



Risk Management SNAPSHOT

Current issues and trends for
practice managers



The United States saw a 23% increase in deaths in 2020.

According to a Medscape article, the United States saw a 23% increase in deaths from March 2020 to January 2021, and almost three-quarters of those deaths involved COVID-19. Death rates were higher among Black and Hispanic populations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that COVID-19 is now the third leading cause of death after heart disease and cancer. In addition, it is estimated that COVID-19 is likely to cause as many deaths as the influenza pandemic of 1918. For more information, read the Medscape article [Excess Deaths Jump 23% in US in 2020, Mostly Because of COVID-19](#).

COVID-19 vaccinations are crucial to controlling the pandemic; however, some patients may be hesitant to get vaccinated. Medical Mutual's practice tip [Strategies for Effective Communication](#) offers helpful tips on navigating difficult conversations with patients.

Sexually transmitted diseases increase for the sixth year in a row.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that sexually transmitted diseases (STD) are at an all-time high. More than 2.5 million cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis were reported in 2019. Congenital syphilis has increased an alarming 279% since 2015. Syphilis among newborns can result in lifelong physical and neurological problems for the child.

Providers should be aware of this alarming trend and ensure that their patients receive appropriate testing and treatment for STDs. The CDC site [Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance 2019](#) gives providers access to helpful resources for identifying and treating STDs, including community resources and treatment guidelines.

Medical Mutual's practice tip [Results Management](#) provides helpful information on establishing a test tracking system in your practice to ensure that diagnostic tests receive appropriate follow-up.

The best exercise to control high blood pressure?

Medical organizations and experts make recommendations for prescribing exercise to control high blood pressure; however, it can be challenging for providers to create exercise plans for their patients. An article in MDedge describes elements of a consensus statement from European cardiology societies on personalized exercise programs.

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The consensus statement offers an algorithm for creating individualized exercise programs as part of a management plan for patients at risk for high blood pressure. In addition, the report from the [European Journal of Preventive Cardiology](#) provides suggestions for patients with hypertension, high-normal blood pressure, and normal blood pressure. The guidance recommends combinations of aerobic exercise and resistance training for patients.

Patients with chronic health issues require consistent follow-up care. Managing patient appointments is key to proper patient follow-up. Medical Mutual's practice tip on [Appointment Management](#) outlines steps your practice should take to ensure that your patients receive appropriate care.

How to support your transgender patients.

In his article, *My patient tells me that they are transgender-now what?*, Dr. Gerald Montano, a pediatrician, explores steps providers can take to make their young transgender patients feel safe and supported. Some transgender youth may be afraid to come out to their parents and look to their provider for confidential, supportive care.

Dr. Montano acknowledges that he has access to many resources for his transgender patients because he works in an academic health system. However, providers in more rural areas might not have access to the same type of resources. Still, [the article lists several resources and online services](#) providers can use to assist their transgender patients.

Providers sometimes have questions about what treatments a minor can consent to and what health information their parents can access. Medical Mutual's practice tip [Minors and the Right to Consent to Health Care Treatment](#) gives guidance on a minor's right to consent to certain aspects of their treatment. The tip also advises on protecting a minor's health information.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's new web portal: Racism and Health

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created a new website dedicated to providing a central location for education around health inequities in the United States. The site will serve as a hub for all of the agency's activities addressing the impact of racism on health.

The CDC acknowledged that while the COVID-19 pandemic identified many health disparities in the US, these inequities have existed for generations. Check out their [Health Equity portal](#) for more information and resources.

Our practice tip [Health Literacy](#) has guidance and resources on increasing your patients' comprehension of complex health issues and treatment plans.



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