

C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network Newsletter

Issue 16



Please visit the C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network webpage at: <https://alpharmacycares.org/>

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Hello C. A. R. E. S. Pharmacy Network members, we hope you are all well and enjoying the summer season! This June, we attended the APA 140th Annual Conference in Destin, FL. It was great to connect with many of the current members and introduce the C.A.R.E.S. program to the conference attendees.

We would like to thank you for your hard work in protecting the community from the pandemic.

We also appreciate your continued participation in our network during the pandemic.

In this issue, we bring your attention to the newly identified SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant. We highlighted the impacts of this more contagious variant on the elderly and how pharmacists can help to provide correct and timely information regarding the pandemic and the new variant. In addition, we provided more information regarding what to do to prevent COVID-19 vaccine fraud. We listed what personal information scammers ask for and how they collect these information.

To keep you informed on the most up-to-date information, we provide regular updates about Medicare and COVID-19 at our website: www.alpharmacycares.org. Feel free to check us out and/or subscribe.

We thank you for referring patients to us for thorough benefit screening. If you need more referral cards and/or pre-stamped envelopes, please let us know!

For our continuing education (CE) programs, pharmacists and technicians can complete this at <https://www.alpharmacycares.org/continuing-education-program>

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Sterling Professor
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The Threat of the New SARS-CoV-2 Delta Variant

Virginia Reese, PharmD Candidate and MPH Candidate

Introduction

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are three classes of SARS-CoV-2 variants. They are variant of interest, variant of concern and variant of high consequence. The new delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 is classified as a variant of concern. The CDC defines a variant of concern as “a variant for which there is evidence of an increase in transmissibility, more severe disease, significant reduction in neutralization by antibodies generated during previous infection or vaccination, reduced effectiveness of treatments or vaccines, or diagnostic detection failures.”¹ The World Health Organization defines a variant of concern as “being associated with one or more of the following changes at a degree of global public health significance: increase in transmissibility or detrimental change in COVID-19 epidemiology; or increase in virulence or change in clinical disease presentation; or decrease in effectiveness of public health and social measures or available diagnostics, vaccines, therapeutics.”²

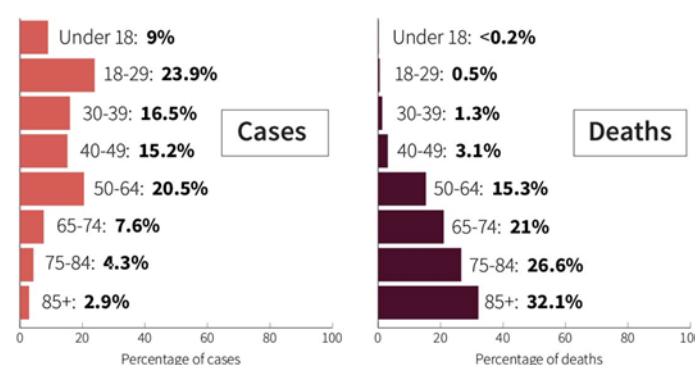
Epidemiology

The delta variant first appeared in India in December of 2020 and was firstly identified in the U.S. in March 2021. The delta variant is more contagious than its predecessors. By far, confirmed cases caused by the Delta variant have been reported in all fifty states in the U.S.³ The CDC with the assistance of other commercial diagnostic laboratories and the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), has produced data containing the estimated biweekly proportions of the most common SARS-CoV-2 lineages circulating the United States. Until July 17th, the most common lineage is delta variant (82.2%) and the alpha variant as the second most common (9.0%).⁴

The impacts on older adults

On the report of CDC data relating to COVID-19-associated hospitalizations by age, since the beginning of the pandemic and up until June, there is a cumulative case count of 82,839 in patients at 65 years old and older. Over the week from July 19th, there have been 249 hospitalizations for patients 65 years old and older.⁵

Coronavirus cases and deaths by age group



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC COVID Data Tracker.
Based on available data as of Oct. 29, 2020.

AARP

The effects of COVID-19 vaccines

Although the delta variant could infect some individuals who are fully vaccinated, fortunately, COVID-19 vaccines could provide effective protection against the new variant for most of people. Until March, 78% of Americans who are 65 and older are fully vaccinated.⁶ If full vaccination is obtained, the Pfizer vaccine is about 88% effective at prevention infection from the delta variant.⁷

What can we do as pharmacist?

- As pharmacists, one of our primary responsibilities is to make patients aware of what they can do to protect themselves from COVID-19.

We can provide information about the current vaccinations that can be provided by their local pharmacy, we can ensure that patients receive their full vaccination dose and we can remind patients about the most recent safety measures put forth by the CDC. These safety measures include wearing a mask when spending time around people, staying six feet away from people who are not part of your household, washing hands frequently, steering clear of crowded indoor spaces, and paying attention to local COVID-19 infection rates.³

- Pharmacists can take action to communicate up-to-date information associated with COVID-19.

Since the largely onset of the pandemic, new information has been emerging frequently, making it challenging to identify credible information and stay up-to-date. The public trust in science was getting lower because of the misinformation associated with the pandemic.⁸ In addition, people may feel fatigue with vast COVID-19 information.

Therefore, Community pharmacists are at a critical position in communicating credible and up-to-date information with patients.⁹

- Specifically for Medicare patients, we can remind them of the benefits they receive concerning COVID-19.

Medicare covers the COVID-19 vaccine at no cost and Medicare will even pay a doctor or other healthcare provider to administer the vaccine in a patient's home in the case that they are unable to leave their home.¹⁰

Summary

The new delta variant is spreading quickly and monopolizing the majority of new cases of COVID-19.¹ Considering the amount of patients sixty-five years old and older who are either hospitalized or have died due to COVID-19, it is pertinent that this age population take

precautions against acquiring this new variant of concern. There is already a large proportion of Medicare population that are vaccinated and those who are not should highly consider vaccination as it provides strong protection against the delta variant. Taking into account the current Medicare population, it is important to provide awareness to Medicare beneficiaries their options in receiving the vaccine. If vaccination is not obtained, patients should take other precautions to protect themselves against any form of SARS-CoV-2. Up to date information on COVID-19 can be provided by the CDC's website or by a patient's healthcare provider.

Resources

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, July 13). SARS-CoV-2 Variant Classifications and Definitions. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/variant-info.html#Concern>
2. World Health Organization. (2021, July 6). Tracking SARS-CoV-2 Variants. World Health Organization (WHO). <https://www.who.int/en/activities/tracking-SARS-CoV-2-variants/>
3. Hackensack Meridian Health. (2021, July 14). 3 Things You Need to Know About the Delta Variant. <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/HealthU/2021/07/14/3-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-delta-variant/>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021a, June 19). COVID Data Tracker. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#variant-proportions>
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6. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (2021, March 12). CMS Fast Facts. <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/CMS-Fast-Facts>. <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/CMS-Fast-Facts>
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8. Marwitz KK. The pharmacist's active role in combating COVID-19 medication misinformation. *J Am Pharm Assoc* (2003). 2020. doi:10.1016/j.japh.2020.10.022.
9. Erku DA, Belachew SA, Abrha S, et al. When fear and misinformation go viral: Pharmacists' role in deterring medication misinformation during the 'infodemic' surrounding COVID-19. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*. 2021;17(1):1954-1963. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2020.04.032>
10. U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. (2021). Medicare & Coronavirus. Medicare.Gov. <https://www.medicare.gov/medicare-coronavirus>

COVID-19 Vaccine Fraud

Kavon Diggs, PharmD Candidate

As people are struggling to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and all its associated measures, those eligible for vaccines are now being told to be wary of vaccine fraud. The United States Department of Justice warns the U.S. citizens to be aware that criminals are attempting to exploit COVID-19 worldwide through a variety of scams.¹ Healthcare imposters may collect personal information via offering COVID-19 tests and vaccines, HHS grants, Medicare prescription cards, and etc. The information collected is then used for financial benefit by billing insurance companies and committing medical identity theft.²

As the healthcare field continues to collect and share research to fight COVID-19, people are often asked to provide identifying information by completing surveys or donating money, among others. While this information can be crucial in combating a virus, it is important to be vigilant in volunteering such information.

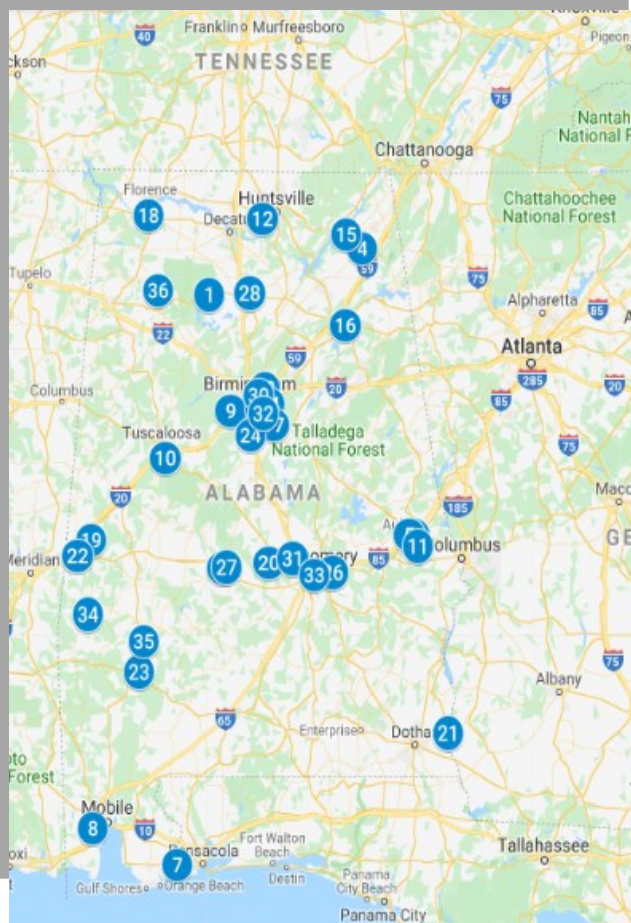
In December of 2020, The United State's Attorney for the District of Maryland reported that it seized two fraudulent websites pretending to be biotechnical companies developing a COVID-19 vaccine.³ There have also been cases of distinguished medical companies obtaining honest vaccines fraudulently in order to distribute them to groups of currently ineligible peoples. In any instance, people must refrain from sharing personal details and only do so cautiously to trusted healthcare workers. People should be aware of to whom they are providing personal information and recognize that the following details are often asked for by scammers: medical history, insurance information, and social security information.

Fraudsters may attempt to collect personal information via phone, text, email, social media, and other postings. Many are posing as the IRS claiming that consumers have overpaid stimulus or pretending to be conducting research and distributing vaccines. Some claim to be contacting consumers on behalf of CARES which aids seniors in accessing healthcare.¹ Take caution by hanging up on suspicious callers, avoiding hyperlinks, deleting suspicious text messages, and avoiding making online payments. Continue to take caution by only providing personal information to trusted healthcare workers.

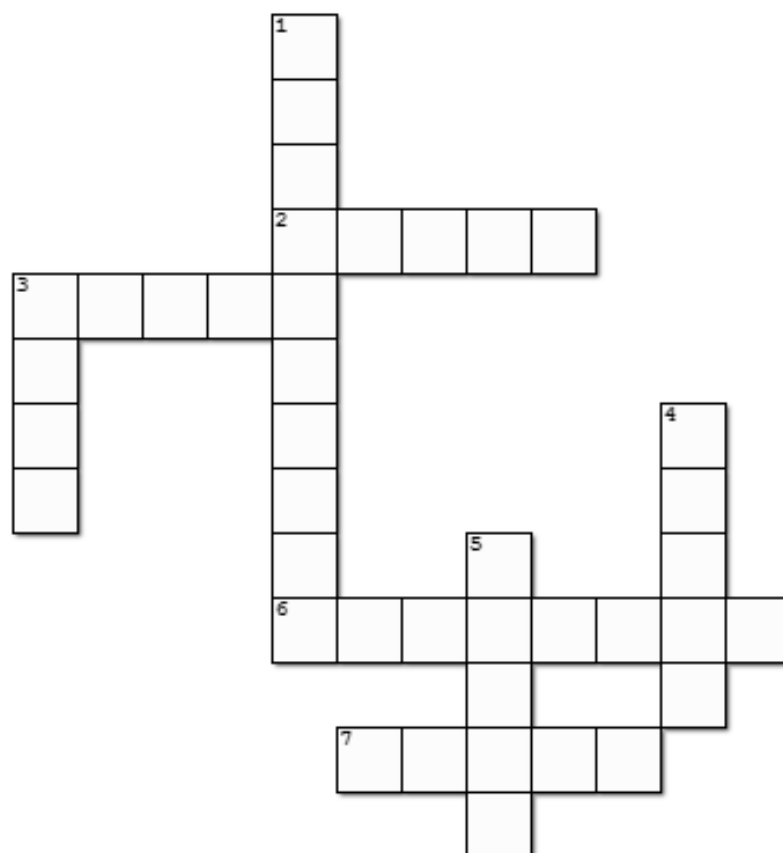
Resources

1. Combatting covid-19 fraud. (2021, March 11). Retrieved July 02, 2021, from <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus/combatingfraud>
2. Fraud alert: Covid-19 scams. (2021, March 25). Retrieved July 02, 2021, from <https://oig.hhs.gov/fraud/consumer-alerts/fraud-alert-covid-19-scams/>
3. Maryland U.S. Attorney's OFFICE Seizes two domain NAMES purporting to be websites of biotechnology companies developing treatments FOR COVID-19. (2020, December 18). Retrieved July 02, 2021, from <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/pr/maryland-us-attorney-s-office-seizes-two-domain-names-purporting-be-websites>

1. Addison Discount Pharmacy | Addison, AL
2. Kroger Pharmacy | Opelika, AL
3. Walgreens Pharmacy #6955 | Hueytown, AL
4. Rainsville Drugs | Rainsville, AL
5. Walmart Neighborhood Market | East University location, Auburn, AL
6. Walgreens Pharmacy #4589 | Pelham, AL
7. Lillian Pharmacy | Lillian, AL
8. Pharmacy Services of Mobile | Mobile, AL
9. Weldon Pharmacy | Hueytown, AL
10. Beauregard Drugs | Auburn, AL
11. Rite Aid Pharmacy #07054 | Madison, AL
12. Rite Aid Pharmacy #07013 | Birmingham, AL
13. Continuity of Care Internal Medicine Clinics- Brookwood Baptist Health | Birmingham, AL
14. Section Pharmacy | Section, AL
15. Gadsden City Pharmacy | Gadsden, AL
16. Fred's Pharmacy #3056 | Tuscumbia, AL
17. Walmart Pharmacy #4330 | Chelsea, AL
18. The Drug Store | Livingston, AL
19. Beasley Pharmacy | Columbia, AL
20. City Drugs | Grove Hill, AL
21. Walgreens Pharmacy #10525 | Tuscaloosa, AL
22. Walgreens Pharmacy #9427 | Pelham, AL
23. Winn-Dixie Pharmacy #0543 | Selma, AL
24. Autauga Pharmacy | Autaugaville, AL
25. Turenne PharMedCo | Montgomery, AL
26. Swift Drug Co. | Selma, AL
27. Borden Family Pharmacy | Cullman, AL
28. Walgreens #10333 | Birmingham, AL
29. Adams Drugs | Prattville, AL
30. Christ Health Center Pharmacy | Birmingham, AL
31. Walgreens Pharmacy #11651 | Birmingham, AL
32. Walgreens Pharmacy #9456 | Montgomery, AL
33. Willard's Medical Arts Pharmacy | Butler, AL
34. Family Medicine Pharmacy | Thomasville, AL
35. Haley's Pharmacy | Haleyville, AL



Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

2. Remember to provide personal information only to the healthcare workers you ____.
3. Scammers may collect personal information via phone, text, email, social ____, and other postings
6. Scammers often ask for medical history, insurance information, and social ____ information.
7. Our newest C.A.R.E.S Pharmacy Network Member is ____'s Pharmacy.

Down

1. The Delta variant is more ____ than its predecessors.
3. A ____ provides well protection when Going to the grocery store.
4. The newly identified SARS-CoV-2 variant is ____ variant.
5. The Delta variant could infect some individuals who are ____ vaccinated for COVID.

C.A.R.E.S. Team Members at APA 140th Annual Conference



The past June, we represented the C.A.R.E.S. Program to attend the 140th Alabama Pharmacy Association 2021 Annual Conference at Destin, FL. It was wonderful to meet with many of our members in-person and introduce the C.A.R.E.S. Program to the conference attendees!



REMINDER!

In partnership with Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS), the C.A.R.E.S. program is partnering with the Harrison School of Pharmacy to offer an online video-based training and three ACPE approved 1-credit hour articles at no cost to you and your pharmacy technician!

1. Online Video Training :

Three-hour comprehensive program providing an overview of Medicare, the roles of ADRCs, and how to identify and refer patients to ADRCs using 8 online modules hosted on Auburn Ethos CE (see website address below).

2. Articles

Three one-hour home-study articles covering the following topics:

- *The Basics of Medicare for Pharmacy Personnel*
- *Pharmacists' Role in Assisting Medicare Patients with Limited Income*
- *Assistance Programs Available for Older Adults*

Access the CE article and complete the post-test and evaluation at:

<http://aub.ethosce.com/>

This publication has been created or produced with financial assistance, in whole or in part, through a grant from the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

Across:
2. trust
3. media
6. security
7. Haley
Down:
1. contagious
3. mask
4. delta
5. fully