

Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

Thanks for being a reader – we hope you enjoyed our coverage

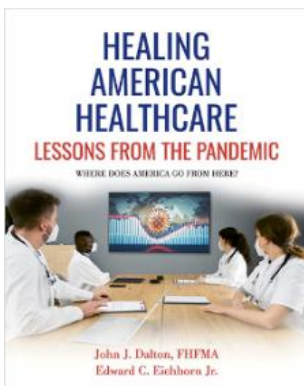
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From the Publisher: As the pandemic began in New York nearly six years ago, John Dalton and I discussed launching an e-newsletter to keep busy physicians and healthcare professionals informed about critical healthcare research and policy

developments during that uniquely difficult time. We leveraged our extensive experience in healthcare to summarize articles and studies of interest, to help our readers keep abreast of important relevant information as they faced the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic.

Every two weeks (and sometimes more often), we selected the five or six most important reports and articles from many sources that we distilled and published in our deliberately limited format of two pages. We named this newsletter The Three Minute Read™ because we hoped it could be read in a couple of minutes. You seemed to like our format; our opening rate was always at least 30% and at times it reached 75%.



As the pandemic approached the death toll of the Spanish flu epidemic, John and I collaborated to write our book, "Healing American Healthcare: Lessons from the Pandemic." The book is a collection of summaries that capture the main issues of the pandemic in the words of the individuals who reported on it.

Available on Amazon, it's the only book we are aware of that describes the chaos in an objective, concise manner. As we bring our newsletter to a close, I want to thank our readers for your support, you made our newsletter the

success that it has been. I also express my deep appreciation to John Dalton for his invaluable contributions. As our editor, he ensured that the articles we summarized were clear, the topics we chose were relevant, and our writing was free from the small errors he called "flyspecks." Our partnership over the last several years in publishing and editing this newsletter has been energizing, enjoyable, and rewarding.

Thank you, John, for all you have done to make our newsletter all it could be.



From the Editor: When Ed Eichhorn and I began The Three Minute Read™ in March 2020 to provide a summary of important healthcare news to physicians and clinicians overwhelmed by the worst pandemic in more than a century, we never dreamed that we would publish 164

issues with over 1,000 article summaries. Sadly, despite our efforts, America's healthcare remains the worst among high income countries and, for most of the pandemic, ranked 31st of the 38 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, ahead of only seven former Soviet satellite states.

By September 2021, the US death toll had exceeded that of the "Spanish flu" epidemic of 1918-20, and Ed and I decided to author a book that cataloged the chaos of the first 18 months of the pandemic through the eyes of the journalists who reported on it. That book, "Healing American Healthcare: Lessons from the Pandemic," included seven lesson remain relevant today. They are:

1. The US must move from curing disease to promoting health;
2. Telehealth must be here to stay;
3. China is not America's friend;
4. Critical supplies must be onshored;
5. Clinician shortages and burnout must be addressed;
6. Committed, compassionate leadership is key;
7. America should emulate the Scandinavians.

Our final issue coincides with the [Lown Institute's](#) annual Shkreli Awards. Named for "[Pharma-Bro](#)" Martin Shkreli, the Lown Institute awards recognize the worst examples

of profiteering and dysfunction in healthcare. They provide a bookend to Trump 1.0 and Trump 2.0. The 1st place [2020 Shkreli Award](#) went to Jared Kushner and the federal government's [Project Airbridge](#), to "*airlift PPE from overseas and bring it to the U.S. quickly*" to go to designated pandemic hotspots. Instead, the supplies were given to six private medical supply companies to sell to the highest bidder, setting off a bidding war among the states. No officials from the 10 hardest hit counties said that they received PPE from Project Airbridge.



Here's TMR's choice as well as the five that the judges found most egregious:

#8 - UnitedHealth's nursing home scheme leaves seniors stranded in emergencies. UnitedHealth Group, the nation's largest healthcare conglomerate, created a financial incentive system across nearly 2,000 nursing homes that rewarded facilities for keeping sick residents out of the hospital, even during medical emergencies.

#5 - Lack of oversight allows alleged physician-predator to commit years of abuse. Nearly 250 former patients say Brigham & Women's rheumatologist Dr. Derrick Todd used his authority to perform invasive breast and pelvic procedures that had no clinical justification.

#4 - Billion dollar bandaids are a bonanza for Medicare billers. Despite limited research showing they outperform traditional bandages, more than 100 new "skin substitute" wound care products, usually made from pieces of dried placenta, have come to market recently, with some companies charging Medicare thousands of dollars per square inch.

#3 - FDA approves lab-grown arteries despite evidence of life-threatening leaks. Biotech company Humacyte promoted its lab-grown blood vessel for as a breakthrough for wounded patients when pitching investors, but its research didn't hold up to scrutiny by FDA scientists. FDA leaders approved the device anyway. It's priced at \$29,500 each.

#2 - Private equity play on clinical trials may be putting patients at risk. Private equity (PE) firms with connections to drug companies are increasingly buying institutional review boards (IRBs) along with the companies that design and run the trials. When Novo

Nordisk needed an ethics review for new Ozempic spin-off trials, it hired WCG Clinical, an IRB partly owned by Novo's own parent company. WCG has been picked at least 46 times to review Novo trials. WCG and its main rival, Advarra, now dominate the for-profit ethics board industry, judging the trials as well as selling services to design the trials, find patients, manage sites, monitor data, and advise sponsors. With little federal oversight, ethicists and watchdogs warn that patient safety could be compromised by these apparent conflicts of interest.

#1 - Kennedy's clumsy crusade against acetaminophen. HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. hasn't been shy about making claims and taking actions that have potentially far-reaching consequences on Americans, such as his focus on autism. Citing studies that showed correlation but [no causal evidence](#), and despite clinicians, toxicologists, and major medical organizations having looked at the research and rejected the claim, he asserted a link between acetaminophen use during pregnancy and autism. While this spectacle of erratic scientific leadership around autism is supposedly tied to Making America Healthy Again, many are now asking not what Kennedy can do for his country, but how his country can undo what he has already done.

TMR's Take: It's no surprise that United Health Group (UHG), Private equity (PE) and Trump's efforts to sideline science are on the list. The [2024 Shkreli Awards](#) #'s 1 and 2 were "*Wreck-it Ralph*" De La Torre of Steward Healthcare and UHG's crushing use of its power to pressure its 90,000 employed physicians to use aggressive medical coding tactics that make patients seem as sick as possible, producing billions in unearned profits for UHG shareholders.

With seasonal flu, measles and whooping cough outbreaks in several states as vaccination rates decline, RFK Jr's "*Make America Healthy Again*" initiative instead is making Americans sicker. We fear for our grandchildren and their children who may be exposed to diseases that were eliminated in the US decades ago.

Editor's Epilogue: What a wild and crazy ride it's been. Thanks, Ed, for being an ideal partner keeping me on an even keel as we produced 164 issues covering the important healthcare-related policy developments over nearly six years. I'd also be remiss if I didn't thank our Executive Producer, Michele Hickey of [Silver Linings Communications](#), who makes sure each issue hits your inbox looking first class.