

16 March 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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Contents

U.S. MILITARY

- [Relations between suicide and TBI, psychiatric diagnoses, and relationship problems, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2001-2009](#)
- [Soldier held in Afghan killings was from troubled U.S. base](#)

GLOBAL

- [Poor hospital care 'puts many lives at risk' in developing world](#)
- [Seven-country study examines the causes of childhood pneumonia](#)
- [Study finds bacterial STD linked to increased risk of HIV](#)
- [Vaccines help protect travelers of all ages](#)

INFLUENZA

- [Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)
- [CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report](#)
- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)
- [USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)
- [PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA](#)
- [Bangladesh: No sign of missed H5N1 cases in Bangladesh study](#)
- [Indonesia: Avian influenza situation, WHO update](#)
- [Vietnam: Avian influenza situation, WHO update](#)

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- [Trade deal eases EU-US beef war over hormones](#)
- [U.S.: Diseases from imported food on the rise, CDC](#)
- [U.S.: Funding gap stalls food safety centers of excellence](#)

Soldier Medical Readiness Series

The Soldier Medical Readiness Campaign Injury Prevention/Human Performance Optimization Education Series consists of quarterly Defense Connection Online (DCO) sessions. Each DCO session will include presentations from experts in the fields of injury prevention, human performance optimization, and health promotion. Each presentation will be 30-60 minutes long.

Date of the course:
22 March, 1300-1600 EST

Topics:

Soldier Fueling Initiative

Physical Activity and Injury

Physical Readiness Training

Vanguard Fitness Trainer

More information

WELLNESS

- A soda per day may raise heart-attack risk
- All red meat is bad for you, new study says
- Avoiding dementia similar to heart disease – lifestyle changes important
- Lack of sleep may increase calorie consumption
- Men's sperm count cut by fatty food diet: Which foods can boost it?

USAFRICOM

- Africa: New approaches could fight killer diseases
- Kenya: Malaria drug effectiveness hit by under-dosage
- Nigeria: Country records four polio cases in 10 weeks
- South Africa: North West first province to cure XDR TB
- Uganda: Cholera warning as heavy rains predicted

USCENTCOM

- Pakistan: No road home for Sindh flood victims

USEUCOM

- The European Union summary report on trends and sources of zoonoses, zoonotic agents and food-borne outbreaks in 2010
- Tracing the UK's No. 1 STD
- United Kingdom: Animal import bans "put UK drug research at risk"

USNORTHCOM

- Canadian hospitals that spend more get better results
- U.S.: Broader screening for hepatitis C would be cost effective, study suggests
- U.S.: CDC, More women need chlamydia screening
- U.S.: Health panel, pap tests needed only every 3 years
- U.S.: Spring is here early and so are allergies
- U.S.: Surveillance for norovirus outbreaks
- U.S.: Tickborne relapsing fever in a mother and newborn child — Colorado, 2011

USPACOM

- India allows copy of cancer drug
- Thailand: Rice pests multiply post-floods

USSOUTHCOM

- Haiti: As cholera season bears down, vaccination program stalls
- Venezuela: Venezuelan hemorrhagic fever

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.

Links

[A-Z Index](#)

[About USAPHC](#)

[Army Public Health and Health Information Weekly Update Archives](#)

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

[Medical Threat Briefings \(AKO\)](#)

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[USAPHC Training](#)

[Contact USAPHC](#)

U.S. MILITARY

Relations between suicide and TBI, psychiatric diagnoses, and relationship problems, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2001-2009

February 2012 - This retrospective case-control study of members of the active component of the U.S. Armed Forces compared those who died from suicide to controls matched by service, gender, race, age, date of entry into the active component, and years of service. The surveillance period was 2001 to 2009. The groups were compared with respect to numbers of deployments and documented diagnoses of traumatic brain injury (TBI), mood disorders, alcohol dependence, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), partner relationship problems, and family circumstance problems. Cases and controls were similar regarding frequencies and types of TBIs and numbers of deployments. In multivariate analyses, increased odds of suicide were associated with mood disorders, partner relationship problems, and family circumstance problems, but not with mild TBI, alcohol dependence, or PTSD. A separate analysis revealed that psychiatric comorbidities increased odds of suicide. Limitations are discussed, including the possibility that some controls with mild TBIs may have died from suicide after their military service. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Soldier held in Afghan killings was from troubled U.S. base

12 March - Dozens of recent cases of killings, suicides and assaults have been linked to combat troops from sprawling Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state... [T]he base has become one of the most troubled in the Army. This week, accusations that a Lewis-McChord sergeant in southern Afghanistan shot to death at least 16 civilians were added to the dozens of cases of killings, suicides, assaults and other crimes linked to soldiers from the base. The largest military base on the West Coast, with more than 60,000 military and civilian personnel, Lewis-McChord is one of the main infantry engines for Iraq and Afghanistan. Lately, the base has earned a reputation for a series of horrific crimes emanating from there, including those by a "kill team" of Stryker brigade soldiers accused of killing Afghan civilians for sport, a father accused of waterboarding his child and a soldier accused of dousing his wife's legs with lighter fluid and setting her on fire. Twelve suicides were reported last year among Lewis-McChord soldiers, and earlier this year, a 24-year-old Iraq war veteran shot and killed a park ranger at Mt. Rainier National Park. [Los Angeles Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

Poor hospital care 'puts many lives at risk' in developing world



13 March - Poor hospital care poses a risk to the lives of many patients in the developing world, say researchers. A study of 26 hospitals in eight countries in the Middle East and Africa found more than one death per day in every hospital was due to preventable accidents and poor treatment. Many deaths were due to poor staff training and supervision rather than a lack of resources, scientists said. The study was published in The British Medical Journal. [BBC News](#)

Seven-country study examines the causes of childhood pneumonia

12 March - The journal Clinical Infectious Diseases has released its March Special Supplement focusing entirely on the research design of and pilot data from the Pneumonia Etiology Research for Child Health (PERCH) Project, which seeks to identify the causes of pneumonia among the world's most vulnerable populations. PERCH, led by the International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in collaboration with seven research centers worldwide, is the largest and most comprehensive study of the etiology of childhood pneumonia conducted in more than 20 years. Pneumonia is the leading cause of death among children under age five, but while the disease is easy to recognize, the causes of pneumonia, which claims the lives of approximately 1.6 million children each year, are not. "This supplement provides a unique opportunity to share our rigorous, deliberative and inclusive process in designing the PERCH study. We hope that our work can benefit other researchers and result in a greater degree of standardization in child pneumonia research," says Orin Levine, lead investigator on the study and professor of International Health at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "In learning more about the causes of pneumonia, we can design better treatments, diagnostics and vaccines to save children's lives." [Infection Control Today](#)

Study finds bacterial STD linked to increased risk of HIV

12 March - A common sexually transmitted bacterial infection more than doubles the risk of HIV infection in African women, according to a study by researchers at RTI International. The study, published in the March 13 issue of AIDS, found that women with the "emerging" sexually transmitted disease Mycoplasma genitalium are more likely to acquire HIV infection. "Further research will be required to confirm a causal relationship and to identify risk factors for M. genitalium infection in African populations," says Sue Napierala Mavedzenge, PhD, a research investigator with the Women's Global Health Imperative at RTI International and the study's lead author. "If findings from this research are confirmed, M. genitalium screening and treatment among women at high risk for HIV-1 infection may be warranted as part of an HIV-1 prevention strategy." [Infection Control Today](#)

Vaccines help protect travelers of all ages

12 March - ...Vaccines are one of the most important tools you have for preventing **certain diseases**. If you travel to other countries, it is important to get vaccinated because some diseases that are not common in the United States still exist in other parts of the world. In addition, in an airport or airplane, other travelers can expose you to disease. Before you travel, review your vaccination history. Check with your doctor or nurse to see if that you've had all of the recommended vaccines. Remember that a vaccine's effectiveness may decrease over time. You may need boosters even if you had vaccines when you were younger. Get the recommended vaccines **before** you travel. If you're traveling outside the United States, you may need to see a **travel medicine specialist**. Ideally, set up a visit 4 to 6 weeks before your trip. [CDC](#)

[top of page...](#)

INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

15 March 2012:

- Influenza cases increased within the MHS; influenza activity is low to moderate in overseas DoD laboratory surveillance networks.
- Influenza-like illness (ILI) incidence rates decreased from last week within the MHS across all regions.
- The influenza vaccination rate for the DoD (Active Duty component only) is 96%. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 9 (26 February – 3 March 2012), influenza activity is elevated in some areas in the United States, but influenza-like-illness remains relatively low nationally. [FluView](#)

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

During week 9 (27 February- 4 March 2012), medium or higher intensity has been reported by 18 countries and increasing trends by 11 countries. Bulgaria, Italy and Spain have reported decreasing trends for at least two weeks in a row and are therefore the first three European countries past their epidemic peak this season. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

10 March – Influenza activity continues increasing but overall activity remains lower than last year. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Bangladesh: No sign of missed H5N1 cases in Bangladesh study

13 March - No signs of H5N1 avian influenza infections were found in more than 400 Bangladeshis who were probably exposed to the virus while working on poultry farms and in markets, according to a study reported in preliminary form today. The findings were presented at the International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases (ICEID) in Atlanta. They are in line with a number of previous serologic studies in the past 8 years that have found few people carrying H5N1 antibodies suggesting they had unrecognized H5N1 infections. [CIDRAP News](#)

Indonesia: Avian influenza situation, WHO update

12 March - The Ministry of Health of Indonesia has notified WHO of a new case of human infection with avian influenza A(H5N1) virus. The case is a 24 year-old female from Bengkulu Province. She developed fever on 23 February 2012 and was hospitalized on the following day. She had breathing difficulty, her condition deteriorated and she died on 1 March 2012. Epidemiological investigation conducted by a team of public health and animal health authorities indicated an exposure to a potentially contaminated environment where sudden deaths of poultry had recently occurred. The case was confirmed by the National Institute of Health Research and Development, Ministry of Health. To date, of the 187 cases reported in Indonesia since 2005, 155 have been fatal. [WHO](#)

Vietnam: Avian influenza situation, WHO update

12 March – The Ministry of Health, Viet Nam has reported a confirmed case of human infection with highly pathogenic avian influenza A(H5N1) virus in the country. The case is a 31 year-old male from Dak Lak province. He developed symptoms on 29 February 2012 and sought health care on the same day. On 4 March 2012, he was admitted to a hospital and was diagnosed with viral pneumonia. He was transferred to a referral hospital on 5 March 2012, where he is currently being treated. Laboratory tests were confirmed by the Pasteur Institute Ho Chi Minh City, a WHO National influenza Centre. Epidemiological investigation indicate that the man was involved in the slaughter and consumption of sick poultry. Pasteur Institute Ho Chi Minh City and the local health sector are conducting further investigation and providing appropriate response. No close contacts of the case have reported respiratory symptoms. To date, of the 123 confirmed cases reported in Viet Nam, 61 have been fatal. [WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

Trade deal eases EU-US beef war over hormones

14 March - The European Parliament has backed a deal that will increase EU imports of beef from the US and Canada and help European food exporters. A row over growth hormones used on North American cattle ranches led to a trade war lasting more than 20 years. The new deal sets an annual EU quota of 48,200 tonnes for high-quality North American beef from cattle that have not been treated with growth hormones. North America will lift import tariffs on a range of European farm produce. An EU ban on hormone-treated meat and meat products remains in place, even though the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled in 1997 that it was illegal. The EU ban, dating back to 1988, was based on concerns about the addition of six hormones to more than 90% of American beef. But now, US farmers are no longer using the hormones, according to Robert Sturdy MEP, a UK Conservative and Vice-President of the European Parliament's Trade Committee. Mr Sturdy, a farmer himself, said the trade deal would be especially important for the European dairy sector, "which has had a difficult time". [BBC News](#)

U.S.: Diseases from imported food on the rise, CDC



14 March - Food-borne disease outbreaks caused by imports seemed to rise in 2009 and 2010, with fish and spices the most common sources, the Centers for Disease Control said on Wednesday. Almost half of the outbreaks, or localized epidemics, pointed to foods imported from areas that had not been linked to outbreaks before, the CDC said in a statement. "As our food supply becomes more global, people are eating foods from all over the world, potentially exposing them to germs from all corners of the world, too," said CDC epidemiologist Hannah Gould, lead author of a report on the upturn. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Funding gap stalls food safety centers of excellence

13 March - Federal funding shortfalls have stalled the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) progress on establishing five centers of excellence that were included in the 2011 Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), according to sources involved in setting criteria for the new centers. One of the goals of the FSMA is to enhance foodborne illness surveillance systems and leadership in outbreak investigations, and the CDC has several responsibilities in implementing the new law, one of which is establishing five Food Safety Integrated Centers of Excellence. According to CDC background information, the centers would serve as resources to respond to foodborne illness outbreaks. Craig Hedberg, PhD, a food safety expert at the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health, told CIDRAP News that the CDC had appointed an independent working group to help the agency establish the criteria for evaluating the centers in advance of announcing a funding opportunity. However, the CDC recently told the working group in a memo that after

reviewing its fiscal year 2012 budget, it is unable to fund the centers until enough targeted funding for them is available. [CIDRAP News](#)

[top of page...](#)

WELLNESS

A soda per day may raise heart-attack risk

12 March - It's no secret that the empty calories in soda and other sugary drinks can contribute to weight gain and obesity. But a new study suggests these beverages also may harm your heart, even if they don't cause you to gain weight. The study, which followed nearly 43,000 men for an average of 22 years, found that those who habitually drank one 12-ounce sweetened beverage per day were 20% more likely to have a heart attack, fatal or otherwise, than men who drank none. The association could not be explained by obesity or weight gain alone. The researchers took into account the men's body mass index, along with their dietary habits, exercise levels, family history of heart disease, and other extenuating factors. Sugary-beverage consumption "appears to be an independent risk factor for heart disease," says lead author Frank Hu, M.D., a professor of nutrition and epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health, in Boston. Artificially sweetened diet drinks were not linked to heart attacks, as they have been in some other recent studies. And only daily or near-daily consumption of sugary drinks measurably increased heart-attack risk. The study was published this week in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation*. [CNN](#)

All red meat is bad for you, new study says

12 March - Eating red meat — any amount and any type — appears to significantly increase the risk of premature death, according to a long-range study that examined the eating habits and health of more than 110,000 adults for more than 20 years. For instance, adding just one 3-ounce serving of unprocessed red meat — picture a piece of steak no bigger than a deck of cards — to one's daily diet was associated with a 13% greater chance of dying during the course of the study. Even worse, adding an extra daily serving of processed red meat, such as a hot dog or two slices of bacon, was linked to a 20% higher risk of death during the study. "Any red meat you eat contributes to the risk," said An Pan, a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston and lead author of the [study, published online](#) Monday in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. [Baltimore Sun](#)

Avoiding dementia similar to heart disease – lifestyle changes important



13 March - Late-life dementia has a lot in common with heart disease – and many of the same causes, according to an article published Tuesday in *Nature Reviews Neurology*. Like heart disease, the cognitive impairment that accompanies aging is usually the result of a combination of lifestyle and other factors, the article says. Diabetes, obesity, untreated hypertension, sedentary lifestyle and stress are all linked to both heart disease and dementia. Other factors linked to dementia: untreated obstructive sleep apnea, clinical depression, bipolar disorder, vitamin B12 deficiency, post traumatic stress disorder, head trauma, brain injury caused by a lack of oxygen, and the ApoE, or Alzheimer's, gene. Lead author Dr. Majd Fotuhi says the latest research shows dementia can be delayed, stopped and sometimes even reversed with lifestyle changes. [CNN](#)

Lack of sleep may increase calorie consumption

14 March - If you don't get enough sleep, you may also eat too much — and thus be more likely to become obese. That is the findings of researchers who presented their study at the American Heart Association's Epidemiology and Prevention/Nutrition, Physical Activity and Metabolism 2012 Scientific Sessions... The researchers noted that while this study suggests sleep deprivation may be an important part and one preventable cause of weight gain and obesity, it was a small study conducted in a hospital's clinical research unit. [American Heart Association](#)

Men's sperm count cut by fatty food diet: Which foods can boost it?

14 March - Add a low sperm count to the long list of health problems caused by eating fatty foods. A new study has found that men who eat a high fat diet that's especially heavy in saturated fats may have more than a 40 percent lower sperm count than men who eat healthier. For the study, researchers surveyed 99 men about their diet habits and analyzed their sperm samples between December 2006 and August 2010. Based on their survey responses, the researchers put the men into three groups ranked in order of how much fat they consumed, and then looked how diet impacted "total sperm count" and "sperm concentration." Total sperm count refers to the total number of sperm in the ejaculate, while "sperm concentration" is the amount of sperm per milliliter. What did the researchers find? Men in the group that ate the most fat had a 43 percent lower total sperm count and 38 percent lower sperm concentration than men in the group who ate the least fat. The study is published in the March 13 issue of *Human Reproduction*. [CBS News](#)

[top of page...](#)

Africa: New approaches could fight killer diseases

13 March - Newer and more effective drugs to be used in the treatment of HIV/AIDS. This came out of a gathering in Cape Town where delegates discussed how best to improve health care in Africa. Efforts to reduce the burden of disease in Africa over the last 10 years have improved. But malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS are still critical issues facing African countries. At a meeting held in Cape Town to discuss health care in Africa, it was heard that new drugs are in the pipeline for the better treatment and management of HIV/AIDS. "In the pipeline we have newer and better drugs. Better means down to one pill a day and, secondly, the drug is killing the virus more effectively and, thirdly, less side-effects. In the past we have had problems with the side-effects of HIV drugs. We still do, but much less because the quality of drugs has improved", said Sir Richard Feachem, Director of the US-based Global Health Group. In the case of malaria, new diagnostics are now used to provide rapid and accurate tests for those in remote areas. Unni Karunakara, from Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF), said this is a breakthrough for Africa. [All Africa](#)

Kenya: Malaria drug effectiveness hit by under-dosage

12 March - Lack of adherence to the full course of Artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) treatment is threatening the effectiveness of the drug recommended as first-line treatment for uncomplicated malaria in countries where the disease is endemic, according to recent studies. In Siaya district of western Kenya, where malaria is particularly prevalent (38 percent incidence in 2010), a study revealed that only 47 percent of participants reported completing the given doses. "There have always been concerns about whether patients are fully adhering to their treatment regimens once they receive the recommended Artemisinin-based combination therapy. Our study reveals that adherence is poor among many patients," Eric Onyango, lead researcher, told IRIN. The study investigated ACT adherence levels, factors associated with non-adherence and household access to ACT. It involved 297 participants, all of whom had tested positive to Plasmodium falciparum, the parasite responsible for causing malaria, at the time of the study. A household's education level was found to be the highest predictor of poor adherence. Others included household income and age. [IRIN](#)

Nigeria: Country records four polio cases in 10 weeks

8 March - Dr Zikrullah Giwa, the Polio Technical Consultant to the Northern Governors' Forum (NGF), said Thursday that Nigeria recorded four cases of wild polio virus in the past 10 weeks. Giwa who made this known at a meeting of the forum in Kaduna, said the cases were recorded in Kaduna, Sokoto, Borno and Zamfara states. "In 2012, Nigeria has four cases of wild polio virus in four states compared to four cases in three states for the same period in 2011." According to him, the current National Epidemiology the country recorded 62 cases of the wild polio virus in 2011 in eight states. Giwa stated that the total number of "circulating vaccine derived polio virus" (cVDPV2) was 35 in 10 states of the federation in 2011. "In 2012, Nigeria has zero cVDPV2 compared to five cases in four states for the same

period." The consultant identified weak political will, funding, monitoring and commitment as some of the obstacles against the polio eradication. [All Africa](#)

South Africa: North West first province to cure XDR TB

13 March - The North West province has become the first province in the country to cure a patient who was suffering from Extremely Drug Resistant (XDR) Tuberculosis (TB). Provincial Department of Health spokesperson Tebogo Lekgethwane announced on Tuesday that the department recorded the first case in the middle of last year, but had to wait for a confirmation from the national department that the patient had not lapsed. "We are happy to announce that we are the first province to successfully cure XDR TB. The national department of health's Communicable Disease Directorate only confirmed this at the beginning of March because the patient was still being monitored to make sure he does not lapse," said Lekgethwane. Lekgethwane said the milestone was reached as a result of the XDR TB unit which was opened in 2010 in Klerksdorp's Tshepong Hospital Complex. "Two more XDR TB patients were declared completely cured early this year resulting in a total of three completely cured XDR TB patients," he said. [All Africa](#)

Uganda: Cholera warning as heavy rains predicted



9 March - A cholera outbreak in Uganda that has claimed eight lives among 280 cases since 14 February could escalate as predicted heavy rains are likely to lead to flooding, the Health Minister warned. "As the rainy season starts, we predict a rise in cases and the death toll due to its mode of transmission," Christine

Ondoa told IRIN. "If people are prepared, the cases and possibly the death toll will not escalate. That is why we are warning the public ahead of the rainy season," said Ondoa. In an alert issued in the capital, Kampala, on 7 March, Denis Lwamafa, commissioner for non-communicable diseases, said 280 cases had been recorded in the western Ugandan districts of Kasese, Buliisa, and eastern districts of Mbale, Bududa and Sironko. Others affected are Pallisa, Butaleja and Manafa districts. The health ministry has opened two cholera referral and treatment centres in Namatala and Busiu in Mbale for eastern region. [IRIN](#)

[top of page...](#)

USCENTCOM

Pakistan: No road home for Sindh flood victims



12 March - ...According to an International Organization for Migration (IOM) assessment carried out in February, 13,325 individuals have been unable to return home following the 2011 floods, and remain based in 95 temporary settlements. "Of these, 90 percent are spontaneous settlements, mostly along roadsides and other pieces of land. Four percent are planned

camps and one settlement is in a school," IOM spokesperson Mutya Izora Maskun told IRIN. She also said the IOM priority was to assess how people could be helped to return. "A fair number have reported standing water either en route to, or in, their village, which is preventing their return. Others have reported lack of resources for recovery - both reconstruction and livelihoods - preventing them from returning. We want to find out how many can return, and also how many may continue to need assistance in the temporary settlements for months to come," she said. [IRIN](#)

[top of page...](#)

USEUCOM

The European Union summary report on trends and sources of zoonoses, zoonotic agents and food-borne outbreaks in 2010

8 March - On 8 March 2012, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) launched their annual report on zoonoses and food-borne outbreaks for 2010, the 'European Union Summary Report on Trends and Sources of Zoonoses, Zoonotic Agents and Food-borne Outbreaks in 2010' [1]. The report provides a comprehensive overview of zoonotic infections and disease outbreaks caused by consuming contaminated food. According to the report, 5,262 food-borne outbreaks were recorded in the European Union (EU), a slight reduction from 2009. *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella* and viruses such as norovirus were the most frequently reported causes of food-borne outbreaks. [Eurosurveillance](#)

Tracing the UK's No. 1 STD

12 March - In a study released today in Nature Genetics, researchers have found that Chlamydia has evolved more actively than was previously thought. Using whole genome sequencing the researchers show that the exchange of DNA between different strains of Chlamydia to form new strains is much more common than expected. The team highlights that current clinical testing methods do not capture the variation between Chlamydia strains. Changes to the genome structure are not the aim of current diagnostics for Chlamydia. The researchers are working with hospitals to use their results to improve Chlamydia testing in terms of detecting variation between Chlamydia strains. Chlamydia trachomatis is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) both in the UK and globally, with approximately 100 million new cases worldwide each year. It is also the most common cause of infectious blindness, or trachoma, in the developing world. Relatively little is known about the evolution of the different strains of Chlamydia that are causing infection.

[Infection Control Today](#)

United Kingdom: Animal import bans "put UK drug research at risk"



14 March - Vital medical research is under threat in Britain because ferry companies and airlines are bowing to pressure from animal rights activists and refusing to carry animals destined for laboratory testing, scientists and drugmakers said on Wednesday. Researchers said all ferry companies operating routes into Britain had now banned the import of mice, rats and other animals, which are used in research labs to explore the potential of experimental new drugs. "Threats to the carriage of these animals will slow down the progress of essential and life-saving biomedical research," scientists from the Medical Research Council, the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, the Association of Medical Research Charities and others said. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

USNORTHCOM

Canadian hospitals that spend more get better results



13 March - Canada has long been a favored talking point for debates over the quality of America's health system, alternatively cast as either Eden or Gomorrah. A new paper adds a shade of gray into the understanding of Canadian hospitals — and the [ongoing debate](#) here about whether when it comes to medical spending, [less is more](#). The [paper published](#) in the *JAMA*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found Ontario hospitals that spent more on patient care had better outcomes, including lower mortality, fewer readmissions and fewer events related to heart attacks. At first glance, this conclusion would seem to contradict the world view of the [Dartmouth Atlas](#), which maintains that American hospitals that throw more resources at patients — more specialists, tests, procedures — don't get better results. The Obama administration is a fan of this philosophy, which it wove into parts of the federal health law, the Affordable Care Act. But the paper explains that Canadian hospitals have far fewer resources than do American ones. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Broader screening for hepatitis C would be cost effective, study suggests

14 March - Broader screening to identify people infected with hepatitis C virus (HCV) would likely be cost effective, according to a new report published in *Clinical Infectious Diseases* and available [online](#). Significantly reducing HCV-related mortality and morbidity, however, will require a coordinated effort that emphasizes not only increased testing but also linking

those infected with the treatment they need. The HCV epidemic peaked many years ago, but roughly 4 million U.S. residents still suffer the consequences of chronic hepatitis C. A growing proportion of those infected now has advanced disease, including cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer. Deaths from chronic infection have doubled over the last decade and are expected to more than double again by 2030. The current "risk factor-based approach to screening has failed to identify at least half of those infected, leading to a situation in which a quarter of those newly diagnosed already suffer from cirrhosis of the liver," said Dr. Phillip O. Coffin, who led a team of researchers, including Drs. John D. Scott, Matthew R. Golden, and Sean D. Sullivan, at the University of Washington in Seattle who estimated the cost-effectiveness and impact of HCV screening. [IDSA](#)

U.S.: CDC, More women need chlamydia screening

14 March - Too few young, sexually active women in the [United States](#) are getting screened for chlamydia, according to a new study by researchers at the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). The results show 38 percent of sexually active women ages 15 to 25 said they had been screened for [chlamydia](#) within the previous year. The CDC recommends annual screening for all sexually active women ages 25 and under. "This new research makes it clear that we are missing too many opportunities to protect young women from health consequences that can last a lifetime," said study researcher Dr. Kevin Fenton, director of the CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral [Hepatitis](#), STD and TB Prevention. "Annual [chlamydia screening](#) can protect young women's reproductive health now and safeguard it for the future," Fenton said. [Fox News](#)

U.S.: Health panel, pap tests needed only every 3 years

14 March - Women only need to get a Pap test once every three years to check for cervical cancer, and don't need to be screened until age 21 - even if they're sexually active earlier, according to new guidelines from a government-backed panel. The statement from the United States Preventive Services Task Force, released on Wednesday, aligns closely with guidelines from three U.S. cancer groups that were also announced on Wednesday. Once they hit 30, women also have the option of getting screened once every five years if they choose to do Pap tests together with human papillomavirus (HPV) testing every time, the committees agreed. "The bottom line is, we strongly recommend screening," said Dr. Virginia Moyer, chair of the USPSTF and a pediatrician at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital in Dallas. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Spring is here early and so are allergies



14 March - Mild winter temperatures in many parts of the US -- the fourth warmest winter since record-keeping began -- have triggered an unusually early release of pollen from trees, which bodes badly for the millions of people who suffer from allergic rhinitis, commonly known as hay fever. Allergists are predicting a longer, and more intense, allergy season than normal. Once people have been exposed to the early pollen, essentially priming the immune system to react to the allergens, there is little chance of relief even if temperatures

cool down again. This priming effect can bring on even more severe symptoms for allergy patients, especially those with asthma, says Neil Kao, an allergist in Greenville, N.C. [Fox News](#)

U.S.: Surveillance for norovirus outbreaks

12 March - Norovirus outbreaks occur throughout the year. But, over 80% of the outbreaks occur from November to April. Also, when there are new strains of norovirus, the number of outbreaks tends to increase periodically. This occurred in the winter of 2006 to 2007 with the Minerva strain. However, a new strain that appeared in 2009 (New Orleans) did not lead to more outbreaks (Figure 1). Most outbreaks are caused when norovirus is spread from infected people to others. But, the virus can also spread by consuming contaminated food or water and touching things that have the virus on them. People can get norovirus illness many times during their lifetime. Outbreaks can affect people of all ages and in a variety of settings (Figure 2). [CDC](#)

U.S.: Tickborne relapsing fever in a mother and newborn child — Colorado, 2011

16 March - [Tickborne relapsing fever (TBRF)] should be considered a potential diagnosis among febrile patients who reside in or have traveled to the western United States, especially those inhabiting rustic housing. Cases should be reported immediately to public health officials to facilitate identification of other potentially exposed persons and to evaluate and treat those persons for TBRF infection. Additionally, TBRF is a reportable disease in 12 western U.S. states. An environmental investigation should be undertaken to search for rodent nests. Reinfection and additional TBRF illnesses can occur in housing previously linked to TBRF cases. Remediation efforts should include rodent-proofing and treatment of structures with pesticides (particularly crack- and crevice-type) by pest control specialists to reduce risk for continued tick exposure. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

[top of page...](#)

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India allows copy of cancer drug

13 March - India's government has permitted a local company to manufacture a generic copy of a patented cancer drug to make it affordable to Indian patients. It allowed Natco Pharma to make and sell Nexavar, which will be available to patients for 8,800 rupees (\$176; £112) for a 120-tablet pack. Bayer, which holds the patent, charges 280,000 rupees for 120 tablets. India invoked a trade rule allowing generic production of a patented drug which was unaffordable. This is the first case in India of a company being granted "compulsory license" to manufacture a patented drug. Under the rule, Natco must pay 6% in royalties to

Bayer. "We are disappointed about this decision," Bayer spokeswoman Sabina Cusimano told the the Associated Press news agency. Ms Cusimano said the company was considering a legal challenge to the decision. "We will see if we can further defend our intellectual property rights in India." A spokesman for Natco Pharma said that the drug, used to treat kidney and liver cancer, was needed by about 8,800 cancer patients in India. "This is a victory for Indian patients and for India's generic manufacturers, which are under attack," said Madineedi Adinarayana, general manager of Natco Pharma. [BBC News](#)

Thailand: Rice pests multiply post-floods

12 March – [Heavy flooding](#) across parts of Thailand in 2011 has fuelled outbreaks of a rice pest that can decimate harvests, experts say. The pest, known as brown planthopper (BPH), transmits two viruses that hit yields as well as eating away at rice plants. "The floods have certainly made things worse," Kong Luen Heong, principal scientist for the Manila-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) told IRIN. "Moreover, they will impact [on] upcoming harvests as well." [IRIN](#)

[top of page...](#)

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Haiti: As cholera season bears down, vaccination program stalls



13 March - The vaccine — \$417,000 worth of it — is stacked high in refrigerated containers to protect it from the Haitian heat. Hundreds of health workers are trained and ready to give the vaccine. They're armed with programmed smartphones and tablet computers to keep track of who has been vaccinated and who needs a second dose. And 100,000 eager Haitians, from the teeming slums of Port-au-Prince to tiny hamlets in Haiti's rice bowl, have signed up to get the vaccine. But everything is on hold. [A long-planned project](#) to find out whether vaccination is feasible in the midst of an ongoing cholera outbreak in Haiti has been stymied — temporarily, its proponents insist — by the kind of glitch that bedevils many projects in Haiti, large and small. Vaccination was supposed to begin this week in two carefully selected target populations. [NPR](#)

Venezuela: Venezuelan hemorrhagic fever

13 March – The country is undergoing its 4th epidemic outbreak of Venezuelan hemorrhagic fever (VHF), caused by an endemic virus that was identified in 1989, so called because it is exclusive to Venezuela, specifically in the llanos [western savanna] states. "This is the 3rd most important epidemic outbreak, after those that occurred in 2002-2003 and in 1997-1998," explained Ana Carvajal, member of the Epidemiological Commission of the

Scientific Medical Societies Network of Venezuela (RSCMV by its initials in Spanish). According to the epidemiological bulletin of the Ministry of Health, in the period 2011-2012, 86 cases have been reported, 76 in 2011, and 10 in 2012." [ProMED-mail](#)

[top of page...](#)

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The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* is published by the Health Information Operations Program, Deputy Chief of Staff for Communication, United States Army Public Health Command.

