



Cite this as: *BMJ* 2021;375:n2871
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n2871>
 Published: 25 November 2021

Seven days in medicine: 17-23 November 2021

Covid-19

Limit use of ivermectin to trials, says NICE

The drug ivermectin should be used to treat people with covid-19 only as part of a clinical trial, said the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).¹ In updating its guideline on managing covid-19 the agency noted a high degree of uncertainty about whether ivermectin was more effective than control in hospital or community settings. It also raised concerns about the quality of studies, uncertainty about the overall safety of ivermectin, and the possibility of rare serious adverse events. *The BMJ's* living guideline made this recommendation on ivermectin on 31 March 2021.²

England prepares to offer annual vaccine boosters

The NHS in England is preparing to offer an annual covid-19 booster vaccine programme if required, said the service's chief executive, Amanda Pritchard. She added that "further expansions" could be made to advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation about which groups should receive booster vaccines. Officials are awaiting more data before deciding whether to recommend annual covid-19 vaccine boosters in a similar way to annual winter flu vaccination. (Full story [doi:10.1136/bmj.n2824](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n2824))

NHS seeks to clarify booster confusion

The NHS moved to tackle public confusion and misunderstanding over the difference between third primary doses of covid-19 vaccination and booster doses, as well as people's eligibility for the two. It published an explanatory document online outlining the difference between third primary doses³—for which some severely immunosuppressed people are eligible—and boosters, which take place from six months after the primary course of two or three doses. Explanatory posters have also been produced for general practices.

US authorises Pfizer and Moderna vaccines as boosters

On 18 November the vaccine advisory committee of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended booster doses of the Pfizer and Moderna covid vaccines for over 18s at least six months after completion of primary vaccination. The Food and Drug Administration had authorised both vaccines as a booster on the same day. Pfizer has said that its booster dose is 95% effective at preventing symptomatic infection in people who have no evidence of prior infection. Moderna did not submit any data on its booster, saying that it was still gathering evidence.

Antimicrobial resistance

Antibiotic resistant infections fell last year

The incidence of antibiotic resistant bloodstream infections fell in England in 2020 for the first time since 2016, although numbers remain higher than six years ago, data from the UK Health Security Agency showed. There were 55 384 antibiotic resistant bloodstream infections in 2020, down from 65 583 in 2019. Deaths attributable to antibiotic resistant bacteria also fell to 2228 last year, from 2596 the year before. The reduction in antibiotic resistance in 2020 was mainly driven by fewer *Escherichia coli* bloodstream infections, the report found. (Full story [doi:10.1136/bmj.n2853](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n2853))

Litigation

NHS litigation system "fails to deliver justice"

The NHS's litigation system is facing ballooning costs while failing to deliver justice or learn lessons when treatment goes wrong, parents and experts told a parliamentary investigation into reform of the system. Parents of three children who died as a result of botched care told the House of Commons health and social care committee of having struggled for years to find out what had gone wrong. The committee chair, Jeremy Hunt, said that the NHS had spent a "staggering" £1.0bn (€11.9bn; \$13.3bn) on clinical negligence cases last year. (Full story [doi:10.1136/bmj.n2829](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n2829))

Liver disease

Premature deaths rise by 10% in a year in England

The British Liver Trust called for urgent action to improve early detection of liver disease, as data showed that premature deaths from these conditions had risen in England from 9218 in 2019 to 10 127 in 2020. The charity has called on the government to work with health services to improve early diagnosis by ensuring that systematic pathways are commissioned and implemented in areas where they are currently absent and that these are evaluated regularly. It has launched an interactive map of survey results showing areas that have no effective pathway in place for early detection of liver disease.

HIV

NICE approves first long acting injectable treatment

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended cabotegravir with rilpivirine, the first long acting injectable treatment for adults with HIV-1 infection. In draft guidance it recommended that the injection should be given every two months when antiretroviral medicines have kept the virus at a low level (HIV-1 RNA <50 copies/mL), where there is no suspected viral resistance and no previous failure of other anti-HIV-1 medicines called non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase

inhibitors and integrase inhibitors. An estimated 13 000 people in England will be eligible to receive cabotegravir with rilpivirine.

General practice

England's GP committee elects new chair

The BMA's General Practitioners Committee for England elected Farah Jameel as its new chair. Jameel, a GP based in north London, is the first woman to chair the committee. She succeeds Richard Vautrey in the role and was elected after a vote at the committee's meeting on 18 November. Jameel was one of two candidates nominated for the post, along with a Stoke-on-Trent GP, Chandra Kanneganti. She has served on the committee's executive team since 2017 and has been a member of the committee since 2014. (Full story doi:10.1136/bmj.n2842)

Online consultations will undergo evaluation

NHS England and NHS Improvement commissioned an independent evaluation of online consultations and digital tools in primary care in England.⁴ The research will assess the implementation and use of online consultation systems to support patient access and triage, the advantages and disadvantages of different modes of communication, lessons learnt from implementation during the pandemic, and patient and staff experiences. A small number of general practices are being asked to volunteer to take part as case studies.

Smoking

Make England smoke free by 2030, say medical leaders

More than 650 health activists urged the government to back amendments in the forthcoming Health and Care Bill to help England become smoke free by 2030. Two years ago the government made the pledge, including making smoked tobacco obsolete and having smokers quit or move to reduced risk products such as e-cigarettes. But it has still not published its new tobacco control plan to meet the goal, which it had planned to publish this year, or the post-implementation review of tobacco regulations that by law it was required to have done by May 2021.

- 1 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. COVID-19 rapid guideline: Managing COVID-19. Version 16.0 published 22 Nov 2021. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng191/resources/covid19-rapid-guideline-managing-covid19-pdf-51035553326>
- 2 Rochweg B, Agarwal A, Siemieniuk RA, et al. A living WHO guideline on drugs for covid-19. *BMJ* 2020;370:m3379. <https://www.bmj.com/content/370/bmj.m3379>. doi: 10.1136/bmj.m3379 pmid: 32887691
- 3 NHS. Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine 3rd dose. Updated 18 Nov 2021. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine-3rd-dose/>
- 4 RSM UK Consulting. Independent evaluation on the implementation of online and video consultation systems in primary care. <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/evaluationofonlineand-videoconsultations/>