACE inhibitors and ARBs, an action that has been shown in animal models. Influenza A (H7N9, H1N1, and H5N1) has been shown to use the ACE2 receptor to mediate lung damage, similar to that seen in severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Understanding the shared mechanism between SARS and influenza may help to address the question as to how ACE inhibitors and ARBs may modulate the manifestations of certain viral respiratory infections.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2005396>

Association Between Seasonal Influenza and Absolute Humidity: Time-Series Analysis with Daily Surveillance Data in Japan

Seasonal influenza epidemics are associated with various meteorological factors. Recently absolute humidity (AH) has garnered attention, and some epidemiological studies show an association between AH and human influenza infection. However, they mainly analyzed weekly surveillance data, and daily data remains largely unexplored despite its potential benefits. In this study, we analyze daily influenza surveillance data using a distributed lag non-linear model to examine the association of AH with the number of influenza cases and the magnitude of the association. Additionally, we investigate how adjustment for seasonality and autocorrelation in the model affect results. All models used in the study showed a significant increase in the number of influenza cases as AH decreased, although the magnitude of the association differed substantially by model.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-63712-2>

Researchers Investigate Flu Vs. Coronavirus Transmission In Florida

Research shows Florida is different than the rest of the nation in terms of how its climate impacts flu transmission. While influenza is not equivalent to COVID-19, it's a good case study in how the coronavirus might progress. So researchers, like Florida State University associate professor Chris Uejio, have been looking into it. "We've found that the southeast has a different seasonality of flu than the rest of the U.S. So that might mean that the dynamics of how that may present risk to people may actually be spread out more over the year in the southeast and in Florida in particular," Uejio says. "Many people are talking about a second fall or winter wave of this epidemic. It's quite possible that we'll continue to see this existing wave carry on through the summer and then next spring and next summer."

<https://news.wfsu.org/state-news/2020-05-08/researchers-investigate-flu-vs-coronavirus-transmission-in-florida>

Knowledge of Aspergillosis Complicating Influenza

In an online survey, we found that nearly one fifth of physicians in the United States who responded had seen or heard about a case of invasive pulmonary aspergillosis after severe influenza at their institution. However, less than 10% routinely used galactomannan testing to test for this fungus in patients with severe influenza.

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/927281>

Pediatric influenza news

The role of influenza vaccination in mitigating the adverse impact of ambient air pollution on lung function in children: new insights from the Seven Northeastern Cities Study in China

Ambient air pollution exposure and influenza virus infection have been documented to be independently associated with reduced lung function previously. Influenza vaccination plays an important role in protecting against influenza-induced severe diseases. However, no study to date has focused on whether influenza vaccination may modify the associations between ambient air pollution exposure and lung function. Study results showed that "Ambient air pollutions were observed significantly associated with reductions in lung function among children. We found significant interactions between influenza vaccination and air pollutants on lung function, suggesting greater vulnerability to air pollution among unvaccinated children"

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S001393512030517X>

Over 65's influenza news

Large AusVaxSafety study provides confidence in influenza vaccine use

A new large-scale AusVaxSafety study, published in JAMA Network Open, has confirmed the safety of enhanced influenza vaccines used in people 65 years and older in 2018, providing confidence in the ongoing use of influenza vaccines. Using the AusVaxSafety active vaccine safety surveillance data, this study analysed adverse events following immunisation with adjuvanted and high-dose trivalent influenza vaccines as reported by more than 50,000 participants using a SMS in 2018. People who received the high-dose trivalent influenza vaccine reported slightly higher rates of adverse events such as fever, injection site pain, injection site swelling or redness than those who received the adjuvanted trivalent influenza vaccine. However, the rates of seeking medical care were low and comparable for both groups.

<http://www.ncirs.org.au/large-ausvaxsafety-study-provides-confidence-influenza-vaccine-use>

Hospitalization costs for RSV similar to influenza costs in older adults

Older adults hospitalized with respiratory syncytial virus face costs that are similar to those of older adults hospitalized with influenza, according to findings published in The Journal of Infectious Diseases. "There is an underappreciation of the burden of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) disease in older adults. We felt that comparing the cost of hospitalization of older adults associated with RSV vs. the cost of hospitalization of older adults associated with influenza, a well-recognized cause of severe disease in older adults, would help increase awareness among adult providers of the burden of RSV disease," Bradley Ackerson, MD, of the pediatric infectious diseases division at Kaiser Permanente Southern California South Bay Medical Center, told Healio.

<https://www.healio.com/infectious-disease/respiratory-infections/news/online/%7Bf397e56f-db29-4a85-99bf-740600227dd4%7D/hospitalization-costs-for-rsv-similar-to-influenza-costs-in-older-adults>

General Influenza News

Rugby League: NRL players 'stood down' for refusing flu jab

Three players from Australia's National Rugby League were stood down on Friday for refusing to

have flu vaccinations after the intervention of Queensland state's top medical officer. Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison reiterated his stance that players should have to have vaccinations to play, but said it was a decision that would not be taken at national level. "Ultimately the states and territories have to determine what the health requirements are as they apply to the NRL," he told a news conference.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-rugby-league-austr/rugby-league-nrl-players-stood-down-for-refusing-flu-jab-idUKKBN22K0VG>

Bryce Cartwright and two other Titans players stood down over refusal to take flu shot

Gold Coast second-rower Bryce Cartwright is among three Titans players to have been stood down by the NRL for refusing to take the flu shot. Titans hooker Nathan Peats and centre Brian Kelly are believed to be the others, with the league acting on the advice of Queensland health officials. Queensland Chief Health Officer Jeannette Young made the announcement on Friday after discussions with the NRL over its controversial flu vaccination policy. "I've had a discussion with [the NRL] this morning and they've stood down those three players at the moment until we work through what it means," Young said. "All their other players, staff and officials are all vaccinated and that is an amazing outcome. So I'm sure we're going to be able to sort it all out."

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2020/may/08/nrl-flu-shot-waiver-2020-season>

Leading doctor says new flu policy is "over the top"

In Australia, leading sports physician Dr Peter Brukner has characterised Prime Minister Scott Morrison's belief in a 'no jab, no play' flu shot policy for the NRL as "a bit over the top". The Prime Minister said players who refuse to get the flu shot should be banned from competing. Dr Brukner said while encouraging people to get the flu shot is good advice, it's not so straightforward. "The flu vaccine is far from 100% effective" he said. Dr Brukner described the AFL's policy of a recommending a flu shot rather than making it compulsory as "far more sensible"

<https://www.3aw.com.au/leading-doctor-says-new-flu-policy-is-over-the-top/>

Manly Sea Eagles Dylan Walker challenges the government in the flu shot debate

In Australia, Dylan Walker is the latest NRL player to publicly challenge the government in the flu shot debate. After the NRL returned to training on Monday, the competition was then met with backlash from a number of its stars who voiced their displeasure at receiving a flu shot as part of the league's plan to return on May 28 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. New South Wales health minister Brad Hazzard declared he's "frustrated" with anti-vaxxers over the messages they send out. "I am extremely frustrated generally at anti-vaxxers and the message they send out. It's just plain stupid and dangerous," Hazzard told reporters.

<https://wwos.nine.com.au/nrl/manly-sea-eagles-dylan-walker-challenges-the-government-in-the-flu-shot-debate/d24d06f6-6ff1-49a5-a52f-ffb7474ce912>

Coronavirus: NSW health minister tells NRL to 'stick to the deal' over flu vaccine

New South Wales health minister Brad Hazzard told the NRL to "stick to the deal" as debate continues around the flu vaccination. The Gold Coast Titans announced on Friday that Bryce Cartwright and Brian Kelly had been stood down after refusing to get a flu shot. The NRL is planning to resume its season on May 28 amid the coronavirus pandemic, but authorities are pushing for players to get a flu vaccine. Hazzard hit out at anti-vaccination attitudes and said the NRL needed to stick to the deal it had agreed with governments.

<https://uk.sports.yahoo.com/news/coronavirus-nsw-health-minister-tells-042444208.html>

Dodging the flu shot doesn't make you an anti-vaxxer, says union

In Australia, players' union boss Clint Newton has moved to distance those resisting the flu shot from the anti-vaxxer movement amid hopes the Queensland government will allow all NRL players to participate when the competition restarts on May 28. Gold Coast duo Bryce Cartwright and Brian

Kelly – the only first-grade players in their state not to get the jab – have been ordered to stay away from training until the Queensland government reviews the NRL’s revised vaccination program. When the NRL initially sought government approval to restart the competition, it said vaccination would be mandatory in its draft pitch.

<https://www.theage.com.au/sport/nrl/dodging-the-flu-shot-doesn-t-make-you-an-anti-vaxxer-says-union-20200509-p54rex.html>

The problem isn’t NRL players risking the flu, it’s the confusion they cause about vaccines

Gideon Meyerowitz-Katz is an epidemiologist working in chronic disease. He writes about the NRL players refusing their flu shot: "The real problem isn’t some players risking the flu, it’s the confusion they’re generating about vaccines and public health interventions in general. We don’t care too much if players don’t get the flu jab but we care quite a bit if they break quarantine. Anti-vaccine advocates get a lot of airtime but it’s worth remembering that vaccines are safe and effective no matter what contentious celebrities say. Social distancing, too, is incredibly important. There will always be hardline anti-vax advocates, but their only real power is in our collective outrage – ignore them and they disappear. So turn off the noise, forget the hype, and go get your flu shot this year. If/when a Covid-19 vaccine is available, get one of those as well."

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/08/the-problem-isnt-nrl-players-risking-the-flu-its-the-confusion-they-cause-about-vaccines>

Can my workplace force me to get an influenza vaccination?

More influenza vaccines than ever are being distributed in Australia this year to help protect the community against the flu. While getting a flu shot doesn't protect against COVID-19, contracting the two together would be a "very dangerous double-up", health minister Greg Hunt has said. There are 16.5 million influenza vaccines to be distributed among Australians, which equates to about two-thirds of the population. "Vaccinated people of all ages are less likely to get the flu and if they do, are less likely to have a severe case," professor Barr said.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6750915/can-my-work-force-me-to-get-the-flu-jab/>

Additional sources: ([Liverpool City Champion](#))

Pharmacists in NSW now able to administer vaccinations outside pharmacies

Pharmacists in NSW are now able to administer vaccinations outside of pharmacies in a move to protect the most vulnerable. Pharmacists will now be able to give vaccinations in residential aged care settings, Aboriginal Medical Services, private and public hospitals, community health centres as well as community pharmacies. The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia welcomed the initiative - NSW Branch President Professor Peter Carroll said pharmacists can now vaccinate more people against vaccine preventable diseases such as influenza.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/pharmacists-in-nsw-now-able-to-administer-vaccinations-outside-pharmacies/13741a12-4193-43ff-b44a-f87e9efd9aa2>

Coronavirus: Flu shots should be included in govt exit plan, expert says

Flu vaccinations are the missing piece of Australia's plan to progressively reopen over coming weeks and months, a leading epidemiologist says. Medical experts cautiously welcomed the three-stage roadmap laid out by Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Friday. Australian Medical Association ACT president Antonio Di Dio said the plan appeared to be "reasonable and sensible". UNSW Professor of Epidemiology Mary-Louise McLaws said the plan was "quite ambitious but also conservative" however an opportunity had been missed to include flu vaccinations as part of the milestones.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6750459/call-to-include-flu-shots-in-restriction-easing-exit-strategy/>

Challenges present in mandatory flu vaccines for healthcare workers says Cork University Hospital consultant

Making flu vaccines mandatory for Irish healthcare workers is littered with difficulties, according to the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI). Hundreds of people die from the flu in Ireland every year, but less than half of health workers get the annual vaccine. President of the RCPI, Professor Mary Horgan, says no vaccines are mandatory for healthcare workers. She says: "The challenge with that is that if no other vaccine is compulsory why are you making a particular group have it when we don't have mandatory vaccines for anything else. It's hard to force anybody to do anything in this country because it's a free country."

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/challenges-present-in-mandatory-flu-vaccines-for-healthcare-workers-says-cork-university-hospital-consultant-998371.html>

Influenza vaccination available for high-risk groups

In Thailand, the annual influenza vaccination has been brought forward to May 1 to August 31 this year, the Public Health Ministry informed on Friday. The vaccination will be free of charge for doctors and public health officials, and for people in high-risk groups. The vaccine covers four influenza types and has been imported from the US.

<https://www.nationthailand.com/news/30387513>

Burden of disease

North Carolina flu death toll at 185, including two last week

Two more people in North Carolina died from flu-related symptoms last week, raising the death toll to 185 with one week left in the reporting season, health officials said. The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services said in its weekly statistics that both flu victims were ages 65 and older. Of the 185 deaths this season, 105 were 65 or older, according to the agency. Last season, 208 people died of flu-related symptoms in North Carolina.

<https://www.thecoastlandtimes.com/2020/05/08/north-carolina-flu-death-toll-at-185-including-two-last-week/>

Additional sources: (WCTI12.com)

Flu Surveillance in Animals

News Scan for May 08, 2020 - Avian flu in Hungarian poultry

Over the last few days, Hungary has reported 12 more highly pathogenic H5N8 avian flu outbreaks in poultry, according to notifications from the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). Ten of the outbreaks occurred in Bacs-Kiskun County and 1 in Csongrad County, both of which have been hit hard, and 1 occurred in Bekes County. All are in southern Hungary. The outbreaks began from Apr 25 to May 3, killing 909 of 191,593 susceptible poultry. The rest were culled to curb the spread of the virus. Officials did not specify the number of affected or susceptible birds in the Csongrad outbreak.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/05/news-scan-may-08-2020>