Call Us Today **202-742-1500** 🔰 in 🖇 攝 🔊 PATRICK MALONE Better Healthcare Newsletter from Patrick Malone IN THIS ISSUE Climate change is real. Its most obvious health peril: extreme weather that can kill Be ready, heed authorities, act sensibly Environmental shifts may damage humanity's well-being in many ways, experts say Pests and plagues are falling prey to climate shifts, too In nation's capital, In anti-science fantasy worlds, climate change is a mere theory, an unsnarling traffic abstraction to be ignored for now. This view would be foolish under any could be breath of circumstance. fresh of air But it has become more counterfactual than ever, as people come to grips with horrific heat waves blamed for hundreds of deaths recently in BY THE the Pacific Northwest and Canada, as well as dozens of deaths in **NUMBERS** Arizona. Who can ignore the parching drought in the West, the 1 million-plus 116° F acres burning in 12 western states due to raging wildfires, record Portland, Ore., recordflooding in Europe (which has claimed more than 100 lives and left busting high set in June more than 1,000 missing) and torrential rains in China — not seen in during Pacific NW heat 1,000 years and which have killed dozens and displaced more than 1 wave. million? 700 Climate change is a real threat to our health and our very existence. Revised death toll The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists multiple areas estimate from Texas where its experts see big issues ahead due to rapid, harsh changes in February freeze and the environment. The National Institute of Environmental Health electrical-grid collapse. State officials had said Sciences lists its own range of impacts, including: fatailities numbered 151. § Asthma, respiratory allergies, and airway diseases § Cancer § Cardiovascular disease and stroke § Foodborne diseases and nutrition § Human development § Mental health and stress-related disorders § 24,448 Neurological diseases and disorders § Diseases borne by pests and Estimated number of animals and § Waterborne Diseases District of Columbia residents who, in 2018 Arming ourselves with a few basics can protect and save the lives of study, were found to the vulnerable — the young, old, and those who toil through extreme have experienced acute respiratory sympotoms due to high ozone Human beings, across the millennia, have shown we can be hearty and (smog) levels. Warming temperatures resulting adaptable. But can we react as needed to survive what many experts from climate change are consider a major danger to our species — one that can take a terrible expected to increase toll on our health if we fail to respond appropriately? ozone levels. Climate change is real. Its most obvious health peril: Extreme killer weather **QUICK LINKS** Our firm's website Read an excerpt from Patrick Malone's book: √High body temperature (103°F+) √Hot, red, dry, or damp skin √Fast, strong pulse. √ Headache ✓ Dizziness ✓ Nausea ✓ Confusion ✓ Losing consciousness (passing out) √Call 911 right away – heat stroke is a medical emergency ✓ Move person to cooler place ✓ Help lower thier temperature with cool cloths or cool bath ✓ Do not give them anything to **Nine Steps** Heat Exhaustion to Finding the Best Medical Care — ✓ Heavy sweating ✓ Cold, pale, clammy skin ✓ Fast, weak pulse ✓ Nausea or vomiting and Avoiding the Worst ✓ Muscle cramps ✓ Tiredness or weakness ✓ Dizziness Headache ✓ Fainting (passing out) ✓ Move to cool place ✓ Loosen clothes ✓ Put cool, wet cloths on body or take cool bath ✓ Sip water 

Get medical help right away if: vomiting, symptoms worsen, or symptoms last longer life /OU save An estimated 650-plus Americans on average die annually due to sizzling temperatures, with another 500-plus fatalities attributable each year to deep freezes. These are mostly preventable casualties. Weather extremes have become obvious markers of climate change and they are among the conditions about which we can do the most to reduce their health risks. Here is what the CDC says about combating illnesses and deaths due to scorching temperatures and high humidity: "Heat-related illness, also called hyperthermia, is a condition resulting **LEARN MORE** from exposure to extreme heat where the body becomes unable to properly cool, resulting in a rapid rise in body temperature. The evaporation of sweat is the normal way to remove body heat, but, when the humidity is high, sweat does not evaporate as guickly. This, in turn, prevents the body from releasing heat quickly. Prompt treatment of heat-related illnesses with aggressive fluid replacement and cooling of core body temperature is critical to reducing illness and preventing death." Read our Patient Safety As the chart above (adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Blog, which has news Prevention) shows, there are different levels of injury due to high heat, and practical advice including cramping, exhaustion, and stroke. It is important to distinguish from the frontlines of medicine for how to among them and to respond to each in specific ways. become a smarter, healthier patient. In general, though, it also is vital to know that certain groups of people are highly vulnerable, including kids (infants and children younger than 4), seniors (those age 65 and older), those who carry excessive weight Mailing List or who may have chronic medical conditions (like diabetes or heart disease), the poor, and the isolated. The athletic, surprisingly, also may put themselves in harm's way during hot spells. **PAST ISSUES** People may heighten their heat risks by taking in intoxicating substances, especially alcohol, or because they take prescription or Proven and practical over-the-counter drugs that affect the body's temperature regulation, ways to slow or prevent some by inhibiting perspiration. cognitive decline Telemedicine: super **Common sense safeguards** convenient, but hidden drawbacks need attention. Common sense can go a long way to reduce excessive heat's toll. Home medical tests and When temperatures climb, try to tackle outdoor activities and chores in health monitors: trendy cooler times of the day. Take frequent breaks. Avoid exposure to the but truly useful? blistering sun, and don't fool yourself that skimpy garb is always the Getting ready for a best way to go. Instead, wearing cool, light-colored, loose-fitting return to more normal clothing may be more helpful. Hats and umbrellas also can provide sun health care Understanding the mess relief. of medical prices, and making sure you're not Whether fair-skinned or not, slather on that sunscreen, especially in burned by big bills summer. Experts are offering more detailed advice about what products to apply to protect against damaging UV rays that not only can age and You Can Eat This... But wrinkle the skin but also may cause cancers. The product guidelines Why Would You? may require even more consideration due to recalls and certain Looking Ahead: chemical ingredients in sunscreens that can pollute some waters. Preparing for Long-Term Care When temperatures soar, a few protective basics come into play, big time: Keeping hydrated, avoiding over-exertion, and staying in cooler Managing Chronic Pain: It's Complicated Secure Health Records: Most people do not require special drinks to stay hydrated in the heat. A Matter of Privacy and Cool water, in regular and sufficient supply, should do the trick. Don't Safety guzzle beverages for their own sake because you can overdo liquids. Eat lightly, maybe with smaller, more frequent meals to maintain key Standing Tall Against a electrolyte balances, especially of sodium and potassium — two substances your body runs through a lot in the heat. More... If possible, the savvy stay indoors, in well-cooled areas, to beat high temperatures. Fans may be useful and less power- and budgetdraining than air conditioning. It may be possible to put a dent in the summer and fall heat and cool a home, apartment, or condo enough by opening windows and doors and capturing the night's chill, then pulling shades and shutting the place up during the day. Still, people need to recognize when the heat becomes too much for resources they can throw at it. Many homes and buildings are not airconditioned, and they quickly may become uncomfortable and unsafe to stay in during hot spells. People long have learned to head to swimming pools, water parks, and, of course, air-conditioned public libraries, movie theaters, and shopping malls to stay cool. Many local governments, including the District of Columbia, open special centers to assist those in need during hot and cold spells. **Looking out for others** While it may be tempting to turn into a cranky recluse during weather extremes, the intemperate periods can demand the best of us notably in our looking out for each other and helping those in need. The old, sick, and disabled can benefit hugely from concerned friends, colleagues, and loved ones checking in on them during extreme heat and cold. The lives of the homebound can be changed — even saved — if Good Samaritans bring them food, water, and other supplies (fans) or walk or drive them to places where they can stay appropriately cool or warm. Please pay extra attention to kids during weather extremes. In the heat, do not leave youngsters alone in the car, especially if they are restrained in child seats or by safety belts from which they can't free themselves. Don't run in a store "just for a second," and think that cracking the windows a little and parking in a spot that seems shady will make things all right. It won't. Your kids don't react to heat as adults do — they can overheat much faster and suffer dire consequences as a result. Authorities have put in place stiff penalties for grownups guilty of this abusive neglect of children. (It should go without saying that pets also should not be left unattended in hot vehicles, and that humanity's four-footed companions need heat protections, too, as outlined in this newsletter.) **Avoid over-exertion** Let's add one more preventable heat-related harm: athletic over-Few of us are elite competitors who are maintaining world-class standings with 24/7 training, including in difficult circumstances. Instead, many of us can and should ease up or ease off on the workouts, especially in extreme heat (and in extreme cold). Maybe instead of running when it's hot, athletes can switch to swimming. It won't be optimal, but it may be better to play tennis under the lights, rather than on scorching midday courts. Overexertion in heat can cause the condition known as rhabdomyolysis or "rabdo," which the CDC describes: "Rhabdomyolysis is a medical condition associated with heat stress and prolonged physical exertion, resulting in the rapid breakdown, rupture, and death of muscle. When muscle tissue dies, electrolytes and large proteins are released into the bloodstream that can cause irregular heart rhythms and seizures and damage the kidneys. Symptoms of rhabdomyolysis include: Muscle cramps-pain, abnormally dark (tea or cola colored) urine, weakness, and exercise intolerance." This condition can result in hospitalization and the need for intravenous fluid replenishment, as well as more serious interventions for kidney harms, including dialysis and even transplantation for organ failure. Coaches need to get wise Grown-ups — coaches, trainers, and athletic administrators — can be blamed for the abject failure in judgment, of course, in pushing youthful players to work out and suffer harms in high summer and fall heat. The National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research reported in March this awful information: "Since 1995, 70 football players have died from heat stroke (51 high school, 14 college, 2 professional, 2 organized youth, and 1 middle school). During the most recent five-year period from 2016-2020, there was an average of 2.2 heat stoke deaths per year compared to 2.2 per year during the previous five-year period 2011-2015. This lack of change supports continued efforts to educate coaches, school administrators, medical providers, players, and parents concerning the proper procedures and precautions when practicing or playing in the heat. During the most recent five-year period, 7 of the 11 deaths were during conditioning sessions compared to 1 of 11 during the previous five-year period. This highlights the need for appropriate oversight and monitoring of conditioning sessions ... " Let's not forget that University of Maryland leaders in 2018 were forced to apologize and concede that the school shared blame for the tragic and preventable heat stroke death of Jordan McNair, 19, a Terps offensive lineman. Coaches forced the young man to run and overexert himself during a practice. More importantly, they failed to diagnose the severity of his condition, neglecting so much as to take his pulse and blood pressure. They also did not deal appropriately with his seizures nor did they act fast to drop his body temperature with ice and cooling baths. Long after his death, the university and the state settled for \$3.5 million with McNair's parents, agreeing that part of that sum would go to a memorial foundation that seeks to help educate communities about heat-related illnesses, the Washington Post reported. McNair's tragic death, the newspaper also noted, "sparked two investigations, cost DJ Durkin his job as Terrapins head coach, hastened the departure of Wallace Loh as school president and prompted the resignation of James T. Brady as chair of the University System of Maryland's board of regents." Be ready, heed authorities, act sensibly Prepare for emergencies A basic readiness kit could include these items as recom-§ Water (1 gallon/person/day for several days, for drinking and sanitation) § Food (at least a three-day non-perishable supply) § Battery-powered or hand crank radio and NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert § Flashlight § First aid kit § Extra batteries Whistle (to signal for help) § Face masks § Plastic sheeting and duct tape (to shelter in place) § Moist towelettes, garbage bags, plastic ties (for personal sanitation) § Wrench, pliers, other tools (to turn off utilities etc) § Manual can opener § Local maps § Cell phone with chargers and backup You also may wish to add these items: § Soap, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes § Prescription medications § Non-prescription meds (e.g. pain relievers, anti-diarrhea drug, antacids, laxatives) § Eyeglasses, spare contact lenses, cleaning solution § Infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, diaper rash cream § Pet food and extra water for your pet § Cash or traveler's checks § Important documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank records saved electronically or in a waterproof, portable container § Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person § Changes of clothing and sturdy shoes § Fire extinguisher § Matches in waterproof container § Feminine supplies and personal hygiene ite Health safeguards against frigid cold and other weather extremes can remind all of us of the importance of planning, preparation, and following expert recommendations. Low temperatures can harm humans in two notable ways: § frostbite, the injury to specific tissues by cold, and § hypothermia, a broader collapse of body systems resulting from cold. The CDC says: "When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up your body's stored energy. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. Body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous because a person may not know it is happening and won't be able to do anything about it. Hypothermia is most likely at very cold temperatures, but it can occur even at cool temperatures (above 40°F) if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water. "Victims of hypothermia are often (1) elderly people with inadequate food, clothing, or heating; (2) babies sleeping in cold bedrooms; (3) people who remain outdoors for long periods — the homeless, hikers, hunters, etc.; and (4) people who drink alcohol or use illicit drugs." In adults, the CDC advises, the symptoms of someone in serious trouble due to the cold include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, and drowsiness. Infants may show symptoms including "bright red, cold skin and very low energy." Emergency care for hypothermia and frostbite focuses on getting the patient warm and dry, handling them gently to avoid further injuring already cold-damaged tissues. With hypothermia, treatment should seek to warm the patient's core areas first — the head, neck, chest, and groin — with heating devices, blankets, and, if necessary, human contact, skin to skin. It may be warranted during the warming period to also continue resuscitation efforts longer than rescuers think because victims who may be believed dead successfully can be revived. **Emergency readiness as a paramount issue** Preventing people from adverse exposure to frigid conditions and other weather extremes — including hurricanes, tornadoes, and inundating rains — is becoming a paramount issue for forecasters and planners. All of us, no matter what part of the country we live in, find ourselves needing to think about disaster readiness for ourselves, our loved ones, businesses, governments, and other enterprises. When public emergencies arise, please heed authorities' warnings and advisories. This can be a life and death matter. It is confounding why some people decide to play on beaches as hurricanes approach, or why golfers and anglers don't take shelter in lightning storms, or others ignore wildfire alarms — and perish as a result. Let's utter the *I word*, at least briefly. To cope with rising conventional demand *and* the crushing scenarios of climate change, our nation must improve its infrastructures of all kinds. The coronavirus pandemic smacked many of us in the face with our vulnerabilities in this area and in so-called supply chains, compounding what we're already experiencing with environmental extremes. To be specific, and without sounding like 1950s extremists who built nuclear-bomb shelters in their yards, we're all too aware of how difficult conditions can make even the most fortunate among us instantly insecure about basics like food and water supplies. Yes, you need emergency rations now, because you may be forced to be self-reliant for an uncertain period due to earthquakes, wildfires, hurricanes, disease outbreaks, or ... well, you name the growing list of calamities. Different agencies issue planning guides for dire circumstances. These no longer can be jammed in kitchen drawers and ignored. (See one preparatory list in illustration above). Instead, a little careful stocking up can keep you and yours out of a world of troubles. You won't sit in the dark and fret if you have a few working flashlights, a portable radio, plenty of batteries, and lots of chargers and fully powered electronic devices such as the cell phones on which we all now rely. Keep health needs in mind During the pandemic, doctors, and pharmacists got with the program and made it easier and almost routine for patients to fill prescriptions in "emergency" quantities. If extreme weather is forecast, be sure you have on hand ample supplies of medications that you need. Ditto any other health or medical supplies. Please also consider that doctors, hospitals, and other medical providers likely will be overwhelmed in extreme conditions, as happened during the Pacific Northwest heat wave. Patients with chronic conditions who need regular, sustained treatments should consult with their caregivers — in advance — about disaster plans. You, your family, and your neighbors may want to think hard about even more detailed and expansive emergency preparations. If you have problems with your mobility, eyesight, hearing, or cognition, do you have care and evacuation plans? If you have medical needs that require steady, sustained electrical power, do you and others in your area need back-up generator or battery capacity? If your homes are heated or cooled with certain sources, including electricity and gas, will these function in weather extremes? Investigations continue to determine the true death toll due to the failure of the Texas power grid last winter. That disaster left millions of customers shivering in an unexpected cold snap, resulting officially in more than 150 deaths — though media investigations suggest that number may be as high as 700. In the parched and scorching West, huge utilities are warning regulators and customers that they suddenly may have their electricity shut off to prevent powerline arcing and sparking that already has been shown to cause sprawling, lethal wildfires. On an individual level, alas, 500 or so people die and more than 1,000 suffer serious injuries annually due to residential fires blamed on defective or faulty use of home heating devices, notably space heaters. **Environmental shifts will damage humans'** well-being in many ways, experts say While extreme weather may offer the most obvious displays of how climate change affects people's health, big alterations of the environment likely will lead to other major harms, too. These effects are forecast by experts but will take time for ordinary folks to see in more concrete ways. Respiratory illnesses, for example, will worsen as climate change increases airborne pollutants. These include surface ozone and particulates (as spread from wildfires). They also mix with other atmospheric chemicals and materials, interacting with heat and sunlight in toxic ways, experts say. Parts of the country seemingly unaffected by disasters like the Western wildfires still may be choked by huge plumes of polluting smoke. In rigorous research scenarios, patients with asthma and other chronic lung disorders, as well as those struggling with heart disease, face increased risks and burdens. The early signs of how different rain, sun, and wind patterns affect our health have been detected by allergy sufferers. They complain that their seasonal discomfort starts earlier, lasts longer, and has been more severe as pollinating plants in many parts of the country bloom in response to weather changes. Cancer experts worry that different problems with ozone — the erosion of a protective upper atmospheric layer, despite efforts to ban certain chemicals to protect it — may increase skin cancers as people are exposed to more and more powerful UV rays. Increased rainfall in swaths of the country, sometimes also unleashing torrential flooding, may result in broader populations being exposed to toxic, cancercausing chemicals spreading on the land and into our waters, staying there, and causing long-term health damages. America long has prospered, of course, because of its agricultural bounty. But as the nation's bread baskets grapple with drought, flooding, temperature swings, and other menaces of climate change, food insecurity may become a bigger threat to us all, experts say. This is likely to be accompanied by troubles in securing and protecting our drinkable water supplies. Health experts fear that climate-change-related problems with food supplies— with crops diminished or wiped out by drought or flooding could result in famines and other nutrition nightmares that affect the health and development of future generations. Further, will persistent environmental shocks drag down the economy — and, combined with bigger and more frequent calamities, cause young people to reconsider having kids? Will persistent climate crises, almost akin to biblical plagues, cause serious erosion of more people's mental health? By the way, let's not ignore that climate change already may be altering the pests that plague us, as well as the infectious diseases they spread (see sidebar). In dealing with the giant crisis of climate change, there also are some other important, debilitating conditions that must be dealt with by us all: pessimism, despair, and apathy. Reciprocal altruism vs. numb nihilism We must come to grips with feeling so overwhelmed by it all — the pandemic, climate change, natural disasters — that we grow numb or even nihilistic. What, after all, can one individual do about global warming, excessive C02 emissions, ozone depletion, deforestation, and more? You may be saying you'll never give up that posh, gasguzzling vehicle gracing your driveway and you're going to fly whenever and wherever you please. You're going to eat and wear what you want, and you'll keep your home and office lit up and toasty in the winter and chilly in the summer, thank you very much. Really? The kids in the neighborhood are watching, as are your nieces, nephews, grandkids and all the young people in the office. Every generation must rise to its own challenges, and leaving the planet in better, healthier shape than we found it must be ours. The next time the nightly news is filled with seemingly endless blahblah-blah from prominent politicians about major issues like infrastructure and climate change, know this: We've got urgent work to do. The least among us and the vulnerable, in the wealthiest nation on the planet, should not be exposed to excessive heat or cold, especially because they live in less-than-optimal housing — or are not housed at all. It is unacceptable that this country, which feeds the world, has so many hungry people of its own. And we can't shrug and assume that Big Agriculture will protect our supplies past their immediate profits and into the future. We can discuss how best to power and heat our businesses and homes but having these services in reliable fashion cannot just be for the rich few, while the rest of us sit, shivering or broiling, in the dark. Health care, as always, cannot be a privilege but must be a right for all Americans — and this will be yet another challenge as the climate changes. The pandemic has underscored the importance of reciprocal altruism. We rely on myriad "essential" workers, and we need to safeguard them — not only from the coronavirus but also from toiling in dangerous weather extremes for our benefit and without adequate protections. We need to worry about our neighbors, colleagues, and loved ones in dire conditions so we all thrive in the days ahead. Huge challenges may seem less forbidding if they're broken down and tackled, bit by bit, just as researchers make medical advances incrementally, leading eventually to major breakthroughs. We need to trust science more than ever, to follow in big and small ways the guidance that will keep us, our health, and the planet as fit as possible. Of course, as always, here's hoping that you and yours stay not only as environmentally tip-top as possible but also healthy and well through the rest of 2021 and beyond! Pests and plagues In nation's capital, unsnarling are falling prey traffic could be breath of fresh to climate shifts, too air Has the world already forgotten how a new, mosquito-borne infection called Zika caused a panic and chatter about a possible cancellation of the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio? Has collective memory gone blank about the handwringing that went on concerning the invasion across the Southern U.S. of the aggressive, daybiting *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes (shown above)? The nation's leaders need only to look out their windows and sniff the air to see how climate After coping with the terrible toll of the coronavirus change can affect a health basic like breathable — which has killed almost 610,000 Americans and infected roughly 34 million of us — it might be tempting for collective memory to downplay the Washington, D.C., as well as parts of Virginia and important warnings of just four years ago. Maryland, all suffered through seriously polluted air blamed on wildfires scorching the West Coast. Then, the New York Times and others reported The smoke and haze were carried to the Eastern that the United States was starting to experience Seaboard by the summer jet stream. It hit the heat heightened health risks from different pests and and humidity locally, prompting warnings of the diseases they spread: unhealthy conditions, especially for the vulnerable. "Tropical diseases — some of them never before The unusual atmospheric conditions underscored seen in the United States — are marching why climate change is an urgent concern and one northward as climate change lets mosquitoes and that isn't just "the other guy's problem." ticks expand their ranges. But that does not mean that epidemics will break out, scientists say. The nation's capital long has benefited by having Whether a few cases explode into a full-fledged politics and government as a major industry, outbreak depends on a set of factors far more meaning that the District, at least, does not complex than the weather. The list of scary bugstruggle as many U.S. metropolises do with, say, borne illnesses seems to get longer every year: pollution from heavy manufacturing. This means Lyme, West Nile, Chagas, dengue, chikungunya the area is not as afflicted with particulates, fine — and now Zika, the first case of which turned up airborne matter that can be destructive to the in Puerto Rico last week. Some factors in the new heart and lungs. spread are, for now, unstoppable, scientists say: the weather is hotter; cheap airfares mean But the District battles for good air for a different humans travel more than they did decades ago; reason — ozone pollution, also known as and cities in tropical countries are becoming more smog. As commuters know all too well, crowded, creating nurseries for each disease." Washington's vehicle traffic has become choking, and not just in road congestion. The jams also Separately, the newspaper zeroed in on how the have trucks, cars, and motorcycles churning out warmer, wetter weather in the South is fostering tailpipe pollutants in significant measure, night and the rise of mosquito nightmares, reporting: day. These emissions combine with other chemicals in the air and interact with the sun and "Since 1980, the amount of time when conditions are ideal for mosquitoes — more warmth, more humidity — have increased by five days in 125 The result can cause big problems, as the American cities, according to the news and American Lung Association has reported: research organization Climate Central. In 10 cities, the mosquito season has grown by a month. In 21 "Breathing ozone can shorten your life. Strong cities — on the Atlantic Coast below Norfolk, Va.; evidence exists of the deadly impact of ozone in much of Florida; in Mobile, New Orleans, from large studies conducted in cities across the Beaumont outside Houston and south to Corpus U.S., in Europe and in Asia. Researchers Christi — mosquitoes are active at least 190 days repeatedly found that the risk of premature death per year. "Climate change is certainly expanding increased with higher levels of ozone. Newer the geographic range of mosquito species, and research has confirmed that ozone increased the inevitably the diseases follow them," says Nikos risk of premature death even when other Vasilakis, an associate professor at the University pollutants also are present. of Texas Medical Branch .... "But it also shortens what we call the extrinsic incubation period, the "Many areas in the United States produce enough time it takes from when a mosquito takes a blood ozone during the summer months to cause health meal to when it becomes infectious. The standard problems that can be felt right away. Immediate is 14 days, but in warmer periods we can see it as problems — in addition to increased risk of short as nine or 10 days." premature death — include: shortness of breath, wheezing and coughing; asthma attacks; Climate change also is helping pesky ticks increased risk of respiratory infections; increased flourish, along with the nasty illnesses they susceptibility to pulmonary inflammation; and spread, the Washington Post reported, increased need for people with lung diseases, like interviewing Matthias Leu, an ecologist and asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease assistant professor at the College of William & (COPD), to receive medical treatment and to go to Mary. The newspaper started by noting this: the hospital. "The [CDC] reports the number of tick-borne "New studies warn of serious effects from diseases is increasing at a record pace while the breathing ozone over longer periods. With more geographic range of ticks continues to long-term data, scientists are finding that longexpand. Lyme disease is the most commonly term exposure—that is, for periods longer than known tick-borne disease, but other diseases, eight hours, including days, months or years such as ehrlichiosis and STARI, have been may increase the risk of early death." discovered and the list of tick-related illnesses continues to grow. Tick bites have even been Regional officials continue to try to unsnarl the found to cause allergic reactions to red meat in area's traffic with campaigns to increase its safe some people." flow and by encouraging commuters to use mass transit, along with efforts to make these as And as expert Leu reported: accessible and affordable as possible. Taxpayers, while spending billions of dollars on initiatives to "[U]rbanization has led to a growing population of improve traffic and public transportation, also will deer and mice, which are used by the ticks for be investing in improving health in the region due blood meals, and that in turn increases the tick to potentially reduced vehicle pollution. population. Flowers and bushes planted by homeowners are feeding the deer well ... Tick As the Washington Post reported: diseases have increased and one tick-borne disease in particular, ehrlichiosis, is impacted by "Among the initiatives and policy priorities in D.C. the weather. Ehrlichiosis, which produces Mayor Muriel E. Bowser's proposed \$17.5 billion symptoms much like Lyme disease, is passed to budget is reducing the use of personal cars in a humans by Lone Star ticks that feed on fawns or post-pandemic world while promoting biking and other hosts, such as rabbits and squirrels. Adult other more sustainable modes of transportation. deer have stronger immune systems, which keeps The mayor's spending blueprint for the fiscal year the *ehrlichia* bacteria in check, but fawns carry beginning Oct. 1 includes tens of millions of much more of the bacteria. During cold winters, dollars for fixing the city's road infrastructure while when the number of fawns is likely lower, the advancing projects aimed at buses, bikes, and bacteria is not as widespread, which lowers the pedestrians. 'As the District reopens and more disease rate. The opposite is true during warm residents are actively getting to home, work, winters." school, we're seizing on the opportunity to accelerate our sustainability goals,' Bowser (D) Rodents also are flourishing as the climate recently told the D.C. Council. 'Car-free lanes are changes, and this is posing not only familiar risks a big investment in this budget, as well as a focus — including potential spread of plague by prairie on how we can reclaim our streets for public use." dogs or hantavirus by field mice — but also new perils. NPR reported that rats, mice, and sand fleas may be spreading leishmaniasis, a disgusting, flesh-eating disease, in Texas, Oklahoma, and Florida. The parasitic condition is well-known in tropical climes, but medical specialists are seeing concerning more cases of it cropping up in this country. **Recent Health Care Blog Posts** Here are some recent posts on our patient safety blog that might interest you: "It's huge, it's historic, it's unheard of, unprecedented, and a real shame. It's a complete shame." That quote, reported by the New York Times and made by Daniel Ciccarone, a professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, tragically summarizes the latest federal data on the opioid abuse and drug overdose crisis. As the newspaper and others reported: "Drug overdose deaths rose nearly 30% in 2020 to a record 93,000, according to preliminary statistics released ... by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's the largest single-year increase recorded." Federal regulators have taken a welcome initial step to bar insurers and health care providers from holding patients hostage in their all-too-common fee fights, with draft rules out now to crush "surprise" medical bills. The politically riven, do-nothing Congress shocked critics by ending 2020 with an actual new law, included in legislation dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, that gave patients new protection from nightmares created when insurers and big corporation sought to reduce their health care costs with so-called narrow networks of pre-approved health care providers. Cash is king. That truism may hold for thrifty savers and businesses and individuals buffeted by economic uncertainty. But this realistic view also may be turned on its head for poorer, uninsured patients trying to cope with bankrupting medical bills. That's because hospitals — a leading driver of health care costs — gouge with their premium prices those who pay with cash, the Wall Street Journal reported. The newspaper, working with previously secret pricing data that institutions across the country must disclose now, has given consumers yet another eye-popping view of the elasticity of hospital charges and how they punish the poor The coronavirus pandemic slammed nursing homes and other long-term care facilities hard in two heart-breaking waves eight months apart. Covid-19 caused the institutions' fatalities to spike by almost a third over the year before, leaving roughly 170,000 of the elderly, injured, and ill dead, as well as 4 in 10 Medicare-covered residents infected. Those are some of the grim statistical views of what occurred in nursing homes, notably to residents covered under the federal Medicare program, according to the Office of the Inspector General in the federal Health and Human Services agency (the HHS IG). Consumers have gotten eyebrow-raising views of Big Pharma's ugly business practices and the tough and sometimes sketchy efforts to rein in the industry's ravenous pursuit of profits — in settling claims over distributors inundating the country with lethal painkillers, or with a maker's behind-the-scenes campaign to win U.S. approval of an Alzheimer's medication based on dubious data. Patients are unlikely to come out ahead, or even satisfied with the outcomes of the cases involving how Johnson & Johnson (J&J), AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson handled opioids, and how Biogen and the Food and Drug Administration have dealt with Aduhelm.

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HERE'S TO A HEALTHY REST OF 2021!