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## Blood delivery by drones across India may soon be reality, says official after ICMR's successful trial run

The boost of technology is an accelerator which is gradually pushing India towards achieving the status of being a developed nation, he added. The trial run as part of a path-breaking validation study has been undertaken for the first time in the country by the collaborative efforts of ICMR, Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi, Government Institute of Medical Sciences, Greater Noida, and Jaypee Institute of Information Technology, Noida.

PTI (/pti-stories) | New Delhi | Updated: 11-05-2023 10:27 IST | Created: 11-05-2023 10:27 IST



Country: India

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lood delivery through drones can soon be expanded to the whole country, a senior official said after the Indian Council of Medical Research successfully conducted a trial run of blood bag delivery by drones under its iDrone initiative on Thursday.

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The initiative was in continuance with the national mission of expanding the drone ecosystem in India. The 'i-DRONE' was first used by ICMR during the COVID-19 pandemic for distributing vaccines to hard-to-reach areas. Today, we are transporting blood and bio-related products which are supposed to be kept at a low temperature. After the experiment, we found that not only can we maintain the temperature but there was also no damage to the products transported.

"We sent another sample through an ambulance and if there are no differences in the samples sent using the two modes then drones will be used all over India," said Dr Rajiv Bahl, the director general of ICMR.

He also said that "clarity on challenge mapping and identifying the possible solutions can be achieved by developing indigenous capacities in research and introduction of innovations and technologies in the mainstream". "With digitisation, efficient manufacturing of vaccines and development of a rapid delivery mechanism, India achieved 90 per cent coverage within a year. The boost of technology is an accelerator which is gradually pushing India towards achieving the status of being a developed nation," he added.

The trial run as part of a path-breaking validation study has been undertaken for the first time in the country by the collaborative efforts of ICMR, Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi, Government Institute of Medical Sciences, Greater Noida, and Jaypee Institute of Information

Technology, Noida. The inaugural trial flight carried 10 units of whole blood samples between the Government Institute of Medical Sciences, Greater Noida, and Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi, in visual line of sight, according to an official statement.

Some countries are already using drones to deliver blood products, vaccines, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, and even organs to remote rural areas or areas with poor infrastructure. In Ghana, drone delivery of blood and blood product delivery -- is now available for thousands of health facilities serving millions of people.

In the US, where whole blood and blood products are often sparse in rural areas, drones are more highly regulated and air traffic is more congested, the feasibility of drone delivery of blood and blood products is still being assessed.

(This story has not been edited by Devdiscourse staff and is auto-generated from a syndicated feed.)

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# Health News Roundup: Japan's Otsuka Pharma gets FDA approval for Alzheimer's agitation drug; Insulin makers testify on Capitol Hill over prices and more

Xu, 35, first lodged the claim against the Beijing Obstetrics and Gynaecology Hospital in 2019, in a landmark case of a Chinese woman fighting for her reproductive rights. South Korea to drop mandatory 7-day quarantine for COVID patients from June South Korea on Thursday lowered its crisis level for COVID-19 and will from June no longer require infected people to quarantine for seven days, dropping one of the country's few remaining pandemic-related restrictions.



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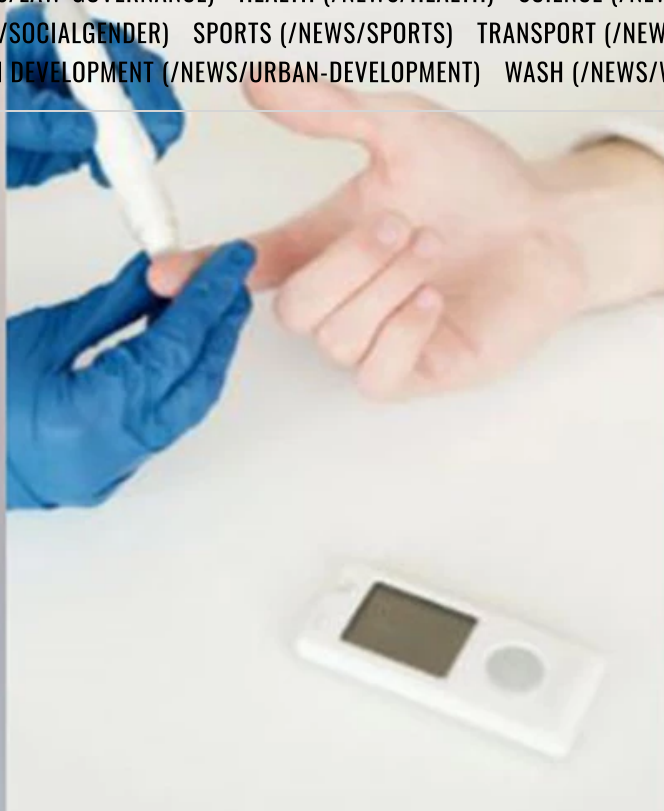


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Following is a summary of current health news briefs.

## **F** [Japan \(/news?tag=Japan\)](#) 's [Otsuka Pharma \(/news?tag=Otsuka Pharma\)](#) gets FDA approval for Alzheimer's agitation drug

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration ([/news?tag=The U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#)) approved [Otsuka Pharma \(/news?tag=Otsuka Pharma\)](#) ceutical's brexpiprazole to treat agitation in patients with Alzheimer's on Thursday, making it the first approved drug for the indication, the company said in a statement. The decision comes after an advisory panel in April voted 9-1 that the company had enough data to identify the population in whom benefits from the treatment outweigh its risks.

## **Insulin (/news?tag=Insulin)** makers testify on Capitol Hill ([/news?tag=Capitol Hill](#)) over prices

Leaders of major insulin makers and pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) traded blame for the life-saving drug's high price on Wednesday while testifying at a U.S. ([/news?tag=U.S.](#)) Senate committee hearing on making it more affordable. PBMs negotiate with drugmakers for rebates and lower fees

on behalf of employers and other clients, and reimburse pharmacies for prescriptions they dispense. Both sides blame each other for high drug prices.

## **Lingering (/news?tag=Lingering) nerve symptoms from Lyme (/news?tag=Lyme) disease may be tied to immune response**

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Neurologic complications of Lyme (/news?tag=Lyme) disease such as hand and foot numbness and pain that do not resolve after antibiotic treatment may be an exaggerated immune response rather than the infection itself, a study published on Wednesday suggests. Researchers found that Lyme (/news?tag=Lyme) disease patients with persistent central nervous system problems have high blood levels of interferon alpha, an inflammatory protein produced by the immune system in response to infection.

## **The U.S. (/news?tag=U.S.) COVID (/news?tag=COVID) health emergency is ending. What changes?**

The U.S. (/news?tag=U.S.) government on Thursday will end the COVID (/news?tag=COVID) -19 Public Health Emergency that allowed millions of Americans (/news?tag=Americans) to receive vaccines, tests and treatments at no cost. The emergency is also tied to telehealth flexibilities, Medicaid (/news?tag=Medicaid) enrollment safeguards, and the ability of government health agencies to collect data on the spread of the coronavirus.

## **Chinese (/news?tag=Chinese) woman fighting for fertility rights hopes to end single mother stigma**

Teresa Xu (/news?tag=Teresa Xu) did not anticipate that five years after she was denied an egg-freezing treatment at a Beijing (/news?tag=Beijing) hospital for being unmarried, her subsequent lawsuit would be at the centre of a debate over reproductive rights in China (/news?tag=China) . Xu, 35, first lodged the claim against the Beijing (/news?tag=Beijing) Obstetrics and Gynaecology Hospital in 2019, in a landmark case of a Chinese (/news?tag=Chinese) woman fighting for her reproductive rights.

## **South Korea (/news?tag=South Korea) to drop mandatory 7-day quarantine for COVID (/news?tag=COVID) patients from June**

South Korea (/news?tag=South Korea) on Thursday lowered its crisis level for COVID (/news?tag=COVID) -19 and will from June no longer require infected people to quarantine for seven days, dropping one of the country's few remaining pandemic-related restrictions. Health authorities will still recommend five days of self-isolation for infected people but it will not be mandatory.

## **Chinese (/news?tag=Chinese) baby product firms seek to age up, sell more abroad as population falls**

For many of China (/news?tag=China) 's manufacturers of baby and children's products, painful reverberations from last year's historic decline in the country's population are already upon them. Domestic sales are shrinking and the scramble is on to develop new streams of revenue, whether that be diversifying into products for adults or boosting offerings in overseas markets with younger populations like Southeast Asia (/news?tag=Southeast Asia) and India (/news?tag=India).

Martin Shkreli (/news?tag=Martin Shkreli) founded drug company. He is facing bankruptcy.

Vyera (/news?tag=Vyera) Pharmaceuticals, which previously settled price-fixing charges that resulted in founder Martin Shkreli (/news?tag=Martin Shkreli) being banned from the pharmaceutical industry, filed for bankruptcy late Tuesday to sell its assets. Vyera (/news?tag=Vyera) said its bankruptcy was the result of declining profits, increased competition for generic drugs, and litigation alleging that Vyera (/news?tag=Vyera) suppressed competition for its most valuable drug, Daraprim (/news?tag=Daraprim) .

### BioNTech, Roche (/news?tag=Roche) 's experimental pancreatic cancer treatment wins Nature (/news?tag=Nature) plaudit

Scientific (/news?tag=Scientific) journal Nature (/news?tag=Nature) on Wednesday said a personalised treatment based on messenger RNA by BioNTech potentially bodes well for the future of fighting an extremely aggressive form of cancer after the regimen was shown to trigger a promising immune reaction in some pancreatic cancer patients.

Results of a trial in the first phase of testing on humans showed that half of the 16 trial participants, who had undergone surgery to remove their tumour, had developed T cells that can potentially recognise cancerous cells and stop them from re-emerging, Nature (/news?tag=Nature) said in a paper on Wednesday.

### Altria (/news?tag=Altria) agrees to \$235 million settlement to resolve Juul (/news?tag=Juul) - related cases

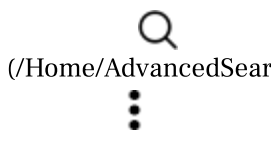
Altria (/news?tag=Altria) Group Inc said Wednesday that it will pay \$235 million to settle at least 6,000 lawsuits accusing it of fueling a teen vaping epidemic through its former investment in e-cigarette maker Juul (/news?tag=Juul) Labs Inc. The deal ends nearly all of the litigation brought against the tobacco giant over Juul (/news?tag=Juul) by local government bodies and individuals across the United States. It came shortly after San Francisco's public school district finished presenting its case against the company in a jury trial, which will now be cut short.

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# Asia shows constant decline in maternal, newborn deaths amid global stagnation: UNICEF official

PTI (/pti-stories/) | Capetown | Updated: 11-05-2023 09:47 IST | Created: 11-05-2023 09:45 IST









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**M**aternal and newborn deaths have seen a persistent decline in South Asia (/news?tag=South Asia) amidst their stagnation globally and even an increase in some regions of Latin America in the last five years, a top UNICEF (/news?tag=UNICEF) official has said.

The decline in maternal mortality in South Asia (/news?tag=South Asia) since 2016 has been driven by good performance in countries like Bangladesh (/news?tag=Bangladesh) , India (/news?tag=India) , Nepal (/news?tag=Nepal) , Afghanistan (/news?tag=Afghanistan) and Pakistan (/news?tag=Pakistan) , Dr Gagan Gupta (/news?tag=Dr Gagan Gupta) , Senior Advisor, Maternal and Newborn Health at UNICEF (/news?tag=UNICEF) said here on Wednesday.

He, however, said the progress on reduction in neonatal mortality needed a greater push in the region.

" India (/news?tag=India) has been one of the exemplar countries with a rapid rise in institutional deliveries, rapid scale-up of newborn care units and several policy changes to improve access of mothers and newborns to quality health services," he told PTI.

Gupta (/news?tag=Gupta) has been addressing various sessions at the ongoing 'International Maternal Newborn Health Conference' (IMNHC) (/news?tag=IMNHC) 2023 here. The four-day conference is being held in New Delhi by the government and AlignMNH (/news?tag=AlignMNH), a global initiative funded by the Bill (/news?tag=Bill) and Melinda Gates Foundation (/news?tag=Melinda Gates Foundation), in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) began here on May 8.

Bangladesh (/news?tag=Bangladesh) has shown a 42 per cent decline in maternal mortality between 2016 -2020.

India (/news?tag=India) also showed a 20 per cent decline in maternal mortality ratio (MMR) during the same period which is especially significant given the stagnation in global progress, Gupta (/news?tag=Gupta) noted.

Many of the learnings from India (/news?tag=India) and Bangladesh (/news?tag=Bangladesh) are relevant for other countries in the region and also for sub-Saharan Africa (/news?tag=Africa).

Some of these learnings were shared at the IMNHC (/news?tag=IMNHC) being held here.

To further accelerate progress in the region, there is a need to now focus on districts which are poorly performing and prioritise the pockets of home deliveries and communities which are not able to access healthcare, he said.

"Local action will be critical if countries and regions have to meet the SDGs for maternal and newborn health," Gupta (/news?tag=Gupta) said.

He stressed the urgency to increase investments in maternal and newborn health as the joint ENAP/EPMM progress report by the WHO, UNICEF (/news?tag=UNICEF) and UNFPA (/news?tag=UNFPA) has shown that 12 per cent of countries have a fully financed maternal and newborn health plan.

These countries include India (/news?tag=India), Bangladesh (/news?tag=Bangladesh) and Bhutan (/news?tag=Bhutan) from the region.

"The allocations for maternal and newborn health have further declined after Covid-19 with 40 per cent of countries reporting a decrease in allocations for maternal and newborn health programmes after the pandemic," Gupta (/news?tag=Gupta) said.

The average annual rate of reduction in maternal mortality in South Asia (/news?tag=South Asia) from 2016-2022 was 4.4 per cent per year while it remained stagnated globally during the same period.



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The SDG targets envisage reducing the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births and an end to preventable deaths of newborns and children under five years of age with all countries aiming to reduce maternal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 100,000 live births by 2030.

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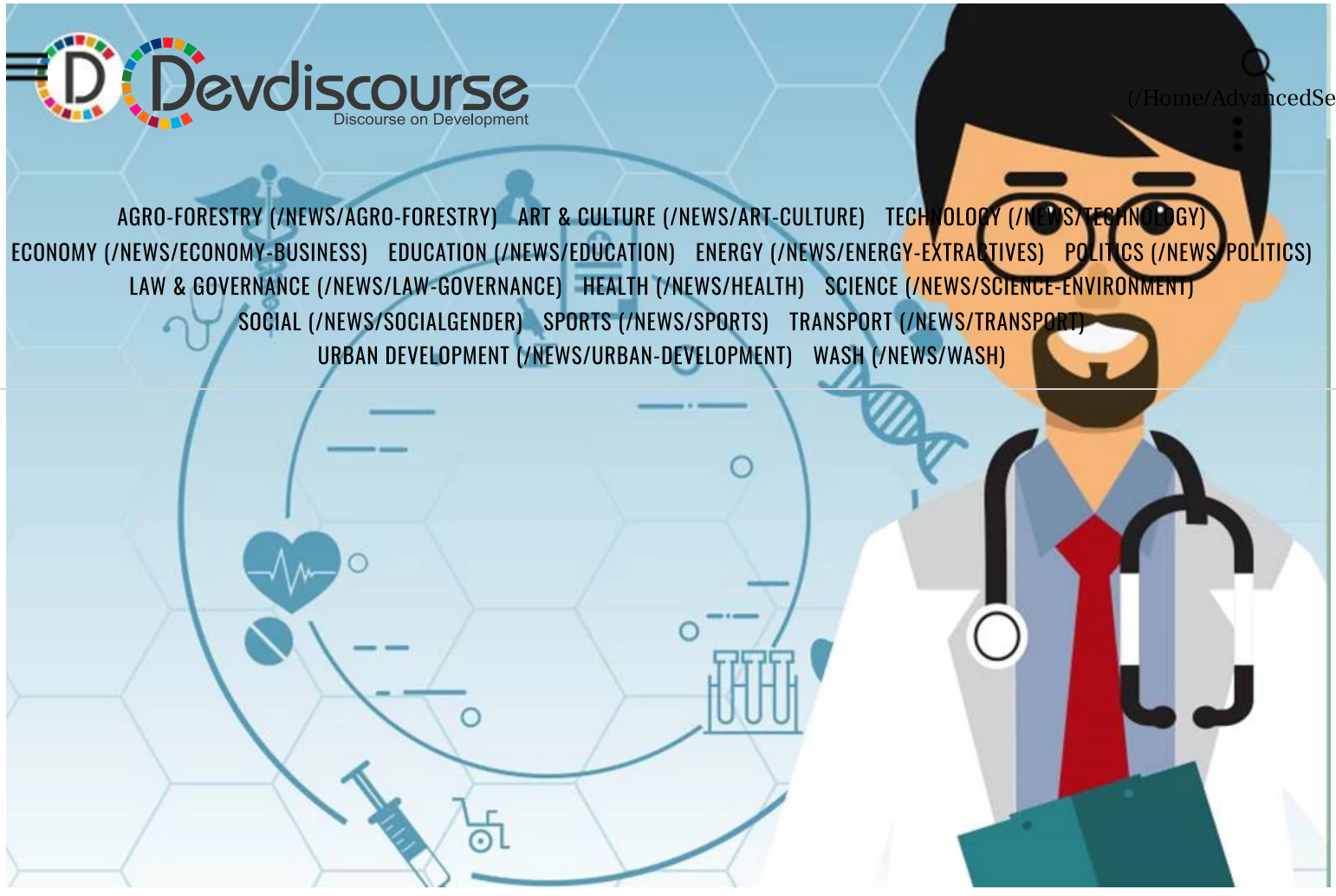
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## South Korea to lift quarantine mandate for COVID-19 and end testing recommendation for travellers

Travellers had been advised to take PCR tests within three days after arriving in the country, but that recommendation will also be lifted. South Korea had maintained a stringent COVID-19 response based on aggressive testing, contact tracing and quarantines during the earlier part of the pandemic, but has eased most of its virus controls since last year as the omicron variants surge rendered those containment strategies irrelevant. WHO had declared an end to the COVID-19 emergency last week, though Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted the viral disease remained a global health threat.

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**S**outh Korea ([/news?tag=South Korea](#)) will drop its COVID-19 ([/news?tag=COVID-19](#)) quarantine requirements and end testing recommendations for international arrivals starting next month after the World Health Organisation declared the end of the global health emergency.

In lowering the coronavirus alert level from “critical” to plainly “alert” starting June 1, health authorities will also lift mask mandates in pharmacies and small clinics but will continue require mask wearing in large hospitals and long-term care facilities and other medical venues with high infection risks. The decision was announced during a meeting attended by President Yoon ([/news?tag=Yoon](#)) Suk Yeol ([/news?tag=Suk Yeol](#)) , where he thanked the country's medical workers and said it was “delightful that people are getting their normal lives back after three and a half years.” He said his government will take steps to improve the country's capacity to deal with future pandemics, including providing stronger support for vaccine developments and expanding international cooperation.

South Korea ([/news?tag=South Korea](#)) has been requiring seven-day quarantines for virus carriers. While the mandate will be lifted from June 1, health officials will continue to recommend people to isolate for five days if they test positive for the virus, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention

Agency said. Travellers had been advised to take PCR tests within three days after arriving in the country, but that recommendation will also be lifted.

South Korea (/news?tag=South Korea) had maintained a stringent COVID-19 (/news?tag=COVID-19) response based on aggressive testing, contact tracing and quarantines during the earlier part of the pandemic, but has eased most of its virus controls since last year as the omicron variant's surge rendered those containment strategies ineffective.

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## South Korea to drop mandatory 7-day quarantine for COVID patients from June

Yoon said the government would continue to provide financial support for COVID testing and treatment "for a while". Last week, the World Health Organization declared an end of the global emergency status for COVID, which has been in place since Jan. 30, 2020. South Korea, which has a population of 52 million, has reported around 31.3 million infections and 34,600 deaths, according to the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency.

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**S**outh Korea (/news?tag=South Korea) on Thursday lowered its crisis level for COVID (/news?tag=COVID) -19 and will from June no longer require infected people to quarantine for seven days, dropping one of the country's few remaining pandemic-related restrictions.

Health authorities will still recommend five days of self-isolation for infected people but it will not be mandatory. "I am glad that people will be able to resume normal life after three years and four months," President Suk Yeol Yoon (/news?tag=Yeol Yoon) told a televised meeting with government officials and medical workers to mark the lowering of the crisis level from the highest level of 4 to 3.

Requirements (/news?tag=Requirements) that masks be worn at all medical facilities and pharmacies will also be dropped, with masks only mandatory at hospitals with patient wards. Yoon (/news?tag=Yoon) said the government would continue to provide financial support for COVID (/news?tag=COVID) testing and treatment "for a while".

Last week, the World Health Organization declared an end of the global emergency status for COVID (/news?tag=COVID) , which has been in place since Jan. 30, 2020. South Korea (/news?tag=South Korea) , which has a population of 52 million, has reported around 31.3 million infections and 34,600 deaths, according to the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (/news?tag=Prevention Agency) .

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## Insulin makers testify on Capitol Hill over prices

Why are 1 out of 4 Americans not able to afford the prescription drugs their doctors prescribe?" asked Senator Bernie Sanders, who chairs the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee. The Lilly, Novo Nordisk, and Sanofi CEOs all said drugmakers pay substantial rebates aimed at lowering costs but that PBMs and insurers are incentivized to choose drugs with higher prices because they lead to larger rebates.

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**L**eaders of major insulin makers and pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) traded blame for the life-saving drug's high price on Wednesday while testifying at a U.S. Senate committee hearing on making it more affordable. PBMs negotiate with drugmakers for rebates and lower fees on behalf of employers and other clients, and reimburse pharmacies for prescriptions they dispense. Both sides blame each other for high drug prices.

Testifying on Wednesday were the CEOs of major insulin manufacturers Eli Lilly and Co, Novo Nordisk, and Sanofi, which together control 90% of the U.S. market, and top PBM executives from CVS Health Corp, Cigna Group's Express Scripts, and UnitedHealth Group Inc's Optum RX, which control 80% of the prescription drug market. "Why, in the richest country on Earth, do 1.3 million Americans ration insulin because of the cost? Why are 1 out of 4 Americans not able to afford the prescription drugs they need?" Sen. Sanders asked. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee.

The Lilly, Novo Nordisk, and Sanofi CEOs all said drugmakers pay substantial rebates aimed at lowering costs but that PBMs and insurers are incentivized to choose drugs with higher prices because they lead to larger rebates. "Higher list prices allow for higher fees and rebates, which can increase patients out of pocket costs while benefiting employers, insurance companies and people who don't use medicines," Eli Lilly CEO David Ricks said.

PBM executives said manufacturers alone set the drug prices and abuse patent protections to stifle competition. Drug costs would be even higher without the rebates that PBMs negotiate for their customers, Optum Rx CEO Heather Cianfrocco said. "They count on us to be a counterweight to the substantial market power of manufacturers, which have the sole discretion in setting and raising prices for their products," she said.

The Lilly, Novo Nordisk, and Sanofi CEOs pointed to their companies cutting list prices by more than 70% for some insulin products in March and said they hoped to provide insulin to more customers a year from now. The cuts could help around 2 million people pay for insulin. Although many people, including some 3.3 million on Medicare, pay \$35 a month or less, about 1-in-5 with private insurance and the 17% of insulin users who are uninsured stand to benefit.

Uninsured people often have to pay full list prices, an average of \$900 a month, forcing many to ration or skip doses. In response to a question from Sanders, the pharmaceutical executives all committed to keep their newest insulin available to patients at \$35 a month or less.

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# Health News Roundup: FDA reviewers raise doubts over data on Sarepta's gene therapy, Martin Shkreli-founded drug company files for bankruptcy and more

The agency's staff on Wednesday highlighted several issues with the data and said that existing studies did not provide "unambiguous evidence" that the gene therapy will benefit patients with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. A U.S. Food and Drug Administration advisory panel on Wednesday voted in favor of allowing sales of Perrigo Co's contraceptive drug without a prescription, paving the way for the country's first over-the-counter birth control pill.

Devdiscourse News Desk (/devdiscourse-stories/) | Updated: 11-05-2023 02:34 IST | Created: 11-05-2023 02:30 IST



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Following is a summary of current health news briefs.

**F** Bayer, Bicycle Therapeutics in cancer radiotherapy drug alliance

German drugmaker Bayer on Wednesday said it acquired the rights to work with Bicycle Therapeutics on the British biotech firm's radiotherapy cancer drug candidates. Under the deal, Bicycle stands to receive an upfront payment of \$45 million and potentially up to \$1.7 billion, contingent on development and commercial achievements, plus tiered royalties on sales.

AGRO-FORESTRY (/NEWS/AGRO-FORESTRY) ART & CULTURE (/NEWS/ART-CULTURE) TECHNOLOGY (/NEWS/TECHNOLOGY) PHARMA CEOs to testify in U.S. Senate hearing on insulin prices

The leaders of major pharmaceutical companies and payers are expected to blame each other on Wednesday in their testimonies during a U.S. Senate committee hearing on making the life-saving drug more affordable. PBMs negotiate with drugmakers for rebates and lower fees on behalf of employers and other clients, and reimburse pharmacies for prescriptions they dispense. Both sides blame each other for high drug prices.

### Lingering nerve symptoms from Lyme disease may be tied to immune response

Neurologic complications of Lyme disease such as hand and feet numbness and pain that do not resolve with treatment may be due to an exaggerated immune response rather than the infection itself, a study published on Wednesday suggests. Researchers found that Lyme disease patients with persistent central nervous system problems have high blood levels of interferon alpha, an inflammatory protein produced by the immune system in response to infection.

### The U.S. COVID health emergency is ending. What changes?

The U.S. government on Thursday will end the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency that allowed millions of Americans to receive vaccines, tests and treatments at no cost. The emergency is also tied to telehealth flexibilities, Medicaid enrollment safeguards, and the ability of government health agencies to collect data on the spread of the coronavirus.

### FDA reviewers raise doubts over data on Sarepta's gene therapy

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's staff reviewers raised concerns over limited data on Sarepta Therapeutics Inc's gene therapy for a muscle-wasting disorder, ahead of a meeting of the agency's advisers on Friday. The agency's staff on Wednesday highlighted several issues with the data and said that existing studies did not provide "unambiguous evidence" that the gene therapy will benefit patients with Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

### U.S. FDA advisers back Perrigo birth control pill for over-the-counter use

A U.S. Food and Drug Administration advisory panel on Wednesday voted in favor of allowing sales of Perrigo Co's contraceptive drug without a prescription, paving the way for the country's first over-the-counter birth control pill. The panel found the drug to be an effective OTC option with some members noting that it could expand the availability of birth-control alternatives to more people.

### Potential weight-loss drug meets goals in mid-stage trial as race accelerates

Denmark's Zealand Pharma and Boehringer Ingelheim said their experimental obesity treatment achieved up to 14.9% weight loss in a mid-stage trial, lining up a potential contestant in the booming obesity drug market in a statement on Wednesday, the partners said that the Phase II dose-finding trial met its primary endpoint of weight loss after 46 weeks.

Martin Shkreli founded drug company files for bankruptcy  
Vyera Pharmaceuticals in founder Martin Shkreli being banned from the pharmaceutical industry, filed for bankruptcy late Tuesday to sell its assets. Vyera said its bankruptcy was the result of declining profits, increased competition for generic drugs, and litigation alleging that Vyera suppressed competition for its most valuable drug, Daraprim.

BioNTech, Roche's experimental pancreatic cancer treatment wins Nature plaudit

Scientific journal Nature on Wednesday said a personalised treatment based on messenger RNA by BioNTech potentially bodes well for the future of fighting an extremely aggressive form of cancer after the regimen was shown to trigger a promising immune reaction in some pancreatic cancer patients.

Results of a trial in the first phase of testing on humans showed that half of the 16 trial participants, who had undergone surgery to remove their tumour, had developed T cells that can potentially recognise cancerous cells and stop them from re-emerging, Nature said in a paper on Wednesday.

India builds more hospitals as population surges but doctors in short supply

Mithilesh Chaudhary, 21, coughs weakly as he struggles to his feet after spending the night outside the state-run All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi. "We have been sleeping on the footpath for two nights," said his grandfather Bhim Lal, as the two waited in a line of about 100 people outside the hospital's main gate, seeking an appointment.

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## OnePlus 9R receives OxygenOS 13.1.0.500 update with new features

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## Woman doctor stabbed to death in Kerala by man she was treating

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