

10 February 2012

Army Public Health Weekly Update

The Army Public Health Update is a collection of articles taken verbatim from public sources to offer awareness of current health issues and the media coverage given to them. The articles do not necessarily represent US Army Medical Department opinions, views, policy, or guidance, and should not be construed or interpreted as being endorsed by the US Army Medical Department.

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Great American Spitout Poster Updated for 2012

The Great American
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An updated poster is
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- Argentina fights child obesity
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**AIPH-USAPHC
Monthly Disease
Surveillance
Workshops**

The Army Institute of Public Health, US Army Public Health Command (AIPH-USAPHC) in conjunction with the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) will begin hosting monthly workshops for individuals who conduct disease surveillance within their respective communities. The workshops will be 30 minutes long and held once per month. **Sign up** for the training sessions by sending an email with your name, job description, and duty station/location.

The first training will be offered at two times. Please attend only one of the following sessions:

February 28 - 0900 Hours Meeting:
Dial In Num: 210-249-4234
Passcode: 60622#
DCO Connect:
<https://connect.dco.dod.mil/r69351588>

February 28 - 1500 Hours Meeting:
Dial In Num: 210-249-4234
Passcode: 46937#
DCO Connect:
<https://connect.dco.dod.mil/r47637484>

U.S. MILITARY

Coordinating authority needed for psychological health and traumatic brain injury activities

January - ... Despite the heightened significance of PH [psychological health] and TBI [traumatic brain injury] matters, the attention drawn to them by numerous studies, and the more than \$2.7 billion of appropriated funds that supported related programs, DOD is not currently in a position to readily report in a reliable manner on how funds are being used to provide benefits to servicemembers. While DOD has undertaken a number of initiatives, the information that it has been reporting has been incomplete and based on data that are unreliable... At present, there is no entity tasked with maintaining up-to-date and comprehensive information on DOD's PH and TBI activities and, more importantly, no entity coordinates DOD's PH and TBI activities. [Government Accounting Office](#)

New plan to cut the fat of the military

9 February - Obese Americans in the military are a national security hazard and first lady Michelle Obama wants to see that change... In an event in Little Rock, Arkansas, Obama will join top Pentagon officials to announce a new obesity and nutritional awareness campaign that will change nutrition standards across the services for the first time in 20 years. The changes will bring more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and food choices that are lower in fat to 1,100 service member dining facilities in the coming months. According to the White House, more than one quarter of 17- to 24-year-olds are too overweight to serve in the military. Active members of the military are also becoming more overweight, a Pentagon official said, and that causes a "readiness problem." [Reuters](#)

Sources of variability of estimates of malaria case counts, active and reserve components, U.S. Armed Forces

January - Each January, the Medical Surveillance Monthly Report (MSMR) estimates numbers of malaria infections among U.S. service members using a surveillance case definition to identify "malaria cases". These cases include individuals with a hospital discharge diagnosis of malaria and those who were reported with malaria through military notifiable event reporting systems. This report compares the MSMR surveillance case definition with other proposed case definitions to demonstrate the degree to which estimates of numbers of malaria cases are dependent upon clinical settings, data sources and case-defining rules used to produce such estimates. For example, including outpatient diagnoses as malaria cases would more than double the 2010 case count. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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**COCA Call
Disaster Planning
for the Whole
Community**

During this Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity conference call, subject matter experts will discuss how clinicians can work within their communities to integrate and coordinate emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts for children and adults with disabilities and others with access and functional needs before, during and after a disaster.

Date: 14 February

Time: 2:00 - 3:00 pm
(Eastern Time)

Join by Phone:

Dial: 888-790-6180

Passcode: 1281914

More information



GLOBAL

Malaria: Specialists duel over death toll in 2011

6 February - Did **malaria** kill 655,000 people last year? Or nearly twice that many — 1.2 million? Those numbers are being quietly dueled over in e-mails among malaria specialists since **a study** released Friday in *The Lancet* said the official **World Health Organization** estimate — 655,000 — was far too low. The challenge was issued by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, founded by the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** to analyze global trends. **New York Times**

Study to determine whether fish oil can help prevent psychiatric disorders

8 February - Researchers at Zucker Hillside Hospital's Recognition and Prevention (RAP) Program who have worked with teenagers at risk for serious mental illness for the past decade are now studying the effectiveness of Omega 3 fatty acids (fish oil) for treating psychiatric symptoms. This new study is a National Institute of Mental Health-funded randomized double-blind trial that was designed to test whether Omega-3 fatty acids improve clinical symptoms, and help adolescents and young adults (ages 12 to 25) who are at elevated risk for severe psychiatric disorders function better in school, work and other social environments. "Of the 300 adolescents who have participated in the RAP Program, most have shown substantial improvement," noted Barbara Cornblatt, Ph.D., director of the Recognition and Prevention (RAP) Program and investigator at The Feinstein Institute for Medical Research. "If this study continues to show success, Omega 3 could offer a natural alternative to the range of medications and therapies now offered to RAP participants. Ultimately, the goal of the RAP Program is to intervene and prevent illness before symptoms get worse." **EurekAlert!**

“Test and Treat” model offers new strategy for eliminating malaria

6 February - As researchers work to eliminate malaria worldwide, new strategies are needed to find and treat individuals who have malaria, but show no signs of the disease. The prevalence of asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic malaria can be as high as 35 percent in populations with malaria and these asymptomatic individuals can serve as a reservoir for spreading malaria even in areas where disease transmission has declined. In a new study, researchers at the Johns Hopkins Malaria Research Institute found that a strategy of actively identifying undiagnosed malaria and then treating those with the disease resulted in significantly lower prevalence of malaria cases compared to a control group. **Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News**

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site:

<http://phc.army.smil.mil>

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

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Vulnerability to anthrax varies widely: study



Chest X-ray of 46-year-old man with anthrax. Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

6 February - People's susceptibility to anthrax toxin is determined by their genes and can vary greatly among individuals, a new study says. Anthrax is an infectious disease widely regarded as a potential bioterrorism weapon. Stanford University School of Medicine researchers analyzed immune cells from 234 people and found that the cells of three of the people were virtually insensitive to anthrax toxin, while the cells of others were hundreds of times more sensitive than those of other people. The findings could help lead to new treatments and could also have important implications for U.S. national security, according to a university news release. For example, people known to be more resistant could act as first-line responders in an anthrax bioterrorism attack. The study appears online Feb. 6 in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

[Medline Plus](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

8 February 2012:

- Influenza activity remains low across all overseas DoD laboratory surveillance networks.
- The influenza vaccination rate for the DoD (Active Duty component only) is 95%.

[AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 4 (22-28 January 2012), influenza activity in the United States increased slightly, but remained relatively low. [FluView](#)

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview

During week 4 (23-29 January 2012), while increased geographic spread was reported by 23 of 27 countries and increasing trends by 12 countries, the epidemic threshold was exceeded significantly in only four countries (Bulgaria, Iceland, Italy and Spain) and was just above threshold in Romania and Sweden. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Flu continues late-season Northern Hemisphere push

3 February - Flu activity in many Northern Hemisphere countries continued its late-season rise last week, with areas such as the United States, Canada, and Europe reporting steady increases. Though flu activity overall is low, notable increases are occurring in North America, western Europe, and northern China, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today. Overall, the H3N2 seasonal flu virus is dominating, though influenza B is the dominant strain in China, while Mexico is seeing mostly the 2009 H1N1 virus. Mexico's health ministry told the WHO that the flu situation is similar to previous influenza seasons, with no signs that the virus patterns have changes. The WHO also noted that Colombia in northern South America and some states in the southern United States are reporting predominantly 2009 H1N1. Temperate parts of Asia, northern China, South Korea, and Japan all reported increasing flu activity, while tropical Asian countries reported low activity, with influenza B circulating in some locations. India is reporting low levels, and southern China is reporting rising influenza B detections, according to the WHO. [CIDRAP](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 4 February 2012:

Clusters of H1N1v and H3N2 influenza cases were identified at U.S. clinics near the Mexican border in January 2012.

Adenovirus

- Vaccination against types 4 and 7 adenovirus was instituted at all basic training centers by mid-November 2011 (week 45).
- The proportion of FRI cases positive for adenovirus has decreased since vaccine was reintroduced.
- Type 3 adenovirus is present at Ft. Jackson.
- Type 14 adenovirus is present at MCRD Parris Island.

FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Live debate airs major divisions in H5N1 research battle

3 February – The controversy over research about potentially dangerous H5N1 viruses heated up last night in a New York City debate that featured some of the leading voices exchanging blunt comments on the alleged risks and benefits of publishing or withholding the full details of the studies. The debate, sponsored by the New York Academy of Sciences, involved two members of the biosecurity advisory board that called for "redacting" the two studies in question to delete details, along with scientists who want the full studies

published and representatives of *Science* and *Nature*, the two journals involved. The 2-hour session, which was live-streamed on the Web, left no clear impression of how the current controversy or future dilemmas over conduct and publication of "dual use" research might be resolved. [CIDRAP](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

South Africa suffers its biggest African swine fever outbreak

3 February – South Africa is suffering its biggest-ever outbreak of African Swine Fever, a provincial veterinary official said. The disease was discovered early last month at eight farms near Delmas, a town 60 kilometers (37 miles) east of Johannesburg, Malcolm de Bude, chief director of veterinary services for Gauteng province, said in a mobile phone interview this week. "This is the largest outbreak of the disease we've ever experienced," he said, adding that about 300 animals were at risk at the infected farms. [MoneyWeb](#)

U.S.: Campylobacteriosis, unpasteurized milk

7 February - Illness after consuming raw milk from a south-central Pennsylvania dairy has risen to 43 in 4 states. Officials say confirmed cases of campylobacteriosis include 36 people in Pennsylvania, 4 in Maryland, 2 in West Virginia, and 1 in New Jersey. Health officials said last week that consumers should discard raw milk purchased since the start of 2012 from the Family Cow farm in Chambersburg in Franklin County, [Pennsylvania]. Meanwhile, the state Agriculture Department said the farm passed a final inspection late Monday afternoon, 6 Feb 2012, and has been cleared to resume production and bottling of raw milk. [ProMED-mail](#)

U.S.: Consumer groups want tougher probe of engineered salmon

7 February - Three U.S. consumer groups petitioned the Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday to subject a new genetically engineered salmon to a more rigorous review process than is now in place before the fish can be approved as safe to eat. The fish at issue, AquaBounty Technologies' AquAdvantage salmon, is currently classified as a new animal drug for the purposes of FDA review. The FDA considers any genetically altered animal a new animal drug for approval purposes. The petition calls for the salmon to be classified as a food additive instead, which would require a more rigorous FDA review. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Egg recall in 34 states over Listeria concerns

3 February - Michael Foods, a Minnesota-based food company, is recalling more than one million hard-cooked eggs from 34 states, after tests revealed some may be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria. Some 15,000 pails of eggs in brine, sold for institutional use, are being recalled, Michael Foods spokeswoman Diane Sparish said in a U.S. Food and Drug Administration written statement. The FDA said the eggs were produced at the company's plant in Wakefield, Neb., and were bought by food distributors and manufacturers and not sold directly to retailers. There have been no reports of illness connected to the eggs, the agency said. The states included in the recall are: Alabama; Arkansas; Arizona; California; Colorado; Florida; Georgia; Iowa; Illinois; Indiana; Kansas; Kentucky; Louisiana; Michigan; Minnesota; Missouri; Mississippi; Montana; North Carolina; North Dakota; Nebraska; New Jersey; Nevada; Ohio; Oklahoma; Oregon; Pennsylvania; South Carolina; Tennessee; Texas; Utah; Washington; Wisconsin; and West Virginia. [CBS News](#)

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WELLNESS

Bread a culprit in Americans eating too much salt

8 February - Nine out of 10 American adults consume too much salt and the leading culprit is not potato chips or popcorn but slices of bread and dinner rolls, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Tuesday. Forty-four percent of salt consumed can be linked to 10 types of foods, CDC said. Bread and rolls lead the list followed by cold cuts and cured meat, pizza, poultry, soups, sandwiches, cheese, pasta dishes, meat dishes and snacks such as pretzels and potato chips. Bread may not have much salt in a single serving, but when eaten several times a day can raise daily salt intake. A single slice of white bread could contain as many as 230 milligrams of salt, according to the CDC. High salt intake can raise blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease and stroke, the CDC said. The average American consumes 3,266 milligrams of salt daily, not counting salt added at the table, which is far above the recommended 2,300 milligrams, the CDC said. [Fox News](#)

Does foot form explain running injuries?



8 February - The members of Harvard University's men's and women's distance running squads are young, fast, fit, skinny, bright, disciplined and, without exception, dutiful. Every day during the cross-country and track seasons, they enter their mileage and pace into an online training Web site overseen by the team's coaches and trainers. They also, like most serious runners, get hurt with distressing frequency, often missing practice due to aching muscles or over-stressed bones. Each of those injuries, no matter how niggling, also gets duly reported and entered into the computer. Meaning that these student athletes, in their high-achieving way, fashioned an excellent database through which to examine running-related injuries, as evidenced by a

[study published online last month](#) in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. The study, for which researchers combed through four years' worth of data about the Harvard runners, has produced the surprisingly controversial finding that how a person runs may affect whether he or she winds up hurt. [New York Times](#)

Male smokers lose brain function faster as they age

6 February - Men who smoke suffer a more rapid decline in brain function as they age than their non-smoking counterparts, with their cognitive decline as rapid as someone 10 years older but who shuns tobacco, scientists said on Monday. In a large, long-term study, British researchers found that while there seems to be no link between cognitive decline and smoking in women, in men, the habit is linked to swifter decline, with early dementia-like cognitive difficulties showing up as early as the age of 45. The research adds to an already large body of evidence about the long-term dangers of smoking -- a habit the World Health Organisation refers to as "one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced."

[Medline Plus](#)

Vending machine dispenses 'morning-after' pill

7 February - Students at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania can get the "morning-after" pill by sliding \$25 into a vending machine, an idea that has drawn the attention of federal regulators and raised questions about how accessible emergency contraception should be. The student health center at Shippensburg, a secluded public institution of 8,300 students tucked between mountain ridges in the Cumberland Valley, provides the Plan B One Step emergency contraceptive in the vending machine along with condoms, decongestants and pregnancy tests. "I think it's great that the school is giving us this option," junior Chelsea Wehking said Tuesday. "I've heard some kids say they'd be too embarrassed" to go into town — Shippensburg, permanent population about 6,000 — and buy Plan B. Federal law makes the pill available without a prescription to anyone 17 or older, and the school checked records and found that all current students are that age or older, a spokesman said. It doesn't appear that any other vending machine in the U.S. dispenses the contraceptive, which can prevent pregnancy if taken soon after sexual intercourse. [NPR](#)

The risks and rewards of practicing yoga



7 February - Twenty million people practice yoga in the United States. William Broad, a Pulitzer Prize-winning science writer for *The New York Times*, is one of them. Broad started doing yoga as a freshman in college in 1970 and has been practicing ever since.

"I can't imagine doing [my] job without it," he tells *Fresh Air's* Terry

Gross. "It's an excellent means of stress management. Yoga helps me relax. And that's the thing that most yogis swear by. No matter how poorly you do it or how stressed you are, you're going to get this guaranteed de-stressing, relaxing, anti-civilization effect of yoga — which is wonderful." Broad's new book, *The Science of Yoga*, investigates both the risks and rewards of yoga. Using the latest scientific research, Broad explains the benefits of yoga, while debunking the myths surrounding it and explaining why certain yoga moves can even be quite dangerous. [NPR](#)

Snack bars and junk food common in schools: study

7 February - About half of all elementary school students can buy potato chips, ice cream or similar snacks in vending machines and at snack bars during school, suggests a new study. Researchers said they'd hoped that with more encouragement for districts to improve nutrition in foods offered at school and an increasing focus on childhood obesity, fewer kids would have access to unhealthy options -- especially ones that they might substitute for a more balanced school lunch. Elementary school "is really a crucial period where the preferences and behavioral habits are being developed," said Lindsey Turner, one of the study's authors from the University of Illinois at Chicago. [Reuters](#)

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USAFRICOM

Cameroon: Yellow fever

3 February - In December 2011, the Ministry of Health of Cameroon notified WHO of a yellow fever outbreak in the North Region of the country. A total of 23 cases, including 7 deaths, have been reported to have occurred since October 2011 in Guider, Bibemi, Gaschiga, Lagdo, Mayo Oulo and Golombe districts. These cases were identified as part of the surveillance system, with fever and jaundice within the 14 days of onset. At least 13 cases from six health districts were laboratory confirmed at the Institute Pasteur of Cameroon by IgM ELISA test, which was followed by the seroneutralizing test (PRNT), the most specific test for yellow fever, and by differential diagnostic for dengue and West Nile Virus conducted in the WHO regional reference laboratory for yellow fever, the Institute Pasteur of Dakar, Senegal. WHO country office has been working with the government/health authorities in the outbreak field investigation to confirm the cases and assess the extent of the outbreak. [WHO](#)

Cote d'Ivoire: Leprosy fight still flagging

8 February - Côte d'Ivoire's leprosy programme was consistently under-funded during the civil war (2002-2007) and last year's political turmoil, say health practitioners, leading to a loss of expertise in terms of detecting or treating the disease. Not considered a public health priority, the government and donors de-prioritized the leprosy fight over the past decade, with funding dropping to 30 percent of the original total, according to Alain de Kersabiec, Côte d'Ivoire and Benin representative for French NGO the Follereau Foundation (FRF), which helps treat existing and new leprosy patients around the country. The World Health Organization (WHO) considers a disease to be a public health emergency if the prevalence is greater than one case per 10,000 inhabitants (a 0.01 prevalence rate). In 2009, the leprosy prevalence rate was 0.36 in Côte d'Ivoire. [IRIN](#)

Ghana: Yellow fever

3 February - On 20 December 2011, the Ministry of Health of Ghana notified WHO of a yellow fever (YF) outbreak occurring in 3 districts; Builsa and Kassena-Nankana-West in the Upper East Region and Kitampo-South in the Brong Ahafo Region located in the mid-western part of the country. A total of three laboratory-confirmed cases, including two deaths, have been detected by yellow fever surveillance, with the clinical syndrome of fever and jaundice. The index case, reported from the Kassena-Nankana-West district, was a 12 year-old male who had been going with his father to his farm in a forest bordering Burkina Faso. Onset of symptoms occurred on 11 October 2011 and progressively got worse until he died in Sandema Hospital on 18 October 2011. District outbreak teams investigated the affected areas but found no additional cases. A reactive campaign has been planned starting 6 February 2012, supported by the International Coordinating Group on Yellow Fever Vaccine Provision (YF-ICG) and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO). Over 235 000 people in the affected districts have been targeted for vaccination, with the exclusion of pregnant women and children aged under one year. [WHO](#)

Nigeria: Lead poisoning rampant among children rights group says



7 February - Thousands of children in northwestern Nigeria are in urgent need of treatment for lead poisoning. New York-based [Human Rights Watch](#) says dozens of villages in northwestern Zamfara State remain contaminated, two years after the problems were first discovered. Left untreated, lead poisoning can be fatal.

Officials say 400 children under age five have died as a result of what Human Rights Watch considers to be the worst lead poisoning epidemic in modern history. [VOA News](#)

Sudan: Malaria, malnutrition on the rise after violent clashes

5 February - 16-year old Nyayan Giet lies helpless on a metallic bed in a maternity ward at Walgak Primary Health Care Center (PHCC) as she quietly stares at roof with no ceiling. Her husband and a relative closely monitor her condition. "She is suffering from malaria. She was brought a few days back after giving birth to her baby," Rebecca Nyabuom, a community midwife at the center tells Valerie Amos, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator. Walgak, a village located in South Sudan's Jonglei state county of Akobo has approximately 6,000 people, according to the 2008 population and housing census. The area, which currently has some 50 UN peacekeepers and about 100 organized forces came under attack between December 28 and January 10 displacing thousands of the population. Rebecca Nyabuom, a midwife speaking to Valerie Amos, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator at Walgak Primary Healthcare Center (Photo by Julius Uma). David Rwei Guem, a community health worker at the healthcare center says Malaria, Malnutrition and Diarrhea are the worst reported cases among children at the facility, established the International Medical Corps (IMC) in 2003. "Surprisingly, we have very few cases of children suffering from measles

recorded at the center," says the 29-year old health official. In recent months, Walgak PHCC has become a hub where health workers grapple with thousands of the populations displaced in what many have termed as the worst ethnic violence in South Sudan's post-session era. [All Africa](#)

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USCENTCOM

55 types of cancer found among Arabs

4 February - At least 55 types of cancer have been documented in the Arab population in the region, according to a preliminary survey done by the Centre for Arab Genomic Studies. A recent report, released by the centre ahead of World Cancer Day today, said rapid improvements in the field of healthcare and dramatic socioeconomic changes resulting in modified lifestyles are believed to have contributed to the increased incidence of cancers among Arabs. "For example, the UAE shows a continually increasing proportion of cancer burden imposing itself as the third leading cause of death after cardiovascular diseases and accidents," said Dr Ghazi Omar Tadmouri, assistant director of the Shaikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Award for Medical Sciences' Centre for Arab Genomic Studies. The report was an effort to catalogue disorders implicated by genetic changes in the region. Although variations do exist among these types of cancers with regard to their incidence and frequency, strong indicators show clearly that cancers of the lung and prostate are the most common among males whereas breast and thyroid cancers are the most common among females in the region, said the report. [Khaleej Times](#)

Afghanistan: Child labor fears grow as aid dries up

7 February - Dwindling development aid as the war winds down in Afghanistan means child labor in the impoverished country is at risk of becoming more widespread, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) warned on Tuesday. Half of Afghanistan's population of 30 million are under 15, with almost two million children in full or part-time work, UNICEF estimates of a country where war, poverty, unemployment and pride in having large families have created a huge underage labor market. With foreign troops fighting Taliban insurgents pulling out by the end of 2014, global attention is dolefully shifting away from Afghanistan and its humanitarian needs, said the ILO's representative to Kabul Herve Berger. [Reuters](#)

Afghanistan: Freezing temperatures kill at least 16 children



8 February - An Afghan official has confirmed that at least 16 children have died outside the capital this month due to the record freezing temperatures. Dr. Ghulam Sakhi Kargar, spokesman for the Afghan Public Health Ministry, confirmed the numbers on February 8 after Afghan authorities initially cast doubt on whether the children died in three refugee camps outside Kabul... An Afghan

official has confirmed that at least 16 children have died outside the capital this month due to the record freezing temperatures... More than 30 Afghans, mostly in the country's remote northeast, have died this winter after heavy snow falls and record cold temperatures. The Afghan meteorological service said Kabul is experiencing the worst weather it has had in at least 15 years. [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#)

Opium: Afghanistan's new front line

6 February - ...Researchers started looking into the problem of child drug addiction in Afghanistan in 2008. Over two years, they went into the homes of 50 known opium smokers to assess whether the children were affected too. In the first year, 61 per cent of children tested positive for opiates. In the second year, 74 per cent tested positive... They established the children were becoming addicted in a number of ways: they were inhaling their parents' second-hand smoke; they were absorbing it through their skin because it was on toys, blankets and pillows and parents were giving it to them as a medicine and pain reliever. Parents were also giving them heroin paste as a "babysitting" method so they could work weaving carpets. In some provinces, during the opium harvest, farmers would also have their children score the poppy and, again, they would absorb it through their skin... Aid groups in Afghanistan have expressed concern that despite billions being poured into the country in aid, a large proportion of the next generation – in a country where in some rural villages all the population is addicted to opiates – will be addicted to drugs. But a silver lining exists. Although the research has identified a horrifying epidemic, the research now being done in Afghanistan on how to treat child addicts is starting to be used as a blueprint for the rest of the world. [The Independent](#)

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USEUCOM

Euro MPs reject new food labels with 'healthier' claims

2 February - Euro MPs have blocked changes to food labels that would have allowed claims such as "now contains 15% less sugar". Such claims for reduced sugar, fat or salt would "mislead consumers", said the parliament's chief negotiator on food labels, Renate Sommer MEP. MEPs also said the draft legislation would not go far enough to encourage firms to develop healthier foods. The EU Commission must now redraft it. Currently a "reduced" label must mean at least 30% less of an ingredient. The European consumer organisation BEUC welcomed the MEPs' vote on Thursday, saying "consumers do not need to be confronted with yet another nutrition claim, especially one which is misleading and adds to confusion... "What they need is for industry to put public health first and step up their reformulation efforts". The industry lobby group FoodDrinkEurope, which includes 18 major food and drink companies, voiced dismay. It argued that consumers "will not be informed of important reformulations to foods so that they can make an informed food choice". [BBC News](#)

Finland: Increased incidence of *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* infection in Finland, 2010–2011

2 February - The number of cases of *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* infection detected by laboratory-based surveillance increased in Finland in late 2010. During 2011, the number of cases was four times higher than during the previous epidemic in 2005. The 2011 epidemic affected mostly school-age children. The increased number of cases was probably not due to changes in laboratory procedures, but public interest may have had an effect, since the number of Google queries followed closely the epidemic curve. [Eurosurveillance](#)

Ireland: Pseudomonas found in more hospital taps



8 February - Pseudomonas has been detected in water outlets in the neonatal units at three more hospitals in Northern Ireland. Water tests from Daisy Hill in Newry, Craigavon Area Hospital and the Erne Hospital in Enniskillen were positive. As in all neonatal units, steps had already been taken to ensure that babies did not come into contact with the water supply. No babies in these hospitals are infected with Pseudomonas, although two at Craigavon are colonised. [BBC News](#)

Israel: Israeli spotted fever

7 February - In September 2011, a female Israeli soldier 1st came to the hospital with a fever that had lasted 6 days, together with headache, muscle weakness and widespread rash. After she was released to her home, she returned 2 days later to another hospital with complaints of insomnia, vomiting and worsening headaches. She was discharged home again, but returned next day to the emergency room with weakness in the legs again, sitting in a wheelchair. After she was released back to her home, she returned 2 days later in a hospital emergency room with shortness of breath, interfering with speech. Transferred to inpatient hospital intensive care unit in serious condition with multi-organ failure, and was diagnosed to have been infected with Israeli spotted fever. The soldier was released from the hospital and underwent lengthy rehabilitation before being returned to good health. In emergency rooms, doctors are encouraged to be alert to the combination of 3 symptoms: fever, rash and headache/muscle ache. This disease may be severe, with a mortality rate due to 0.7 percent in estimates. [ProMED-mail](#)

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CDC study shows 90-percent of Americans consume too much salt

9 February - A new study concludes that the vast majority of Americans eat too much salt. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 90-percent of people over age two take in too much sodium. The salty problem is not potato chips or french fries. The CDC blames bread products. One slice of bread can have over 200 milligrams of salt. The average American eats about 3300 milligrams of sodium per day. The recommended amount is 2300 milligrams daily. The CDC warns too much salt raises blood pressure, which can cause heart disease. [OzarksFirst.com](#)

U.S.: HPV vaccination for boys recommended by CDC

6 February - Health authorities on Friday urged all boys age 11-12 to get a routine vaccination against the most common sexually transmitted disease, human papillomavirus, or HPV. Other changes as part of an annual update to immunization schedules included a recommended hepatitis B vaccine to protect the livers of adults up to age 60 who have diabetes and a vaccine against whooping cough for pregnant women. The updates, agreed upon by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), were published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly report of February 3. The HPV vaccine has been approved for girls since 2006 but the CDC had not expressly urged it for boys, though boys were included among those who could receive it to prevent certain cancers and genital warts. Health experts have expressed hope that if pre-teen boys and girls are both encouraged to get the vaccine, the rate of infection will decrease in the general population. About half of all sexually active adults will get HPV in their lifetime. There are more than 100 types of HPV, and most clear the body on their own, but some strains can linger and lead to cervical, anal or oral cancer. [NY Daily News](#)

U.S.: Measles patient at Super Bowl venue among 4 cases

8 February - A person diagnosed with measles may have exposed others at Indianapolis' Super Bowl Village to the disease, according to Indiana health officials, who say they're not yet concerned about a widespread outbreak. Two cases of measles have been confirmed in Hamilton County, with another two suspected in Boone County. One of the confirmed patients visited the outdoor Super Bowl Village on Friday afternoon. More than 200,000 people visited the Super Bowl Village that day, two days before the New York Giants beat the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl. The Indiana State Department of Health said it notified the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and health departments in New York and Massachusetts, but it could be a week before new cases of measles pop up from that exposure. [The Wall Street Journal](#)

U.S.: Nearly 300 NYC cops diagnosed with cancer since responding to 9/11 attacks

6 February - A startling number of healthy, young New York City cops who responded to the 9/11 terror attacks have since been diagnosed with cancer, according to data obtained by the New York Post. The statistics, which show nearly a tripling in the number of cops applying for cancer-related disability pensions post-9/11, are the first of their kind to become public and confirm the fears of at least 12,000 police officers who toiled amid the rubble at the toxic World Trade Center site. There are 297 cops who were diagnosed with cancer after working at Ground Zero -- and the average age was a shocking 44 at the time of diagnosis, according to the data from the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA). The cancers range from lung cancer -- which is the most prevalent, with 19 cases -- to rarer cancers that affect the bile duct, tongue and nasal passages, according to the data obtained from a random sampling of retired cops. Since Sept. 11, 2001, 56 cops have died from cancer, the PBA said, adding that an average of 16 cops apply annually for cancer-related disabilities since the terror attacks, compared with about six a year before 9/11. [Fox News](#)

U.S., Utah: Chemical stockpile elimination

9 February - ... With the elimination of the chemical weapons stockpile at Deseret Chemical Depot (DCD) in Utah on Jan. 21, 2012, PM-CSE has safely destroyed 27,473.65 U.S. tons of nerve and blister agents, nearly 90 percent of the nations stockpile of chemical agent. PM-CSE successfully completed its mission to destroy all chemical agent munitions and items declared at entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and assigned to CMA for destruction. The CWC, an international treaty ratified by the United States in April 1997, required the complete destruction of the Nations chemical weapons stockpile by April 2007. The United States was granted a five-year extension to April 2012. The Tooele Chemical Agent Disposal Facility at DCD was CMAs last operating chemical demilitarization facility. CMA previously completed chemical agent destruction operations at six other chemical demilitarization facilities. [Stand-To!](#)

Vaccines: They're not just for kids (but too few U.S. adults are getting immunized)

3 February – Shots are never fun no matter what your age, but according to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adults may dread them (almost) as much as children. Each year, 45,000 Americans die from vaccine-preventable diseases. Despite that, U.S. adults are not getting the immunizations they need. According to the report published in the Feb. 3 issue of the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, three vaccines — tetanus, diphtheria and acellus pertussis, or Tdap; human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine and a vaccine for shingles — showed small increases among adults in 2010. The rate of coverage climbed from 1.6% to 8.2%. "There were some modest increases in coverage but for very few vaccines," Dr. Carolyn B. Bridges, associate director of adult immunization at the CDC and co-author of the report, told HealthDay. Coverage is much lower than we would like to see it." Some other vaccines also improved their rates slightly: the number of young women who got at least one dose of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which

guards against 70% of cervical cancers, grew more than 3.5%, to 20.7%. And 16.6% of whites aged 60 and older received a shingles vaccine, up more than 5%. [TIME](#)

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Australian floods force thousands from their homes

5 February - Thousands of Australians were forced from their homes on Monday because of floods that have risen to record levels in some areas and killed one person, and authorities issued warnings for more than a dozen rivers in Queensland and New South Wales states... The flooding across the two states this year has resulted in tens of thousands of people being cut off in the last few days, with some having to battle with deadly snakes as they scrambled for dry ground. The Australian Bureau of Meteorology has forecast that flooding will continue for weeks in some areas. [Reuters](#)

China 'bans' airlines from joining EU carbon scheme

5 February - China has "banned" all airlines in the country from joining the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) aimed at cutting carbon emissions. The authorities have also barred the airlines from increasing their fares or adding new charges for the scheme. The ban comes just weeks after the China Air Transport Association said its members did not support the ETS. The scheme, implemented from 1 January, levies a charge on flights in EU airspace based on carbon emissions. "They would be able to stop the Chinese airlines from flying to the EU, but that could see retaliatory action by China." The scheme has come in for severe criticism not just from China but also from other countries such as the US and Canada. China has claimed that the plan could cost Chinese airlines 95m euros (\$124m, £79m) in extra annual costs. Analysts said that given the global economic conditions and an uncertain outlook for the travel industry, airlines were wary of the scheme hurting their profits. "The sector is already facing quite severe challenges," Chris De Lavigne of Frost & Sullivan told the BBC. "The airline industry as a whole has already been hit by high fuel costs in the past couple of years and no one wants additional cost factors coming in." [BBC News](#)

China fires 7 officials after toxic cadmium spill

4 February - An environmental protection director and six other officials have been fired after a spill of toxic cadmium in a river in southern China threatened drinking water supplies for millions of people, news reports said Saturday. The spill in January prompted residents of Liuzhou, a city of 3.2 million in southwestern China's Guangxi region, to stock up on bottled water. Officials said efforts to neutralize the cadmium were keeping its levels in river water within safe limits... Chinese rivers, lakes and coastal waters are heavily polluted due to inadequate controls on industries, runoff from farms and urban sewage. [CTV](#)

Fiji: As floods continue, UN stresses need to boost preventive measures

3 February - The United Nations disaster risk reduction agency stressed today the need to boost preventive measures in Fiji, as heavy rains are predicted to occur more frequently in the archipelago nation, which has been ravaged by severe floods over the past week... "Scientists are exploring the evidence that climate change and developments in low-lying flood-prone areas such as Nadi and Ba are contributing factors. In the interim, improved preparedness and early warning, two important elements of disaster risk reduction, will have to remain important and urgent priorities." According to UNISDR, eight people have died and there have been 51 reported cases of water-related diseases, including diarrhoea and typhoid, as a result of the floods. [UN News Centre](#)

Philippines: Negros earthquake - urgent rescue efforts as death toll rises



7 February - Dozens of people were still missing Tuesday following a strong earthquake that triggered landslides and damaged buildings and roads on a central Philippine island. The death toll reached 22, but officials said it was likely to rise further as rescuers struggle to reach remote areas. Monday's magnitude-6.9 quake also collapsed bridges on Negros Island, forcing soldiers and firefighters to hike mountains to reach remote villages. Most of the confirmed deaths were in Planas village, a part of Guihulngan town where some 30 houses were buried under concrete debris. [The Christian Science Monitor](#)

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Argentina fights child obesity

9 February - Obesity has become a major health concern in Argentina - and is now ranked behind smoking as the largest preventable cause of death. According to the World Health Organization, the country is following a global trend of soaring obesity rates in developing economies, affecting adults and children alike. According to official data, nearly one in 10 children under the age of six in Argentina is severely overweight. For children, it can be the start of a life-long health battle. [Latino Fox News](#)

PAHO report urges higher tobacco taxes, bans on advertising

8 February - A growing number of countries in the Americas are adopting effective measures to reduce consumption of tobacco and exposure to secondhand smoke. But a new report from the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization

(PAHO/WHO) recommends further measures, particularly increases in tobacco taxes and bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. [PharmPro](#)

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