

COVID-19 WEEKLY COMPENDIUM

DECEMBER 14, 2021 | YEAR 2, VOLUME 41

CLINICAL UPDATES

[Reporting Urgent Notifiable Conditions by Telephone - Maine HAN \(12/9\)](#)

[CDC, FDA Sign Off on Pfizer Boosters for 16- and 17-Year-Olds - Medscape \(12/9\)](#)

[Omicron May Require Fourth Vaccine Dose, Pfizer Says - Medscape \(12/9\)](#)

[Immunization Action Coalition Answers Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination - IAC Express \(12/14\)](#)



**Leaps.org & Sabin-Aspen Vaccine Science & Policy Group presents
COVID Vaccines: The Latest on Omicron, Boosters, and Immunity**
Friday, December 17 | 2:00–3:30 PM | [Information & Registration](#)

A group of four leading scientific and medical experts will discuss the most pressing questions around the new Omicron variant, including what we know so far about its ability to evade COVID-19 vaccines, the role of boosters in eliciting heightened immunity, and the science behind variants and vaccines. A public Q&A will follow the expert discussion.

INTERESTING READS

[Your Questions About Omicron, Answered - Consumer Reports \(12/8\)](#)

The recently identified Omicron variant of the coronavirus has sparked a new wave of concern about the trajectory of the pandemic. While there's much we don't yet know about this particular strain of SARS-CoV-2, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the CDC have designated it a "variant of concern."

[Fauci says Omicron-specific version of Covid-19 vaccines may not be necessary - STAT News \(12/10\)](#)

Anthony Fauci isn't convinced Covid-19 vaccine manufacturers are going to need to produce an Omicron-specific version of their vaccines.

[The Omicron variant can likely outcompete Delta — and that could worsen the U.S. Covid-19 epidemic - STAT News \(12/10\)](#)

As the Omicron variant snowballs in South Africa and widens its inroads in Europe, evidence is mounting that it can outcompete the highly transmissible Delta variant — a potential warning signal for the United States.

[We Know a Lot More About Omicron Now - The Atlantic \(12/8\)](#)

The flood of Omicron news can be overwhelming. The endless data, anecdotes, and studies are hard enough to synthesize.

[The Coronavirus Attacks Fat Tissue, Scientists Find - The New York Times \(12/8\)](#)

From the start of the pandemic, the coronavirus seemed to target people carrying extra pounds. Patients who were overweight or obese were more likely to develop severe Covid-19 and more likely to die.

[Governor Mills Activates Maine National Guard to Maintain Hospital Capacity & Ensure Care for Maine People Amid Increasing COVID-19 Hospitalizations - maine.gov \(12/8\)](#)

Governor Janet Mills announced Wednesday that she has activated additional members of the Maine National Guard to help alleviate short-term capacity constraints at hospitals and maintain access to inpatient health care services for Maine people amid a sustained surge of COVID-19.

[Pandemic fuels rising reports of anxiety and depression among Maine students - Portland Press Herald \(12/10\)](#)

As the pandemic continues to disrupt normal routines, students are finding it more difficult to learn and interact with their peers, according to school-based mental health workers statewide.

['Twindemic' fears are back. And this time they might foretell a tragic season - CNN \(12/7\)](#)

Just before South African scientists identified the Omicron coronavirus variant, many experts were beginning to focus on a completely different potential problem: the collision of Covid-19 and influenza, which is now in the first weeks of its annual surge.

[Don't let your guard down — roll up your sleeves for a flu shot - Horizon Health News \(10/25\)](#)

Concerns rise for a twindemic. Some facts to know about fighting off the flu and COVID-19.

[How to weigh coronavirus risks this holiday season - The Washington Post \(12/3\)](#)

Last year, the pandemic forced many to dramatically alter their holiday plans. Annual parties were canceled, gift exchanges moved into video chat rooms, outdoor patios transformed into dining rooms and menorah candles were lit with far fewer loved ones gathered around. Much has changed since then, bringing hope that this holiday season will be different.

DENTAL UPDATES

[Pre-procedural Mouth rinses Are Highly Effective in Reducing the SARS-CoV-2 Viral Load in the Oral Cavity for Up to 45 Minutes - Practice Update \(12/11\)](#)

[Bacterial Contamination of Forehead Skin and Surgical Mask in Aerosol-Producing Dental Treatment - Practice Update \(12/11\)](#)

[Oral Manifestations of Multisystemic Inflammatory Syndrome in Children \(MIS-C\) and Kawasaki Disease Associated With COVID-19 - Practice Update \(12/9\)](#)

[Periodontal Disease May Exacerbate the Effect of Obesity on Hospitalization and Mortality Following COVID-19 Infection - Practice Update \(12/11\)](#)

[Pandemic linked to rise in blood pressure among U.S. adults - DrBicuspid \(12/9\)](#)

POLICY & COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

HRSA Plans to Revise the Rules Governing the 340B ADR Process

HRSA is going “back to the drawing board” to re-write the regulations that govern the 340B Administrative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process – the process that has been a major stumbling block in CHCs’ efforts to get relief from contract pharmacy restrictions.

On Friday, Dec. 10, 2021, the [agency announced](#) plans to issue a new “Notice of Proposed Rulemaking” for the ADR process next month, and to invite public comment on the proposal. After considering the comments, HRSA will issue a new Final Rule that will replace the regulation currently in effect.

The current ADR regulation was issued last December, in response to lawsuits filed on behalf of 340B providers (including by NACHC on behalf of CHCs) seeking relief from contract pharmacy restrictions. That Final Rule was based on a proposed rule that the agency had issued in 2016, but never followed up on. Manufacturers have sued HRSA over that Rule, arguing that the agency failed to adequately consider public input when finalizing it. By developing a new regulation from scratch, HHS is likely seeking to invalidate those arguments.

It is unclear how this development will impact CHCs, particularly their contract pharmacy arrangements. On the one hand, it will likely further delay the timeline to receive a decision via the ADR process. On the other hand, a new regulation may strengthen the government’s legal arguments in court. Stay tuned. We will pass along new information as it unfolds.

Build Back Better Act Moves Slowly in the Senate

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) still aims to pass the Build Back Better (BBB) Act by Christmas. The Senate parliamentarian is reviewing the legislation to ensure it complies with Senate reconciliation rules, but the timeline could slip to next year as issues over some provisions, including family leave, drug pricing, and climate change, persist. Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) [has yet to commit](#) to voting for the legislation.

WORKFORCE UPDATE

[UMaine Opens admission for Machias Nursing Pathway - UMM.edu \(12/2\)](#)

The University of Maine is taking a critical step to provide access to its nationally ranked Bachelor of Science in Nursing education program for the Down East region through its regional campus, the University of Maine at Machias.

HRSA Health Center COVID-19 Survey Change on Friday, December 17

In the **Health Center COVID-19 Survey** you'll receive this week, we will ask you to let us know if you hosted family vaccination clinics and, if so, how many. There will be a change in existing questions 12 and 12a. We will update the [Survey User Guide](#) by noon on Friday, December 17.

RACIAL JUSTICE/HEALTH DISPARITY RESOURCES & INFO

Center of Excellence for Integrated Health Solutions presents CoE Office Hour: Understand Health Inequities, Health Disparities & Social Determinants of Health within Integrated Care Settings

Thursday, December 16 | 2:00 -3:00 PM | [Register](#)

Join our panel of health equity experts as they explore the connections between health inequity, health disparities and social determinants of health. To kick things off, authors of our new toolkit, [Access for Everyone: A Toolkit for Addressing Health Equity and Racial Justice within Integrated Care Settings](#), will introduce two brand-new modules in the toolkit that address health inequity, health disparities and social determinants of health.

For resources and other relevant information, please visit the [Racial Justice/Health Disparities Resources](#) page on the [MPCA website](#).

CoverMe.gov Links Mainers to the Health Coverage

[CoverMe.gov](#) provides help sorting through coverage options and enrollment. There is a [plan compare tool](#) that can help you determine if your doctor and preferred hospital is in network, or if your prescription drugs are covered. There is also a [Get Help](#) page to direct you to someone in your local area who is trained to help you explore plans and enroll in coverage.

Mainers can also call Maine's free, confidential Consumer Assistance Program HelpLine at 1-800-965-7476. The HelpLine, provided by [Consumers for Affordable Health Care](#), provides access to trained Assisters who can help you understand your options and enroll in coverage. Anyone in need of coverage should enroll by 12/15/21 for coverage to start January 1, 2022.



BILLING, CODING & TELEHEALTH NEWS

For updates from insurers and other relevant information, please visit the [Telehealth Resources](#) page on the [MPCA website](#).

CHCNET UPDATE

For the latest information concerning the MPCA's HCCN, **Community Health Center Network of Maine (CHCNet)**, or for support with health information technology needs, please visit the [CHCNet Member Portal](#) or contact Michael Pancook: mpancook@mepca.org.

RESOURCES ADDENDUM

[AFTER HOURS](#) - MPCA OFFICE HOURS RESOURCES

For the **Stay Informed, Sign Up, Maine Helps**, and **Coping and Stress Resources** information, please visit the [Compendium Resources Addendum](#) page on the [MPCA website](#).

Is Your Health Center Hiring?

Click on the Job Board icon to utilize the new MPCA Job Board and list your openings on our website!



Please click on the calendar for a full listing of upcoming MPCA trainings and events.

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Join MPCA on Slack! We are building our communication outreach capacity between meetings using the Slack communication platform. Many of you are already connected with us in several peer groups including our **Clinical Channel** and our **Billing and Coding Channel**. Please feel free to reach out to it@mepca.org for help with joining.