



Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [August 10, 2020]

NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

Washington Post: [Students can safely return to college if tested for coronavirus every two days, study says](#)
Coronavirus infections can be controlled at universities this fall if students are tested for the virus every two days, according to a study published Friday. The study was done by researchers from the Yale School of Public Health, Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital and published in JAMA Network Open. The study used computer simulations to show how the virus might spread among a hypothetical cohort of 5,000 students.

Physicians' Weekly: [Aggressive testing, tracing key to safely reopening schools](#)
As school systems across the country and around the world struggle with whether they can safely reopen in the weeks and months to come, two new studies from the UK and Australia highlight the importance of population-wide testing and contact tracing.

Science: [Designer antibodies could battle COVID-19 before vaccines arrive](#)
Monoclonal antibodies could provide an immunity boost that prevents and treats the disease. They are likely to be successfully developed prior to a vaccine, with companies aiming for releases in November or December. However, high development costs and modest investment in this method compared to vaccines may limit supplies.

New York Times: [Health experts to F.D.A.: Make your vaccine deliberations public](#)
A letter signed by almost 400 public health experts urges the FDA to be transparent about their vaccine deliberations, including safety and efficacy reviews, before making any vaccine available to the public. In addition to ensuring a safe vaccine, health experts feel insight into the approval process will increase public trust in the potential vaccines and guard against political motivations.

New York Times: [Major U.S. health insurers report big profits, benefiting from the pandemic](#)
The US Health and Human Services Department recently advised insurance companies to reduce their premiums and speed their rebates in response to their recent dramatic increase in profit and the country's overall economic downturn. Some large insurance companies are experiencing double the profits of the previous year due to many people avoiding hospitals and doctors' offices during the pandemic and postponing expensive surgeries. The Affordable Care Act caps insurance profits, but many politicians, especially democrats, argue this is not enough.

E & E News: [Inside Biden's network of climate advisers](#)
Cecilia Martinez, co-founder of the Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy, said environmental justice leaders have gotten a level of access to the presumptive Democratic nominee's policy aides that's almost unheard of.

The Hill: [EPA to issue methane rollback](#)

The new rules will include getting rid of requirements for producers to have systems and processes to find methane leaks. They will also end EPA oversight of smog and emissions from pipelines and storage sites and lessen monitoring and reporting requirements for certain pollutants.

The Guardian: [US hurricane experts predict “extremely active” storm season](#)

There have already been nine named storms in 2020, seven more than in a normal year. NOAA predicts the US will continue to have an extremely busy hurricane season, with up to 25 named storms, seven to eleven of which could become hurricanes. This beats out the agency’s previous highest estimate of 21 in 2005.

National Geographic: [Microplastics have moved into virtually every crevice on Earth](#)

While most of the early research focused on the larger plastics found on beaches and floating on the surface, less visible and more pervasive plastic bits have spread everywhere, from the deepest sea trenches to the highest alpine mountains. Some microplastics are so tiny they are part of the dust that blows around the planet, high in the atmosphere.

Nature: [NSF grant changes raise alarm about commitment to basic research](#)

The National Science Foundation recently updated the guidance for its Graduate Research Fellowship Program to emphasize research in artificial intelligence, computationally intensive research, and quantum information science. The emphasis on technological development and immediate application has sparked concerns for basic science fields that are often underfunded compared to computer science disciplines. Many fear the move will further racial disparities in the program as well.

REGIONAL NEWS

NWI.com: [10 years of Indiana public policy on the ballot in this year's elections](#)

The Nov. 3 general election will determine public policy for the next decade in Indiana, because one task lawmakers must accomplish when the Indiana General Assembly convenes in January is drawing new legislative district boundaries using the results of the 2020 census. Assuming the Republican Party retains its majorities in both chambers, the decennial redistricting could keep the GOP in power at the Statehouse—and in control of what laws are enacted in Indiana—until at least 2031.

IndyStar: [Here's everything you need to know to vote by mail in Indiana](#)

The list of 11 acceptable excuses for voting by mail in Indiana does not include an excuse specifically related to the coronavirus. When asked about the possibility of adding such an excuse during a Wednesday press conference, Gov. Eric Holcomb said he wants to wait to see where a pending lawsuit lands before "we start to entertain different language."

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

Scientific American: [Science and scientific expertise are more important than ever](#)

62 percent of the new members of the U.S. National Academy of Science (NAS), up from 38 percent in 2018, signed the “Statement to Restore Science-Based Policy in Government.” We interpret this increase as a clear signal: the past reluctance of many scientists to speak out publicly is undergoing a welcome change.

Nature: [Why deforestation and extinctions make pandemics more likely](#)

As humans diminish biodiversity by cutting down forests and building more infrastructure, they’re increasing the risk of disease pandemics such as COVID-19. Many ecologists have long suspected this, but a new study helps to reveal why: while some species are going extinct, those

that tend to survive and thrive—rats and bats, for instance—are more likely to host potentially dangerous pathogens that can make the jump to humans.

Mother Jones: [We can't prevent another pandemic without stopping the infodemic](#)

Back in March, as epidemiologists and front-line nurses scrambled to track and treat the spread of COVID-19, health expert Timothy Caulfield (University of Alberta) was already sounding the alarm about its sinister twin: the infodemic, or the spread of misinformation about the virus, which facilitated an erosion of trust in key institutions and added to the already chaotic information environment.

Grist.org: [The world is drowning in used face masks. Should we turn them into fuel?](#)

As we emerge from the shockwaves of COVID-19," she said in a statement, "society must re-commit itself to the reduction of plastic use in favor of reusable materials, particularly in consumer goods, but also by actively seeking safe reusable alternatives to plastic for proper personal protection from COVID-19."

The Guardian: [Big oil remembers "friend" Trump with millions in campaign funds](#)

Trump and his associated Super Pacs have received millions of dollars in donations from fossil fuel billionaires and their companies. The fossil fuel industry has benefited from tax cuts and many instances of deregulation over the past three years. Therefore, Biden's \$2 trillion green energy plan and aim to rejoin the Paris climate agreement poses a large threat.

InsideClimate News: [Analysts worried the pandemic would stifle climate action from banks. It did the opposite](#)

The pandemic hasn't dissuaded investors from acting on climate change. And many analysts argue that the economic disaster caused by the virus has helped galvanize money managers—who now see climate change as the next global financial crisis—to more urgently protect their assets by transitioning away from high-carbon industries.

TAKE ACTION

NRDC.org: [Tell Bank of America to stop investing in arctic oil and gas](#)

The Trump administration is forcing through imminent plans to open up the irreplaceable Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil and gas drilling. But following outcry from local communities and activists — including NRDC supporters like you — five of the top six U.S. banks have pledged to keep their money out of investments in Arctic oil and gas projects, including in the Refuge. Only one major holdout remains: Bank of America.

Our CSIU news bulletin is intended to provide a brief update on recent news, editorials, as well as action items related to science integrity and science policy. Note that editorial pieces and action items are assembled from a variety of sources and organizations; they do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy priorities of Concerned Scientists @ IU. This week's news bulletin was compiled by ASIU and IU biology major Emma Hand and CSIU member Christoph Irmischer of IU's Department of English. We're looking for volunteers! If you'd like to volunteer—or if you have additional links you'd like to share for future bulletins, send them to Christoph at cirmsche@indiana.edu.

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