

4 January 2013

# 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.

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## Navy PSA: Bath Salts

The U.S. Navy has released a new informational video warning of the dangers of the synthetic amphetamine known as "bath salts."



## Stopping Norovirus in its Tracks: What Every Clinician Should Know

A CDC subject matter expert will discuss the burden of norovirus outbreaks, review diagnostics and surveillance tools, and share resources to promote the prevention and control of norovirus infections.

Date: January 17, 2013

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

Call Number:  
888-790-6180

Passcode: 1281914

[Webinar Link](#)

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### U.S. MILITARY

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## Military to subject Marines to random Breathalyzer tests in strict anti-drinking crackdown

26 December - The U.S. military next month plans to start subjecting Marines to random Breathalyzer tests, as part of its strictest anti-drinking policy to date. Even one drink could get a Marine referred for counseling. The initiative, which goes into effect Jan. 1, 2013, is part of a broader program aimed at stopping Marines from underage drinking and drinking while on duty. They will be required to take the tests twice a year... Under the Marine order, monthly reports will be kept by each unit and quarterly reports will be submitted to Marine Corps headquarters. It's up to the unit commander whether he or she wants to hand down

## Deployment Health Assessments for Soldiers and Civilians

Through a series of self assessments and one-on-one confidential conversations with a healthcare provider, the Deployment Health Assessment Program (DHAP) enables personnel to identify and receive care for deployment-related health conditions.

The Army DHAP continues to improve by:

- Promoting DA civilian compliance and tracking non-appropriated fund employees.
- Launching a new website that helps users navigate DHAP tools and resources.
- Scheduling each assessment within the required timelines, and asking leaders to help reduce the stigma associated with behavioral health issues.

additional punishment. Any Marine who tests positive at .01 percent or higher, under the policy, could be referred by a commander for "training, education and further screening" at a substance abuse center. If a Marine tests .04 percent or higher, he or she will be referred to medical personnel to determine whether they are fit for duty. [Fox News](#)

## One in 12 in military has clogged heart arteries

28 December - Just over one in 12 U.S. service members who died in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars had plaque buildup in the arteries around their hearts - an early sign of heart disease, according to a new study. None of them had been diagnosed with heart disease before deployment, researchers said. "This is a young, healthy, fit group," said the study's lead author, Dr. Bryant Webber, from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland. "These are people who are asymptomatic, they feel fine, they're deployed into combat," he told Reuters Health. "It just proves again the point that we know that this is a clinically silent disease, meaning people can go years without being diagnosed, having no signs or symptoms of the disease." [Reuters](#)

## Online program may help ID self-harm patterns

28 December - The Army is developing an online software program leaders hope will help commanding officers connect the dots between a soldier's history of high-risk behavior and any outward signs he might be considering self-harm. The Commander's Risk Reduction Dashboard, requested by the Army G-1's office and scheduled for a February release, will pull incident reports from multiple Army databases to create a profile commanders can consult when considering the best way to intervene with a soldier who might need help... The software looks for incident reports involving 14 high-risk behaviors. They include positive drug tests, crimes against persons or property, domestic disputes, vehicle or training accidents and other disciplinary issues, which the commander can narrow by searching within a specific time period. [Army Times](#)

## Outbreak of gastrointestinal illness during Operation *New Horizons* in Pisco, Peru, July 2012

November - In July 2012, the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit No. 6 investigated an outbreak of gastrointestinal illness characterized by diarrhea among U.S. service members participating in Operation *New Horizons* in Pisco, Peru. Overall, there were 25 cases of self-reported diarrheal illness among 101 respondents to a questionnaire (attack rate: 24.8%). Personnel who consumed food that was prepared at the two hotels where they were lodged were more likely to report diarrhea than those who did not eat at the hotels (40.9% [9/22] versus 20.3% [16/79]; RR=2.1; p=.047). The difference in diarrhea attack rates between lodgers at the two hotels was not statistically significant. Known or putative pathogens were identified in 72.7 percent (8/11) of samples tested... The investigation's findings suggested a food-borne etiology from hotel kitchens. Among all personnel, hand-washing hygiene was reinforced; however, food sources were not restricted. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

## 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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## Sailors who helped Japan after quake sue, claiming excessive radiation exposure

2 January - Eight former USS Ronald Reagan sailors have sued Japan's Tokyo Electric Power Co. for hundreds of millions of dollars, claiming they're suffering from radiation exposure because the company lied to the public and Navy. The aircraft carrier, which is wrapping up a \$218 million, yearlong maintenance period at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility, was the first U.S. ship to respond after the March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami. Its crews flew 300 sorties and delivered 350,000 pounds of supplies to isolated areas on the Japanese coast. Reactors at Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant melted down, releasing high levels of radiation, according to the lawsuit, filed Dec. 21 in U.S. District Court in San Diego. The company, owned by the Japanese government, knowingly put out false information about the true conditions to keep from delaying help to people living near the plant, the suit maintains. [Kitsap Sun](#)

## Targeting shoot house hazards

21 December - ...Soldiers conduct live-fire weapons and tactics training in buildings called shoot houses. These buildings are constructed to stop ammunition by impact in bullet traps or ballistic walls, but there is another danger to Soldiers in these buildings. The danger of exposure to lead while working or training in shoot houses has long been recognized. Emphasis for action was recently added by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, G-4, which issued an operations order to all installations reiterating the Army's requirement to follow the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's lead regulations. Good first steps to help reduce exposures include improving personal hygiene by using hand washing products made specifically to remove lead prior to eating and upon leaving the shoot house training area, avoiding dry sweeping when cleaning shoot houses, and laundering uniforms at work or separately from all other clothing. [Army.mil](#)

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### GLOBAL

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## Analysis: Entering the age of the \$1 million medicine

3 January - The Western world's first drug to fix faulty genes promises to transform the lives of patients with an ultra-rare disease that clogs their blood with fat. The only snag is the price. The gene therapy for lipoprotein lipase deficiency (LPLD), a hereditary disorder that raises the risk of potentially lethal inflammation of the pancreas, is likely to cost more than \$1 million per patient when it goes on sale in Europe this summer. Rare or so-called orphan diseases are winning unprecedented attention from drug developers. More than a quarter of the 39 new medicines approved in the United States last year were designated for such conditions... Until now, governments and insurance companies have largely accepted prices that can run into hundreds of thousands of dollars for products that treat orphan diseases.

As only a handful of patients need the treatment, the overall cost to health budgets is relatively small. However, healthcare providers are increasingly having to balance the acute needs of the few against the wider interests of society, within constrained budgets. Scrutiny of the sky-high prices charged for this wave of new drugs is growing. [Reuters](#)

## Hydrogen peroxide vapor kills superbugs dead

02 January - Infection control experts at the Johns Hopkins Hospital have found that a combination of robot-like devices that disperse a bleaching agent into the air and then detoxify the disinfecting chemical are highly effective at killing and preventing the spread of multiple-drug-resistant bacteria, or so-called hospital superbugs. A study report on the use of hydrogen peroxide vaporizers — first deployed in several Singapore hospitals during the 2002 outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, and later stocked by several U.S. government agencies in case of an anthrax attack — was published 1 January in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. [Homeland Security New Wire](#)

## Most countries offer the Pill over-the-counter

2 January - Unlike women in the U.S., Canada and much of Europe, most women in the world can access the birth control pill without a prescription, according to a new study. As medical organizations and other groups push to ease the prescription requirements for the Pill in the U.S. and elsewhere, "we can start to use this information to... get a sense of the safety of women having access to this method where no prescription is required," said Kari White, who studies birth control at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. The Pill is generally considered safe, said White, who was not involved in the new work, and some studies have shown that, without a doctor's input, women can accurately screen themselves for risk factors to steer away from using the Pill if it's not appropriate for them... In a survey of government health officials, pharmaceutical companies, family planning groups, medical providers and other experts in 147 countries Dr. Daniel Grossman, of Ibis Reproductive Health in Oakland, California, and his colleagues found that women in the U.S. and 44 other countries need a prescription to get birth control pills. [Reuters](#)

## People movement drives dengue virus transmission

2 January - In a two-year, finely detailed study of dengue transmission in Iquitos, Peru, a 13-member team led by Thomas Scott of the UC Davis Department of Entomology found that human movement—people going from house-to-house to visit their friends and relatives—is a key component to driving the virus transmission. "This finding has important implications for dengue prevention, challenging the appropriateness of current approaches to vector control," said lead author Steven Stoddard, a medical entomologist in the Scott lab and part of the team that included scientists from the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit; San Diego State University; University of Iowa; Tulane University, New Orleans; and Emory University, Atlanta, Ga. [Medical Xpress](#)

## The burden of disease links ecology to economic development and growth

28 December - A new study, published 27 December in *PLoS Biol*, finds that vector-borne and parasitic diseases have substantial effects on economic development across the globe, and are major drivers of differences in income between tropical and temperate countries. The burden of these diseases is, in turn, determined by underlying ecological factors: it is predicted to rise as biodiversity falls. A *PLoS* release notes that this has significant implications for the economics of health care policy in developing countries, and advances our understanding of how ecological conditions can affect economic growth. [Homeland Security News Wire](#)

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### INFLUENZA

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## Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

For the week ending 3 January 2013,

- Throughout the MHS, the proportion of outpatient visits due to Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) increased substantially for all regions in Week 52 (through 29 December 2012); such increase is higher than previous seasons for all regions except in PACOM, where the ILI proportion is similar to previous seasons.
- Influenza activity is at moderate levels across the overseas DoD laboratory surveillance network, except in Europe where the activity remains low; sites reported variable co-circulation of influenza A/H1, A/H3, and B.
- The influenza vaccination coverage for the DoD (Active Duty component only) is 93%. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

## CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 51 (16-22 December 2012), influenza activity increased in the U.S.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 6,234 specimens tested, 1,846 (29.6%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths: Eight influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported. Three were associated with influenza B viruses, 3 were associated with influenza A (H3) viruses, and 2 were associated with influenza A viruses for which the subtype was not determined.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like

illness (ILI) was 4.2%; above the national baseline of 2.2%. Nine of 10 regions reported ILI above region-specific baseline levels.

- Geographic Spread of Influenza: Thirty-one states reported widespread geographic influenza activity; 14 states reported regional activity. [FluView](#)

## DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

During week 50 (9 – 15 December 2012), 114 specimens were tested from 33 locations. There were 12 influenza B viruses and 47 influenza A viruses detected

- In Week 50, 51.8% of respiratory specimens collected and tested were positive for influenza.
- To date, 784 specimens have been tested from 59 locations of which 179 were positive for influenza A (two co-infections of A/H3 & B, 168 A/H3, and nine A(H1N1pdm09); and 26 were positive for influenza B. There have been 70 other respiratory viruses isolated (19 adenovirus, nine RSV, seven enterovirus, and 35 parainfluenza). [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

- During week 51 (17–23 December 2012), of the 17 countries reporting clinical data, two countries experienced medium intensity influenza activity, three countries reported geographically widespread influenza activity, and five additional countries reported increasing trends.
- The proportion of sentinel specimens positive for influenza continued to increase (27.3%), compared with 17.3% in week 50. Seventy per cent of influenza viruses were type A and 30% were type B. So far the detected viruses remain well-matched to the vaccine strain.
- Since week 40/2012, 10 hospitalised severe influenza cases have been reported by five countries. Sixty per cent of these infections were due to influenza A viruses.
- Despite surveillance limitations over the holiday period, there are clear indications that influenza transmission continues to rise in Europe, affecting a higher proportion of countries in week 51 compared with week 50, although the impact and characteristics of the epidemics are yet to be determined. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

## Flu spikes make holiday headlines

2 January - Flu is surging in several parts of the world, with pandemic 2009 H1N1 (pH1N1) outbreaks making headlines in Palestine, Norway, and Yemen, and rising numbers of illnesses, primarily from the H3N2 strain, reported in US states such as Minnesota and South Carolina, according to media reports. A Palestinian health official said a pH1N1 outbreak has killed 9 people and infected 225 more, according to a Dec 31 Associated Press (AP) report. Meanwhile, Norwegian officials said more patients are testing positive for the virus

in the country's major cities, including 84 at a hospital west of Oslo, a city that has activated personnel to respond to a possible major outbreak, said Xinhua, China's state news agency. In Yemen, five recent flu deaths prompted health officials to set up an operations center to address a potential outbreak, according to a report today from *The Gulf Today*, based in the United Arab Emirates. In the United States, where the H3N2 virus has been dominating, surging numbers of flu cases in South Carolina have led some clinics to call in more staff to handle the load, *The Greenville News* reported today. Jim Ellis, MD, medical director for MD 360 Convenient Care practices, said clinics in Greenville and Simpsonville are seeing about 90 flu patients a day. In Minnesota, a holiday spike in flu cases has led to concern that this season could be the worst in several years, the *Star Tribune* reported today. State health officials said 120 people were hospitalized for flu during the week ending Dec 22, nearly double the previous week, a pace that could rival the 2009 H1N1 pandemic months, according to the report. [CIDRAP](#)

## Google.org: Flu Trends

2 January – Estimates of flu activity based on certain search terms indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere ranges from high to intense in North America and Russia; from minimal to high in Europe; and from minimal to low in the southern hemisphere. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

## Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 29 December 2012:

- Influenza: NHRC Laboratory confirmed 3 A/H3 influenza cases among US military basic trainees.
- Adenovirus: Type 14 adenovirus cases continue at MCRD Parris Island, though FRI rates remain low.
- 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](#)

## USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week Ending 15 December 2012 (Week 50), influenza activity remains higher than the same time last year. NRMC and SRMC saw the highest proportion of positive Influenza A specimens in week 50.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 50 were 3% higher than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: Five hospitalized influenza cases were reported in DRSi in week 50. A total of 13 hospitalized cases have been reported during this influenza season.
- Acute Respiratory Disease at BCT sites: ARDS rates remain low at all Army BCT sites; despite high civilian rates in the southeast, no increased influenza activity has been noted in trainees.

- Viral specimens: During week 50, 388 of 1101 (35%) clinical specimens tested were positive for respiratory pathogens. Although influenza A accounted for 62% of positive specimens, a notable increase in influenza B-positive specimens was also seen. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

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## VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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### Canada: Salmonella outbreak in southwest Alberta “running rampant”

26 December - An outbreak of Salmonella is “running rampant” in the province, the Alberta Health Services (AHS) is warning. An area of rural southwestern Alberta has recorded more than 30 Salmonella cases since Dec. 13 in the outbreak health officials say is being spread by household contacts. In addition to AHS, Environmental Public Health, Health Canada First Nations, and Inuit Health are assisting in the investigation... The investigation to find out the root cause of the Salmonella outbreak continues, agency spokesmen say. Most cases are from rural areas, making locating its origin more difficult. [Food Safety News](#)

### China: Shanghai to enact strict new food safety law – Xinhua

26 December - Shanghai will introduce tough new laws to blacklist firms that flout food safety laws, the official Xinhua news agency reported, a significant move in China's consumer hub to end the food scandals that in recent years have killed children. Under the proposed law, firms caught using banned substances in food, producing food from inedible ingredients, or illegally making, selling or using banned food additives, will be banned from operating in Shanghai, Xinhua reported late on Wednesday quoting city officials. [Reuters](#)

### U.S.: Study of Listeria linked to cantaloupe in 2011 reveals new outbreak strain

31 December - After analyzing four of the five types of Listeria implicated in last year's deadly cantaloupe outbreak, scientists have discovered that a new outbreak strain was among those that contributed to the nearly 150 illnesses and 33 deaths caused by contaminated melons. The researchers, an international team of government and university scientists, also compared the strains involved in the 2011 outbreak to those that had caused other outbreaks or been collected from other food facilities. By doing this, they identified two new sets of “epidemic clones” – strains isolated in different times and places that appear to have common ancestors. Only five epidemic clones, or ECs, of Listeria had been identified prior to this study, which raises that number to seven. [Food Safety News](#)

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## WELLNESS

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### A series of poses for fitness, inside and out

3 January - ...The ancient art of yoga, a physical, spiritual and mental practice whose benefits have been touted as improving relaxation, has found an unlikely home: prisons. When many states have cut their wellness and education programs for inmates, citing cost and political pressures, some wardens looking for a low-cost, low-risk way for inmates to reflect on their crimes, improve their fitness and cope with the stress of overcrowded prison life are turning toward yoga. [New York Times](#)

### For those short on time, aerobic, not resistance, exercise is best bet for weight, fat loss

2 January - A new study led by North Carolina researchers has found that when it comes to weight- and fat loss, aerobic training is better than resistance training. The study is believed to be the largest randomized trial to directly compare changes in body composition induced by comparable amounts of time spent doing aerobic and resistance training, or both in combination, among previously inactive overweight or obese non-diabetic adults... The researchers found: The groups assigned to aerobic training and aerobic plus resistance training lost more weight than those that did resistance training only. In fact, those who did resistance training only actually gained weight due to an increase in lean body mass.

[EurekaAlert](#)

### More evidence for "obesity paradox"

1 January - In a review of almost 100 past studies covering nearly three million people, researchers found that being overweight or slightly obese was linked to about a 6 percent lower risk of dying, compared to people considered "normal weight." Being severely obese, however, was still tied to an almost 30 percent higher risk of death. The idea that being somewhat overweight could be linked to better health has been dubbed the obesity paradox, even though actual obesity is generally not associated with the apparent "benefit"... Some have argued that the pattern is a statistical one only because being thin, especially in old age, is often a sign or a result of serious illness - so the thinner people seem to have higher mortality. [Reuters](#)

### The secret to losing weight

2 January - ...If one does a quick Google search for "weight loss," more than 500,000 results appear, headlined with advertisements for the latest and greatest diets, all claiming to have the new secret to weight loss. So which do you choose? ...Would you believe that the BEST thing you could do to achieve your goals is to avoid all of these fads? Dawn Jackson-Blatner, a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association says, "Don't be fooled into thinking it is because of some magical food, pill or potion. Crazy, unbalanced diets cause weight loss because they are basically low-calorie diets." These diets limit your nutritional intake, can be unhealthy, and tend to fail in the long run. [Army Times](#)

## Weight-lifting may boost heart health in black men

3 January - A little weight training may go a long way toward helping improve the heart health of black men, new research suggests. Just six weeks of resistance exercise appears to have a positive impact on the blood levels of key indicators for inflammation, immune response and/or artery shape among black men. Such indicators, or "markers," are known to rise in conjunction with tissue damage, infection and stress. But after weight training, levels of two of the markers dropped in these patients, the researchers found. [US News and World Report](#)

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### USAFRICOM

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## Gambian leader says to build herbal AIDS-cure hospital

2 January - AIDS patients would be offered an herbal cure at a 1,111-bed hospital in Gambia that the president said on Tuesday he plans to build despite medical concerns the treatment is dangerous. President Yahya Jammeh said in 2007 he had found a remedy of boiled herbs to cure AIDS, stirring anger among Western medical experts who claimed he was giving false hope to the sick. "With this project coming to fruition, we intend to treat 10,000 HIV/AIDS patients every six months through natural medicine," Jammeh said in his New Year's address, adding that he expected the 1,111-bed hospital to open in 2015. The World Health Organisation and the United Nations have said Jammeh's HIV/AIDS treatment is alarming mainly because patients are required to cease their anti-retroviral drugs, making them more prone to infection. [Reuters](#)

## South Africa: Ex-miners seek silicosis class action vs. South African firms

28 December - A South African lawyer has moved to file a class action suit against more than 30 gold firms on behalf of 17,000 former miners who say they contracted the debilitating lung disease silicosis due to negligence in health and safety... The damages sought in what could be Africa's biggest ever class action suit have not been disclosed but could be huge at a time when South Africa's mining industry faces soaring power and wage costs as well as violent labor militancy. [Reuters](#)

## Sudan: Yellow fever

29 December - Experts claim that the outbreak of yellow fever currently affecting Sudan is the worst the world has experienced in the past 20 years. The disease has already claimed the lives of 168 people, while 800 suspected cases of the mosquito-spread disease have been reported across Darfur, since the outbreak began in October [2012]. Many more cases are likely not being reported to health authorities. ...The disease's occurrence has followed

nomadic migration routes across Darfur and has affected mainly rural areas, although there is a risk of it spreading to urban areas as well as the camps for internally displaced people, which house over 2 million people forced to flee their homes due to the conflict in Darfur.

[ProMED-mail](#)

## Swaziland: Illegal abortions endangering lives

14 November - Abortions are illegal in Swaziland and have resulted in criminal convictions, but in October 2012 more than 1,000 women were treated for abortion-related complications at a single clinic in the country's second city Manzini, says the Family Life Association of Swaziland (FLAS), a family planning organization. FLAS is calling for the legalization of abortion on the grounds of women's health. "In neighbouring South Africa, the legalization of abortion in concert with strong family planning efforts resulted in substantially fewer maternal deaths in a matter of a few years. Deaths from abortion complications decreased by 91 percent in South Africa from 1994 to 2001," FLAS spokesperson Mancoba Mabuza said. [IRIN](#)

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**USCENTCOM**

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## Afghanistan: Energy drinks take Afghanistan by storm



30 December - ... Energy drinks are sold everywhere in modern Afghanistan -- from street carts to corner shops to the finest restaurants. Even hard-line Taliban militants have been known to enjoy one of the many available concoctions to quench their thirst on the battlefield. But

energy drinks are definitely rattling some nerves, leading to calls for the drinks to be banned outright. Although many are certified as "Islamic-approved," they have come under fire from religious figures. Because of their stimulant properties, some liken them to alcoholic drinks, which are "haram," or forbidden under Islam. Others have raised eyebrows over the quality of some of the drinks being imported and the negative effects they could have on Afghans' health. In Afghanistan, there is little government regulation and no national standards for imported drinks, food, or medicines. That has meant the Afghan market has been flooded by outdated, low-quality energy drinks deemed unfit for sale in other countries. [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#)

## Afghanistan: Pertussis

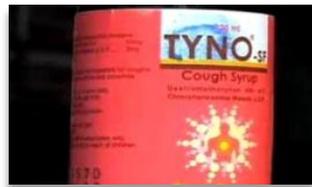
29 December - The provincial governor spokesman said 12 children suffering from whooping cough died in a snow-bound district in the northeastern province of Badakhshan. Spokesman Abdulmaroof Rasekh said ...the deaths took place in Shoorian village bordering Tajikistan, located in Nasi Darwaz district of the province. ...About 350 other children in the

area are suffering from the whooping cough epidemic. The village remains inaccessible from Afghanistan, so a health team was sent from Tajikistan 27 Dec 2012. The team is now treating the children and providing them nutritious food, Rasekh added. Heavy snow has blocked access to 12 districts in Badakhshan, and teams are unable to reach other areas with potential health emergencies. [ProMED-mail](#)

## Pakistan: Measles kills over 200 in Sindh Province

3 January - Measles has killed 210 children in Pakistan's Sindh Province over the past year, and health officials and experts say further deaths are likely. A World Health Organization (WHO) report handed to the Pakistan government this week, but not made public, says the death toll in 2012 was more than 300 nationwide. Reports of measles deaths have been increasing in the last quarter of 2012 with around 50 children in Sindh dying of the disease in December, particularly in the Kandhkot and Shikarpur districts. [IRIN](#)

## Pakistan: More than 30 die after taking cough syrup



30 December - In eastern Pakistan more than 30 people have been killed apparently after drinking cough mixture. Dozens more are being treated in hospital. It is thought the victims around Gujranwala may have drunk the medicine to get intoxicated. The authorities are looking for the suppliers of drug addicts. Pakistan saw a similar mass poisoning in Lahore in November. [Euronews](#)

## Pakistan: Polio-vaccination campaign resumes under tight security

3 January - Authorities in a district in Pakistan's troubled northwest have resumed a polio-vaccination campaign that had been halted after a wave of attacks last month on health workers involved in the program... Authorities in a district in Pakistan's troubled northwest have resumed a polio-vaccination campaign that had been halted after a wave of attacks last month on health workers involved in the program... UN agencies suspended the polio-vaccination campaign in December after nine health workers involved in the campaign were shot dead. The killings occurred in the southern port city of Karachi and in Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Five of those killed were women. Earlier this week, gunmen ambushed and shot dead six Pakistani women aid workers and a male doctor in Swabi district, northwest of the capital, Islamabad. Those killings were also believed to be linked to the recent killings of polio campaigners. The Taliban has said it did not carry out the attacks on the polio-vaccination workers. [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#)

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## United Kingdom: Typhoid vaccine shortage hits U.K.

28 December - A recall issued by a single pharmaceutical company has caused a shortage of vaccine against typhoid in the United Kingdom. The October recall has left Britain missing approximately 88 percent of its usual stock of the vaccine, prompting doctors to warn potential travelers to the developing world it may become increasingly difficult to find, according to the *Guardian*. Pharmaceutical company Sanofi Pasteur MSD was forced to recall 16 batches of the vaccine after some samples were found to be too weak. In addition to the current shortage, nearly 730,000 people vaccinated between January 2011 and October 2012 could only be partially protected against the illness, which is most common in South Asia and South East Asia. [Vaccine News Daily](#)

## United Kingdom: UK norovirus sickness cases reach over 1.1 million

2 January - More than 1.1 million people in Britain have succumbed to the norovirus winter vomiting disease so far this season, and health officials expect cases to jump higher after a Christmas and New Year dip. Britain's Health Protection Agency (HPA) said cases of highly contagious norovirus have risen earlier than expected this winter - a trend that has also been seen across Europe, Japan and other parts of the world. Health officials in the United States said last week that more than 400 people on two cruise ships had been taken ill with a sickness suspected of being due to the norovirus, and hospital wards and nursing care homes in Europe have been forced to close to try to stop infections spreading. [Reuters](#)

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## U.S.: Drowsy driving — 19 states and the District of Columbia, 2009–2010

4 January - According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 2.5% of fatal motor vehicle crashes (approximately 730 in 2009) and 2.0% of all crashes with nonfatal injuries (approximately 30,000 in 2009) involve drowsy driving.. Among 147,076 respondents in 19 states and the District of Columbia (DC),\* 4.2% reported having fallen asleep while driving at least one time during the previous 30 days. Reports of falling asleep while driving were more common among adults who reported usually sleeping  $\leq 6$  hours per day, snoring, or unintentionally falling asleep during the day compared with other adults who did not report these characteristics. Drivers should avoid driving while drowsy and learn the warning signs of drowsy driving. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## U.S.: FDA approves first med for multidrug-resistant TB

31 December - The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today announced its approval of Sirturo (bedaquiline), the first drug developed specifically to treat multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), saying it must be used in combination with other TB medications. The drug, developed by Janssen Therapeutics, Titusville, N.J., inhibits an enzyme that *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* uses to replicate and spread, the FDA said in a news release. Janssen officials said it is the first TB drug in 40 years that has a new mechanism of action. MDR-TB strains are those that resist isoniazid and rifampin, the two drugs most commonly used to treat TB patients, the FDA noted. [CIDRAP](#)

## U.S.: Gas drilling is called safe in New York

3 January - The state's Health Department found in an analysis it prepared early last year that the much-debated drilling technology known as hydrofracking could be conducted safely in New York... The eight-page analysis is a summary of previous research by the state and others, and concludes that fracking can be done safely. It delves into the potential impact of fracking on water resources, on naturally occurring radiological material found in the ground, on air emissions and on "potential socioeconomic and quality-of-life impacts." But it remains difficult to discern how much original research the state has done on potential health impacts, and environmentalists worry that the administration's lack of transparency is hiding a lack of rigor in its assessment of public health risks. [New York Times](#)

## U.S.: Thousands at risk from dirty syringes used in clinics, hospitals

02 January - U.S. health officials are still fighting a battle which was supposed to be over more than fifty years ago: dirty needles (the disposable syringe became widely available in the early 1960s); in the last eleven years, more than 150,000 patients nationwide were victims of unsafe injections, and two-thirds of those injections have been administered since 2008. [Homeland Security News Wire](#)

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### USPACOM

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## China: Tackling China's public health crisis



3 January - ...The statistics are startling. China has one-third of the world's smokers and suffers around one million tobacco-related deaths annually; the cardiovascular disease death rate is higher in China than in the United States; and close to one hundred million Chinese are believed to suffer from diabetes. Public anger over poor care, rising costs, and corruption in the health care system triggered more than 17,000

violent attacks against hospital doctors and health care workers in 2010. Moreover, horrific stories of tainted food and drugs have further undermined the Chinese people's faith in their government's capacity to provide an effective health care regime... Even president-elect Xi Jinping's pledge to bring higher levels of health care to the Chinese people, coupled with increased investment in the health care sector... will not be enough to make the kind of difference in the country's public health system that China's leaders desire and its people demand. [CNN](#)

## Fiji issues a two-week ban on kava to help curb typhoid outbreak

1 January - The Government of Fiji issued a 14-day ban this weekend on the consumption of kava in an attempt to slow down an outbreak of the bacterial disease, typhoid fever, particularly in the northwestern Ba district, according to a Fiji Times report Sunday. "Movement and gathering restricted by the Commissioner's office for Koroboya and surrounding settlements have started, while for Navala Village, the kava ban will start Sunday," Dr Mike Kama said. Kava is the root of the Piper methysticum plant, which is found in the Western Pacific and is used to make a drink that contains sedative and anesthetic properties... "Villagers have been urged to observe and practice good hygiene and sanitary practice and to also boil water before drinking, if water is untreated." [Global Dispatch](#)

## Japan: Norovirus

31 December - More than 100 people have been infected in an outbreak of norovirus infection at a Yokohama hospital [Kanagawa Prefecture] according to the municipal authorities on Mon 31 Dec 2012. A total of 112 people, including 82 patients and 30 members of staff at Yokohama Denentoshi Hospital contracted gastroenteritis caused by norovirus infection up to the morning of 31 Dec 2012, according to officials quoted by Japan's Kyodo News. This outbreak of disease probably caused the deaths of 4 seniors in the hospital on 31 Dec 2012, who died as a result of breathing problems [in addition to] the characteristic norovirus infection symptoms of vomiting and diarrhoea. [ProMED-mail](#)

## Malaysia: Melioidosis

31 December - Melioidosis had claimed one life in the state among the total of 40 cases reported this year [2012] which is a significant drop from last year which recorded 121 cases and 11 deaths. The figure was disclosed by state Health Department director Datu Dr Zulkifli Jantan. "There were no clusters as all were sporadic cases and unrelated," he said. Giving the breakdown by divisions, he added that Kapit had the highest number of melioidosis cases at 28, followed by Kuching (4), 2 each in Mukah and Miri, while Sibu, Sarikei and Samarahan had only one case," Dr Zulkifli told The Borneo Post in an e-mail reply yesterday [30 Dec 2012]. [ProMED-mail](#)

## Nepal: Tracking dollars to fight diarrhea in Nepal

3 January - Insufficient, fragmented and misdirected investment in the water and sanitation sector has hindered the fight against diarrhoea, leaving it one of Nepal's leading child killers

despite hundreds of millions of dollars having been invested, say practitioners. While health programming has helped reduce the severity and fatality of diarrhoea among children below the age of five, the percentage of children affected by diarrhoea in Nepal has not budged in almost a decade, remaining at a stubbornly high 14 percent. [IRIN](#)

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**USSOUTHCOM**

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## Brazilians fight dengue with bacteria



2 January - Dengue epidemics continue to break out in South America. Last year, more than 100,000 people contracted dengue fever in Rio de Janeiro alone... The biology professor [Luciano Moreira] has been experimenting with mosquitoes for 16 years. He is part of an international team of scientists experimenting with Wobachia bacteria. It took them four years to manage to inject mosquito eggs with these tiny parasites. Each insect reacts differently to the parasite, which can be found all over the world, Moreira says... In mosquitoes the bacteria prevents the transmission of dengue. "When we collect saliva from mosquitoes 14 days after they were infected, we don't find any virus there." The project, which comprises Australian, Brazilian and Vietnamese scientists, is co-financed by the Brazilian government. In Australia, first colonies of treated mosquitoes were released into the wild. Soon, Moreira says, his team will release mosquitoes into isolated areas in a controlled experiment. [Deutsche Welle](#)

## Dominica: Leptospirosis

28 December 2012 - Health officials in Dominica have warned of a new outbreak of leptospirosis on the island. They have confirmed 5 new cases of the disease and are encouraging residents to take action to avert its spread. The latest outbreak comes just one year after a similar outbreak was brought under control. ...Health officials have blamed the high incidence of rodents all over the island as the most likely reason for the spread.

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