

Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

April 2022--2



From the Editor: Covid's roller coaster ride continues, with the WHO noting that cases are declining globally as they climb in the Northeastern U.S. This issue's article summaries also include good news on the medical debt front. To access the full article, just click on the headline.



[WHO: Covid cases and deaths continue to fall globally](#), Associated Press, 4/6/22

TMR Topline - The WHO said confirmed coronavirus infections were down in all regions of the world but cautioned that many cases are going undetected as many countries have stopped widespread testing for the coronavirus. It also is tracking an omicron variant that is a recombination of BA.1 and BA.2 that may be more transmissible and warned countries not to drop their Covid-19 protocols too quickly.

[Covid in the Northeast](#),

by German Lopez, New York Times, 4/12/22

TMR Topline - States in the Northeast are now reporting an uptick in

cases, but it's unclear whether the regional rise will amount to a much larger Covid surge. Hospitalizations have not yet risen indicating that the wave has to contend with recently built-up immunity, both from the vaccines and the Omicron surge that infected about 45% of Americans this winter. The recent BA.2 surge in Britain and Europe did not lead to an increase in deaths. More treatment options are now available. Evusheld can help prevent a Covid infection, particularly for immunocompromised people. The antiviral medication Paxlovid helps

treat infections when caught early. A recent clinical trial of [sabizabulin](#) successfully treated critically ill patients.

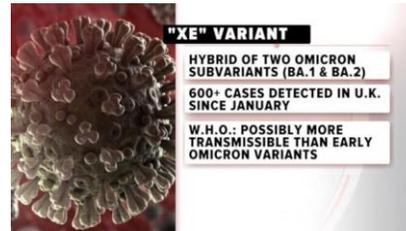


[The 'so what wave': Why the US is so blasé about BA.2](#), Mackenzie Bean and Erica Carbajal, Becker's Hospital Review, 4/6/22

TMR Topline - With Omicron's BA.2 subvariant now dominant throughout the U.S., experts warn that the country is ill prepared to adequately manage a surge in cases. The blasé attitude toward a potential wave is reflected in the relaxed preparedness this time around:

1. Health departments are scaling back public health efforts.
2. Data reporting is spottier.
3. The stakes feel smaller after this winter's omicron surge.

As author Katherine Wu puts it in [The Atlantic](#), "The next wave may be less a BA.2 wave, and more a 'So what?' wave — one many Americans care little to see, because, after two years of crisis, they care so little to respond."



[What to Know About the Covid-19 XE Variant](#), by George Citroner, Healthline, 4/7/22

TMR Topline - In

late March, the U.K. Health Security Agency (UKHSA) [announced](#) a new Covid-19 variant – XE - a recombinant of Omicron BA.1 and BA.2. Citing WHO estimates that XE is 10% more transmissible than BA.2, [Robert G. Lahita](#), MD, Director of the Institute for Autoimmune and Rheumatic Disease at St. Joseph Health, says he expects that we will likely see new Covid-19 variants emerge, "just like the flu." Carlos Malvestutto, MD, an infectious disease specialist at OSU's Wexner Medical Center, said "Several times we've had to change monoclonal antibodies that worked against previous variants that did not work against more recent ones," noting that they've switched to [bebtelovimab](#), which is

effective against BA.2. Experts agree that increased infectiousness doesn't mean XE is more dangerous and that current treatments will likely remain effective.



[Covid and Diabetes, Colliding in a Public Health Train Wreck](#)

by Andrew Jacobs, New York Times, 4/3/22

TMR Topline – Aside from

seniors and nursing home residents, no group has been hit harder by Covid than type 2 diabetics. Several [studies](#) indicate at least 30% of all [coronavirus deaths](#) in the U.S. have occurred among diabetics. *“It’s hard to overstate just how devastating the pandemic has been for Americans with diabetes,”* said Dr. Giuseppina Imperatore, who oversees diabetes prevention and treatment at the CDC.

Diabetes affects 34 million Americans and another 1.5 million are diagnosed with it each year but it draws [less funding](#) and public attention than other major diseases like cancer, Alzheimer’s and heart disease. Researchers hope that the disproportionate suffering and death among diabetics will bring increased attention to this disease, which annually claims 100,000 lives and costs up to 25% of annual healthcare spending. Dr. David Kerr, director of research and innovation at Sansum Diabetes Research Institute in California said: *“Diabetes is a wicked problem and Covid has just shone a bright light on this crisis.”* One [study published](#) last month found that patients who recovered from Covid were 40% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes within 12 months compared with the uninfected. Black and Latino Americans are over twice as likely to develop type 2 diabetes than Caucasians, and they may have inadequate access to medical care, making it harder for them to juggle the complex dietary, monitoring and treatment plans that can stave off its devastating complications. Dr. Sudip Bajpeyi, a University of Texas El Paso researcher whose [study](#) on hospitalized Covid patients was among the first to highlight the death toll among diabetics said, *“The only way to move the needle is to reform a system that prioritizes cures and new drugs over prevention.”*

TMR’s Take – Like the scarecrow in the Wizard of Oz, viruses don’t have a brain. They just keep seeking receptive hosts and mutate. The Northeast is the most vaccinated region of the U.S. That, combined with post-Omicron immunity, could be the reason that hospitalizations and deaths are not rising. Vaccination continues to

be the best defense against severe cases of Covid-19. A recent Commonwealth Fund [study](#) finds that without the U.S. vaccination effort, there would have been roughly 2.2 million additional Covid-19 deaths by March 31, 2022, more than 17 million additional Covid-19 hospitalizations, and an added \$900 billion in healthcare spending.

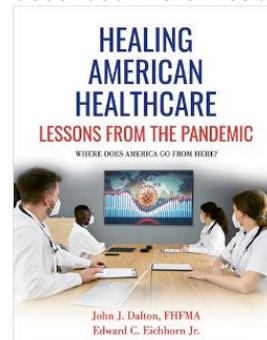


[Biden administration wants to make medical debt less of a threat to consumers’ financial health: ‘People who get](#)

[sick feel like the system is out to get them’](#), by Andrew Keshner, MarketWatch, 4/12/22

TMR Topline - The administration is asking federal agencies to erase medical debt as an underwriting factor in credit programs for certain consumer and small businesses whenever possible. Vice President Kamala Harris said, *“Having medical debt because you were sick or injured should not lower your credit score.”* Three weeks ago, the three major credit reporting companies said they would overhaul how medical debt affects people’s credit scores and paid medical bills sent to collections will not be included in credit reports. Roughly 43 million people had amassed \$88 billion in medical debt on their credit reports according to a recent [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#) estimate. Black households, adults in the 35–64-year-old demographic, people making less money and households in the South tend to shoulder larger shares of medical debt. HHS is asking over 2,000 healthcare providers for information including bill collection approaches, lawsuits against patients owing money and financial aid.

TMR’s Take – TMR applauds these moves. In 2019, over 530,000 families filed for bankruptcy due to medical-related debt, accounting for [66.5% of filings](#). Other OECD countries with universal healthcare have medical debt, but at much lower levels than the U.S. The Allcare Plan described in the first book of the Healing American



Healthcare series would eliminate medical bankruptcies. The second book, “Healing American Healthcare: Lessons from the Pandemic” is now available in both softcover and eBook versions. Click [here](#) for a special **half-price** introductory offer that expires on April 22.