10 March 2017

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

U.S. MILITARY

- Army develops life-saving device that warns medics before patients go into shock or bleed out
- Incidence rates of malignant melanoma in relation to years of military service … U.S. Armed Forces, 2001–2015
- VA expands mental health care for discharged veterans

GLOBAL

- Can salted doorknobs prevent superbug infections?
- Health of ticks may be key to health of humans
- New technique uses gold nanoparticles to rapidly detect Ebola
- NIH-funded study helps explain how zebrafish recover from blinding injuries
- Pipe-climbing bacteria might spread infection from hospital sinks
- Study: Half of the studies you read about in the news are wrong
- Surgery or drugs? Doctors’ pay may influence choice
- The cost of a polluted environment: 1.7 million child deaths a year, says WHO
- VA study highlights benefits of enhanced aspirin in preventing certain cancers
- Yellow fever — once again on the radar screen in the Americas
- ZIKA VIRUS
- Blood donor screening finds 13% Zika rate in Puerto Rico last year
- Zika case counts in the U.S.

INFLUENZA

- APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report
- ECDC: Flu News Europe
- Increase in human infections with avian influenza A(H7N9) Virus during the fifth epidemic — China, October 2016–February 2017
- NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update
- USAFSAM & DHA: DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program
- USDA has $80 million-$90 million to fight bird flu
- WHO: Influenza Update
VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- 2 dead in multi-state Listeria outbreak traced to Vulto cheese
- fMRI predicts if Fido is fit for service
- Four more states report soy nut butter E. coli infections
- The military kills 8,500 pigs and goats every year for medical training. A new bill would end that

WELLNESS

- Arthritis afflicts about 1 in 4 adults in the U.S., CDC report finds
- Is dieting passé? Study finds fewer overweight people try to lose weight
- Poor diet tied to nearly half of U.S. deaths from heart disease, stroke, diabetes
- Significant differences among occupational groups found in short sleep duration
- The grateful life may be a longer one
- Warm-ups, cool-downs, what works, what doesn’t

USAFRICOM

- Somalia says 110 dead in last 48 hours due to drought
- South Sudan: South Sudan will now charge $10,000 for an aid worker permit. Why?

USCENTCOM

- Afghanistan: Afghan fighting pressures hospitals, clinics - children’s rights group
- Afghanistan: ISIS militants disguised as doctors kill 38 in Kabul hospital attack
- Iraq: ISIS allegedly used chemical weapons in Mosul battle, injuring civilians
- Syria: Syrian children suffer staggering levels of trauma and distress – report

USEUCOM

- Europe/U.S.: Mutual Recognition promises new framework for pharmaceutical inspections for United States and European Union
- Israel marijuana: Users to face fine rather than criminal charge
- Romania: Measles outbreak in Romania - ECDC assesses the risk of spread to and sustained transmission in EU/EEA countries
- Romania: Romania’s healthcare exodus
- Switzerland: Measles outbreaks continue to plague Switzerland
- United Kingdom: Nestlé to remove 10% of sugar from all snacks in UK and Ireland by 2018

USNORTHCOM

- Canada: Dallaire testifies mefloquine drug impaired thought process in Rwanda
- U.S.: CDC wants better data to manage global communicable diseases
- U.S.: EPA chief unconvinced on CO2 link to global warming
- U.S.: EPA environmental justice leader resigns, amid White House plans to dismantle program
- U.S.: FDA has encouraged development, but needs to clarify the role of draft guidance and develop qualified infectious disease product guidance
- U.S.: Forbidding forecast for Lyme disease in the northeast
- U.S.: Obamacare repeal guts crucial public health funds
- U.S.: Patients demand the ‘right to try’ experimental drugs, but costs can be steep
- U.S.: Ten million lives saved by 1962 breakthrough, study says
- U.S.: U.S. skin disease burden expected to increase

USPACOM

- India: India abortion - police find 19 female foetuses
- India: Missing the signals - India’s anti-vaccination social media campaign
- Myanmar: ’Tuberculosis’ kills 14 in Myanmar’s remote north
USSOUTHCOM

- Brazil: WHO expands vaccination advice as yellow fever covers southeast Brazil state
- Ecuador: Lead’s desperate artisans

U.S. MILITARY

Army develops life-saving device that warns medics before patients go into shock or bleed out

4 March - Army researchers have developed a device that can tell when a wounded person is in danger of going into shock or dying from blood loss. The life-saving device fits on a fingertip, and it’s the first technology that gives early warning that a trauma patient is close to circulatory shock, the researchers say. The device, called the Compensatory Reserve Index, can save lives, including soldiers wounded on the battlefield, by showing medics when a patient is about to go into hemorrhagic shock, according to a release from the Military Health System. Hemorrhagic shock is the leading cause of death among trauma victims. Now, the CRI has been cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to be used in hospital settings and in treatment before a patient gets to the hospital. Army Times

Incidence rates of malignant melanoma in relation to years of military service ... U.S. Armed Forces, 2001–2015

February 2017 - During the 15-year surveillance period, there were 2,233 incident diagnoses of malignant melanoma among members of the active component of the U.S. military. ... Unadjusted incidence rates were highest in the fixed-wing pilot/crew group (2.45 per 10,000 p-yrs); lowest in the infantry, special operations, combat engineer group (0.77 per 10,000 p-yrs); and intermediate among healthcare providers (1.33 per 10,000 p-yrs) and all others (1.07 per 10,000 p-yrs). During the 15-year period, rates of malignant melanoma diagnoses among U.S. military members overall increased in an exponential fashion in relation to years of active service. However, this relationship varied across occupational groups. Most notably, after several years of service, rates of melanoma diagnoses increased relatively rapidly among pilots and the crews of fixed-wing aircraft (e.g., fighters, bombers, cargo/personnel transporters) and those in occupations inherently conducted outdoors (e.g., infantry, special operations, combat engineers). In contrast, melanoma diagnosis rates increased relatively slowly among healthcare providers and those in “other” military occupations. Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

VA expands mental health care for discharged veterans

8 March - The Department of Veterans Affairs will offer urgent mental health care beginning this summer to thousands of former service members with less-than-honorable discharges, part of its expanded initiative to stem stubbornly high rates of suicide. VA Secretary David
Fact Sheet: Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) & Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) in Drinking Water - Frequently Asked Questions for Consumers

Army-owned or operated drinking water systems are being sampled for PFOS and PFOA as part of the Army's ongoing effort to ensure good quality drinking water. The Army will inform consumers of sampling results and the actions taken to eliminate or reduce PFOS and PFOA in water systems if concentrations are detected above the LHA levels.

GLOBAL

Can salted doorknobs prevent superbug infections?

3 March - ... [One] option [to combat superbugs like Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus] is to coat those frequently fondled objects most likely to carry the bugs—doorknobs, bed rails, toilet handles—with a special anti-microbial surface, like copper. ... Brayden Whitlock, a graduate student at the University of Alberta, [designed] a pilot study that put salt and copper head to head. Coupon-sized strips of pure, compressed sodium chloride were covered in an MRSA culture, alongside similar strips of antimicrobial copper and stainless steel. Whitlock found that salt killed off the bug 20 to 30 times faster than the copper did, reducing MRSA levels by 85 percent after 20 seconds, and by 94 percent after a minute. ... [Other] researchers ... have found another potential medical use for salt: this time, as a coating on surgical masks. These masks are designed to trap viruses that wearers are carrying, like influenza, but need to be thrown away after a single use. ... Hyo-Jick Choi ... found that soaking the inner membrane of a common surgical mask in a solution of sodium chloride made the mask actually able to destroy the flu virus outright, which could allow for multiple uses. The Atlantic

Health of ticks may be key to health of humans

7 March - Doctors and researchers say preventing Lyme and other diseases would be preferable to trying to treat the conditions. [Joao] Pedra has some ideas about how scientific discoveries from his lab may eventually contribute to prevention efforts. One avenue could be a vaccine that protects people by producing an antibody in humans that is transferred to feasting ticks so they don’t feed well and fall off before they can pass on a germ. Another path could involve spraying, much like people do for mosquitoes. The spray would contain a compound that triggers over-activity in the ticks’ immune system, preventing them from harboring threatening microbes. ... There will be
challenges, however, for other researchers in translating the science into specific preventive measures, he said. One challenge is the tick's relatively long life cycle of two to three years, which makes manipulating and studying ticks more laborious compared with mosquitoes that live less than two months. The Baltimore Sun

New technique uses gold nanoparticles to rapidly detect Ebola

7 March - Researchers from the University at Albany have developed a test that can detect the presence of Ebola virus from a urine sample, much faster and more cost-effectively than current methods. The technique relies on biomarkers and gold nanoparticles, which if triggered turn the sample red to indicate infection, or purple to indicate no infection. Certain biomarkers for Ebola can be found in urine, and the gold nanoparticles are functionalized with DNA receptors that can bind to these Ebola biomarkers and trigger a chain reaction. It is a fairly simple method that allows for visual detection of Ebola in minutes. Overall, the team tested 25 urine samples containing four biomarkers associated with Ebola. The method produced accurate results in 24 samples, including each of the four subtypes of Ebola. Overall the process takes about four to five hours, which compared to current standard Ebola detection methods that can take several days for results, is a vast improvement. Bioscience Technology

NIH-funded study helps explain how zebrafish recover from blinding injuries

9 March - Researchers have discovered that in zebrafish, decreased levels of the neurotransmitter gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) cue the retina, the light-sensing tissue in the back of the eye, to produce stem cells. The finding sheds light on how the zebrafish regenerates its retina after injury and informs efforts to restore vision in people who are blind. "This work opens up new ideas for therapies for blinding diseases and has implications for the broader field of regenerative medicine," said Tom Greenwell, Ph.D. NIH

Pipe-climbing bacteria might spread infection from hospital sinks

1 March - Bacteria can thrive in p-traps, those "U bends" below sink drains that collect everything from errant earrings to lost toothpaste tube caps. That's a big problem, especially in hospitals where sinks have been linked to a slew of bacterial outbreaks. To determine exactly how the pathogens spread, scientists built a row of five sinks in a setup similar to that in many hospitals, with all of them draining into the same pipe. Scientists seeded p-traps with harmless, fluorescent bacteria to see where the microbes traveled. The bacteria flourished, shimmying up the pipe at a rate of about 2.5 centimeters per day to contaminate sink drain covers. There, faucet water splattered the...
Study: Half of the studies you read about in the news are wrong

3 March - ... A single study is rarely the final answer. And yet for science reporters, new studies are irresistible — a bold new finding makes a great headline. ... The problem isn’t necessarily that these studies are poorly designed (although some of them may be). The problem is that each headline gives an incomplete glimpse of how science works. One lab produces a result. Another lab — ideally — tries to replicate that result. Rinse and repeat. Eventually someone needs to do a meta-review of the totality of the evidence on the question to reach a conclusion. That meta-review, rather than any one study in isolation, is likely to get closer to the true answer. Yet as researchers in PLOS One recently found, journalists typically only cover those initial papers — and skip over writing about the clarifying meta-reviews that come later on. VOX

Surgery or drugs? Doctors’ pay may influence choice

8 March - Sometimes doctors choose to do surgery not because it is absolutely preferable to other treatments but because they get reimbursed for it, a new study suggests. Researchers looked at patients with a narrowed artery in the neck, a condition called carotid artery stenosis that can be treated with surgery or managed with medicine and lifestyle changes. The choice is often a judgment call. Some were treated in a fee-for-service system, which pays doctors for every procedure they do. Others were treated by doctors on salary at a military hospital. After adjusting for health, behavioral and socioeconomic variables, they found that over all, patients in the fee-for-service system were 63 percent more likely to have surgery than those in the salary system. The New York Times

The cost of a polluted environment: 1.7 million child deaths a year, says WHO

6 March - More than 1 in 4 deaths of children under 5 years of age are attributable to unhealthy environments. Every year, environmental risks – such as indoor and outdoor air pollution, second-hand smoke, unsafe water, lack of sanitation, and inadequate hygiene – take the lives of 1.7 million children under 5 years, say two new WHO reports. The first report, Inheriting a Sustainable World: Atlas on Children’s Health and the Environment reveals that a large portion of the most common causes of death among children aged 1 month to 5 years – diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia – are preventable by interventions known to reduce environmental risks, such as access to safe water and clean cooking fuels. ... Harmful exposures can start in the mother’s womb and increase the risk of premature birth. Additionally, when infants and pre-schoolers are exposed to indoor and outdoor air pollution and second-hand smoke they have an increased risk of pneumonia in childhood, and a lifelong increased risk of chronic respiratory diseases, such as asthma. WHO
VA study highlights benefits of enhanced aspirin in preventing certain cancers

1 March - Researchers know of aspirin’s benefits in preventing certain ailments — from cardiovascular disease to most recently colorectal cancer. But while the link to those two conditions was made, researchers also questioned how and if this “wonder drug” could work to ward off other types of cancers. … [N]ew studies verify their theory of cancer-prevention benefits based on aspirin’s effects on platelets—blood cells that form clots to stop bleeding. … “Along with clotting, platelets also play a role in forming new blood vessels,” Vijayan said. “That action is normally beneficial, such as when a new clot forms after a wound, and new vessels are needed to redirect blood flow. But the same action can help tumors grow. It’s this process that aspirin can interrupt.” Aerotech News

Yellow fever — once again on the radar screen in the Americas

8 March - … Over the past several weeks, a fifth arbovirus, yellow fever virus, has broken out in Brazil, with the majority of the infections occurring in rural areas of the country. These are referred to as sylvatic, or jungle, cases, since the typical transmission cycle occurs between forest mosquitoes and forest-dwelling nonhuman primates, with humans serving only as incidental hosts. In this ongoing outbreak, health authorities have reported 234 confirmed infections and 80 confirmed deaths as of February 2017. … The high number of cases is out of proportion to the number reported in a typical year in these areas. Although there is currently no evidence that human-to-human transmission through Aedes aegypti mosquitoes (urban transmission) has occurred, the outbreak is affecting areas in close proximity to major urban centers where yellow fever vaccine is not routinely administered. This proximity raises concern that, for the first time in decades, urban transmission of yellow fever will occur in Brazil. … Although it is highly unlikely that we will see yellow fever outbreaks in the continental United States, where mosquito density is low and risk of exposure is limited, it is possible that travel-related cases of yellow fever could occur, with brief periods of local transmission in warmer regions such as the Gulf Coast states, where A. aegypti mosquitoes are prevalent. The New England Journal of Medicine

ZIKA VIRUS

Blood donor screening finds 13% Zika rate in Puerto Rico last year

7 March - In a study that expands on an earlier analysis, screening of blood donations in Puerto Rico last spring and summer found a 13% incidence of Zika virus. … Assuming a 9.9-day duration of viremia (virus in the blood), the investigators extrapolated that 469,321 people on the island were infected during that period, for an estimated cumulative
incidence of 12.9% (range, 11.0% to 15.4%). They further estimated that 69,675 women of reproductive age were infected in that time span, or 9.7% of the total population of such women.

**CIDRAP News Scan** (first item)

### Zika case counts in the U.S.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. States</th>
<th>U.S. Territories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5,109 Zika virus disease cases reported</td>
<td>38,099 Zika virus disease cases reported</td>
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<tr>
<td>4,813 cases in travelers returning from affected areas</td>
<td>147 cases in travelers returning from affected areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>221 cases acquired through presumed local mosquito-borne transmission in Florida (N=215) and Texas (N=6)</td>
<td>37,952 cases acquired through presumed local mosquito-borne transmission</td>
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<tr>
<td>75 cases acquired through other routes, including sexual transmission (N=45), congenital infection (N=28), laboratory transmission (N=1), and person-to-person through an unknown route (N=1)</td>
<td>0 cases acquired through other routes*</td>
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*Sexually transmitted cases are not reported for US territories because with local transmission of Zika virus it is not possible to determine whether infection occurred due to mosquito-borne or sexual transmission.

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**INFLUENZA**

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

For the week ending 25 February 2017 (Week 8):

Overall, influenza activity and positive influenza A samples decreased in Army and civilian populations.

- **ILI Activity:** Army ILI (influenza-like illness) outpatient visits in week 8 were 13% higher than the same week last year.
- **Influenza cases:** Seven hospitalized influenza-associated cases were reported to APHC through DRSi in week 7 and all were non-AD beneficiaries.
- **Viral specimens:** During week 8, 980 of 2894 (34%) lab specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. Of 697 influenza A-positive specimens, RHC-A reported 402 (57.7%), followed by RHC-C (254, 36.4%), RHC-P (25, 3.6%), RHC-E (15, 2.2%), and CENTCOM (1, 0.1%). [APHC](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/)

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

During week 8 (February 19-25 2017), influenza activity remained elevated in the United
States.

- Viral Surveillance: The most frequently identified influenza virus subtype reported by public health laboratories during week 8 was influenza A (H3). The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories remained elevated.
- 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: Six influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported. CDC

ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 8/2017 (20–26 February 2017):

- Influenza activity across the region, while decreasing, remained above levels observed during the out of season period.
- The proportion of influenza virus detections among sentinel surveillance specimens decreased to 33% from 38% in the previous week.
- The great majority of detected and subtyped influenza viruses were A(H3N2) and while the proportion of type B viruses increased, as commonly seen in the second half of an influenza season, their numbers remained low.
- The number of hospitalized laboratory-confirmed influenza cases reported, primarily in people aged 65 years or older, continued to decrease.

European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO

Increase in human infections with avian influenza A(H7N9) Virus during the fifth epidemic — China, October 2016—February 2017

10 March - During March 2013–February 24, 2017, annual epidemics of avian influenza A(H7N9) in China resulted in 1,258 avian influenza A(H7N9) virus infections in humans being reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by the National Health and Family Planning Commission of China and other regional sources. During the first four epidemics, 88% of patients developed pneumonia, 68% were admitted to an intensive care unit, and 41% died. Candidate vaccine viruses (CVVs) were developed, and vaccine was manufactured based on representative viruses detected after the emergence of A(H7N9) virus in humans in 2013. During the ongoing fifth epidemic (beginning October 1, 2016), 460 human infections with A(H7N9) virus have been reported. ... Although the clinical characteristics and risk factors for human infections do not appear to have changed, the reported human infections during the fifth epidemic represent a significant increase compared with the first four epidemics. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Update

NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 2 January 2016:
- Influenza: Fourteen cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at Fort Jackson, NRTC Great Lakes, MCRD Parris Island, Lackland AFB, and CGTC Cape May. Naval Health Research Center

**USAFSAM & DHA: DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program**

During 12 - 25 February 2017 (Surveillance Weeks 7 & 8), a total of 570 specimens were collected from 49 locations. Results were finalized for 455 specimens from 44 locations. During Week 7, one influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 144 influenza A(H3N2) and 28 influenza B viruses were identified. During Week 8, three influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 91 influenza A(H3N2), one influenza A(H3N2) & Influenza B, and 14 influenza B viruses were identified. Approximately 50% of specimens tested positive for influenza during Week 7. Approximately 50% of specimens tested positive for influenza during Week 8. The influenza percent positive for the season is approximately 35.

**US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine & Defense Health Agency**

**USDA has $80 million-$90 million to fight bird flu**

9 March - The U.S. Department of Agriculture has $80 million to $90 million left over from the last major outbreak of bird flu to fight any new discoveries of the virus, the department’s chief veterinary officer said on Thursday. USDA must appeal to Congress if more money is needed to fight the disease, which was recently found in two U.S. states and also has been confirmed across Asia and in Europe. Any potential request for emergency funding is complicated as U.S. President Donald Trump’s choice for the position has not yet been confirmed by the Senate. Reuters

**WHO: Influenza Update**

6 March - Influenza activity in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere continued to be elevated in some countries. Influenza activity in many countries especially in East Asia and Europe appeared to have already peaked. Worldwide, influenza A(H3N2) virus was predominant. The majority of influenza viruses characterized so far were similar antigenically to the reference viruses contained in vaccines for use in the 2016-2017 northern hemisphere influenza season. Nearly all tested viruses collected recently for antiviral sensitivity were susceptible to the neuraminidase inhibitor antiviral medications. WHO
VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

2 dead in multi-state *Listeria* outbreak traced to Vulto cheese

9 March - Two people are dead and four others are confirmed sick with a strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* found in cheese made from unpasteurized raw milk. Vulto Creamery is recalling the cheese from retailers and distributors nationwide. It’s been more than five months since the first outbreak victim became sick on Sept. 1, 2016, but federal officials said Jos Vulto, owner of the Walton, NY, cheese operation initiated the recall as soon as he heard about the “cannot rule out” test results on his cheese. He began pulling cheese back from his customers March 3 and posted the public recall Tuesday. Since then, the Food and Drug Administration has confirmed *Listeria monocytogenes* in Vulto’s finished product. ... The most recent illness began on Jan. 22. [Food Safety News](https://www.foodsafetynews.com/)

fMRI predicts if Fido is fit for service

7 March - Using functional MRI to identify certain areas of brain activity helped improved predictions about which dogs were not suitable for service dog training, a small study found. ... [R]esearchers said they used fMRI on 43 service dogs prior to training -- 33 of which completed training and were matched with a person, and 10 of which were released for behavioral reasons. Dogs with a higher level of response in the amygdala, an area of the brain linked with excitability, were more likely to fail the service training program. This was a modest improvement over current prediction methods that involve evaluating the dog’s temperament. [MedPage Today](https://www.medpagetoday.com)

Four more states report soy nut butter *E. coli* infections

8 March - Four more people from four additional states became infected with Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* O157:H7 bacteria after consuming a certain brand of soy nut butter and granola, according to the CDC. Missouri, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin have all reported individuals becoming ill after consuming I.M. Healthy Brand SoyNut Butter -- bringing the total affected to 16. Two additional people have been hospitalized with hemolytic uremic syndrome. All five individuals with this type of kidney failure were children, a CDC investigation found. [MedPage Today](https://www.medpagetoday.com)

The military kills 8,500 pigs and goats every year for medical training. A new bill would end that

4 March - A bipartisan group of lawmakers is trying to stop the Defense Department from killing about 8,500 goats and pigs a year in medical training exercises designed to prepare troops for combat. Rep. Hank Johnson, D-Ga., and Rep. Tom Marino, R-Pa., introduced a bill on Tuesday that would require the military to use only “human-based methods” to train service members to treat injuries sustained on the battlefield and end the use of “live tissue
training,” in which troops stab or shoot pigs and goats to simulate the treatment of combat trauma, by Oct. 1, 2020. Johnson told the Washington Examiner he intends to raise the issue during debate on the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act and hopes to use the must-pass bill as a vehicle to ban live-tissue training. He said simulators offer better combat training than live animals, are more humane and are ultimately more cost-effective.

Washington Examiner

top of page...

WELLNESS

Arthritis afflicts about 1 in 4 adults in the U.S., CDC report finds

7 March - About one in four adults in the United States suffers from arthritis, according to a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vital Signs report published Tuesday. Of the 54 million people in the United States who have this debilitating condition, not all are elderly. About 60 percent of those with arthritis were between the ages of 18 and 64, that is, working age. Activity limitations from arthritis increased by 20 percent since 2002, the report found. Simple, everyday tasks, such as walking or lifting bags, are challenging for 24 million people affected by the condition in the United States. Even though movement is painful and difficult for people with arthritis, the report suggests that increased physical activity can mitigate arthritis symptoms by 40 percent. Despite the proven health benefits of physical activity for arthritis symptoms, about 1 in 3 adults with arthritis in the United States self-reports being physically inactive. The Washington Post

Is dieting passé? Study finds fewer overweight people try to lose weight

8 March - An increasing number of overweight Americans have lost the motivation to diet, according to a new study. ... Back in 1990, when researchers asked overweight Americans if they were trying to lose weight, 56 percent said yes. But this has changed. According to the latest data, just 49 percent say they’re trying. This may not seem like a big decline. But given that about 2 out of every 3 Americans are either overweight or obese, a decline of 7 percent means millions more people may have given up on dieting. “The trend is particularly evident among black women,” says study author Jian Zhang, an epidemiologist at Georgia Southern University — though the trend is seen across the population. ... “It’s a big concern,” study author Jian Zhang told us. Obesity increases the risk of a whole range of diseases, and there’s a concern that people who are overweight and obese may be ignoring or overlooking the risks. Not everyone is convinced that the dip in dieting is bad. “There’s a possible good news story in this,” says Janet Tomiyama, a psychologist at UCLA who studies eating behavior and weight stigma. ... Tomiyama says there are signs that the strong anti-fat
Poor diet tied to nearly half of U.S. deaths from heart disease, stroke, diabetes

7 March - Ensuring that diets include the right amount of certain foods may help the U.S. cut deaths from heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes by almost half, suggests a new study. About 45 percent of deaths from those causes in 2012 could be blamed on people eating too much or too little of 10 types of foods, researchers found. ... [Renata] Micha and colleagues identified 10 dietary components closely tied to heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes: sodium, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, unprocessed red meats, processed meats, polyunsaturated fats like soybean or corn oils, seafood omega-3 fats and sugar-sweetened beverages. Based on participants' food diaries, the researchers estimated that 318,656 of the 702,308 deaths from heart disease, stroke or type 2 diabetes were tied to people getting too much or too little of those 10 foods or dietary factors. Reuters

Significant differences among occupational groups found in short sleep duration

7 March - According to a new study published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, there are big differences in the amount of sleep people get depending on their occupation. "We found that overall prevalence of short sleep duration was 36.5 percent among the working adults who responded to the survey – but sleep duration varied widely by occupation," said study author Taylor Shockey, M.P.H. of CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). "Workers in occupations where alternative shiftwork is common, such as production, health care, and some transportation jobs, were more likely to have a higher adjusted prevalence of short sleep duration. Workers in other occupation groups, such as teachers, farmers, or pilots were the most likely to report getting enough sleep." Among the 22 major occupational groups that were researched, the prevalence of short sleep duration ranged from 42.9 percent for production workers to 31.3 percent among workers in the farming, fishing and forestry occupation group as well as the education, training and library occupation group. Other groups that were found to have a high percentage of short sleep durations include: health care support, health care practitioners and technical, food preparation and serving-related and protective service. Occupational Health & Safety

The grateful life may be a longer one

7 March - Can a positive attitude save your life? There’s not conclusive evidence, but hints are tantalizing enough that researchers ... are trying to find out. “A lot of the long-term research says if you’re an optimist, you’re more likely to have better health,” says Jeff Huffman. ... “Let’s say you’re not an optimist — can we turn you into one? Can we promote that and teach that in a durable way? [And] will it really work [to improve health]? It’s a big and open question.” The Cardiac Psychiatry Research Program combines exercises designed to promote positive psychology in cardiac and diabetes patients with techniques known to
change behavior, such as goal-setting, to encourage patients to adhere to medication regimens, improve their diets, and become more active. The best chance for a positive outlook to affect health is by promoting exercise, Huffman says. Harvard Gazette

Warm-ups, cool-downs, what works, what doesn’t

8 March - ... [S]cientists ... decided to systematically examine the effects of some of the world’s best-known warm-up programs, the FIFA 11 and its recent update, the FIFA 11+. ... [T]he original FIFA 11 warm-up is light and quick, lasting about 10 minutes and involving various kinds of jumping, shuffling and balancing exercises. The updated FIFA 11+ is more intense, requiring repeated sprints and exercises such as squats, leg lifts and vertical leaps. ... [T]he new study systematically pooled data from the best earlier studies. ... Those boys, girls, men and women who regularly completed the FIFA 11+ warm-up before training or games were about 40 percent less likely to sustain knee, ankle, hamstring, and hip or groin injuries during the season than athletes who warmed up in other ways. Interestingly, the easier FIFA 11 warm-up did not substantially reduce the incidence of subsequent injuries. The New York Times

top of page...

USAFRICOM

Somalia says 110 dead in last 48 hours due to drought

4 March - Some 110 people have died in southern Somalia in the last two days from famine and diarrhea resulting from a drought, the prime minister said on Saturday, as the area braces itself for widespread shortages of food. In February, United Nations children’s agency UNICEF said the drought in Somalia could lead to up to 270,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition this year. “It is a difficult situation for the pastoralists and their livestock. Some people have been hit by famine and diarrhea at the same time. In the last 48 hours 110 people died due to famine and diarrhea in Bay region,” Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire’s office said in a statement. Reuters

South Sudan: South Sudan will now charge $10,000 for an aid worker permit. Why?

7 March - Late last month, famine was declared in two counties of the civil-war torn East African country of South Sudan. With 100,000 people at risk for dying of starvation in that area alone and millions more on the brink of crisis-level food shortages throughout the country, South Sudanese President Salva Kiir promised “unimpeded access” to humanitarian aid organizations working there. A few days later the South Sudanese government hiked the
fee for work permits for foreign aid workers from $100 to $10,000. It's unclear whether the fee would apply only to newcomers or to those already there as well. Whatever the case, the amount is "absolutely unheard of globally," said Julien Schopp, director for Humanitarian Practice at InterAction, an alliance of 180 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working around the world. "No organization can afford this, and if NGOs go to their institutional donors to request that extra money, I'm pretty sure that [the donors] will be reluctant to pay this because they will see this to some extent as ransom." NPR

top of page...

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**Afghanistan: Afghan fighting pressures hospitals, clinics - children's rights group**

6 March - Hospitals and clinics in Afghanistan have increasingly been targeted by armed groups over the past two years, weakening an already degraded health system, a children's rights group said in a report issued on Monday. Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict said attacks had further restricted or even blocked medical care in a country where almost a third of the population of more than 30 million lacks access to basic health services. Armed groups had "forced temporary or permanent closure of medical facilities; damaged or destroyed medical facilities; looted medical supplies; stolen ambulances; threatened, intimidated, extorted, or detained medical personnel; and occupied medical facilities for military purposes," it said. The report ... said there were 119 conflict-related incidents targeting medical facilities and personnel last year, quoting a figure from the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan. Reuters

**Afghanistan: ISIS militants disguised as doctors kill 38 in Kabul hospital attack**

8 March - Islamic State has claimed responsibility for an attack on a Kabul military hospital by gunmen disguised as doctors who breached the facility and battled security forces for hours. More than 30 people died and dozens more were injured, the Afghan defence ministry said. The attack began with a suicide bombing at the rear of the hospital complex in the Afghan capital. Officials said at least three gunmen dressed as medical staff then entered the 400-bed Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan facility and took up positions on the upper floors. A second explosion was heard as Afghan special forces engaged the gunmen and "heavy fighting" ensued, a defence ministry spokesman said. The Guardian

**Iraq: ISIS allegedly used chemical weapons in Mosul battle, injuring civilians**

6 March - ISIS militants used chemical weapons during the battle for the city of Mosul last
week, injuring a number of civilians, according to a senior Iraqi security official. The official's assessment comes after the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), issued a statement last week saying that their workers had treated patients from Mosul who were suffering from symptoms consistent with exposure to a toxic chemical agent. Over a number of days last week, the ICRC said it treated 15 such patients. "It was certainly [the result of] a toxic chemical agent, because their symptoms were absolutely clear. People had blisters, they vomited. They had irritation in the eyes and coughed," she added. The World Health Organization said in a statement that "the use of chemical weapons is a war crime.” Both the WHO and ICRC said that the patients’ symptoms were consistent with exposure to a blistering agent. NBC News

Syria: Syrian children suffer staggering levels of trauma and distress – report

6 March - A Save the Children study says Syria’s mental health crisis has reached a tipping point, and that severe distress among children could cause life-long damage. The report says 5.8 million of children in Syria are in need of aid. Children in Syria are suffering from “toxic stress”, a severe form of psychological trauma that can cause life-long damage, according to a study that charts a rise in self-harm and suicide attempts among children as young as 12. ... More than 70% of children interviewed experienced common symptoms of “toxic stress” or post-traumatic stress disorder, such as bedwetting, the study found. Loss of speech, aggression and substance abuse are also commonplace. About 48% of adults reported seeing children who have lost the ability to speak or who have developed speech impediments since the war began. ... The majority of children interviewed showed signs of “severe emotional stress” and 78% of them felt grief and extreme sadness some of the time. The Guardian

Europe/U.S.: Mutual Recognition promises new framework for pharmaceutical inspections for United States and European Union

2 March - The United States and the European Union (EU) completed an exchange of letters to amend the Pharmaceutical Annex to the 1998 U.S.-EU Mutual Recognition Agreement. Under this agreement, U.S. and EU regulators will be able to utilize each other’s good manufacturing practice inspections of pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities. The
amended agreement represents the culmination of nearly three years of U.S. Food and Drug Administration and EU cooperation as part of the Mutual Reliance Initiative and will allow the FDA and EU drug inspectors to rely upon information from drug inspections conducted within each other’s borders. Ultimately, this will enable the FDA and EU to avoid the duplication of drug inspections, lower inspection costs and enable regulators to devote more resources to other parts of the world where there may be greater risk. FDA

Israel marijuana: Users to face fine rather than criminal charge

5 March - The Israeli government has taken steps to reduce the penalties for personal marijuana use. It backed plans to issue fines initially, and only resort to criminal charges for repeat offenders. Selling, buying and producing the drug will remain illegal and the move must still be ratified by parliament. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, almost 9% of Israelis use cannabis, though some experts believe the figure to be higher. The move follows recommendations by a committee set up to study the issue, and moves by a number of US states and European nations to decriminalise use of the drug. BBC News

Romania: Measles outbreak in Romania - ECDC assesses the risk of spread to and sustained transmission in EU/EEA countries

7 March - An outbreak of measles is ongoing in Romania. From the end of September 2016 to 17 February 2017 the Romanian National Institute of Public Health received reports of 3071 cases of measles. Cases continue to be reported despite ongoing response measures at national level through reinforced vaccination activities. ... Considering the size and geographical spread of the ongoing measles outbreak in Romania, the likelihood of exportation of measles cases is high. Between 1 February 2016 and 31 January 2017 ECDC received reports of 4484 cases of measles from 30 EU/EEA countries. ... Given that the vaccination coverage target [of 95%] is still to be reached in a number of EU/EEA countries the risk of spread and sustained transmission from areas where measles transmission is occurring in areas with susceptible populations is high. Eurosurveillance

Romania: Romania's healthcare exodus

9 March - ... Romania has bled out tens of thousands of doctors, nurses, dentists and pharmacists since joining the European Union a decade ago, lured abroad by what the country lacks: significantly higher pay, modern infrastructure and functional healthcare systems. France, Germany and Britain are among the most popular destinations. The consequences are dire. Romania is one of the EU states with the fewest doctors. Nearly a third of hospital positions are vacant and the health ministry estimates one in four Romanians has insufficient access to essential healthcare. ... This despite the fact that Romania is a leading EU state when it comes to the number of medical graduates. Reuters
Switzerland: Measles outbreaks continue to plague Switzerland

28 February - Switzerland is on track to see the most cases of measles in years in 2017. Vaccinations are on the rise, but the government recently admitted its eradication strategy has failed. In 1987, the Federal Health Office announced a vaccination strategy that it hoped would eradicate measles by the year 2000. Seventeen years after that deadline, the vaccination rate lies at 87%, below the 95% that the World Health Organization deems a target for eradication. Daniel Koch, head of the infectious disease unit at the Federal Health Office, told swissinfo.ch that “the number of people who are vaccinated has been consistently rising, but we’re not yet where we want to be”. Over the past several decades, Switzerland has had significant outbreaks roughly every four years. In a long-term outbreak between 2006 and 2009, Switzerland reached the highest measles rate in Europe with 4,371 registered cases. SWI

United Kingdom: Nestlé to remove 10% of sugar from all snacks in UK and Ireland by 2018

7 March - Nestlé, one of the world’s biggest chocolate manufacturers, will take 10% of the sugar out of its confectionery in the UK and Ireland by 2018. The corporation says the cut is from the levels existing in its sugary products in 2015 and will amount to about 7,500 tonnes. ... The announcement follows public concern over the quantity of sugar in the country’s diet and its contribution to rising obesity levels. The threat of a sugar levy on soft drinks has encouraged the reformulation of Irn Bru and Lucozade, which will escape the tax, although there have been no such moves by PepsiCo or Coca-Cola. ... Nestlé says it will not use artificial sweeteners in its confectionery. Instead it plans to replace sugar with higher quantities of existing ingredients or other, non-artificial ingredients and ensuring products are below a certain amount of calories. The Guardian

Canada: Dallaire testifies mefloquine drug impaired thought process in Rwanda

7 March - The Canadian army officer who led the UN peacekeeping mission during the Rwandan genocide says the antimalarial drug mefloquine affected his thought processes during his deployment but the military refused to let him stop taking it. Roméo Dallaire, the human rights activist, retired lieutenant-general and former senator who speaks openly about his struggles with post-traumatic stress syndrome, told the Commons veterans affairs
committee this week that mefloquine interferes with the ability to make quick decisions in military theatres. ... Soldiers who were given mefloquine in Somalia in the early 1990s as part of a poorly administered – and possibly illegal – clinical trial run by the Department of National Defence have told the veterans affairs committee that the medication caused lasting brain damage. ... Health Canada began in December to review available information about any causal link between the use of mefloquine and persistent neurological or psychiatric adverse events, their frequency and severity and whether any particular segment of the population is at increased risk. The Globe and Mail

U.S.: CDC wants better data to manage global communicable diseases

6 March - To better understand how diseases travel with international airline passengers, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is seeking advanced global aviation intelligence data and analytical tools to enhance the agency’s ability to analyze global aviation patterns. In a request for proposals posted Feb. 16, the CDC said it needs more advanced data and tools because air travel has become an increasingly common conduit for the spread of disease. “The need is immediate and ongoing for a single, secure, and web-based global aviation database and analytical application to support analysis of aviation global capacity and domestic and international passenger traffic (historical and future),” the RFP said. GCN

U.S.: EPA chief unconvinced on CO2 link to global warming

9 March - The new head of the Environmental Protection Agency said on Thursday he is not convinced that carbon dioxide from human activity is the main driver of climate change and said he wants Congress to weigh in on whether CO2 is a harmful pollutant that should be regulated. In an interview with CNBC, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said the Trump administration will make an announcement on fuel efficiency standards for cars "very soon," stressing that he and President Donald Trump believe current standards were rushed through. Pruitt, 48, is a climate change denier who sued the agency he now leads more than a dozen times as Oklahoma's attorney general. He said he was not convinced that carbon dioxide pollution from burning fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal is the main cause of climate change, a conclusion widely embraced by scientists. Reuters

U.S.: EPA environmental justice leader resigns, amid White House plans to dismantle program

9 March - A key environmental justice leader at the Environmental Protection Agency has resigned, saying that a recent budget proposal to defund such work would harm the people who most rely on the EPA. Mustafa Ali, a senior advisor and assistant associate administrator for environmental justice, has served more than two decades at the agency, working to ease the burden of air and water pollution in hundreds of poor, minority
communities nationwide. He helped found the EPA’s environmental justice office during the early 1990s and became a key adviser to agency administrators under Republican and Democratic presidents. … [T]he White House is seeking to close the agency’s Office of Environmental Justice. … [T]he new administration … “assumes any future EJ specific policy work can be transferred to the Office of Policy.” The Washington Post

U.S.: FDA has encouraged development, but needs to clarify the role of draft guidance and develop qualified infectious disease product guidance

January 2017 - Antibiotics have long played a key role in treating infections, but this role is threatened by growing resistance to existing antibiotics and the decline in the development of new drugs. … The [Generating Antibiotic Incentives Now (GAIN)] provisions created the [qualified infectious disease products (QIDP)] designation and its associated incentives to encourage the development of new drugs to treat serious or life-threatening infections. While it is too soon to tell if GAIN has stimulated the development of new drugs, GAO was asked to provide information on FDA’s efforts to implement GAIN. … GAO recommends that FDA clarify the role of draft guidance for and develop written guidance on the QIDP designation to help drug sponsors better understand the designation and its associated incentives. HHS said it would consider GAO’s first recommendation and agreed with the second. GAO believes the first recommendation should also be adopted. GAO

U.S.: Forbidding forecast for Lyme disease in the northeast

6 March - … [Rick] Keesing and [Felicia] Ostfeld, who have studied Lyme for more than 20 years, have come up with an early warning system for the disease. They can predict how many cases there will be a year in advance by looking at one key measurement: Count the mice the year before. The number of critters scampering around the forest in the summer correlates to the Lyme cases the following summer, they’ve reported. The explanation is simple: Mice are highly efficient transmitters of Lyme. They infect up to 95 percent of ticks that feed on them. Mice are responsible for infecting the majority of ticks carrying Lyme in the Northeast. And ticks love mice. "An individual mouse might have 50, 60, even 100 ticks covering its ears and face," Ostfeld says. So that mouse plague last year means there is going to be a Lyme plague this year. NPR

U.S.: Obamacare repeal guts crucial public health funds

8 March - The latest Republican health-care bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act would eliminate funds for fundamental public health programs, including for the prevention of bioterrorism and disease outbreaks, as well as money to provide immunizations and heart-disease screenings. As part of the ACA, or Obamacare, the Prevention and Public Health
Fund provides almost $1 billion annually to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Since 2010, the fund has been an increasingly important source of money for core CDC programs, today accounting for about 12 percent of the CDC’s total budget. The GOP bill would eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund starting in October of next year. No clear replacement has been proposed. The Washington Post

U.S.: Patients demand the 'right to try' experimental drugs, but costs can be steep

3 March - In the last three years, 33 U.S. states have passed laws aimed at helping dying people get easier access to experimental treatments that are still in the early stages of human testing. Supporters say these patients are just looking for the right to try these treatments. Such laws sound compassionate, but medical ethicists warn they pose worrisome risks to the health and finances of vulnerable patients. ... Dr. R. Adams Dudley, director of UCSF's Center for Healthcare Value [says,] "If we take the FDA out of it, how do we protect people from physicians or drug companies that will want to sell them things and will want to prey on their desperation?" ... Patients could spend huge amounts of money trying a drug that hasn’t been proved to work, he says. And the patient may also be giving up their hopes for a controlled, peaceful death at home. NPR

U.S.: Ten million lives saved by 1962 breakthrough, study says

3 March - Nearly 200 million cases of polio, measles, mumps, rubella, varicella, adenovirus, rabies and hepatitis A—and approximately 450,000 deaths from these diseases—were prevented in the U.S. alone between 1963 and 2015 by vaccination, researchers estimate. ... In 1963, vaccination against these infections became widespread, thanks to the development of a human cell strain that allowed vaccines to be produced safely. Globally, the vaccines developed from this strain and its derivatives prevented an estimated 4.5 billion cases of disease and saved more than 10 million lives. Author S. Jay Olshansky, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health ... used previously-published data on cases and deaths for each disease in the U.S. in 1960, before vaccines were available for these diseases. Medical Xpress

U.S.: U.S. skin disease burden expected to increase

3 March - More than one-fourth of Americans (27%) were seen by a physician for skin disease in 2013, and they averaged 1.6 skin diseases each, researchers found. Skin disease costs at least $75 billion to treat in a single year, and is an especially big problem in the 65-and-older population, which tends to get more skin diseases due to lifelong cumulative sun exposure and increasing susceptibility to bacterial, viral, and fungal diseases. "With the projected increase in the age group 65 years and older in the U.S. population, combined with the increased costs of currently in-use and newly developed dermatologic treatment options, the economic burden of skin disease will continue to grow," the investigators wrote. MedPage Today
India: India abortion - police find 19 female foetuses

6 March - Police in the western Indian state of Maharashtra have found 19 aborted female foetuses near a hospital. Senior police officials in Sangli district said the remains were "buried with the intention of disposing them". The police told the BBC that they found the foetuses while they were investigating the death of a woman who had undergone an illegal abortion. Activists say the incident proves yet again that female foeticide is rampant in India despite awareness campaigns. The police said that the woman had died in a "botched abortion", and they were looking for the foetus near a local hospital when they made the grisly discovery. "It appears to be an abortion racket. We have arrested the husband of the woman, and have launched a manhunt for the doctor who has gone missing," Dattatray Shinde, superintendent of police, told the BBC. BBC News

India: Missing the signals - India’s anti-vaccination social media campaign

7 March - ... India recently launched a one-month campaign to vaccinate over 35 million 9-month to 15-year old children with a measles-rubella vaccine across five states. The campaign marked the start of a two-year initiative aiming to vaccinate over 400 million children across India – part of a larger global effort to eliminate measles and rubella. By the end of the first month of the campaign, it became clear that it was struggling to meet its goal. A different kind of campaign was circulating on WhatsApp and Facebook – fuelling a mix of conspiracy theories, safety concerns, and questioning around why the vaccine and the campaign were needed. What's more, the rumours were taking hold in the wealthier southern states with generally the best education and health indicators in the country.

The Vaccine Confidence Project

Myanmar: 'Tuberculosis' kills 14 in Myanmar’s remote north

9 March - At least 14 people have died from pulmonary tuberculosis in a remote and impoverished region in Myanmar’s north this year, according to officials Thursday. The illness, characterized by a persistent cough, has hit two villages in Lahe Township of the mountainous Naga region, located around 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) from Myanmar’s largest city Yangon. Maung Kal, a lawmaker representing the area, told Anadolu Agency on Thursday that 14 middle-aged people -- including six women -- have succumbed to the disease over the past two months. ... According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, more than 150,000 people suffer from tuberculosis in Myanmar, which is currently included in a list of 30 countries recognized as high-burden with the infectious respiratory disease. Anadolu Agency
Brazil: WHO expands vaccination advice as yellow fever covers southeast Brazil state

7 March - The entire Brazilian state of Espirito Santo is now considered at risk for yellow fever transmission, the World Health Organization says, raising concerns the deadly virus could spread to the nation’s biggest cities. An ongoing yellow fever outbreak has so far been limited to rural areas ... [b]ut there are growing concerns the virus could spread to urban centers like Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Belo Horizonte and Vitoria - areas where tens of millions live. Reuters

Ecuador: Lead's desperate artisans

Spring 2017 - ... Lead has been used in ceramic glazes for thousands of years for its beautiful and strong finish—but more importantly—because it enables the glaze to melt at a lower temperature, facilitating the use of backyard, low-fire kilns. In La Victoria, to get the lead for these glazes, artisans turned to the lead plates from car batteries, manually removing them and melting them down in their kilns. This process aerosolized the lead, enabling it to be inhaled by people and distributed across the environment, widely contaminating soil, foods, objects and homes. ... [Edgar] Neto tells me that environmental health inspections should be done in La Victoria every three months, but there are no police to enforce the environmental laws. Although no one in La Victoria tells stories of fines levied for crimes against the environment, the social structure within the political and artisan associations here is strong, and much of the lead use among artisans has changed. ... While excessive exposure and acute lead toxicity may have abated, lead’s potential for health problems continues—in the form of chronic exposure. Hopkins Bloomberg Public Health
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