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USA OUTLOOK

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Foto: cnbc.com

Time for a fourth Covid vaccine dose? Here's why medical professionals are skeptical

Countries are beginning to offer a fourth dose of the Covid-19 vaccine to vulnerable groups, but medical professionals are undecided on whether it would benefit the wider population.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has so far authorized a fourth shot only for those aged 50 and above, as well as those who are immunocompromised. And the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was skeptical of the need for a fourth dose for healthy adults in the absence of a clearer public health strategy.

Those decisions came as a study from Israel found that although a fourth dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine offers protection against serious illness for at least six weeks after the shot, it provides only short-lived protection against infection, which wanes after just four weeks.

No 'good evidence' yet

The medical consensus so far is that there hasn't been enough research on how much protection a fourth dose can offer.

The World Health Organization hasn't given an official recommendation on a fourth dose, and "there isn't any good evidence at this point of time" that it will be beneficial, said WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan.

Roberts calls leak of draft Supreme Court opinion in abortion case a "betrayal"

Chief Justice John Roberts denounced the leak of a draft opinion published by Politico that indicated the court may overturn the 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, calling its release a "betrayal of the confidences of the court" and saying he directed the marshal of the court to launch an investigation. "This was a singular and egregious breach of that trust that is an affront to the court and the community of public servants who work here," he said in a statement Tuesday.

Roberts also said efforts to "undermine the integrity" of the Supreme Court's operations will not succeed.

"The work of the court will not be affected in any way," he said. "We at the court are blessed to have a workforce — permanent employees and law clerks alike — intensely loyal to the institution and dedicated to the rule of law. Court employees have an exemplary and important tradition of respecting the confidentiality of the judicial process and upholding the trust of the court."

The Supreme Court also confirmed the authenticity of the document, but stressed that the draft does not represent the final decision of the court.

"Although the document described in yesterday's reports is authentic, it does not represent a decision by the court or the final position of any member on the issues in the case," the court said in a statement.



Foto: CBS News

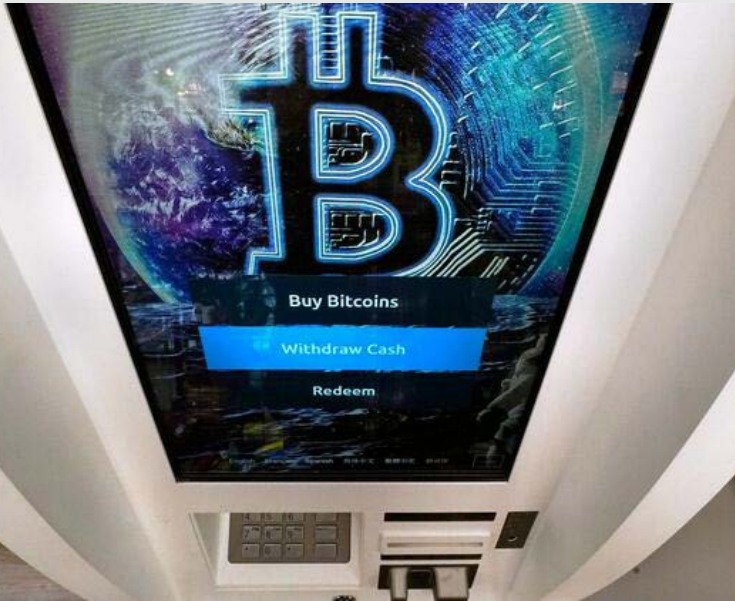


Foto: USNews.com

California moves to embrace cryptocurrency and regulate it

California, which has a economy larger than all but four countries and where much of the world's technological innovation is born, on Wednesday became the first state to formally begin examining how to broadly adapt to cryptocurrency and related innovations.

Following a path laid out by President Joe Biden in March, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed an executive order for state agencies to move in tandem with the federal government to craft regulations for digital currencies. It also calls for officials to explore incorporating broader blockchain computer coding into the government operations.

Evolving blockchain and cryptocurrency technology "is potentially an explosive creator of new companies and new jobs and new opportunities," said Dee Dee Myers, a senior advisor to Newsom and director of the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development.

"So there are a lot of opportunities," she said. "There's also a lot of unknowns in the industry and so that's another reason we want to engage early."

Newsom's order says the state — home to Silicon Valley and financial innovators like PayPal and Square — should be out front in figuring out how to adapt to new technologies.

Biden administration launches plan to refill emergency oil reserve

The Biden administration plans to seek bids this fall to buy 60 million barrels of crude oil as the first step in a years-long process aimed at replenishing America's emergency oil reserve, an Energy Department official told CNN.

This would mark the first time since the early 2000s that the Energy Department has acquired large quantities of oil for the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), the largest emergency supply of oil on the planet.

The Energy Department plans to announce the launch of the long-term buyback plan on Thursday to show officials are serious about eventually refilling the SPR, which has been drained by the war in Ukraine and sales mandated by Congress to raise revenue.

But that will take time. Delivery of the first tranche of 60 million barrels will take place in unspecified future years, the Energy Department official said, adding it will be paid for with revenue received from ongoing emergency sales.

The SPR serves as a vital national security and economic tool to buffer the United States from energy price spikes. Presidents have released oil from the SPR during times of war and after natural disasters.

Reserves were already sitting at 20-year lows, largely because of Congressionally-mandated sales, before President Joe Biden promised in late March to release a record-setting 180 million barrels of oil over six months to ease pressure on energy markets. The latest release amounts to a loss of one-third of the oil still left in the SPR.



Foto: CNN

Fuente

<https://apnews.com/article/cryptocurrency-biden-technology-business-california-0586164898c33eeae0afa835fd7b50>

Fuente

<https://us.cnn.com/2022/05/05/energy/spr-biden/index.html>



Nearly 15 million deaths related to covid-19, WHO estimates

Foto: The Washington Post

That number is more than double the official toll because it includes excess deaths from other causes largely attributable to overburdened health systems.

The pandemic led to nearly 15 million excess deaths worldwide, according to a new estimate by the World Health Organization, including people who died of covid-19 and others who died from other causes related to the crisis, such as health-care shortages as the virus surged and overwhelmed hospitals.

The WHO defines excess deaths as “the difference between the number of deaths that have occurred and the number that would be expected in the absence of the pandemic based on data from earlier years.”

“These sobering data not only point to the impact of the pandemic but also to the need for all countries to invest in more resilient health systems that can sustain essential health services during crises, including stronger health information systems,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO’s director general, said in a statement.



Fuente

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/05/05/covid-excess-global-deaths-nearly-15-million/>