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Thursday, September 25, 2025
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Morning Briefing

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From KFF Health News:

KFF HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES

1. AI Will Soon Have a Say in Approving or Denying Medicare Treatments

A pilot program testing the use of artificial intelligence to expand prior authorization decisions in Medicare has providers, politicians, and researchers questioning Trump administration promises to curb an unpopular practice that has frustrated patients and their doctors. (Lauren Sausser and Darius Tahir, 9/25)

2. Big Loopholes in Hospital Charity Care Programs Mean Patients Still Get Stuck With the Tab

Even if people qualify for financial help with their hospital bills, the care they receive may not be covered. (Michelle Andrews, 9/25)

3. As Trump Punts on Medical Debt, Battle Over Patient Protections Moves to States

Some states are enacting medical debt laws as the Trump administration pulls back federal protections. Elsewhere, industry opposition has derailed legislation. (Noam N. Levey and Katheryn Houghton and Arielle Zions, 9/25)

4. Political Cartoon: 'You Gotta Be Kidney!'

KFF Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with ["Political Cartoon: 'You Gotta Be Kidney!'" by Paul Wooldridge](#).

Here's today's health policy haiku:

DOWNPLAYING DICTUM

Research funding cuts:
All experts face scrutiny.
Anti-science rules!

- Paul Hughes-Cromwick

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please [Contact Us](#) and let us know if we can include your name. Haikus follow the format of 5-7-5 syllables. We give extra brownie points if you link back to an original story.

Opinions expressed in haikus and cartoons are solely the author's and do not reflect the opinions of KFF Health News or KFF.

Summaries Of The News:

PUBLIC HEALTH

5. Tylenol Hard Line Eases As Oz, Vance, Thune Advise Taking Doctor's Advice

The CMS administrator, vice president, and Senate Republican leader have broken with President Donald Trump on whether pregnant women should avoid taking acetaminophen to alleviate pain and fever. Former President Barack Obama also spoke out, saying the current administration's claims undermine public health.

The Hill: Dr. Mehmet Oz Softens Trump's Tylenol Warning For Pregnant Women

Dr. Mehmet Oz on Tuesday softened President Trump's warnings that pregnant women should not take Tylenol due to a largely unproven link to autism. In an interview with TMZ, Oz, who leads the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said pregnant women should consult with a physician and use the medication if they have a high fever. (Weixel, 9/24)

NBC News: Vance Says Pregnant Women Should 'Follow Your Doctor' When It Comes To Tylenol

Vice President JD Vance said Wednesday that pregnant women should follow their physicians' advice in deciding whether or not to take Tylenol, striking a different tone after President Donald Trump strongly discouraged its use. "What I took from the president's announcement and also the CDC's recommendations here is we just have to be careful," Vance said in a NewsNation interview. "We know that some of these medications have side effects. We know that even despite those side effects, sometimes they're necessary. So my guidance to pregnant women would be very simple, which is: Follow your doctor." (Richards, 9/24)

Politico: Thune Breaks With Trump Admin Over Tylenol, Government Role In Free Speech

Senate Majority Leader John Thune broke slightly with the Trump administration Wednesday, splitting from the GOP on government regulation of free speech and recent warnings linking Tylenol to autism. In an interview with CNN's "Inside Politics," Thune condemned the "coercive use of government" in regulating TV programming and said such decisions "ought to be made by the companies" after ABC temporarily pulled "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" from the airwaves last week. (Wardwell, 9/24)

Politico: 'Violence Against The Truth': Obama Denounces Trump's Tylenol Claims

Barack Obama has accused President Donald Trump of "violence against the truth" for linking autism to the use of Tylenol by pregnant women. The former president made a direct attack on his successor that was as rare for its forcefulness as for its setting — an arena stage on foreign soil in London on Wednesday — as he warned that the Trump administration's claims undermine public health. (Bloom, 9/24)

CNN: Many In The Autism Community Say They Need Support, Not A 'Cure'

At a very young age, Maxwell Huffman knew that he absorbed the world around him differently than most of his classmates. He was diagnosed with autism as a teenager, and nearly 20 years later, Huffman is an executive at Aspiritech, a Chicago-based nonprofit that works to find meaningful employment for people who have autism or are neurodiverse. (Musa, Hautau, Jaramillo-Plata and Ebanks, 9/24)

Also —

Bloomberg: HHS Reposts Old Tylenol Tweet Warning On Use During Pregnancy

US Health and Human Services resurfaced an old social media post from an account that appeared to be Tylenol's that cautioned against its use by pregnant women after the Trump administration linked the over-the-counter medication to autism. "We actually don't recommend using any of our products while pregnant," said the 2017 post from what appeared to be Tylenol's account on the site then called Twitter. This post looked to be in response to a consumer question. (Nix and Brown, 9/24)

AP: Trump Leucovorin-For-Autism Announcement Surprises Doctor Who Proposed It

When President Donald Trump's administration announced it would repurpose an old, generic drug as a new treatment for autism, it came as a surprise to many experts — including the physician who suggested the idea to the nation's top health officials. Dr. Richard Frye told The Associated Press that he'd been talking with federal regulators about developing his own customized version of the drug for children with autism, assuming more research would be required. (Perrone, 9/24)

MedPage Today: Does FDA's Leucovorin Decision Meet The Bar For Gold-Standard Science?

Although HHS under Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has made "gold-standard science" a priority, the principle appears to be absent from the FDA's impending approval of leucovorin calcium tablets (Wellcovorin), experts told MedPage Today. The treatment doesn't have evidence from large randomized controlled trials

supporting its use in autism, and it went through an atypical FDA approval review process, they said. (Fiore, 9/24)

The Wall Street Journal: RFK Jr.'s Team Wanted To Tout An Autism Therapy. He Went After Tylenol Instead.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s team had decided by the beginning of September to tell Americans that acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol, was a possible cause of autism. But officials were divided over how much emphasis to put on the painkiller and were planning to discuss it as one of many possible causes, people familiar with the matter said. Doctors that Kennedy had selected to lead key agencies under him—Jay Bhattacharya, Mehmet Oz and Marty Makary—suggested the big story should be leucovorin, a little-known generic drug in which they saw promise for alleviating autism symptoms. (Esley Whyte, 9/24)

ADMINISTRATION NEWS

6. Trump Plans To Shift USAID Funds To Boost 'America First' Agenda

The effort to retool the United States' foreign aid approach retreats from the longstanding practice of helping to treat and cure diseases, ending famines, and promoting democracy, The Washington Post reports. Plus, the U.N. outlines its health goals, Ben Carson returns to government, and more.

The Washington Post: Trump Administration Eyes USAID Money To Advance America First Goals

The Trump administration, in its latest challenge to Congress's authority over federal spending, intends to shift almost \$2 billion in U.S. foreign aid toward a slate of priorities aimed largely at advancing the president's "America First" agenda. The plan, which has not been reported previously, was outlined for lawmakers in a document the State Department sent to Capitol Hill on Sept. 12 and later reviewed by The Washington Post. It represents a dramatic rebranding of Washington's approach to foreign assistance after the Trump administration's dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) this year. (Robertson, 9/24)

The New York Times: U.N. Health Goals Weakened By Industry Pressure, Experts Say

In many respects, the United Nations declaration on chronic diseases that world leaders are expected to adopt on Thursday offers bold recommendations to combat soaring rates of hypertension, cancer, diabetes and other health conditions that kill a combined 43 million people a year. The document calls on its 193 member states to adopt universal health coverage and to increase access to mental health services. It also urges countries to add health warnings to cigarette and nicotine products, in an effort to reduce the number of premature deaths from tobacco. (Jacobs, 9/24)

More on MAHA —

Bloomberg: Trump Taps Ben Carson To Help Push MAHA Nutrition Agenda At USDA

Former Republican presidential candidate and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson

will take on a temporary role as a senior nutrition and housing adviser at the US Agriculture Department. Beginning Wednesday, Carson will serve as a point person at USDA to help advance Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s agenda to "Make America Healthy Again," an agency spokesperson said. USDA manages many key federal nutrition programs including SNAP benefits for low-income families and the national school meals program. (Peterson, 9/24)

On the restructuring of the federal government —

Politico: White House To Agencies: Prepare Mass Firing Plans For A Potential Shutdown

The White House budget office is instructing federal agencies to prepare reduction-in-force plans for mass firings during a possible government shutdown, specifically targeting employees who work for programs that are not legally required to continue. The Office of Management and Budget move to permanently reduce the government workforce if there is a shutdown, outlined in a memo shared with POLITICO ahead of release to agencies tonight, escalates the stakes of a potential shutdown next week. (Cai, 9/24)

The Washington Post: Federal Judge Declines To Reinstate Inspectors General Fired By Trump

A federal judge in Washington on Wednesday declined to reinstate eight inspectors general fired by President Donald Trump as part of a purge of government watchdogs in the early days of his second term, though she agreed the terminations were unlawful. In her ruling, U.S. District Judge Ana C. Reyes said it was "obvious" that Trump violated the 1978 Inspector General Act with the firings because he did not provide Congress with a 30-day notice of the dismissals or a valid reason for the removal of the Senate-confirmed inspectors general. (Cho, 9/25)

Politico: The Trump Administration Is Pushing Courts To Make More 'New Law'

Federal courts tend to avoid tackling unprecedented questions that strike at the heart of the separation of powers — the large and small mysteries left by the framers (and amenders) of the Constitution. Judges at every level are painfully aware that their decisions in cases of "first impression" risk unintended consequences that could destabilize the nation's balance of power. So when those questions present themselves, they often find ways to resolve the cases without issuing far-reaching rulings, or making "new law." (Cheney, 9/24)

On the immigration crisis —

The New York Times: Dallas ICE Facility Shooting Leaves One Detainee Dead And Two Injured

A sniper perched on a nearby rooftop fired at a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement field office in Dallas on Wednesday morning, killing one detainee and critically injuring two others, the Department of Homeland Security said. It was the latest act of violence to raise fears that politically motivated attacks are increasing in the United States. The authorities said that the gunman killed himself, and that no law enforcement officers were injured in the attack. (Goodman, Aleaziz and Levenson, 9/24)

ABC News 4: Court Ruling May Open Doors For Health Inspections At Tacoma's ICE Detention Center

The immigrant detention center in Tacoma has fought for years to keep health inspectors out of the facility, but a recent court ruling may finally clear the way. Over the past several years, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has received nearly 2,700 complaints about conditions inside the Northwest ICE Processing Center. However, it has been severely limited in its ability to follow up. Among the thousands of complaints received are issues regarding disease outbreaks involving tuberculosis, as well as access to medication, sanitation, and overcrowding. (Moreno, 9/24)

HEALTH CARE COSTS

7. Admin Costs Outpace Health Spending In Ga.'s Medicaid Work Program: GAO

Georgia's Pathways to Coverage is the nation's only Medicaid work requirement program and has been touted by congressional Republicans as a model for the nation. As of April, the Georgia program has spent \$54.2 million on administrative costs since 2021, compared to \$26.1 million spent on health care costs.

ProPublica, The Current: Georgia's Medicaid Work Requirement Program Spent Twice As Much On Administrative Costs As On Health Care, GAO Says

Most of the tax dollars used to launch and implement the nation's only Medicaid work requirement program have gone toward paying administrative costs rather than covering health care for Georgians, according to a new report by the Government Accountability Office, the nonpartisan agency that monitors federal programs and spending. The government report examined administrative expenses for Georgia Pathways to Coverage, the state's experiment with work requirements. It follows previous reporting by The Current and ProPublica showing that the program has cost federal and state taxpayers more than \$86.9 million while enrolling a tiny fraction of those eligible for free health care. (Coker, 9/24)

More on the high cost of health care —

The New York Times: Why Obamacare Bills May Double Next Year

Earlier this month, Julie Moringello, an artist in rural Maine, received a notice that her health care premiums could nearly double next year. She now pays \$460 a month for her Obamacare plan, but that amount is contingent on government subsidies that the Republican-controlled Congress may not extend. (Abelson and Sanger-Katz, 9/24)

Modern Healthcare: Providence, Adventist Health Layoffs Tied To Tax Law

Providers and insurers are cutting staff or eliminating unfilled positions due to forthcoming funding cuts stemming from the tax law. The law, H.R. 1, is expected to cost the industry \$1.1 trillion and leave 10 million people uninsured, according to the Congressional Budget Office. Among other likely challenges, health systems are forecasting less reimbursement for Medicare and Medicaid services, while insurers anticipate rising claims costs. (DeSilva, 9/24)

Modern Healthcare: How Community Health Worker Programs Can Boost Hospital ROI

Health systems are growing investments in community health workers, but they face questions about how to make these programs financially sustainable.

Community health workers are gearing up for the impact of federal healthcare funding cuts, and health systems hope they can help patients avoid losing insurance coverage with expiring enhanced subsidies and the new tax law, among other areas. But setting up these kinds of programs — and finding stable funding for them — can be tricky, even if community health workers ultimately help avoid unnecessary costs. (Hudson, 9/24)

KFF Health News: As Trump Punts On Medical Debt, Battle Over Patient Protections Moves To States

With the Trump administration scaling back federal efforts to protect Americans from medical bills they can't pay, advocates for patients and consumers have shifted their work to contain the nation's medical debt problem to state Capitols. Despite progress in some mostly blue states this year, however, recent setbacks in more conservative legislatures underscore the persistent challenges in strengthening patient protections. (Levey and Houghton and Zions, 9/25)

KFF Health News: Big Loopholes In Hospital Charity Care Programs Mean Patients Still Get Stuck With The Tab

Quinn Cochran-Zipp went to the emergency room three times with severe abdominal pain before doctors figured out she had early-stage cancer in the germ cells of her right ovary. After emergency surgery four years ago, the Greeley, Colorado, lab technician is cancer-free. The two hospitals that treated Cochran-Zipp at the time determined that she qualified for 100% financial assistance, since her income as a college student was extremely low. Not having to worry about the roughly \$100,000 in bills she racked up for her care was an enormous relief, she said. (Andrews, 9/25)

KFF Health News: AI Will Soon Have A Say In Approving Or Denying Medicare Treatments

Taking a page from the private insurance industry's playbook, the Trump administration will launch a program next year to find out how much money an artificial intelligence algorithm could save the federal government by denying care to Medicare patients. The pilot program, designed to weed out wasteful, "low-value" services, amounts to a federal expansion of an unpopular process called prior authorization, which requires patients or someone on their medical team to seek insurance approval before proceeding with certain procedures, tests, and prescriptions. (Sausser and Tahir, 9/25)

STATE WATCH

8. Oklahoma Hospital Loses Part Of Roof In Storm, Evacuates Some Patients

Damaging storms tore off a section of the roof at the Northeastern Health System hospital in Sallisaw and forced the evacuation of nine patients. Other states making news: Pennsylvania, North Carolina, California, Kansas, Illinois, Florida, Colorado, and elsewhere.

AP: Storms With Heavy Rain And Damaging Winds Tear Roof Off Oklahoma Hospital

Storms carrying heavy rain and damaging winds ripped part of the roof off a hospital in eastern Oklahoma on Tuesday afternoon, forcing some patients to be

evacuated, according to county officials. The Northeastern Health System hospital in Sallisaw had to evacuate around nine patients after a small section of its roof was peeled off, leaving part of the facility soaked, said Brad Taylor, Sequoyah County's Emergency Management director. No injuries had been reported, he said. (9/24)

More health news from across the U.S. —

Becker's Hospital Review: 2,600 Temple Health Workers Set To Strike

Members of the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals are set to begin a five-day strike Oct. 6 at Temple University Hospital Main Campus and Temple Women and Families Hospital in Philadelphia, with bone marrow transplant nurses and techs at Jeanes Hospital in Philadelphia also striking. The union represents 2,600 nurses, techs and professionals across two local chapters: the Temple University Hospital Nurses Association and the Temple University Hospital Allied Health Professionals, according to a union news release. As of 2024, Temple Health had more than 12,000 total faculty members and employees, according to its website. (Gooch, 9/24)

FiercePharma: Fujifilm Biotechnologies Christens \$3.2B Antibody Plant In N.C.

The opening of the Holly Springs, N.C., site, which will focus on antibody-based drugs, marks the debut of one of the largest cell culture biomanufacturing sites in the U.S., Fujifilm Biotechnologies said in a Sept. 24 press release. (Kansteiner, 9/24)

EdSource: After Federal Cuts, California Schools Could Lose Hundreds Of Mental Health Clinicians

After Jane Huang graduated from Eureka High School in 2018, she knew she wanted to go to college in a different town. She had struggled with severe depression, and when she could not keep up with her classes, teachers called her "lazy." She dreaded going to school, where she felt isolated from friends and family and outcast as one of the few Chinese American students in Eureka, a rural and low-income seaport town in Northern California. As an undergraduate student at Cal State East Bay, majoring in psychology, Huang returned to Eureka High School as a student mental health worker in a role funded by the federal government's school-based mental health grants in 2022. (Sanganeria, 9/24)

Investigate Midwest: These Rural Communities Feed The World. They're Also Going Hungry.

Over the last four decades, America's agricultural output has nearly doubled, as the production of livestock and crops has not only fed the nation but also fueled growing food demand in Asia and South America. But in the rural communities that have made the U.S. a global food power, residents are increasingly finding it difficult to access enough food for themselves. While the national food insecurity rate has dropped slightly over the last decade, farming-dependent counties have seen an 11.7% increase. (Felder, 9/24)

Vaccine updates from Illinois, Florida, Colorado, and the Pentagon —

Chicago Tribune: Illinois Issues Its Own COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations

Illinois has released its own recommendations on COVID-19 vaccines — urging all

adults and many children to get the shots, in a break with the federal government's guidance. (Schencker, 9/24)

Tampa Bay Times: Florida Touts Doctor Freedom But Pushes Them To Take Unvaccinated Kids

In Florida, you can't turn away a patient on the basis of their race, color, sex, religion or national origin. But a doctor can turn someone away if they're unvaccinated. And in the Tampa Bay area, several pediatricians do. (Ellenboogen, 9/24)

Colorado Sun: New Colorado Group Aims To Help With Vaccine Access And Education

With major, rapid changes upending longstanding federal immunization policies, it's seldom been more confusing to get vaccinated. But a new group in Colorado is hoping to clear the confusion and ensure access to vaccines for those who want them. The group is called Colorado Chooses Vaccines, and it's a coalition of at least a dozen major medical and community organizations in the state. Those organizations run the gamut from hospitals — Children's Hospital Colorado, Denver Health and the Colorado Hospital Association are all on board — to professional associations — including the Colorado Medical Society and the Colorado chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics — to nonprofits such as the Colorado Children's Campaign and academic institutions such as the Colorado School of Public Health. (Ingold, 9/25)

AP: Pentagon Adds Exemptions To Flu Shot Requirement

The Pentagon has stepped back from the policy that requires all troops to get the flu shot every year by introducing exemptions for reservists and proclaiming that the shot is only necessary in some circumstances for all service members, according to a document obtained by The Associated Press. The memo, written by Deputy Defense Secretary Steve Feinberg on May 29 and sent to all the military services, says reserve troops now will need to be on active duty for 30 days or more before being required to get an annual flu shot. It also says the military will no longer be paying for reservists or National Guard members to get the vaccine on their own time. (Toropin, 9/25)

PHARMA AND TECH

9. Experimental Gene Therapy Curbs Progression Of Huntington's Disease

The results of the small trial have not been published or peer reviewed, but the gene therapy company uniQure is looking to seek approval for the experimental treatment early next year. Plus, news on junk genes, anti-malaria baby wraps, the rollout of cheaper HIV drugs, and more.

The Washington Post: New Gene Therapy Slows Huntington's Disease Progression

An experimental treatment for the first time slowed the devastating progression of Huntington's disease, gene therapy company uniQure announced Wednesday, a rare hopeful advance against a cruel genetic disease that robs people of control of their bodies and minds in the prime of life. ... About 40,000 people in the United

States have symptomatic Huntington's, which is caused by a mutated gene.
(Johnson, 9/24)

In other innovations —

The Washington Post: For Decades, Scientists Puzzled Over A Genetic Anomaly. They Just Solved It

When couples have trouble conceiving a baby or lose a pregnancy, they often undergo routine tests, which can turn up a shock: One of the prospective parents may be missing a chromosome. The most common chromosomal abnormality — carried by about 1 in 800 people — is a “Robertsonian translocation,” when two chromosomes get fused together. People are often healthy, but one short of the typical 46 chromosomes for a human. Most don't learn they carry this genetic anomaly unless they experience reproductive problems and seek testing.
(Johnson, 9/24)

MedPage Today: Insecticide-Treated Baby Wraps Ward Off Malaria

Toting around young children in baby wraps treated with insect repellent cut their malaria infection rate by two-thirds, according to findings of a randomized trial in Uganda. Among 400 pairs of moms and children who all used insecticide-treated bed nets at night, the clinical malaria incidence rate for infants fell by 66% for those carried in permethrin-treated wraps rather than sham-treated wraps ... said researchers led by Ross Boyce, MD, of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (Rudd, 9/24)

On the high costs of prescription drugs —

Bloomberg: Gates Foundation Accelerates Rollout Of Cheaper HIV Drug Lenacapavir Injection

A twice-yearly injection described as the most promising HIV prevention tool in decades is poised to reach millions more people, with new generic versions priced at about \$40 per patient per year. The Gates Foundation and Indian drugmaker Hetero Labs Ltd. are among the groups moving to produce the medication, lenacapavir, which Gilead Sciences Inc. sells in the US for a list price of more than \$28,000 annually under the brand name Yeztugo. (Kew and Furlong, 9/24)

Bloomberg: Cancer Drug Makers Push \$200,000 Cure Even As Cheaper Options May Work

Three hours inland from Chennai, India, traffic crawls on a half-finished road past rice fields and cow crossings until it reaches a newer complex of neat white buildings. Among them is the cancer wing of a hospital founded over a century ago by American missionaries. ... A single infusion might cost at least \$7,000 at the standard dose in the US, and a year's treatment more than \$200,000. Here, by financial necessity, most of the patients are getting as little as one-sixth of that.
(Langreth, 9/24)

Bloomberg: Pharma Middlemen Seek To Head Off New Rules With Voluntary Changes

Pharmacy middlemen are working on a proposal to voluntarily change some of their business practices in an effort to avoid new regulation from the Trump administration, according to people familiar with the discussions. The main lobbying group that represents so-called pharmacy benefit managers, the Pharmaceutical Care Management Association, has drafted proposals to bring to

the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, according to a document viewed by Bloomberg News. (Tozzi and Cohrs Zhang, 9/24)

ScienceDaily: Breakthrough Method Could Dramatically Cut Prescription Drug Prices

University of Maine researchers developed a new process to make HBL, a key ingredient in many medicines, from renewable glucose instead of petroleum. The approach not only lowers drug production costs but also reduces emissions. (University of Maine, 9/21)

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

10. Air Pollution Might Be To Blame For Worsening Eyesight In Kids, Study Says

The study showed that although genetics is a main factor, extended exposure to nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter might contribute to higher rates of nearsightedness among children. Also, about 1.6 billion people will be affected by toxic air from burning fossil fuels, data indicate.

The Washington Post: Air Pollution Could Be Worsening Children's Vision, Study Says

It's well established that air pollution causes a wide variety of harms to the human body, raising the risk of heart disease, respiratory diseases and strokes. But new research has highlighted yet another damaging impact: to our vision. The research found that extended exposure to air pollutants, specifically nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter, could be contributing to high rates of myopia, also known as short- or nearsightedness, in schoolchildren in China. (Ajasa, 9/24)

More on pollution and fossil fuels —

The Guardian: Fossil Fuel Burning Poses Threat To Health Of 1.6B People, Data Shows

A new interactive map from Climate Trace, a coalition of academics and analysts that tracks pollution and greenhouse gases, shows that PM2.5 and other toxins are being poured into the air near the homes of about 1.6 billion people. Of these, about 900 million are in the path of "super-emitting" industrial facilities – including power plants, refineries, ports and mines – that deliver outside doses of toxic air. (Harvey, 9/24)

News-Medical.net: Study Shows Dementia Patients Exposed To Pollution Had Longer Telomeres

Associations between air pollution and subsequent risk of dementia are growing clinical concerns, but remain understudied. The biological underpinnings of these associations are especially unclear. In a recent study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, researchers explored one hypothesized pathway involving telomeres (that shorten with age) by analyzing data from 473 older adults from Northern Sweden who had complete information on air pollution exposure, telomere length, and covariates. Study findings did not reveal an overall association between exposure to air pollution and telomere length. However, study analyses highlight a slight, statistically nonsignificant trend suggesting that individuals who later developed dementia had longer telomeres, despite higher

exposure to pollution, a counterintuitive finding that warrants further investigation. (de Souza, 9/24)

AP: Al Gore's Climate TRACE Uses AI And Satellites To Track Soot Pollution

Soon people will be able to use satellite technology and artificial intelligence to track dangerous soot pollution in their neighborhoods — and where it comes from — in a way not so different from monitoring approaching storms under plans by a nonprofit coalition led by former Vice President Al Gore. Gore, who co-founded Climate TRACE, which uses satellites to monitor the location of heat-trapping methane sources, on Wednesday expanded his system to track the source and plume of pollution from tiny particles, often referred to as soot, on a neighborhood basis for 2,500 cities across the world. (Borenstein, 9/24)

The Guardian: World's Oceans Fail Key Health Check As Acidity Crosses Critical Threshold For Marine Life

The world's oceans have failed a key planetary health check for the first time, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels, a report has shown. In its latest annual assessment, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research said ocean acidity had crossed a critical threshold for marine life. This makes it the seventh of nine planetary boundaries to be transgressed, prompting scientists to call for a renewed global effort to curb fossil fuels, deforestation and other human-driven pressures that are tilting the Earth out of a habitable equilibrium. (Watts, 9/24)

On pesticides in food —

Inside Climate News: Pesticides In Your Produce? Probably.

If you eat a daily serving of fruits and vegetables, critical components of a healthy diet, you're likely ingesting a hefty dose of pesticides too, new peer-reviewed research shows. People who ate strawberries, spinach, kale and other produce with high levels of pesticide residues, even after washing them, had significantly higher amounts of pesticides in their urine than those who ate less-contaminated produce, scientists with the Environmental Working Group reported Wednesday in the International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health. (Gross, 9/24)

HEALTH POLICY RESEARCH

11. Research Roundup: The Latest Science, Discoveries, And Breakthroughs

Each week, KFF Health News compiles a selection of the latest health research and news.

CIDRAP: CDC: Most Enteric Disease Outbreaks Linked To Fruit, Backyard Poultry

A new report on 2023 outbreaks of enteric, or intestinal, diseases in the United States from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that fruits were the source of most foodborne outbreaks, and backyard poultry was the most common source of animal-contact cases and outbreaks. (Soucheray, 9/23)

FiercePharma: Gen Z Shows Least Trust, Satisfaction In Pharma: Survey

Almost 40% of Gen Z survey respondents value social media as a trusted source for health information, compared to 22% of other, older generations. (Becker, 9/23)

CIDRAP: Study Links Long COVID To Higher Risk Of Heavy Menstrual Bleeding

Women who have long COVID are at higher risk for heavy menstrual bleeding (HMB), perhaps from an outsized inflammatory response, British and French researchers report in Nature Communications. (Van Beusekom, 9/23)

MedPage Today: Skipping First Breast Cancer Screening Has Long-Term Consequences

Women who did not participate in a national screening program when invited at age 40 or 50 had a 50% greater risk of developing stage III breast cancer and almost a fourfold greater risk of stage IV (metastatic) disease over the subsequent 25 years. Breast cancer mortality was 40% higher in patients who did not get screened when first eligible. (Bankhead, 9/24)

Phys.org: Culture Is Overtaking Genetics In Shaping Human Evolution, Researchers Argue

Researchers at the University of Maine are theorizing that human beings may be in the midst of a major evolutionary shift—driven not by genes, but by culture. (Wolf, 9/15)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

12. Viewpoints: H-1B Visa Fee Unfairly Targets Critical Indian-Born Doctors; Autistic People Don't Need To Be Cured

Opinion writers tackle these public health issues.

Stat: A \$100,000 Fee For H-1B Visas Will Devastate U.S. Health Care

Last Friday, President Trump announced that every new H-1B visa application will carry a \$100,000 fee. In practice, this will end the H-1B program and with it, a critical pipeline of health care workers the U.S. cannot afford to lose. (Geeta Minocha, 9/25)

USA Today: I'm Autistic. Trump And RFK Jr. Must Stop Treating Us Like A Plague To Be Eradicated.

[Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.] has painted autistic people's existence as a plague. In their news conference, he and [President Donald] Trump reaffirmed that the administration's goal is to end autism. (Colin Killick, 9/23)

Stat: How President Trump's Remarks About Autism Hurt Autistic People Like Me

The reality is that there's no "epidemic" of autism. As pointed out time and time again by the autistic community, the increase in the number of people being diagnosed can be largely explained by better screening and more awareness. (David Rivera, 9/25)

The Washington Post: Jailing Of Journalist Shows China Still Fears Covid Truth

Nearly six years after the coronavirus first appeared in Wuhan, sparking a pandemic, Chinese authorities are still acting as though they have something to hide — and fear. Last Friday, a brave journalist who helped expose the impact of the coronavirus's early days in Wuhan was once again sentenced to four years in

prison, apparently for continuing to rattle authorities by speaking truth and refusing to be silenced. (9/24)

The Washington Post: AI Just Created A Working Virus. The U.S. Isn't Prepared For That.

In a remarkable paper released this month, scientists at Stanford University showed that computers can design new viruses that can then be created in the lab. How is that possible? Think of ChatGPT, which learned to write by studying patterns in English. The Stanford team used the same idea on the fundamental building block of life, training “genomic language models” on the DNA of bacteriophages — viruses that infect bacteria but not humans — to see whether a computer could learn their genetic grammar well enough to write something new. (Tal Feldman and Jonathan Feldman, 9/25)

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