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Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center



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NOTE:

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As a workaround, opening the Update using **Chrome** will enable the links.

We're sorry for the inconvenience.

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U.S. MILITARY

Court rules VA must pay disability benefits to ‘blue water’ Vietnam veterans

29 January- A federal court ruled Tuesday that the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot deny disability benefits to thousands of Vietnam veterans who claim exposure to cancer-causing chemical defoliants simply because those vets served in the waters off the country’s coastline, and not inland. The ruling marks a major victory for so-called “blue water” Navy veterans who have fought the department for years over the denials. VA officials have said the existing scientific evidence doesn’t justify the presumption of toxic exposure for the group and have strongly opposed legislative efforts to overturn their decision. But the 9-2 decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit overturns past court opinions backing up VA, saying that Congress never intended to exclude service members in the seas around Vietnam when they awarded presumptive benefits for certain illnesses related to Agent Orange exposure. [Military Times](#)

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Growing Air Force’s space medicine culture

23 January- As space continues to play an increasingly critical role in our nation’s defense, the need for the space medicine specialty grows. Medical Airmen within U.S. Air Force Space Command are making sure space operators are ready for future readiness requirements. “Space is no longer a neutral, docile domain,” said Air Force Col. Walter Matthews, AFSPC Command Surgeon. “It has become a contested environment where many state and non-state actors actively seek to disrupt U.S. space capability.” It is the role of AFSPC medics to ensure space operators are medically ready to complete their mission, and to optimize their performance, while also preparing for the future of space medicine. [Health.mil](#)

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Navy denies claims linked to contaminated water at Marine base

24 January- The U.S. Navy secretary says he is denying thousands of claims from veterans and their families who were exposed to contaminated drinking water decades ago at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. Secretary Richard Spencer says at least 4,400 claims totaling \$963 billion are being denied because there is no legal basis for paying them. He says it was a difficult decision but suggested that claimants can go to Capitol Hill to seek legislation providing restitution. [Navy Times](#)

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The cool days of autumn have passed and winter has arrived! Along with stockpiling firewood, winterizing the house, and staging snow shovels, this is the time to make sure your horse is ready for the change in temperature. Cold temperatures can negatively affect your horse's health if you are not prepared. The following are some important equine care tips for horse owners.



Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), Active Component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2000–2017

January 2019- During 2000–2017, a total of 19,069 active component service members received incident diagnoses of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), for a crude overall incidence rate of 77.7 cases per 100,000 person-years. The overall rate of incident NAFLD diagnoses among males was more than 1.5 times the rate among females. Overall incidence rates of NAFLD diagnoses increased with advancing age and were highest among service members aged 50 years or older. Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic service members had the highest overall incidence of NAFLD diagnoses compared to those in other race/ethnicity groups. The lowest overall incidence by race/ethnicity was observed among non-Hispanic black service members.

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Transformation underway across the Military Health System

29 January- The Military Health System is one of America's largest and most complex health-care delivery systems, and the world's preeminent military-medical enterprise. Saving lives on the battlefield and caring for 9.5 million beneficiaries in one of the nation's largest health-benefit plans, the Military Health System (MHS) is embarking on a new chapter, ushering unprecedented reform to military medicine. This transformation marks a new way of doing business – from military treatment facility (MTF) management, to electronic health record (EHR) employment, to TRICARE benefit enhancements – and we are working hard to provide medical readiness and health-care delivery that is more integrated and effective than ever before. [Health.mil](#)

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VA unveils proposed rules extending more private care to veterans

30 January- Nearly four times as many veterans could be eligible for private health care paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs under sweeping rules the agency proposed Wednesday. The rules, which will be open to public comment, would permit veterans to get private care if they had to wait more than 20 days or drive more than 30 minutes for a VA appointment. That would be a considerable expansion of eligibility standards, in which private options kick in for vets who have to wait 30 days or live 40 miles from a VA facility. The new rules would allow veterans who need urgent care to go to a private doctor without pre-authorization. [USA Today](#)

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GLOBAL

A partnership for transforming mental health globally

28 January- The large and increasing burden of mental and substance use disorders, its association with social disadvantage and decreased economic output, and the substantial treatment gaps across country-income levels, are propelling mental health into the global spotlight. The inclusion of targets related to mental health and wellbeing in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, as well as several national and global initiatives that formed during the past 5 years, signal an increasing momentum toward providing appropriate financing for global mental health. Drawing on the organisational and financial architecture of two successful global health scale-up efforts (the fight against HIV/AIDS and the improvement of maternal and child health) and the organisational models that have emerged to finance these and other global health initiatives, we propose a multi-sectoral and multi-organisational Partnership for Global Mental Health to serve two main functions.

[The Lancet](#)
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Blood test shows promise for early detection of severe lung-transplant rejection

23 January - Researchers have developed a simple blood test that can detect when a newly transplanted lung is being rejected by a patient, even when no outward signs of the rejection are evident. The test could make it possible for doctors to intervene faster to prevent or slow down so-called chronic rejection—which is severe, irreversible, and often deadly—in those first critical months after lung transplantation. Researchers believe this same test might also be useful for monitoring rejection in other types of organ transplants. The work was funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health. The study's findings were published Jan. 22 in *EBioMedicine*, a publication of *The Lancet*. "This test solves a long-standing problem in lung transplants: detection of hidden signs of rejection," said Hannah Valentine, M.D., co-leader of the study and lead investigator of the Laboratory of Organ Transplant Genomics in the Cardiovascular Branch at NHLBI. "We're very excited about its potential to save lives, especially in the wake of a critical shortage of donor organs." [NIH](#)

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Congo Ebola cases rise to 736 as problems noted in Katwa

28- January Over the weekend and through today, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) reported 15 more Ebola cases, including 5 earlier probable infections from Komanda, one of the areas where responders had faced security challenges. Also, the country's health ministry shed more light today on factors that have fueled a steep rise in cases in Katwa, which has become the current hot spot, and South Sudan today launched a campaign to

Cold Weather Injury Report December 2018

Forty-nine cold weather injuries (CWIs) were reported in December 2018, representing a 16% increase from the 41 CWIs reported in November 2018 and a 75% increase in the December average (n=29) from 2014-2017.



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immunize health workers and frontline responders with VSV-EBOV vaccine.

[CIDRAP News Scan](#)

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Cure for cancer? Israeli scientists claim to be on brink of development

30 January- A group of Israeli scientists say a cure for cancer is within reach, even optimistically predicting that it will be found within a year. But at least one expert in the U.S. has questioned the potential cure's legitimacy and said it's more likely just another claim on a list of "irresponsible and ultimately cruel false promises" for cancer patients. The company, Accelerated Evolution Biotechnologies Ltd. (AEBi), has described its treatment, MuTaTo, as comparable to a cancer antibiotic that uses a multipronged approach similar to the treatment given to HIV patients. The Israeli team told The Jerusalem Post that this treatment relies on a combination of several peptides for each cancer cell, reportedly eliminating the chances of evasion through mutation. [Fox News](#)

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Does the world need a new buzzword – 'syndemic' – to describe 3 big crises?

28 January- The Lancet Commission on Obesity has announced that the world is suffering from a "syndemic" of obesity, undernutrition and climate change. But ... what, exactly, is a syndemic? The term was first coined in the 1990s to describe the way different diseases interact within the human body. It's popped up in medical journals for the last two decades, often used to describe the biological interactions in patients who have AIDS and are substance abusers. Now, a new report by the Lancet Commission is broadening the definition big time, using it to make a connection between three of the biggest public health issues of the 21st century. ... The report emphasizes that the issues are indeed linked. Climate change results in severe droughts, which can lead to a scarcity of food as well as higher prices for available fruits and vegetables. That pushes consumers toward processed foods, which are cheaper — and can contribute to a lack of proper nutrition. And farming definitely has a carbon footprint. [NPR](#)

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Global neurosurgery's moment

25 January- Last weekend, the neurosurgery field gathered for the first Global Neurosurgery 2019: A Practical Symposium, hosted by the Weill Cornell Brain and Spine Center January 18-19. Attendees from 5 continents, including notable leaders within the field of neurosurgery, residents, students and keynote address speaker Walter Johnson, head of the WHO's Emergency and Essential Surgical Care Program, made it clear that global neurosurgery is becoming its own specialty. Speakers highlighted different initiatives in countries like Haiti, Tanzania, Vietnam, Uganda, and Cambodia. [Global Health Now](#)

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How dirty air could be affecting our gut health



29 January- The gut microbiome is made up of billions of bacteria, and scientists have been trying to understand exactly how they affect our health, contribute to our risk of contracting diseases and how they interact with the vital organs and systems in the body, including the brain. ... While there's no

clear answer yet of what a healthy gut microbiome looks like, it's widely accepted that environmental factors, such as diet, can alter it. But one emerging theory is that air pollution is also one of these factors, and it can play a part in triggering debilitating diseases – bad news for our guts, since air quality has been deteriorating in cities around the world.

[BBC News](#)

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Medicine needs a culture change to retain talented physicians

28 January- A talented young physician was concerned about her job at Michigan Medicine, where we both work. She thought she might have to leave the organization because she could not meet mandatory early-morning start times for procedures or outpatient visits. She was especially discouraged by colleagues who said her attitude reflected a lack of commitment and "was emblematic of her generation's fixation on lifestyle." Her problem did involve commitment — to her two children, who needed to be dropped off at school. She and her husband had decided to prioritize his medical career, and between his clinical and academic schedules, she was the glue that held their young family together. Ten years ago, as the product of an old and still-powerful medical culture, I probably would have sided with her colleagues. But her story hit home thanks to my daughter, who finished her residency in pediatrics in 2017. She's now in a practice alongside three other women pediatricians, all of whom work an average of 75 percent time. [STAT](#)

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Picturing health: a new face for leprosy

25 January- It is true that leprosy impairs and society disables. Leprosy is a neglected tropical disease and one of the most stigmatizing of diseases. Images of severely disabled patients with leprosy have helped to raise awareness, attract attention, and drive donations. But these pictures are not representative of the disease. Leprosy patients deserve a better image—leprosy needs a new face. Many people with leprosy will not develop severe disease if they access treatment early. Leprosy infection is curable with 6 or 12 month courses of two or three antibiotics depending on the type of leprosy that they develop, provided free to national leprosy programmes by WHO through the Novartis Foundation. [The Lancet](#)

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Research points to greater long-fingered bat

25 January- Scientists puzzling over how Ebola Zaire, the cause of West Africa's deadly outbreak, made it to region have found an important clue in a greater long-fingered bat likely infected with the strain, Science reported. It's too soon to say for sure, the researchers—part of a USAID-funded PREDICT project—cautioned. They did not isolate the virus in the bat, but they found about 1/5 of its genome. And, the virus could have multiple hosts. [Global Health Now](#)

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Study could help predict aneurysm risk for kids with Kawasaki disease

25 January-... A new study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) could improve the quality of life for children with Kawasaki disease at risk of developing coronary artery aneurysms. ... Dr. Michael Portman, a cardiologist at Seattle Children's Heart Center Kawasaki Disease Clinic and researcher at Seattle Children's Research Institute, hopes to find genetic biomarkers that will predict which patients will not respond to the standard treatment and thus have a higher risk of developing coronary artery problems. [Seattle Children's](#)

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When Lyme disease strikes an unborn child

25 January - Let's say, for the sake of argument, you plummet from a ski gondola. Or, equally bad, you contract a fatal illness from eating human brains. Your risk of experiencing such disasters is low. But these calamities, and many more, are nonetheless covered by the world list of illnesses and injury known as the International Classification of Diseases, or ICD, published by the World Health Organization (WHO). The document tells doctors what to look for, insurers what they might pay for, and health officials—by virtue of numbers—what needs attention. [Scientific American](#)

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INFLUENZA

AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 3:

-NORTHCOM: Influenza activity continued to decrease in some states, however Utah, Texas, and Connecticut had high activity.

-EUCOM: Influenza activity was minimal to low in EUCOM, with the exception of Turkey which continued to have high activity.

-PACOM: Influenza activity remained low in the Republic of Korea and Japan and minimal in Hawaii and Guam.

-CENTCOM: Influenza activity was ranged from minimal too high in CENTCOM locations with available data.

-AFRICOM: In Djibouti, influenza activity remained minimal. The percentage of outpatient visits due to ILI could not be calculated for week 03 due to a delay in receiving TMDS data.

-SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity remained minimal in Honduras and Cuba during week 03.

[DHA -Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch](#)

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APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 19 January 2019 (week 3): The number of positive respiratory specimens increased by 25% from surveillance week 2 to surveillance week 3; there were 331 positive specimens in week 2 and 415 in week 3. Of the positive specimens, influenza A accounted for 74% (308), followed by respiratory syncytial virus with 20% (84), and influenza B with 4% (16). Adenovirus and parainfluenza both accounted for 1% of the positive specimens. The number of influenza-like illness visits in week 3 among the Active Duty population decreased by 18% when compared to the previous week. Proper hand hygiene, in addition to urging troops to seek medical attention for influenza-like symptoms, should continue to be encouraged by leadership. [APHC](#)

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CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report

2018-2019 Influenza Season Week 3 ending January 19, 2019

-Viral Surveillance: The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza viruses in clinical laboratories increased. Influenza A viruses have predominated in the United States since the beginning of October. Influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 viruses have predominated in most areas of the country, however influenza A (H3) viruses have predominated in the southeastern United States (HHS Region 4).

-Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was above the system-specific epidemic threshold in the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Mortality Surveillance System.

-Influenza-associated Pediatric Deaths: Three influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported to CDC during week 3. [CDC](#)

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ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 3/2019 (14–20 January 2019)

-Influenza activity continued to increase in the European Region. Samples collected from individuals presenting with ILI or ARI to sentinel primary health care sites yielded an

influenza positivity rate of 48.8%.

-Influenza type A virus detections dominated with A (H1N1) pdm09 viruses being more prevalent than A (H3N2). Very few influenza B viruses were detected.

-Data from the 23 Member States and areas reporting to the EuroMOMO project indicated that generally all-cause mortality was at expected levels for this time of the year, but a few countries observed some excess mortality in elderly populations [European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

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NHRC: Operational Infectious Diseases - Weekly Surveillance Report

24 January - For Epi Week 2, 2019, febrile respiratory illness surveillance data among military recruit, DoD beneficiary, and U.S.-Mexico border (CDC-BIDS) populations indicated 128 positive samples out of 194 received.

-Military Recruits – 9 received

-DoD Beneficiaries – 147 received

-CDC Border Infectious Disease Surveillance – 38 received

[Naval Health Research Center](#)

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Swine flu outbreak kills 76 in India's desert state of Rajasthan

30 January - A swine flu outbreak in one of India's biggest tourist hubs, Rajasthan state in the west of the country, has killed 76 people this year, government officials said on Wednesday. Colder weather has worsened the seasonal outbreak of the H1N1 virus, with Rajasthan recording more than a third of all swine flu deaths in India, officials said. Rajasthan's cities, with their imposing fortresses and palaces, attract many overseas visitors, although officials said there no reports of any of them catching the virus. More than 8,700 people in Rajasthan have been screened for H1N1 this year, and 1,976 had tested positive by Tuesday, a state health department spokesman told Reuters. [Reuters](#)

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USAFSAM & DHA: DoD Global Respiratory Pathogen Surveillance Program

During 6-19 January 2019 (Surveillance Weeks 02 &03), a total of 668 specimens were collected and received from 68 locations with influenza-like illness (ILI). Results were finalized for 651 specimens from 68 locations. The influenza percent positive for Weeks 02 and 03 were approximately 22% and 24%, respectively. The influenza percent positive for the season is approximately 10.3%.

[U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine & Defense Health Agency](#)

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120,000 pounds, recalled: What's happening to America's chicken nuggets?

30 January - Tyson Foods, one of the United States' largest meat producers, recalled more than 36,000 pounds of chicken nuggets on Tuesday after pieces of rubber were found in the food. A day earlier, another large meat supplier, Perdue, recalled more than 16,000 pounds of chicken nuggets because of misbranding and undeclared allergens. The nuggets contain milk — a common allergen — but it was not clearly specified on the packaging, according to the United States Department of Agriculture. That followed a separate recall by Perdue this month involving more than 68,000 pounds of chicken nuggets that were contaminated with "extraneous materials, specifically wood," the U.S.D.A. said. [The New York Times top of page...](#)

Oskri Organics recalls all nut butters for possible *Listeria*

29 January- Oskri Organics Corporation of Lake Mills, Wisconsin is recalling all of their nut butters for possible *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination. No illness reports have been received to date in connection with this issue. The Oskri Organics Nut Butters were sold in New York, Michigan, California, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Illinois, Florida, Massachusetts, Texas, Arizona, Indiana, Idaho, Oregon, South Carolina, and Rhode Island. The nut butters were produced starting in January 2018. All nut butters with the best by dates of 6/20 and earlier are recalled. [Food Poisoning Bulletin top of page...](#)

Outbreak of *Salmonella* infections linked to pet hedgehogs

25 January

- Eleven people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium have been reported from eight states.
- One person has been hospitalized and no deaths have been reported.
- Epidemiologic and laboratory evidence indicate that contact with pet hedgehogs is the likely source of this outbreak.
- In interviews, 10 (91%) of 11 ill people reported contact with a hedgehog.
- A common supplier of hedgehogs in this outbreak has not been identified.
- The outbreak strain making people sick was identified in samples collected from three hedgehogs in two ill patients' homes in Minnesota. [CDC top of page...](#)

Thrive Market nut butters recalled for possible *Listeria*

28 January- Thrive Market is recalling all unexpired lots of their Thrive Market branded nut butters because they may be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria. One of their suppliers notified the company on January 21, 2018 that they were recalling all nut butters made since January 2018 because of a positive *Listeria monocytogenes* test. [Food Poisoning Bulletin](#)
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WELLNESS

Aerobic exercise may improve thinking skills in adults of all ages

30 January- Numerous studies have shown that aerobic exercise can improve cognition in seniors, but a small new study finds that vigorous workouts boost thinking skills in younger adults as well. After a six-month aerobic regimen, adults aged 20 to 67 showed improvements in executive function - the cognitive processes important for reasoning, planning and problem solving - and expanded gray matter in the brain region central to those functions. A comparison group that did only stretching and toning during the same period did not see the same benefits, the study team reports in *Neurology*. [Reuters](#)
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Being a night owl really can hurt your mental health

30 January- Ben Franklin may have had it partly right with his belief that "early to rise" makes one "healthy, wealthy and wise." Natural early risers may experience greater overall well-being and better mental health compared with night owls, a new study suggests. But what Franklin likely didn't know is that your chorotype, or tendency to sleep and rise at a particular time, is heavily dependent on your genes — and there might not be much you can do to change it. In the new study, published today (Jan. 29) in the journal *Nature Communications*, researchers identified 351 regions in the human genome associated with being an early bird, only 24 of which were known previously. Those people in the study with the most gene variants associated with early rising tended to go to sleep upward of a half hour sooner than others with fewer of these variants. [Live Science](#)
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E-cigarettes help more smokers quit than patches and gum, study finds

30 January- E-cigarettes are almost twice as effective at helping smokers quit as nicotine replacement treatments like patches, lozenges and gum, according to the results of a major clinical trial. The study, involving almost 900 smokers, found that 18 percent of e-cigarette

users were smoke-free after a year, compared to 9.9 percent who tried quitting using other products. ... Independent experts said the latest trial, funded by Britain's National Institute for Health Research and carried out by researchers from Queen Mary University of London, was robust and well-conducted. [Reuters](#)

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Fighting the stigma of mental illness through music

29 January- When Ronald Braunstein conducts an orchestra, there's no sign of his bipolar disorder. He's confident and happy. Music isn't his only medicine, but its healing power is potent. Scientific research has shown that music helps fight depression, lower blood pressure and reduce pain. The National Institutes of Health has a partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts called Sound Health: Music and the Mind, to expand on the links between music and mental health. It explores how listening to, performing or creating music involves brain circuitry that can be harnessed to improve health and well-being. [The New York Times](#)

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Mental health disorders common following mild head injury

30 January - A new study reveals that approximately 1 in 5 individuals may experience mental health symptoms up to six months after mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), suggesting the importance of follow-up care for these patients. Scientists also identified factors that may increase the risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or major depressive disorder following mild mTBI or concussion through analysis of the Transforming Research and Clinical Knowledge in Traumatic Brain Injury (TRACK-TBI) study cohort. [ScienceDaily](#)

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Study offers hint of hope for staving off dementia in some people

28 January- In dementia research, so many paths have led nowhere that any glimmer of optimism is noteworthy. So some experts are heralding the results of a large new study, which found that people with hypertension who received intensive treatment to lower their blood pressure were less likely than those receiving standard blood pressure treatment to develop minor memory and thinking problems that often progress to dementia. The study, published Monday in JAMA, is the first large, randomized clinical trial to find something that can help many older people reduce their risk of mild cognitive impairment — an early stage of faltering function and memory that is a frequent precursor to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. [The New York Times](#)

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Survey finds higher risk of stroke among e-cigarette users

30 January - The use of e-cigarettes is associated with an increased risk of heart attack, heart disease and stroke, according to research that is scheduled to be presented Feb. 6 at the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference in Honolulu. Concern around the health effects of e-cigarette use has grown in recent years, fueled by a surge in their popularity and a belief that they're safe alternatives to normal cigarettes. [NPR](#)
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USAFRICOM

Cape Verde: Cabo Verde leads the way in ending new HIV infections in children in West and Central Africa

28 January- ... With support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners, Cabo Verde is leading the way in West and Central Africa on the elimination of the HIV in children born to HIV-positive mothers. ... Many other countries in the region have yet to reach the same level of success as Cabo Verde. Fewer than half of all pregnant women living with HIV in West and Central (47%) had access to antiretroviral medicine to prevent transmission of the virus to their child, compared with almost 90% in East and Southern Africa. Although there has been some progress in antiretroviral therapy coverage for children in West and Central Africa, which rose from 18% in 2014 to 26% in 2017, the region still has the lowest coverage in the world. [WHO](#)
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Democratic Republic of Congo: Congo's Ebola epidemic is now its worst ever and still spreading

28 January- Political unrest over the Democratic Republic of Congo's recent election as well as continued guerrilla activity in the country's north east have hampered the response to an Ebola epidemic that has now killed 446 people out of 733 infected. The World Health Organisation said that protesters targeted dozens of clinics around disease hotspots like Beni and Butembo, where they are often seen as outposts of the central government. Election unrest also sent thousands of Congolese fleeing into neighbouring Uganda, as WHO warned that the virus might spread not only there, but also to Burundi, Rwanda, and South Sudan. WHO gave lower level warnings to five other African countries. [BMJ](#)
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Sudan: Hospitals attacked in Khartoum, Sudan

28 January- The Lancet recently highlighted the humanitarian crisis in Sudan (Jan 19, p 199). In the past weeks, tens of thousands of people across Sudan have been reported to have taken to the streets, calling for an end to President Omar al-Bashir's 30-year rule. According

to credible reports received by Amnesty International, security forces had killed 37 protestors by Dec 24, 2018. The violent crackdown escalated, with security forces reportedly attacking hospitals in Omdurman on Jan 9, 2019, and Bahri on Jan 13, 2019. Crossing the threshold of hospital grounds is a saddening precedent for a government response that appears to deliberately target health professionals through violence and detention.

[The Lancet](#)

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USCENTCOM

Iran: Iran facing the toughest economic situation in 40 years - president

30 January- Iran's president said on Wednesday the country was facing its toughest economic situation in 40 years, and the United States, not the government, was to blame. U.S. President Donald Trump last year pulled out of an international nuclear deal with Iran and re-imposed sanctions. Workers, including truck drivers, farmers and merchants, have since launched sporadic protests against economic hardships, which have occasionally led to confrontations with security forces. [Reuters](#)

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Oman/Saudi Arabia: Oman and Saudi Arabia report new MERS cases

29 January- Two Middle East countries reported new MERS-CoV cases today, including four in Oman and one in Saudi Arabia, according to separate health ministry announcements. Oman's health ministry didn't have many details about the cases, but said they are receiving care at a reference hospital, according to a statement translated and posted by Avian Flu Diary (AFD), an infectious disease news blog. The ministry said the new MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) cases raise Oman's total since 2013 to 18. The country reported its last case in March of 2018. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's health ministry in its epidemiological week 5 report, noted one more case, which involves a 38-year-old man from the city of Wadi Aldwasir in the south-central part of the country. The man is hospitalized, and an investigation found that he had contact with camels before he got sick. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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Saudi Arabia: Camel contact linked to new Saudi MERS case

30 January- Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health (MOH) reported another case of MERS-CoV today, this time in a man who had contact with camels. In an update to its epidemiologic week 5 report, the MOH said the patient was a 65-year-old man from Buraydah. He is hospitalized for his MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) infection. In

the World Health Organization's most recent MERS-CoV update, it said that, as of Dec 31, it had received reports of 2,279 MERS-CoV cases since 2012, at least 806 of them fatal. There have been at least 12 MERS cases reported this month in Saudi Arabia.

[CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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USEUCOM

Denmark: Danish health literacy campaign restores confidence in HPV vaccination

January 28- Danish health authorities have launched a media campaign to restore public confidence in response to negative media reports questioning the safety of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine and a related decline in the number of teenage girls getting it. The vaccine protects against cervical cancer. "We knew that we had to do something to turn the trend around," said Stine Ulendorf Jacobsen, a consultant with the Danish Health Authority. "We needed to raise public awareness by increasing health literacy so that people could make an informed medical choice about the vaccine." [WHO](#)

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United Kingdom: UK aims to cut antibiotics 15% in 5-year AMR plan

24 January- The UK government today released a new plan to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR) that aims to reduce drug-resistant infections, cut human and animal antibiotic use, and provide incentives to pharmaceutical companies for developing new antibiotics. The 5-year national action plan calls for a 10% reduction in the number of antibiotic-resistant infections in people by 2025, a 15% decrease in human antibiotic use by 2024, and a 25% decrease in the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals by 2020. To encourage development of new antibiotics, the government will test a new payment model that will reimburse pharmaceutical companies based on how valuable their drugs are to the National Health Service (NHS), rather than on the quantity of antibiotics sold. [CIDRAP News](#)

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United Kingdom: Up to 250 cardiac deaths at leading London hospital are to be reviewed

28 January- Heart surgery deaths at a leading London NHS trust, which had higher mortality rates than other cardiac centres over a four year period, are to be reviewed by an independent team of experts. The review of deaths at St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust follows an investigation last year by former NHS England deputy medical director Mike Bewick. Bewick's investigation found a "persistent toxic atmosphere" with surgeons "working in camps." The latest review, commissioned by NHS Improvement, will

be carried out by a team of consultant cardiac surgeons, cardiologists, and anaesthetists. They will look at deaths between April 2013 and March 2017, when the trust had statistically higher mortality rates than other cardiac surgery units, and between April 2017 and September 2017, when improvements were being introduced. [BMJ](#)
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USINDOPACOM

South Asia: Eliminating visceral leishmaniasis in South Asia - the road ahead

22 January- Devastating epidemics of visceral leishmaniasis, also known as kala-azar, have been recorded on the Indian subcontinent since the early 19th century, most commonly affecting poor people. The three most affected countries in South Asia are India, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Sporadic cases have been reported in Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Box 1 describes key features of kala-azar in South Asia. Efforts to control the disease have had limited impact. Until recently, these countries accounted for more than 50% of the global disease burden. Sustained elimination efforts have led to a steady decline in recent years. However, some transmission continues and outbreaks in non-immune populations remain likely. As the number of kala-azar cases becomes negligible, newer tools and strategies will be required for diagnosis, treatment, and vector control. [BMJ](#)
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Thailand: Thailand chikungunya cases top 1,000 in January

29 January - The chikungunya outbreak that began last year in southern Thailand continues into the first month of 2019 as country health officials report more than 1,000 cases through Jan. 28. According to the Bureau of Epidemiology, a total of 1075 cases were reported from 14 provinces during the first four weeks. No deaths have been reported. The increase in cases continues in the southern provinces with Phuket reporting a morbidity rate of (67.45 / 100,000 population) with the provinces of Songkla and Pattani also reported high rates of infection. [Outbreak News Today](#)
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U.S.: Characteristics of school-associated youth homicides — United States, 1994–2018

25 January- To understand trends and characteristics in school-associated homicides involving youths, data from CDC's School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System were analyzed for 393 single-victim incidents that occurred during July 1994–June 2016 and 38 multiple-victim incidents (resulting in 121 youth homicides) during July 1994–June 2018. School-associated homicides consistently represent <2% of all youth homicides in the United States. The overall 22-year trend for single-victim homicide rates did not change significantly. However, multiple-victim incidence rates increased significantly from July 2009 to June 2018. Many school-associated homicides, particularly single-victim incidents, are similar to youth homicides unrelated to schools, often involving male, racial/ethnic minority youth victims, and occurring in urban settings. The majority of both single-victim (62.8%) and multiple-victim (95.0%) homicides were from a firearm-related injury. A comprehensive approach to violence prevention is needed to reduce risk for violence on and off school grounds. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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U.S.: Deep brain stimulation may bring relief for people with severe epilepsy

28 January- A new treatment has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for people with certain forms of epilepsy who continue to experience seizures despite trying several different anti-epileptic medications. The treatment, called deep brain stimulation, or DBS, was first developed to help people with Parkinson's disease or tremor. Recent research has shown that it may also help people with epilepsy. [U.S News and World Report](#)

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U.S.: Measles outbreak prompts state of emergency in Washington

28 January- Washington has declared a state of emergency over a measles outbreak that's occurred primarily among unvaccinated children in a southwestern county. In Clark County, health officials have identified 34 confirmed cases of measles since Jan. 1. At least 30 patients had not been vaccinated against the highly contagious viral infection. The immunization status for four cases was not verified, and another nine cases are suspected. Twenty-four of the confirmed cases were among children 10 or younger, while just one case was among a patient older than 18. One child was hospitalized, and a Seattle man who had visited the county also contracted measles, local health officials said.

[U.S News and World Report](#)

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U.S.: New EPA rule may hinder health research

28 January- A new rule proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may make it almost impossible to uncover hazards such as dirty air, polluted water and environmental toxins, researchers say. The rule mandates that all underlying data from studies be made available to any and all researchers in the interests of transparency. But while transparency is generally a laudable goal, the rule may be used to throw out older studies for which data is no longer available and newer studies with data that can't be shared because of patient privacy issues, said Dr. Renee Salas, the lead author on an opinion piece published in the Annals of Internal Medicine. Salas, an emergency medicine physician at the Massachusetts General Hospital and a researcher with the Harvard Global Health Institute in Boston, told Reuters Health the new rule would be "turning the existing system on its head." [Reuters](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Brazil: Five Vale staff and contractors arrested after Brazil dam disaster

29 January- Three employees of Brazilian miner Vale SA (VALE3.SA) and two contractors were arrested on Tuesday, prosecutors said, as a criminal investigation began after a devastating dam rupture expected to leave a death toll of more than 300 people. Vale said it was cooperating with investigators in the case, which has enraged Brazilians and raised fresh questions about the company's commitment to safety after a similar dam burst just over three years ago at a nearby mine it jointly owned. Two of those arrested were Vale's senior managers at the Corrego do Feijao mine, where a tailings dam broke on Friday, hammering the nearby town of Brumadinho with a flood of mining waste - according to a court order seen by Reuters. The job of the third Vale employee was not immediately clear.

[Reuters](#)

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Brazil: PAHO: Possible yellow fever outbreak brewing in Brazil

28 January - In its most recent update on yellow fever in the Americas, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported 12 new cases of the disease in Brazil, possibly marking the beginning of the country's third wave of yellow fever activity in the past 2 years. Twelve confirmed cases, including 6 deaths, have been reported in Sao Paulo state since the beginning of January. Historically, yellow fever transmission is at its highest rates between December and May, PAHO said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

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Brazil: Rescue efforts resume for Brazil dam survivors as death toll reaches more than 50

28 January- Authorities in Brazil on Sunday resumed rescue efforts for potential survivors from a devastating dam collapse that has killed at least 58 people and left up to 300 others missing. Rescuers were forced to suspend their search earlier Sunday after alarms sounded near Brumadinho, Brazil signaling dangerously high water levels at a nearby dam within the same complex of the one that ruptured on Friday. Heavy rains are said to have put an additional strain on the second dam, and nearly 24,000 people have been ordered to evacuate in case it erupts. The dams are owned and operated by Brazil's largest iron ore company Vale SA. When the dam burst on Friday, it buried residents below in runoff mud and sand from the mine, and many who perished were workers at the mine itself. [Fox News top of page...](#)

Cuba: Tornado hits Havana; Cuban president says 3 dead, 174 hurt

28 January- A tornado and pounding rains smashed into the eastern part of Cuba's capital overnight, toppling trees, bending power poles and flinging shards of metal roofing through the air as the storm cut a path of destruction across eastern Havana. Power was cut too many areas and President Miguel Diaz-Canel said Monday at least three people were killed and 172 injured. Julio Menendez, a 33-year-old restaurant worker said Havana's 10 de Octubre borough "looks like a horror movie." "From one moment to the next, we heard a noise like an airplane falling out of the sky. The first thing I did was go hug my daughters," who are 9 and 12, he told The Associated Press. [NBC News top of page...](#)

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