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Weekly Situational Awareness Brief
Awareness Topics

Toxic Chemicals We Consume Without Knowing It

“If the pandemic served as a window into our health, what it revealed was a US population that is not only sick but also seemingly only getting sicker. Life expectancy is falling precipitously. Three fourths of Americans are overweight or obese, half have diabetes or prediabetes, and a majority are metabolically unhealthy. Furthermore, the rates of allergic, inflammatory, and autoimmune diseases are rising at rates of 3%-9% per year in the West, far faster than the speed of genetic change in this population. Of course, diet and lifestyle are major factors behind such trends, but a grossly underappreciated driver in what ails us is the role of environmental toxins and endocrine-disrupting chemicals. In years past, these factors have largely evaded the traditional Western medical establishment; however, mounting evidence now supports their significance in fertility, metabolic health, and cancer.”

HHS Announces the Availability of \$25 Million to Expand Primary Care – Including Mental Health – Services in Schools

“Today, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), announced the availability of approximately \$25 million to expand primary health care, including mental health services, in schools. For the first time, applicants will be required to add or expand mental health services to receive school-based funding. HRSA-funded health centers currently operate more than 3,400 school-based service sites in schools across the country.”

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Proposed PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation

“On March 14, 2023, EPA announced the proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR) for six PFAS including perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), hexafluoropropylene oxide dimer acid (HFPO-DA, commonly known as GenX Chemicals), perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS), and perfluorobutane sulfonic acid (PFBS). The proposed PFAS NPDWR does not require any actions until it is finalized. EPA anticipates finalizing the regulation by the end of 2023. EPA expects that if fully implemented, the rule will prevent thousands of deaths and reduce tens of thousands of serious PFAS-attributable illnesses.”

Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2021

“This report presents maternal mortality rates for 2021 based on data from the National Vital Statistics System. A maternal death is defined by the World Health Organization as “the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and the site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes” (1). Maternal mortality rates, which are the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, are shown in this report by age group and race and Hispanic origin. This report updates a previous one that showed maternal mortality rates for 2018–2020 (2). In 2021, 1,205 women died of maternal causes in the United States compared with 861 in 2020 and 754 in 2019 (2). The maternal mortality rate for 2021 was 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, compared with a rate of 23.8 in 2020 and 20.1 in 2019.”

Strategies, challenges and opportunities in the implementation of COVID-19 field hospitals: a scoping review

“COVID-19 has strained healthcare systems, requiring the redesign of their structure, human resource management and clinical approach. Countries have adopted implementation strategies and maximise field hospital functionality to address the issue of overflow of patients with COVID-19. This scoping review was based on the main research question, ‘What are the implementation strategies, challenges and opportunities in managing the field hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic?’, and aimed to consolidate all recent evidence on COVID-19 field hospital implementation approaches, challenges and potentialities. Eighty-five records were reviewed and 25 studies were included. For the field hospital implementation strategies, ‘surge capacity’, namely space, human resource, supply and system, was discussed in addition to the preparation and workflow of other services such as pharmacy, rehabilitation, food and nutrition. The management of COVID-19 field hospitals is challenging with respect to staff and resource shortages, inability to anticipate patient load and poor communication. The opportunities and recommendations for improvement of management were also highlighted.”

West Nile, Lyme, and other diseases are on the rise with climate change. Experts warn the U.S. is not prepared

“In the summer and fall of 2021, West Nile virus spread rapidly through Arizona’s Maricopa County and other areas of the state. The outbreak, with more than 1,700 cases reported and 127 deaths. was the largest in the United States since the mosquito-borne virus first emerged in this country in 1999. But with the nation facing a far larger public health crisis with the Covid-19 pandemic, it went almost unnoticed.”

Study: Disabled People Less Likely to Be Prescribed Medication for Opioid Disorder

"New research finds people living with disabling conditions are less likely to be prescribed medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder than individuals without disabilities, raising concerns over whether those individuals are experiencing added stigma that is making it harder for them to access treatment."

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