

The SENTRY

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LOCAL NEWS...

BSO investigates fatal shooting in N. Lauderdale

Broward Sheriff's Office homicide detectives are investigating a shooting that left one man dead and two men injured in North Lauderdale.

At approximately 3:41 a.m., Sunday morning, Broward County Regional Communications received a call reporting a shooting in front of the Player's Sports Bar & Grill located at 5280 N. State Road 7. Broward Sheriff's Office district deputies responded to investigate. During the preliminary investigation, deputies learned three shooting victims were transported to two hospitals. Emergency personnel pronounced Deandre Major deceased later that morning. Brandon Pinkney and Clarence Hall sustained injuries listed as not life-threatening. BSO Homicide detectives responded and are currently investigating this incident.

Anyone with information on this fatal shooting is asked to call Homicide Detective Louis Bonhomme at 954-321-4377 or submit a tip through the SafeWatch App. If you wish to remain anonymous, please contact Broward Crime Stoppers at 954-493-TIPS (8477), online at browardcrimestoppers.org, or dial *TIPS (8477) from any cellphone in the United States.

16-year-old dead after Pompano Beach shooting

Broward Sheriff's Office Homicide Unit detectives are investigating a fatal shooting that killed a 16-year-old and injured three other people in Pompano Beach.

Around 5 p.m. on Monday, March 25, Broward County Regional Communications received reports of a shooting in the 1800 block of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in Pompano Beach. BSO deputies and Pompano Beach Fire Rescue responded. On scene, deputies located a male on the sidewalk suffering from gunshot wounds and immediately began life-saving measures. Pompano Beach Fire Rescue transported the victim to Broward Health North where he died. Deputies also learned that three additional shooting victims were taken to a nearby hospital by a private vehicle. They are expected to survive.

According to detectives, the preliminary investigation reveals that the victims were in front of a business at 1780 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. prior to the incident when they were approached by multiple subjects who began shooting. BSO's Homicide and Crime Scene Units are investigating the motive for the shootings and attempting to determine who is responsible.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact BSO Homicide Unit Detective Steve Novak at 954-321-4325 or submit a tip through the SafeWatch app. If you wish to remain anonymous, please contact Broward Crime Stoppers at 954-493-TIPS (8477), online at browardcrimestoppers.org, or dial *TIPS (8477) from any cellphone in the United States.

Detectives arrest suspect in L. Lakes Shooting

Broward Sheriff's Office Homicide Unit detectives arrested one suspect in connection with a shooting that killed a man in Lauderdale Lakes in December and are searching for the person who pulled trigger.

On March 13, detectives issued an arrest warrant for Freddie Miller and he was located in Tampa on March 18, where he was taken into custody. Miller is facing one count of second degree murder with a firearm and resisting an officer without violence.

The fatal shooting occurred on Monday, Dec. 18, 2023. Around 12:38 p.m., Broward County Regional Communications received reports of a shooting in the 4100 block of Northwest 30th Terrace in Lauderdale Lakes. BSO deputies and Broward Sheriff Fire Rescue responded. On scene, deputies located an adult male suffering from gunshot wounds. Paramedics transported the individual, identified as Jacob Pablo, to Broward Health Medical Center where he was pronounced deceased.

BSO's Homicide and Crime Scene units responded to investigate the circumstances that led up to this incident. Based on the interviews, evidence collected on scene and search

Biden focuses on Florida

President Biden and former President Trump are set for a rematch this November after becoming their party's presumptive nominees, but they're also facing a relatively notable third-party challenge from Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Biden's reelection campaign is tapping three veteran Democratic operatives to head up its efforts in Florida amid a deeper debate over whether the state remains in play for Democrats in the November elections.

Biden's Florida leadership team brings three veterans of the state's politics into the president's formal campaign structure. J. Michael Smith, who served as Biden's Florida state director, Florida Democratic Party executive director Phillip Jerez and strategist Jackie Lee will take on senior adviser roles. The push from the Biden campaign is just ramping up. On Wednesday, second gentleman Doug Emhoff traveled to Coral Gables to launch the campaign's Hispanic outreach initiative.

How big of a role Florida will play in the November presidential election is still undecided, given the state's rightward shift in recent years.

Biden lost Florida to former President Donald Trump in 2020, and Gov. Ron DeSantis scored a massive 19-point reelection win in the state in 2022 that was widely seen as devastating to Democrats.

Trump hopes to rake in \$33 million during his Florida fundraiser this week. He has invited wealthy donors to his Palm Beach home for an April 6 fundraiser hosted by New York hedge fund billionaire John Paulson and listing as co-chairs other high-dollar donors such as Las Vegas-based businessman Robert Bigelow, casino mogul Steve Wynn and New York grocery billionaire John Catsimatidis.

Guests are being asked to contribute \$814,600 per person as a "chairman" contributor or \$250,000 per person. Perks of attendance include a personalized copy of Trump's coffee table book with photographs from his administration.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the nephew of former President John F. Kennedy, has been trying to get signatures to get on the ballot in as many states as possible as he mounts an independent campaign for president. Although he has only gained enough signatures in about a half-dozen states so far, early polling shows he may be the most likely third-party candidate to impact the race.

But Kennedy faces long odds to seriously challenge Biden and Trump for the election, or even to get a victory in any state, based on

past history. Perot was the most successful third-party candidate in modern history, but he only received about 19 percent of the popular vote and won no electoral votes.

Most election pros expect Kennedy to siphon democratic votes from Biden, giving Trump an edge in November.



No "Squatting" in Florida

Governor Ron DeSantis has put the brakes on "Squatting" in the State of Florida.

Florida's Legislature signed HB 621, which eliminates squatter's rights in the state of Florida.

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Old Town Untapped Bailey Contemporary Arts, 41 NE 1st Street Apr 05 | 6:00 pm - 10:00 pm |

Join us for Pompano Beach's Arts Festival! We are excited for the kickoff! The 2023-24 season of Old Town Untapped series running October through May. Patrons will enjoy a night filled with live music by local bands and a local DJ, art gallery openings at Bailey Contemporary Arts Center, local art vendors and food trucks.

Free Chlorination Notification

Monday, April 8th - Monday, April 29th

As part of our efforts to ensure that the drinking water we supply is the highest quality possible, the City of Pompano Beach Utilities Department will begin a free chlorination treatment of its entire distribution system on Monday, April 8th until Monday, April 29th. This treatment will be in effect for four weeks. This free chlorination treatment is a common maintenance practice used by utilities. The City of Pompano Beach free chlorinates the distribution system periodically.

Persons currently undergoing dialysis or with a compromised immune system should consult their health care provider prior to this disinfection process change to determine whether this change will affect their treatment.

In addition, anyone who has a fish tank or pet, including grocery stores and restaurants with lobster tanks and fish containers at bait shops, that uses city water should contact a pet or aquarium professional to determine the need for any adjustments to their aquarium treatment procedures during this chlorine treatment change.

During the free chlorination pro-

cess, the disinfection portion of the water treatment process will change from using chloramines (a combination of ammonia and chlorine) to using free chlorine. Due to these changes, residents may experience a slight change in both the taste and smell of the water. The water will remain safe to drink, to use for cooking, to bathe in, and for other everyday uses. Many water providers in the United States still use free chlorine disinfection as the normal water disinfection process. After this chlorine treatment is completed, the city will return to its normal method of disinfection using chloramines.

During this period the Utilities Department will also be flushing fire hydrants throughout the city. There may be periods of discolored water that will be temporary. Let your faucets run until the water clears up.

The City's primary focus is the quality of water that we provide to our customers. This chlorine treatment is being performed as a routine maintenance measure. If you have any questions, please contact the Utilities Billing Division (Customer Service) for assistance at 954-786-4637.

City of Pompano Beach launches dynamic tourism website

The City of Pompano Beach is thrilled to announce the launch of its cutting-edge tourism website, VisitPompanoBeach.com, designed to showcase our beautiful beach, vibrant culture, and the endless recreational opportunities that make Pompano Beach a premier destination.

VisitPompanoBeach.com is a user-friendly platform that offers a comprehensive guide to all the attractions, accommodations, dining options, and events that Pompano Beach has to offer. With a fresh and modern design, the website aims to provide visitors with an immersive experience, enticing them to explore and discover the charm of Pompano Beach.

Key features of the new website include:

• Comprehensive guide to all the attractions, accommodations, dining options, and events that Pompano Beach has to offer.

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Pompano Pioneers by Bud Garner

As we started Pompano Beach camp, I said, "I didn't even own a flashlight. Neither did Bill or Joe. Didn't matter," said Sam. "I have one."

We would just have to keep close behind him and watch the best we could for fallen trees, snakes and gator holes. Wait a minute, this could be dangerous, well no going back now, couldn't see to get back to the truck anyway it was so dark.

We weren't making very good time through the mud and water and thick plants that surrounded us, not even a trail to walk, we wondered how the dogs with their short legs could travel through this.

Sam kept moving steadily along, stopping over so often and getting us quiet so he could get a track on the dogs and see in which direction the coon was taking them.

I could have told him, the coon was taking us into the deepest part of Cypress creek and the stumps and roots were getting thicker and the water was getting deeper.

Bill stumbled on a cypress knee and as he fell he grabbed me and we both went down into the mud and water, now we were really in a mess, it was already cold and now we were wet all over and cold.

This was just the first of many falls we would take this night and it was all of us doing the falling, even Sam slipped and fell several times during the night and he didn't seem to mind in the least.

After what seemed like hours that the dogs were on the trail of the coon, Sam suddenly stopped and we listened to the dogs he told us they had the coon treed and we had to hurry to them before he came down and ran some more.

NEWS...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

warrants, detectives believe a physical fight occurred between Pablo and Miller. At some point during the altercation, Pablo stabbed Miller. Miller exited the apartment and went to his car to retrieve a firearm and gave it to a second subject who shot Pablo. Miller and the second subject then fled the area.

Detectives continue their search for the second subject involved in this fatal shooting.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact BSO Homicide Unit Detective Kevin White at 954-321-4210 or submit a tip through the SaferWatch app. If you wish to remain anonymous, please contact Broward Crime Stoppers at 954-493-TIPS (8477), online at browardcrimestoppers.org, or dial **TIPS (8477) from any cellphone in the United States. Any Crime Stoppers tip that leads to an arrest in this case is eligible for a reward of up to \$5,000.

Bud Garner

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

After finally getting to the dogs, Sam shined his light up into the tall cypress tree and sure enough, there sat a big old coon staring down at us, looking like a bandit, his eyes shining like red hot poker.

We were so tired from the sloshing through the swamp we just wanted Sam to shoot the coon and let's get back to the truck.

"Not so," said Sam. He untied the bag he had strapped to his back, unrolled a "croaker sack" handed it to Bill and told him to be ready to open it and close it up when he gave the word.

Sam then raised the 22 rifle to his shoulder, holding the flashlight up against the barrel of the gun, he shot the trunk of the tree next to where the coon was sitting and I suppose it startled the coon and he either fell or jumped from the tree to the ground and was immediately set-upon by the dogs.

Before they had a chance to injure the coon or vice-versa Sam handed me the gun and jumped into the middle of the dogs, the coon, the mud and water.

Grabbing the snarling coon by the tail, swung him up and away from the dogs and yelled for Bill to open the sack, dropped the coon in, closed the top, tied it, and there, he had "sacked the coon." All in one continuous motion.

This came as a big surprise to me, Bill and Joe, we thought Sam would shoot the coon.

Sam said this was the better way to handle them if you were hunting with others.

The coon could be penned up and used whenever you wanted him.

Sam sold most of the coons he caught or killed and some folks wanted theirs alive so they could feed-out any strong, wild taste that the coon might have.

This one coon did not end our hunt on this Saturday night, we caught three more before the night was over and we called it quits.

It was near daylight when we staggered out of the Cypress creek swamp and were glad to see that truck in the beam of the flashlight.

We hunted with Sam on several occasions after that, always at Cypress Creek, sometimes east of the bridge sometimes west of the bridge but we never, ever hunted west of Dixie highway, just would not have anything to do with that part of the creek. I wondered why and he wouldn't say. Sam never did get the cent "hammered out" of the fender of his car, wasn't a very big dent anyway.

Read Bud Garner every week in The SENTRY.

Haven't flown in a while? Here's how air travel has changed



Illustration by Aren Elliott

If you haven't flown in a while, fasten your seatbelts. I've got good news -- and bad news.

You've probably already heard the bad news because it travels faster than the speed of sound. Airfares are up. So are luggage fees. And we seem to have a problem with in-flight violence again.

But there's more to the story, and if you're an occasional air traveler, you'll want to get the big picture. You might be surprised by what you find.

First, the bad news about air travel in 2024.

Some of the changes have not been for the better. For example: Airfares are climbing. Cheap pandemic airfares are history. Average domestic roundtrip fares fell to a low of \$186 in May 2020. But they were back up to \$261 by the beginning of this year -- and they continue to rise.

Checked baggage fees are soaring. All of the major airlines have recently raised their baggage fees. On domestic flights, a checked bag may cost as much as \$35 (more if you wait until the last minute or your bag is overweight).

Air rage is back. In-flight air rage hit record highs in 2021, mostly because of masking requirements. But the number of violent in-flight incidents remains high -- this time a combination of fuller flights and a continuing decline of civility. We're on track to exceed 2020's unruly passenger incidents.

But don't despair. The air travel experience is changing in small ways -- and, potentially, in big ways.

What's it like to fly now? Let's start with the air travel experience itself. Flights are fuller and space is tighter than ever. In fact, if you're flying somewhere this spring or summer, you should congratulate yourself. You're probably part of the busiest year in the history of air travel.

"Air travel has rebounded," says Jason Block, CEO of WorldVia Travel Group. That puts a squeeze on regular passengers. If you've booked a no-frills economy ticket, you may face a higher risk of being bumped from your flight. So if you have a little extra money, Block suggests buying a more flexible ticket. You're still not bump-proof, but at least you'll move up the list. Smile for the TSA.

The passenger screening experience is different but not necessarily better. The TSA has new scanners that take your picture to verify your identity. New technology might allow you to keep all your belongings in your bag and speed up screening -- "might" being the operative word.

The process is more inconsistent than ever," says Andy Abramson, a frequent traveler and a communications consultant from

Las Vegas. "Procedures change from airport to airport. In some cases, all you need is your boarding pass. In others, you need your ID, and in others, nothing but your facial scan."

Speaking of technology, many air travelers have raved about new onboard Wi-Fi capabilities. Airlines like Air New Zealand, Emirates and JetBlue include the price of Wi-Fi in their tickets, and the connections have just gotten better since the pandemic.

Your face is your only boarding pass. The TSA isn't the only one using facial scans. Some U.S. airlines have started using facial scans instead of boarding passes. It's a little bit of an adjustment for passengers.

"I stood awkwardly in front of a camera, feeling like a contestant in a dystopian game show," says Chris McGuire, a real estate broker from Birmingham, Ala.

A few months ago, Frankfurt became the first airport in Europe to fully adopt facial recognition. Other airports, including Tokyo and Dubai, also have face-scanning technology. If you haven't flown in a while, you may not have to fumble for your boarding pass before you get on the plane.

I've tried face-scanning technology on many occasions and it usually works, but it can be slow. Getting through customs in Santiago, Chile, took a while and the agent kept apologizing for the technology. So don't forget to pack your patience.

No more ticket change fees. Airline ticket change fees disappeared during the pandemic on U.S. airlines. So if you have to change your flight, you won't have to pay a \$250 fee on top of any fare difference.

"That's one of the most significant changes," says frequent air traveler Bob Bacheler, who is the managing director of Flying Angels, a medical transport service. "Airlines introduced more flexible booking and cancellation policies, allowing passengers to change or cancel flights without heavy penalties."

Bacheler thinks the fees will return eventually, and he's right. If they do, airlines will call them something else -- maybe a "convenience" fee?

You may board your flight differently.

"Some airlines are implementing new boarding procedures," says Andy Palacios, vice president of growth and strategic partnerships for App in the Air. The most significant is United Airlines, which last fall began boarding economy passengers with window seats before those with middle and aisle seats.

Palacios recommends avoiding the general boarding, maybe by getting a credit card or earning elite

status. Anything that gets you into the first boarding group can save you from having to gate-check your carry-on or just getting stuck in a crowd.

You have new rights, too.

If something goes wrong on your flight, you may find that your airline will do more for you. That's because the Department of Transportation (DOT), which regulates airlines, has been applying steady pressure on domestic airlines to improve customer service. (After all, taxpayers bailed out the airlines during the pandemic.)

Airlines now offer guaranteed meals, accommodations and ground transportation to and from a hotel when they're at fault for a cancellation. (You can find out about all your rights on the DOT's Fly Rights website.)

The government is working on carving out more rights for air travelers, dealing with everything from more straightforward and honest pricing to minimum seat size. But it's a work in progress.

Flying "feels different" now. Flying "feels like" something has shifted when it comes to air travel.

"Flying feels different," says Robert Khachatryan, a frequent flyer and founder of a freight forwarding service in La Crescenta, Calif.

He's correct. It's not just that customers have a few new rights or that the technology is getting an upgrade -- or even that boarding is a little different.

There's a sense that something big lies just ahead. With people like Elon Musk teasing a Tesla that can fly and personal flying vehicles making headlines almost every day, there's a feeling that flying is about to evolve in a significant way.

Air travelers have become disenchanted with commercial air travel, with its high fares, fees, long lines and terrible customer service. And the relief may not come from new rules to protect the rights of air travelers but from a fundamental change in the way we fly.

So if flying feels different to you now, just wait. You ain't seen nothing yet.

This is the first of a two-part series on the future of air travel. Next week: Flying cars. Yeah, we're going to go there.

Christopher Elliott is an author, consumer advocate, and journalist. He founded Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps solve consumer problems. He publishes Elliott Confidential, a travel newsletter, and the Elliott Report, a news site about customer service. If you need help with a consumer problem, you can reach him at elliott@elliott.org or email him at chris@elliott.org.

Affordable LEGAL NOTICES TheSentry Your Legal Depot

FLSentry@gmail.com
954-532-2000

PROBLEM SOLVED

BY CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

I returned my defective hard drives to Amazon. What's this \$546 restocking fee?



Illustration by Dustin Elliott

When Akin Williams' Western Digital hard drives don't work, he tries to return them to Amazon. But the seller wants to charge him a \$546 restocking fee. Is that legit?

Q: I recently bought four Western Digital hard drives through Amazon. The drives were defective.

I contacted the manufacturer and confirmed in writing that the drives were defective due to the loud grinding noises being made when they were in operation. When I told the Amazon seller of the defective condition, a representative told me they would not issue a full refund of the purchase, but that I could return the drives to the manufacturer. This was after I forwarded them the manufacturer's recommendation that I should return the drives to the seller.

When I returned the drives, the reseller assessed a restocking fee of \$546 against the original purchase price. It claimed "heavy usage" of the item. In the four days that I used the drives, they were not heavily used. However, I did have to erase sensitive information from both drives before returning them.

I have spoken to Amazon several times this week about this seller's return policy, but due to the seller's claim that the only damage to the drives was as a result of use, and not defect, they have chosen to back the seller's decision to impose a restocking fee. I was hoping that Amazon would intervene in this situation. The seller has the drives back, and they can still exercise the warranty to get new drives at full value. Whereas I have lost a lot of money through no fault of my own. My decision to return the drives was based on Amazon's assurance that I would receive assistance in getting a refund. Sadly, that no longer seems to be the case. -- Akin Williams, Atlanta

A: A restocking fee is a charge a business sometimes applies when a customer returns an item and receives a refund. The fee covers the expense of erasing a phone or laptop and placing the item back on the shelves (hence the name "restocking"). Some electronics businesses charge restocking fees of between 10 and 20 percent, but yours was more than 50 percent, which is not reasonable.

As you noted, the Amazon seller could return your Western Digital drives to the manufacturer for a full refund, which means it would make a tidy profit from your storage unit. That's wrong.

Could you have avoided this? Maybe. It's almost impossible to screen a business based on its restocking fees -- it's not as if they are disclosed when you buy an item. Amazon works with a network of businesses that fulfill orders, and as I look back at your order, I just don't see how you could have known.

But I do think Amazon could have offered you better support after you purchased a defective product. Amazon's A-to-Z guarantee covers a product purchased through the site that is damaged, defective, or materially different from what you ordered. Under the guarantee, a reseller can't charge you a restocking fee; it must refund everything, regardless of what the manufacturer says. I have more information on Amazon's guarantee in my ultimate guide to Amazon returns on my consumer advocacy site, elliottadvocacy.org.

Bottom line: Amazon should have stepped up. I see you kept an excellent paper trail and even reached out to some of the Amazon executives I list on my consumer advocacy site.

Your case is an important reminder to document everything when a product doesn't work. If your hard drive is grinding, take a video of it and share it with the business. I think in your case, the more visual evidence you had of the breakdown, the less likely that you would have been charged a restocking fee of more than 50 percent. Also, I think Amazon should enforce the terms of their guarantee policy, but that's a discussion.

I contacted Amazon on your behalf. It refunded you the entire amount of your purchase.

Christopher Elliott is the founder of Elliott Advocacy (<https://elliottadvocacy.org>), a nonprofit organization that helps consumers solve their problems. Email him at chris@elliott.org or get help by contacting him at <https://elliottadvocacy.org/help/>

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Colon cancer Prevention and screening



Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in the United States, and more than 150,000 people will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer this year. For Colon Cancer Awareness Month, Xavier Llor, MD, PhD, professor of medicine (digestive diseases) and director of the Gastrointestinal (GI) and Pancreatic Cancer Prevention Program, shared some things everyone should know about colorectal cancer.

Early-onset colorectal cancer is on the rise.

Over the last 40 years, there has been a decline in colon cancer overall; however, since 2011, there has been a very steady, significant increase year over year in colorectal cancers in younger individuals (under age 50). “We’re seeing a cohort effect, where everyone born from the early 1960s on carry a higher risk for colorectal cancer,” said Llor. “We’re seeing so many young people with healthy dietary habits, who don’t use tobacco, and who test negative for a genetic defect, and yet they have colon cancer at age 35. This trend is really worrisome.”

Researchers are still trying to understand why this trend is occurring. “It’s likely environmental factors, like the air we breathe or what we eat and drink. Genetics don’t change that fast,” said Llor. “This is the multi-million-dollar question in colon cancer prevention right now.”

In response to the rise in colon cancer among younger people, the United States Preventive Ser-

vices Task Force (USPTF) has endorsed screening for average-risk patients at age 45. Unfortunately, many younger adults are still not getting screened.

“Getting screened early could save your life,” Llor said.

Risk factors for colon cancer include lifestyle factors, like weight, diet, exercise, and substance use, along with genetic factors. People at higher risk of colon cancer should start screenings at age 40.

Research shows that approximately 5-6% of colorectal cancers are associated with a genetic factor. Yale’s Gastrointestinal (GI) and Pancreatic Cancer Prevention Program, which Llor co-leads, helps diagnose, screen, and coordinate care for patients with genetic syndromes that put them at higher risk for colorectal and other GI cancers.

“Navigating the healthcare system in this country is extremely complicated. It can be a huge burden for patients to manage different doctor visits and screenings, yet we know this kind of diligent follow-up is especially important for high-risk patients,” said Llor. “Our main goal is to provide the care coordination patients need to ease the burden for patients while comprehensively working with them to help them prevent cancer.”

Patients who may be at a higher risk for hereditary cancer include:

- A personal or family history of early-onset cancer (younger than 45-50 years)

Multiple family members on the same side of the family with the same or related cancers

An individual or family member

with a diagnosis of more than one type of cancer

A personal or family history of colorectal, endometrial, or breast cancer

A personal or family history of ovarian or pancreatic cancer at any age

A personal or family history of a rare type of cancer tumor

4. There are multiple screening options for patients.

For many years, colonoscopies were thought of as the only colorectal cancer screening option. In recent years, organizations like the USPTF, American Cancer Society, and American Gastroenterological Association have encouraged the use of stool-based tests for certain patients.

“Now, clinicians can be smart about stratifying patients by risk and offering patients choices that work best for them,” said Llor. “Each test carries different benefits and risks. Ultimately, the best test is the one that gets done.”

Providers can now offer patients the choice between colonoscopies or stool-based tests. Each test carries different benefits and different risks.

To help providers determine which test is suitable for each patient, Yale developed a colon cancer screening pathway in Epic. The pathway provides health care providers with details about the sensitivities and risks of each screening option. It includes easy-to-share educational resources for patients so that they can understand the different screening options available to them. Providers can also order tests directly from the pathway.

More than a third of patients over 50 who have a colonoscopy will have polyps, which are abnormal growths on the inner walls of the colon or rectum. A very small percentage of polyps progress into cancer.

“We still don’t understand which polyps will progress into cancer or why, and only in the case of the advanced ones do we have a high level of certainty they can progress to cancer,” said Llor. He and his colleagues are part of a multi-site study funded by the National Cancer Institute that is looking into this question. Specifically, the research aims to understand if a patient with one or two small tubular adenomas (a specific type of polyp) has a higher risk of colon cancer. Current guidelines recommend more frequent colonoscopies for patients with this finding. This research may help understand if these more frequent screenings are necessary for patients.

FDA approves Rezdiffra, the first drug for NASH, a form of fatty liver disease

Rates of a serious form of liver disease have grown, but there have been no medications to treat it—until now. In March, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a pill called resmetstatin, sold under the brand name Rezdiffra™, for NASH (nonalcoholic steatohepatitis). NASH is a subtype of one of the most common types of liver disease, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), a term used to describe a spectrum of conditions marked by a buildup of fat in the liver that is not caused by heavy alcohol use.

NAFLD ranges from fatty liver disease, which has little or no liver inflammation—and often no symptoms—to NASH, where there is inflammation (hepatitis) and possible scarring (fibrosis) of the liver. In its most advanced stage, NASH can lead to cirrhosis (permanent scarring of the liver) and even liver failure. Rezdiffra is approved for adults with NASH who have moderate to advanced scarring of the liver, which is the case for an estimated 6 to 8 million Americans. Chronic overnutrition is a major contributor to the development of NASH, says Wajahat Mehal, MD, director of the Yale Metabolic Health & Weight Loss Program. Overnutrition is a type of malnutrition (imbalanced nutrition) that means a person is taking in an excessive number of nutrients, causing body fat to accumulate and leading to negative health consequences.

Obesity, type 2 diabetes, and metabolic syndrome (a group of conditions, including high blood pressure and abnormal cholesterol levels, that can lead to serious health problems) are also risk factors. About 42% of American adults have obesity, a number that continues to rise, which then also contributes to the increasing number of people with fatty liver disease. And while weight loss can help reverse both NAFLD and NASH (in early stages), it may not reverse the fibrosis caused by NASH. This new medication, however, has been shown to improve scarring in about 25% of people who take it. Dr. Mehal says he hopes the drug’s approval “energizes” the field and leads to more treatment advances. In fact, there are several different types of NASH medications in late-stage clinical trials, he adds. “Now that the FDA has approved a drug for NASH, pharmaceutical companies will have a better understanding of the thresholds they must meet to get future approvals,” Dr. Mehal says. “This makes them more enthusiastic about continuing drug development in this area. And there are many promising medi-

cations coming along.”

Below, we talk more with Dr. Mehal about NASH and what this development means for patients.

Why is NASH dangerous?

It’s helpful to think of fatty liver disease as progressive and, as mentioned above, largely driven by chronic overnutrition, the body stores fat in many places, including the liver. Dr. Mehal says, “Most people with obesity or overweight are going to have high levels of fat in their liver, and that means they have NAFLD. But, over time, about a quarter of people with NAFLD will start to experience liver damage. That’s when NAFLD transitions to NASH.”

With NASH, the liver scarring is a threat to your health, he says. The level of damage is measured via biopsy and is graded in four stages from 0 (no scarring) to 4 (cirrhosis). However, because NASH is a progressive disease, fibrosis can eventually develop into liver cirrhosis.

At that point, a liver transplant might be the only treatment for cirrhosis, and even that is not always effective—or attainable, Dr. Mehal says.

Because NAFLD and NASH often don’t have symptoms, it is difficult to diagnose. Doctors rely on a medical history, a physical examination, and tests, including imaging tests, blood tests, and liver biopsies. NAFLD might be suspected if you have elevated levels of certain liver enzymes, for example, found during routine blood work for an annual physical. “It’s important to note, however, that most of the time, NASH can be diagnosed with blood tests and imaging. A liver biopsy is necessary in about 10% of patients,” says Dr. Mehal.

Rezdiffra, made by Madrigal Pharmaceuticals, is a daily pill that activates a thyroid hormone receptor that reduces liver fat accumulation.

Results from an ongoing Phase III clinical trial were published in The New England Journal of Medicine. Resmetstatin, which was tested at two dose strengths, was shown to resolve NASH without a worsening of fibrosis in 26% (at the lower dose) and 30% (at the higher dose) of patients compared to 10% in the placebo group. The trial also showed that the drug improved fibrosis by at least one stage in 24% (at the lower dose) and 26% (at the higher dose) of the patients, compared to 14% in the placebo group.

The medication was granted accelerated approval; final approval is contingent on the results of the ongoing study.

Diarrhea and nausea are the most

common side effects of Rezdiffra. The drug also comes with warnings and precautions about drug-induced liver toxicity and side effects related to the gallbladder. It may also have “potentially significant drug interactions” with certain other drugs, including statins for lowering cholesterol, the FDA notes.

Typically, if NASH patients lose 10% to 15% of their body weight, their liver condition improves, Dr. Mehal says. “But, of course, that can be difficult to achieve, and before this drug came along, we would give other medications that could help with weight loss,” he says.

Anti-obesity medications, such as semaglutide (Wegovy) and tirzepatide (Zepbound), can help treat fatty liver disease and potentially stop it from advancing to NASH, but once someone has NASH, these drugs have not yet been proven to reverse it, Dr. Mehal says. However, clinical trials are ongoing, and the early data is very encouraging that these medications will be effective for NASH, he adds.

Dr. Mehal says he expects insurance carriers to cover the cost of Rezdiffra and, once it becomes available, he will offer it to his patients with NASH who fit the criteria.

“Rezdiffra is meant for adults with NASH who have well-developed, but not extremely severe scarring in their liver, and it should be used along with a healthy diet and an active lifestyle,” says Dr. Mehal.

Could a trip to the dentist save you from going to the heart surgeon? Medical science has a lot to say about how cardiovascular health is influenced by what you put in your mouth. Fatty and sugary foods, cigarettes and alcohol have appeared on many-wanted posters in heart doctor offices for decades now.

But what about the mouth itself? “There is a connection indeed,” said Dr. Andrew Waxler, a cardiologist at Penn State Health Medical Center’s Berke Cardiology. In fact, people with untreated tooth infections are 2.7 times more likely to have cardiovascular problems like coronary artery disease than people without, according to a 2016 study in the Journal of Dental Research.

But exactly what the connection is between oral health and heart health is still a mystery.

The heart valve connection. Scientists have known about the link between oral health and one specific kind of heart issue for a long time, Waxler said.

“We’ve known for years that

Does pregnancy accelerate aging? Yale findings suggest it does – at first

New research from Yale School

of Medicine published in Cell Metabolism suggests that pregnancy accelerates aging, but with an important caveat—there appears to be significant reversal of this effect in the postpartum period.

To make this discovery, Yale Child Study Center Assistant Professor

Kieran O’Donnell, PhD, and his team made use of a unique pregnancy cohort

that provided epigenetic data across pregnancy, allowing them to calculate measures of biological aging using “epigenetic clocks.” From early in late pregnancy, a period of approximately 20 weeks, biological — or epigenetic — age increased by approximately two years, suggesting that pregnancy indeed accelerated aging. However, when O’Donnell and his team examined biological age in the same women three months later, what they saw came as surprise.

“At three months postpartum,



we saw a remarkably large decrease in biological age, by as much as eight years for some individuals, so while pregnancy increases biological age there is a clear (and pronounced) recovery in the postpartum,” O’Donnell commented. These new findings replicate those in an earlier study, also published in Cell Metabolism, suggesting different sources of stress may increase biological age in a transient manner.

In the new study, for which the group’s biostatistician, Hung

Pham, was first author, the team also found that maternal pre-pregnancy body mass index and gestational weight gain negatively impacted this recovery effect, resulting in higher biological age estimates in the postpartum. In contrast, breastfeeding resulted in a steeper decline in maternal biological age from pregnancy to three months postpartum. O’Donnell says these

findings provide an interesting new direction for aging research. “Lots to follow up on here,” O’Donnell said. “First, we don’t know if the postpartum recovery effect is relevant for short- or long-term maternal health outcomes and if these effects accumulate over successive pregnancies. Likewise, we don’t know if the postpartum decrease in biological age simply the system recovering to pre-pregnancy biological age or, more provocatively, if pregnancy may have a rejuvenating effect.”

to be looking for several impacted genes, not just one.”

Together, the researchers performed these experiments on more than 540,000 sections of DNA.

Doing this work together and systematically allowed the group to find patterns and identify best practices that they likely wouldn’t have through separate experiments, Reilly said.

The group was collectively able to determine the best way to go about these particular CRISPR experiments, identifying which guides should be used to direct CRISPR and which analysis methods are most accurate. This will help other researchers do these types of experiments in their DNA regions of interest more effectively and more efficiently, said Reilly.

“Particularly if researchers are working with patient cell samples, which they may only have a certain amount of, they’ll want to use our guidelines to maximize their chances of linking enhancers to their target genes,” he said.

Additionally, the researchers found that when using this type of CRISPR screening, it matters which of the two DNA strands you target. The genome is huge. One person or one lab can’t tackle it all. And this work has been a cool example of how large-scale collaborations work and their necessity for this monumental task of understanding the human genome.

“Depending on which strand you target, you will get different results of how big of an effect the CRISPR-mediated DNA strand has on genes,” said Reilly. “Knowing these differences will allow researchers to design the right analysis methods.” This particular finding wouldn’t have been possible without the large collaborative effort of this work, he added.

“We only saw this because we were analyzing hundreds of these experiments. You need to assemble really large datasets to see these patterns,” said Reilly. “This has been the theme of the human genome work from the beginning.”

The genome is huge. One person or one lab can’t tackle it all. And this work has been a cool example of how large-scale collaborations work and their necessity for this monumental task of understanding the human genome.

The ENCODE Consortium, which was launched in 2003, is coming to an end with many of its main goals achieved. Going forward, Reilly aims to use the best practices that have come out of this work to do these types of analyses in more complicated systems.

One goal is to better understand how many genes are involved in the development of disease or in conferring observable traits like height.

“We have a good sense of what DNA variants exist, but we don’t have a good sense of how those variants affect genes,” said Reilly. “This study gives us a roadmap to do those experiments better.”

ies of oral bacteria in the walls of blood vessels, said Waxler.

Theory two: Inflammation. When people have a chronic infection in, say, the gums, associated chronic inflammations can pop up elsewhere.

During the past 30 years or so, research has shown that people with higher levels of inflammation in their bodies are more likely to have heart attacks and strokes, Waxler said. The thinking is that when people have an infection in their mouth, they can set off an inflammatory response in the body. In responding to it, the immune system can become overly aggressive, and the hardening of the arteries is the result of an irritation caused by that response.

“This actually makes me more sense to me than the bacteria,” Waxler said.

Theory three: It’s incidental. People who don’t take care of their teeth are more likely to have bad habits that lead to heart disease. In this case, any arterial problems have nothing to do with bacteria or inflammation. The connection between dental health and heart health is that people with severe dental problems also might smoke or eat foods that are bad for them.

Understanding the ‘wiring’ of the human genome



Around 98.5% of human DNA is non-coding, meaning it doesn’t get copied to make proteins. A new study has connected many of these non-coding regions to the genes they affect and laid out guidelines for how researchers can continue this work going forward.

Understanding the non-coding portion of our DNA is critical for understanding the genetic components of disease, says Steven Reilly, an assistant professor of genetics at Yale School of Medicine who co-led the study.

“When we find mutations in DNA that are associated with some trait or disease, they’re often in these non-coding regions,” said Reilly. “Being able to understand which genes these mutations impact is really critical.”

When we find mutations in DNA that are associated with some trait or disease, they’re often in these non-coding regions of DNA known as “enhancers” and “promoters” are linked to genes. Promoters are bits of DNA just upstream of genes that control whether the genes are transcribed into mRNA, which will eventually be turned into protein. Molecules that activate genes bind to promoters to initiate the process. Enhancers are regions of DNA that act as additional control elements

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OPINIO

What have the bots learned about us?

After the 2016 election, Twitter found that 50,000 Russia-linked bots were active on its network during the campaign. As we bled into the 2024 presidential election, the emergence of generative AI has opened new possibilities for the mass creation and dissemination of misinformation. Are the major social media sites ready? We talked to Prof. Taha Zaman, who studies how bots manipulate opinion on social networks.

How prevalent are bots as the 2024 election nears?

Today's bots are much more sophisticated, capable of creating and posting original content that makes them seem convincingly real. This technological leap means that in the current election cycle, bots have the potential to be far more persuasive and impactful than before.

Bots have been a concern in major elections since 2016. Initially, they were relatively straightforward to identify, mainly serving as content amplifiers to exploit platform algorithms. However, advancements in generative AI have significantly evolved the landscape. Today's bots are much more sophisticated, capable of creating and posting original content that makes them seem convincingly real. This technological leap means that in the current election cycle, bots have the potential to be far more persuasive and impactful than before.

In the past, fake accounts exploited the polarization within the U.S. electorate to sow further division, enhancing partisan suspicion and dislike. Now, as our society has grown even more polarized, we find ourselves even more vulnerable to such manipulative tactics.

The ability of these advanced bots



to generate original content and blend seamlessly into the social media landscape presents a heightened challenge. It's not just about the sophistication of the technology but also about the timing: our increased polarization makes us more susceptible to influence, making the potential for disruption greater than ever before.

AI has indeed revolutionized the digital landscape in ways more profound than many realize. The creation of convincingly real fake content—text, images, and, imminently, video—has democratized the ability to produce high-quality content at an unprecedented scale. This advancement alone significantly alters the dynamics of content dissemination and consumption.

However, the implications extend far beyond mere content creation. Today's AI can comprehend and synthesize content, providing the capability to tailor messaging with astonishing precision. Imagine collecting social media posts, both text and images, from a targeted demographic. AI can now analyze this data to craft content specifically designed to influence those individuals. This enables messaging to be hyper-targeted, not just broadly disseminated.

Confirms managing several accounts, each tailored to interact with specific demographic groups. AI enables the crafting and implementation of a unique messaging strategy for every segment, subtly guiding them toward a desired out-

come or preference. What's more, AI can independently identify the most compelling targeting strategies, enhancing both the efficiency and subtlety of these efforts. Adding another layer to the complexity—or sophistication—depending on perspective—is AI's capability to autonomously generate these accounts, complete with convincing profile pictures, biographies, and other details that maximize their appeal and persuasive potential. This process is informed by the target audience's analyzing the target audience's content, enabling AI to construct an account that resonates strongly with its intended audience.

This level of targeted persuasion, powered by AI's content creation and analytical capabilities, represents a paradigm shift in how digital campaigns are conducted. It underscores the urgent need for ethical guidelines, transparency, and regulatory measures to safeguard the integrity of digital discourse and protect individuals from manipulation.

Platforms are making concerted efforts to address the proliferation of fake accounts, leveraging a blend of human intervention and AI technologies. Yet the battle against misinformation becomes increasingly challenging as AI technologies evolve.

For example, Meta has committed to labeling AI-generated images across its platforms. Despite this, recent findings suggest that accounts distributing AI-generated content might inadvertently be amplified by the platform's algorithms. It's a constant tug of war, with content creation technologies advancing rapidly. The onus is now on detection algorithms to evolve and adapt swiftly. The current state underscores a critical phase in this ongoing battle, where the sophistication of content generation has surged ahead, necessitating significant advancements in detection capabilities to maintain parity.

fake" audio clip of a presidential candidate popped up on social media just two days before the election. An AI-generated selfie of the protester who stood in front of a column of tanks in Tiananmen Square in 1989 briefly topped search results, displacing the genuine historical image.

Beth Goldberg '18, the head of research and development at Jigsaw, a Google unit that explores threats to open societies, explained how the combination of the ability to create fake images and videos that are almost indistinguishable from reality and to automate processes in a way that greatly increases the reach of false stories has the potential to accelerate misinformation production by malevolent actors. Goldberg emphasized that the effects of misinformation can't be ignored. "False and misleading information slowly erodes trust in institutions. We're seeing it all across the world, and it's especially damaging to confidence in democracies."

AI is, most of the time, making problems we already had worse or solutions we already had better. The difference is in terms of how much more intense the solution or the problem has become.

Ziad Reslan, senior product policy manager for multimodal GenAI at Google, is often the person helping to draw policy lines to combat misinformation and other forms of harmful content. He emphasized that Google takes the safety of the content its models generate very seriously, with multiple rounds of "red teaming" testing done before any GenAI product is launched. He added that as GenAI takes more hold across the world, the challenge will be thinking through how different countries and cultures will use and misuse (and misusing) this technology. He remembered how, when he first began working in content moderation, he learned a great deal from observing his own mother in Beirut as she used WhatsApp in its share of medical advice—and, likely, misinformation—with her friends and neighbors. Similarly, he cautioned, "We need to slow down and think through how GenAI will be used in each cultural context."

Throughout the day, speakers discussed other potential risks associated with AI, including privacy, data security, bias, and copyright infringement. Liz Grennan, a partner and the global co-leader of digital trust at McKinsey, urged audience members to think about how their own work can leverage AI's strengths, which she described as the four C's: coding, creation, customer service, and creation. "If you're looking for near-term impact in the workplace, these are the high-value use cases," she said. "If you extrapolate, you say, 'I'm in any of these areas?'. How can I use AI as my copilot?"

Is Uber strangling the restaurant business?

Jiwong Shin, professor of marketing at Yale SOM, likes to keep in touch with his former students. They tell him about what's going on in the world and give him ideas for new research.

In December 2019, one of those former students, now a restaurateur in New York and San Francisco, came back to New Haven and met up with Shin for dinner. Shin asked how things were going. Uber was thriving, the former student said: "Uber is killing my business."

Shin was confused. Was Uber affecting people's ability to get to his restaurants? Or was it competition from Uber Eats, Uber's food delivery service? Neither, the student said. It was Uber itself. Driving for Uber, like working as an entry-level server, requires no special experience or qualifications, but the hours are more flexible and the working conditions and wages are potentially better. So every time Uber was hiring, the student said that took six months or so, they would suddenly quit to drive for Uber.

"It was really shocking," Shin says now. "Because of Uber, he was short of experienced workers constantly, and customers complained about the service."

Was this a widespread issue, Shin wondered, or specific only to this particular group of restaurants? He consulted Google and learned that within the restaurant industry—one of the largest private industries in United States—the loss of relatively inexperienced workers to Uber was the number-one topic of conversation.

Shin wondered if this impression reflected a broader phenomenon. He and his Yale colleague Soheil Ghili, Minkyu Shin of the City University of Hong Kong, and Jaehwan Kim of Korea University, Seoul, set out to study how newer businesses like Uber and Airbnb are disrupting labor markets.

As it happened, Uber and its main competitor, Lyft, had both left Austin, Texas, in May 2016 because of new local regulations, and then returned a year later, after the state passed statewide regulations that overrode city ordinances in an elegant natural experiment. The researchers hypothesized that the entry of the rideshare apps into the local

economy provided another employment option for low-skilled workers and would therefore lead to an increase in turnover at the city's restaurants and a decrease in the quality of service.

pothesis, too, says Shin: "In high-end restaurants, people get paid well. They don't want to be Uber drivers."

Neither do chefs or managers, any level; these are career jobs, Shin observes. The restaurant workers most likely to move around or quit and take another gig job are servers. There also happen to be restaurant workers who have the most direct interaction with the public, so their lack of experience would be more noticeable to customers.

Policymakers need to understand the full scope of the gig economy's impacts to design effective regulations that balance the benefits of gig economy and innovation against the potential for disruption in traditional labor markets. Now restaurants are looking elsewhere find themselves working harder to keep their servers from defecting to rideshare apps and other gig jobs. The most obvious solution is increasing worker salaries, though this is always easy to do in an industry that was already running on narrow profit margins before the inflation drove up the cost of food. Some restaurants have decided to do without servers altogether by automating the serving process with ordering kiosks, counter service, grab-and-go options, and even robots.

The ramifications of this study extend beyond the restaurant industry. The gig economy will continue to expand, likely accompanied by increasing calls for regulation. Some cities are already regulating Airbnb; in New York City, lawmakers have introduced legislation that would limit the number of listings that have effectively eliminated most Airbnb rentals.

"Policymakers need to understand the full scope of the gig economy's impacts to design effective regulations that balance the benefits of gig economy and innovation against the potential for disruption in traditional labor markets," Shin says. "Also, local government officials and economic development planners can use these findings to anticipate and manage the effects of the gig economy on local labor markets and economies."

This could include initiatives to support sectors, probably low-skill labor intensive sectors, most affected by gig economy disruptions.

For example, "Surrogate" AI tools that seem to accurately mimic human survey responses could make experiments that require measurements of physical behavior or face-to-face interactions increasingly unpopular because they are slower and more expensive to conduct, Crockett said.

The authors also describe the possibility that AI tools become viewed as more objective and reliable than human scientists, creating a "monoculture of knowers" in which AI systems are treated as a singular, authoritative, and objective knower in place of a diverse scientific community of scientists with varied backgrounds, training, and expertise. A monoculture, they say, invites "illusions of objectivity" where scientists falsely believe that AI tools have no perspective or represent all perspectives when, in truth, they represent the standpoints of the computer scientists who developed and trained them.

There has never been an objective "knower," there can never be one, and continuing to pursue this myth only weakens science.

"There is a belief around science that the objective observer is the ideal creator of knowledge about the world," Messeri said. "But this is a myth. There has never been an objective 'knower,' there can never be one, and continuing to pursue this myth only weakens science."

There is substantial evidence that human diversity makes science more robust and creative, the authors add. "Acknowledging that science is a social practice that benefits from including diverse standpoints will help us realize its full potential," Crockett said. "Replacing diverse standpoints with AI tools will set back the clock on the progress we've made toward including more perspectives in scientific work."

It is important to remember AI's social implications, which extend far beyond the laboratories where it is being used in research, Messeri said.

"We train scientists to think about technical aspects of new technology," she says. "We don't train them nearly as well to consider the social aspects, which is vital to future work in this domain."

Doing more, but learning less: The risks of AI in research



Artificial intelligence (AI) is widely heralded for its potential to enhance productivity in scientific research. But with that promise come risks to objectivity and efficiency's ability to better understand the world, according to a new paper co-authored by a Yale anthropologist.

Some future AI approaches, the authors argue, could consist of the questions researchers ask, the experiments they perform, and the perspectives that come to bear on a scientific data and theories. AI tools, these factors could leave people vulnerable to "illusions of understanding" in which they believe they comprehend the world better than they do.

There is a risk that scientists will use AI to produce more while understanding less," said co-author Lisa Messeri, an anthropologist in Yale's Faculty of Arts and Sciences. "We're not arguing that scientists shouldn't use AI tools, but we're advising the humanities and social sciences to be more cautious about how scientists will use them and suggesting that we shouldn't automatically assume that all uses of the technology, or the ubiquitous use of it, will benefit scientific understanding, which can crimp their perspectives and convince them that they know more than they do."

The efficiencies and insights that AI tools promise could weaken the production of scientific knowledge by creating "monocultures of knowing," in which researchers prioritize the questions and methods best suited to AI over other modes of inquiry, Messeri and Crockett state. A scholarly environment of that kind leaves researchers vulnerable to what they call "illusions of exploratory breadth," where scientists wrongly believe that they are exploring all testable hypotheses, when they are only examining the narrower range of questions that can be tested through AI.

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