August 28, 2026

"AMGA Immunizations Brief"—brought to you by the Rise to Immunize® (RIZE) campaign—delivers vaccine news and updates relevant to healthcare leaders. This brief provides concise, actionable information to help you stay informed and guide patient care in an evolving immunization landscape.

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At a Glance

- HHS is seeking public input on potential changes to federal vaccine recommendation categories.
- President Trump has nominated Dr. Heidi Overton to lead the FDA.
- The FDA approved updated COVID-19 vaccines for the 2026-27 respiratory season.
- New research estimates that each 2025 measles case exceeded $43,000 in associated costs.
- Moderna and Merck announced that their personalized mRNA cancer vaccine improved key outcomes in a late-stage melanoma trial.

Detailed Brief

HHS is seeking public input on potential changes to federal vaccine recommendation categories.

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a Request for Information (RFI) on Aug. 21 seeking public input on whether the categories currently used for federal vaccine recommendations should be changed or expanded.
  - The RFI is intended to inform the HHS Task Force on Safer Childhood Vaccines as they consider possible changes to the recommendation framework following President Trump's Aug. 10 executive order.
- Federal vaccine recommendations currently fall into three main categories: routine, risk-based, and shared clinical decision-making (SCDM). HHS is asking whether additional categories should be created, including vaccines that are "recommended, but not during infancy," "recommended with qualification," or subject to SCDM with additional qualifications.
  - The Department is also seeking input on whether existing recommendations should offer greater flexibility around the timing and sequencing of doses, including whether vaccines should be administered individually rather than during the same visit.
  - HHS is also reconsidering whether SCDM is sufficiently clear to clinicians and patients and whether it should be renamed—for example, as a "conditional recommendation" or a "recommendation based on individualized assessment."

President Trump has nominated Dr. Heidi Overton to lead the FDA.

- On Aug. 19, President Trump formally nominated Heidi Overton, MD, deputy director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, to serve as U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner.
  - Overton is a physician and former America First Policy Institute official who has helped advance several of the Trump administration's health policy priorities.
- If confirmed, Overton would take over FDA at a time of continued leadership turnover. The agency is currently led by Acting Commissioner Kyle Diamantas, as several major FDA centers continue to operate without permanent directors.

The FDA approved updated COVID-19 vaccines for the 2026-27 respiratory season.

- On Aug. 27, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Moderna, Novavax-Sanofi, and Pfizer-BioNTech's updated COVID vaccines, after an advisory panel recommended that the shots should target the dominant XFG variant in the spring.
- Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech offer mRNA vaccines, while Sanofi, which recently acquired Novavax, offers a protein-based vaccine.
- The approval allows manufacturers to begin shipping doses, ensuring that these vaccines will be available in the coming days.

New research estimates that each 2025 measles case exceeded $43,000 in associated costs.

- New Johns Hopkins research estimates that each U.S. measles case in 2025 cost $43,204 on average, underscoring the significant financial impact of measles outbreaks.
  - Average cost per case varied from $33,415 from the medical provider perspective to $58,591 when including public health response costs, which include case investigation, contact tracing, quarantine, and vaccination campaigns.
  - Researchers note that measles outbreaks and their significant costs are largely preventable through vaccination and system-level preparedness.

Moderna and Merck announced that their personalized mRNA cancer vaccine improved key outcomes in a late-stage melanoma trial.

- Moderna and Merck announced that their personalized mRNA cancer vaccine, when added to existing treatment, slowed the return of melanoma and its spread to other parts of the body in a Phase 3 clinical trial.
  - The mRNA-based vaccine, intismeran autogene, is tailored to each patient using genetic information from their tumor. The vaccine trains the immune system to recognize and attack cancer-specific mutations.
  - The developers reported improvements in both recurrence-free survival and distant metastasis-free survival, making this the first mRNA cancer vaccine to show benefit in a randomized Phase 3 trial. Full study results have not yet been released.
- The results could represent an important advance in cancer treatment, with the potential to become part of standard melanoma care, while also demonstrating the broader promise of mRNA for future vaccines and therapies.
