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## First Edition

Friday, January 06, 2023

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Today's early morning highlights from the major news organizations.

[KHN: More Orthopedic Physicians Sell Out To Private Equity Firms, Raising Alarms About Costs And Quality](#)

Dr. Paul Jeffords and his colleagues at Atlanta-based Resurgens Orthopaedics were worried about their ability to survive financially, even though their independent orthopedic practice was the largest in Georgia, with nearly 100 physicians. They nervously watched other physician practices sell out entirely to large hospital systems and health insurers. They refused to consider doing that. "It was an arms race," Jeffords said, "and we knew we had to do something different if we wanted to remain independent and strong and offer good quality of care." (Meyer, 1/6)

[KHN: During In-Flight Emergencies, Sometimes Airlines' Medical Kits Fall Short](#)

In March, a Frontier Airlines flight was headed from Phoenix to Las Vegas when a female passenger stopped breathing. The flight attendant yelled in the cabin for help. A passenger who was trained as a wilderness first responder, Seth Coley, jumped into action and found the woman was unresponsive and had a weak pulse. Coley dug through the plane's medical kit but couldn't find an oropharyngeal airway, a tool that was supposed to be there and that he needed to help the woman breathe. Instead, he cleared the airway by manipulating her neck. (Ramachandran, 1/6)

[KHN: KHN's 'What The Health?': Year-End Bill Holds Big Health Changes](#)

The year-end government spending bill includes a lot of changes to federal health programs, including changes to Medicare payments and some structure for states to begin to disenroll people on Medicaid whose eligibility has been maintained through the pandemic. Separately, the Biden administration took several steps to expand the availability of the abortion pill, which in combination with another drug can end a pregnancy within about 10 weeks of gestation. Anti-abortion forces have launched their own campaign to limit the reach of the abortion pill. (1/5)

[CNBC: South Carolina Supreme Court Overturns State Abortion Ban](#)

The South Carolina Supreme Court on Thursday overturned the state's ban on abortion after around six weeks of pregnancy, ruling that the law violated the state's constitutional right to privacy. The 3-2 decision comes nearly seven months after the U.S. Supreme Court's bombshell ruling voiding the federal constitutional right to terminate pregnancies. (Mangan, 1/5)

### [The New York Times: South Carolina Constitution Includes Abortion Right, State Supreme Court Rules](#)

It is the first final ruling by a state Supreme Court on the state constitutionality of abortion since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in June. ... "This is a monumental victory in the movement to protect legal abortion in the South," said Jenny Black, the president of Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, which was among the groups that filed the case. The five justices ruled 3-2 that a state ban on abortions after roughly six weeks of pregnancy violated a provision in the state constitution which says that "the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures and unreasonable invasions of privacy shall not be violated." (Zernike, 1/5)

### [The Hill: South Carolina Supreme Court Strikes Down Six-Week Abortion Ban](#)

Under the law, abortions were banned when a fetal heartbeat was detectable, which usually occurs around six weeks; South Carolina Supreme Court Justice Kaye Hearn noted that was before many people know they are pregnant. In her opinion, Hearn rejected the argument put forth by the South Carolina state government that the constitutional rights to privacy were limited by the absence of language mentioning bodily autonomy and medical care, an argument that states with similar laws have previously made. (Choi, 1/5)

### [Politico: Idaho Supreme Court Upholds Near-Total Abortion Ban](#)

The Idaho Supreme Court upheld multiple state laws prohibiting abortion in the state on Thursday, ruling that there is no implicit right to abortion in the state's constitution. In a 3-2 decision, the court ruled that three state laws — prohibiting abortion at conception and after six weeks of pregnancy, as well as a Texas-style civil enforcement measure — are constitutional as the state has a "legitimate interest in protecting prenatal fetal life in all stages of development, and in protecting the health and safety of the mother." (Messerly, 1/5)

### [The Hill: Idaho Supreme Court Upholds State Laws Restricting Abortion](#)

In Thursday's decision, the Idaho Supreme Court echoed the U.S. Supreme Court's reasoning for overturning Roe v. Wade last June, finding that the right to an abortion is not "deeply rooted" in the state's traditions and history. "When we apply that test to this dispute, there simply is no support for a conclusion that a right to abortion was 'deeply rooted' at the time the Inalienable Rights Clause was adopted," Justice Robyn Brody wrote in the majority opinion. (Shapero, 1/5)

### [AP: Abortion Rights Bill Fast-Track in Minnesota To Become Law](#)

A bill to strengthen abortion rights in Minnesota is on the fast track to becoming law as it passed its first test Thursday. A House health panel approved the legislation, which codifies protections into state statutes, 11-8 on just the third day of the 2023 session and sent it to its next committee stop on an expedited path to a House floor vote. Backers hope to put the bill on Democratic Gov. Tim Walz's desk for his signature by the end of the month. (Karnowski, 1/5)

### [Politico: FDA Stays The Course On Abortion Pills, Rejecting Demands From The Left And Right](#)

The FDA rejected a demand from the anti-abortion group Students for Life to prohibit most prescriptions via telemedicine and revert back to the 2011 restrictions on the drug that the FDA has loosened by allowing the pill to be prescribed over the phone, sent by mail, and picked up at a local pharmacy. ... The FDA also rejected a petition from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) to make the pills easier to obtain for patients using them to treat a miscarriage rather than an elective abortion. (Ollstein, 1/5)

### [The Boston Globe: The FDA Allowed Pharmacies To Dispense Abortion Pills. But Will They Do It?](#)

Mike Wilson, president of the Massachusetts Independent Pharmacists Association, said that he expects that most of the state's approximately 80 independent community pharmacies will take on the task. "This will be a huge step toward increasing access and personal autonomy," said Rebecca Hart Holder, president of Reproductive Equity Now, a Massachusetts-based advocacy group. "This mainstreams abortion care." (Freyer, 1/5)

### [CNN: The Biden Administration Keeps Shifting Its Stance On A Controversial Policy](#)

President Joe Biden just made a point that's surprising to those of us who've been closely following his administration's approach to migration at the southern border. "I don't like Title 42," Biden told reporters following a speech at the White House Thursday afternoon. That comment was startling because it came minutes after his administration announced a

program that effectively expands the controversial public health restrictions yet again. (Shoichet, 1/5)

#### [Bloomberg: Biden EPA Backs Off Plan To Crack Down On Smog From Permian Oil Drillers](#)

The Biden administration is deferring a plan to crack down on smog in the drilling hotbed of the Permian Basin, handing a win to oil producers along with their allies in Texas and New Mexico. The Environmental Protection Agency had been considering formally labeling parts of the region as violating federal air quality standards for ozone — a designation that would have spurred new pollution curbs and potentially deterred drilling in the world's biggest oil field. (Dlouhy, 1/5)

#### [The Hill: Biden Administration Launches Pilot Program For COVID-19 Telehealth Care](#)

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) on Thursday announced the launch of a pilot program that will allow people to receive free testing, consultation and treatment for COVID-19 from their homes. The NIH estimated up to 8,000 eligible individuals will participate in the pilot program, called the Home Test to Treat program, which will be led by local and state officials in Berks County, Pennsylvania. (Choi, 1/5)

#### [Reuters: NIH Launches Pilot COVID Telehealth Program](#)

eMed, a privately-owned at-home health services firm, will host the official Home Test to Treat website, where individuals can sign up to receive antiviral treatment delivery as well as to coordinate telehealth-enabled test kits. The public health agency has also engaged the UMass Chan Medical School in Worcester, Massachusetts, to collaborate with eMed on analyzing the data collected from the telehealth program such as the impact of a home-based process on testing and treatment. (1/5)

#### [San Francisco Chronicle: XBB.1.5 Driving Up Hospitalizations On East Coast](#)

The pace of new COVID-19 hospital admissions is rapidly rising in regions where XBB.1.5 has become dominant. The latest omicron offshoot has been labeled the most infectious coronavirus subvariant to date and made up about 75% of new sequenced cases on the East Coast last week, according to data published last Friday by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (Vaziri, 1/5)

#### [The Atlantic: How Worried Should We Be About The XBB.1.5 Subvariant?](#)

After months and months of SARS-CoV-2 subvariant soup, one ingredient has emerged in the United States with a flavor pungent enough to overwhelm the rest: XBB.1.5, an Omicron offshoot that now accounts for an estimated 75 percent of cases in the Northeast. A crafty dodger of antibodies that is able to grip extra tightly onto the surface of our cells, XBB.1.5 is now officially the country's fastest-spreading coronavirus subvariant. (Wu, 1/5)

#### [AP: As COVID Surges In China, US Begins Testing More Travelers](#)

Shubham Chandra knows how dangerous the coronavirus can be: He lost his dad during the pandemic. So when he cleared customs at Newark Liberty International Airport and saw people offering anonymous COVID-19 testing, he was happy to volunteer. "It's a minimum amount of effort to help a lot of people," said the 27-year-old New York City man, who had just stepped off a plane from Cancun, Mexico. (Ungar and Lum, 1/5)

#### [AP: Judge: Tennessee Must Release Consultant COVID Response Docs](#)

A Tennessee judge has ordered Gov. Bill Lee's administration to release consultant reports that recommend how to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic — documents the state argued should remain secret under public records law. (Mattise, 1/6)

#### [CIDRAP: Study Notes Racial Disparities In Kids' COVID Vaccine Uptake](#)

COVID-19 vaccination rates among US children aged 5 to 17 years varied widely by race as of August 2022, with the highest coverage among Asian youth and the lowest in Black children, underscoring the need for culturally relevant information, according to a study published today in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. (Van Beusekom, 1/5)

#### [CNBC: What Long Covid Patients Need To Know About Health Insurance](#)

Navigating the health insurance system is often difficult and overwhelming, even in the best of times. For patients with long Covid, a relatively new condition that frequently leaves patients with a lengthy and unpredictable list of debilitating symptoms, it can be especially nightmarish. (Nova, 1/5)

### [The Boston Globe: With Cold And Flu Medicine Shortages, Not Enough Relief For Sick Kids — And Some Adults](#)

With cases of COVID-19, the flu, and RSV surging this winter, children's cold and flu medicines are growing sparse on drugstore shelves. And even some adult varieties are proving harder than usual to find. An "unprecedented level of respiratory need" — as over-the-counter drugmaker Procter & Gamble put it in a statement — has local pharmacies struggling to keep pediatric products like liquid Motrin or Tylenol on shelves. (Gerber, 1/5)

### [CIDRAP: Study Finds Few Mpox Infections After One Vaccine Dose |](#)

A large study of patients seen at sexual health clinics in London found low numbers of mpox cases after vaccination with one dose of modified vaccinia Ankara (MVA-BN) vaccine. ... In the early months of the mpox outbreak, health officials embraced a one-dose vaccine strategy to stretch limited supplies of the vaccine while acknowledging that the immune boost following one dose of the two-dose vaccine might not be enough. (Schnirring, 1/5)

### [NBC News: A New Test For Autism Hopes To Help Doctors Diagnose Before Symptoms Show](#)

Researchers have developed a first-of-its-kind test for autism that they say can find markers of risk in a single strand of hair, an innovation that might help clinicians identify it in young children before they miss developmental milestones. (Bush, 1/5)

### [NBC News: Damar Hamlin Is Alert And Asking Questions, Doctors Say](#)

During a news briefing Thursday, Hamlin's doctors said his recovery includes other promising signs that his brain is functioning, such as moving his feet and squeezing the hands of his doctors and family members. (Edwards, 1/5)

### [The New York Times: Damar Hamlin's Neurological Recovery Reaches A 'Turning Point'](#)

While experts have reasons to anticipate that Mr. Hamlin may be on a good path for neurological recovery, questions remain about the health of his other organs, including his lungs. In a news conference on Thursday, Dr. Knight and Dr. Timothy A. Pritts said that Mr. Hamlin was still critically ill, was in intensive care and was still lightly sedated and on a ventilator, and so unable to talk. But he can now communicate by shaking his head and nodding. He even wrote a question on a pad of paper, asking his nurse who had won the game. (Kolata, 1/5)

### [The New York Times: 'We're Going to Need Everybody': Recordings Captured Response to N.F.L. Crisis](#)

The radio traffic moments after Buffalo Bills defensive back Damar Hamlin collapsed on the field Monday night in Cincinnati crackled with urgency. "I don't like how he went down," one person said on a channel that appears to have included medical personnel on the sidelines. Seconds later, as the gravity of Hamlin's condition became clearer, another person was more emphatic. (Belson, Blinder and Stein, 1/5)

### [AP: NHL Evolves Its Plan, Prep For Terrifying Cardiac Events](#)

The horror that swept across the NFL when Buffalo Bills defensive back Damar Hamlin collapsed and went into cardiac arrest during a game this week in Cincinnati was all too familiar to members of the hockey community. Five players in the NHL over the past 25 years who collapsed during a game — terrifying scenes that stopped play while people scrambled to help — were diagnosed with a heart-related issue of some kind. (Whyno, 1/5)

### [USA Today: What Damar Hamlin's Cardiac Arrest Can Teach Parents About Kids Sports](#)

Every year, sudden cardiac arrest claims the lives of over 2,000 children and teens in the U.S., according to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. This accounts for about 3% to 5% of all deaths in children aged 5 to 19. "Everyone's at some potential risk," said Dr. Gul H. Dadlani, division chief of cardiology at Nemours Children's Health in Orlando, Florida. "The same thing could happen to a high school student or the non-athlete who's just at home." (Rodriguez, 1/5)

### [CNN: How To Protect Your Kids When They Play Sports, According To Doctors](#)

Every time there is a head trauma, cardiac arrest, or other major injury among professional sports, parents take a deep breath. "That athlete is someone's child. Could that be my child?" Cardiac events during sports are uncommon for anyone, said Dr. Stuart Berger, division head of cardiology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. While they can also occur in kids and teens, these injuries can happen whether or not people play sports. (Holcombe, 1/5)

#### [AP: California Trying To Find, Compensate Sterilization Victims](#)

About 600 people alive today can't have children because California's government sterilized them either against their will or without their knowledge, and now the state is trying to find them so it can pay them at least \$15,000 each in reparations. But after a year of searching, the state has approved just 51 people for payments out of 310 applications. There's one year left to look before the \$4.5 million program shuts down and the challenges remain steep. State officials have denied 103 people, closed three incomplete applications and are processing 153 others — but they say it's difficult to verify the applications as many records have been lost or destroyed. (Beam, 1/6)

#### [The Hill: Federal Judge Rules West Virginia Law Restricting Transgender Athletes Is Constitutional](#)

A federal judge on Thursday ruled that a West Virginia law prohibiting transgender female athletes from playing on women's sports teams in public middle schools, high schools and universities is constitutional. (Scully, 1/5)

#### [Stateline: This State Could Be The Last One \(For A While, Anyway\) To Expand Medicaid](#)

For years, state Sen. Phil Berger says, there was nobody in North Carolina who opposed Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act more vehemently than he did. "If there was somebody in the state of North Carolina that had spoken out publicly in opposition to Medicaid expansion more than me, I'd like to talk to that person," Berger said in an interview last month. From the time the ACA passed in 2010 until last spring, "my attitude was Medicaid expansion was wrong for North Carolina," he said. (Ollove, 1/4)

#### [AP: Governor's Veto Allows Ohio Communities To Regulate Tobacco](#)

Ohio's capital city can keep its ban on sales of flavored tobacco products, after Republican Gov. Mike DeWine vetoed a bill on Thursday that would have put such regulation in the hands of the state instead of local communities. The measure, passed by the GOP-led Ohio Legislature in December, had said regulating tobacco and alternative nicotine products should be up to the state, not municipalities. It would have prevented communities from voting to restrict things like smoking, e-cigarettes and sales of flavored vaping products. (Hendrickson, 1/5)

#### [The Washington Post: Maryland Residents Consume More Marijuana Than Other States, Study Finds](#)

Maryland lawmakers working to create a system for the legalized sale of recreational marijuana had a question for researchers: What does demand look like for cannabis in Maryland? The answer: it's high. While adult residents use marijuana in rates similar to other states, Marylanders who do use consume about five grams more per month on average than their counterparts, a survey of thousands of Maryland residents found. (Wiggins, 1/5)

#### [Reuters: Doctors' 'Pill Mill' Convictions Partially Tossed After U.S. Supreme Court Ruling](#)

A federal appeals court on Thursday overturned key parts of the convictions of two Alabama doctors accused of running a massive "pill mill" after the U.S. Supreme Court in June made it harder to prosecute physicians for illegally prescribing addictive drugs like opioids. (Raymond, 1/5)

#### [The Washington Post: Mexico Captures Son Of El Chapo, Alleged Fentanyl Trafficker, Ahead Of Biden Visit](#)

The Mexican military on Thursday captured Ovidio Guzmán, the son of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán and allegedly one of the country's top fentanyl traffickers, days before President Biden was expected to visit Mexico and press for action against criminal groups that have deluged the United States with the deadly opioid. (Sheridan and Sieff, 1/5)

#### [AP: Man Gets Record 20 Years In Prison For Teen's Fentanyl Death](#)

A man was sentenced Thursday to a record 20 years in prison for selling fentanyl pills that killed a Colorado teenager. Federal prosecutors say Nathaniel Corser, 23, sold two blue pills with the imprints "M" and "30" to 19-year-old Kaeden Norlander at a park in Colorado Springs on July 4, 2021. The drugs appeared to be prescription oxycodone pills but actually contained fentanyl. (1/6)

#### [AP: Pennsylvania Sen. Casey To Undergo Prostate Cancer Surgery](#)

Democratic Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania said Thursday that he will undergo surgery for prostate cancer but is expected to make a full recovery. Casey, 62, said in a statement that he was diagnosed last month. "While this news came as a shock, I can report that I have an

excellent prognosis, as well as the benefit of exceptional medical care and the unwavering support of my family.” (1/5)

#### [Reuters: U.S. New Drug Price Exceeds \\$200,000 Median In 2022](#)

After setting record-high U.S. prices in the first half of 2022, drugmakers continued to launch medicines at high prices in the second half, a Reuters analysis has found, highlighting their power despite new legislation to lower costs for older prescription products. The median annual price of the 17 novel drugs the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved since July 2022 is \$193,900, down from \$257,000 in the first half of 2022, Reuters found. For full year 2022, the median was \$222,003. (Beasley, 1/5)

#### [Axios: 2023 Could Be A Banner Year For New Prescription Drugs](#)

A group of pricey breakthrough prescription drugs are poised to shake up the market this year — including an Alzheimer's treatment that could be approved today by the FDA. Though the drugs offer hope to patients with hard-to-treat conditions like Alzheimer's or sickle cell disease, or who struggle with obesity, their potentially eye-popping prices are sure to create dilemmas for insurers, government programs and patients themselves. (Owens, 1/6)

#### [Bloomberg: ADHD Drug Shortages Affect Generic Ritalin, Concerta Amid Adderall Supply Issues](#)

For the past two months, patients have had a hard time finding methylphenidate drugs, a class that includes Novartis AG's Ritalin and Johnson & Johnson's Concerta. A drug manufacturer and a major pharmacy told Bloomberg News there are issues with the supply of the drugs, though it's unclear what's causing the shortage. (Swetlitz, 1/5)

#### [Modern Healthcare: FTC's Proposed Noncompete Clause Ban Could Raise Physician Wages](#)

Absent a federal policy, noncompete agreements have been governed by a patchwork of state laws. Physician noncompete clauses are generally unenforceable in California, North Dakota and Oklahoma. Twenty-one states have either prohibited most restrictive covenants or instituted time limits, payout requirements or other conditions, according to a 2020 report from the University of California, Hastings and the University of California, Berkeley. (Kacik, 1/5)

#### [Crain's New York Business: Mount Sinai's Nurse Strike Preparation Affects Surgeries, Patients](#)

Staff at Mount Sinai Hospital, Mount Sinai Morningside and Mount Sinai West have begun preparations ahead of a potential New York State Nurses Association strike Jan. 9, according to a memo reviewed by Crain's. (Neber, 1/5)

#### [Stat: A Year After A Nurse's Loss To Suicide, A Peer Support Network Grows](#)

When Michael Odell, an intensive care nurse, died by suicide a year ago this month, it thrust attention on all that nurses had endured during the pandemic. Odell's death also motivated his friends in the field as well as other nurses to build on that attention and his legacy. In the year since, they've been advocating for health care worker well-being and calling for health systems to offer more support for nurses, historically a group that's received less consideration than doctors. They also started an organization called Don't Clock Out. (Joseph, 1/6)

#### [Reuters: Moderna Signs \\$35 Million Deal With Cancer Drug Developer CytomX](#)

Moderna Inc on Thursday announced a \$35 million licensing deal with cancer-focused drug developer CytomX Therapeutics to work on messenger RNA-based therapies for a wide range of diseases. Shares of California-based CytomX rose more than 50% in extended trading. (1/5)

#### [Bloomberg: UK Signs BioNTech Deal To Treat 10,000 With Custom Cancer Drugs](#)

The UK government agreed to work with BioNTech SE to treat as many as 10,000 cancer patients with personalized therapies by 2030, a research partnership that will give the German company quicker access to patients it needs to test its drugs. (Kresge and Ashton, 1/6)

#### [CBS News: Why Doctors Say Playing Ping-Pong Could Help Manage Parkinson's Disease Symptoms](#)

When 67-year-old Roben Seltzer was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease three years ago, his symptoms were so bad he could barely get out of bed. He was treated with physical therapy and medication to manage symptoms like tremors, stiffness and slowness. His doctor also

offered him a surprising treatment option: ping-pong. (Oliver and Novak, 1/5)

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