10 November 2017

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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

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Army offers medical help for veterans injured in chem-bio agent tests

6 November - The U.S. Army is notifying veterans that they may be eligible to receive medical care if they participated in chemical or biological substance testing from 1942 to 1975. The service must provide medical care to veterans who volunteered to contribute to the advancement of the U.S. biological and chemical programs, according to a Nov. 6 Army Medical Command press release. The Government Accountability Office found that the U.S. military conducted three secret military research projects between 1942 and 1975, according to a March 9, 1993, GAO report. Care will be provided on a space-available basis for a specific period of time as described in the authorization letter, and is supplemental to the comprehensive medical care a plaintiff is entitled to receive through the VA based on their status as a veteran, according to the release. Military.com

College of Allied Health Sciences awards first degree

19 October - Army Staff Sergeant Robert Eccles, 38, from Holladay, Utah, is the first recipient of an undergraduate degree awarded by the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU). Eccles, who serves as a medical laboratory technology instructor at the DoD's joint Medical Education and Training Campus (METC) in San Antonio, Texas, received the Associate of Science degree in Health Sciences from USU’s new College of Allied Health Sciences (CAHS) in a ceremony at the Army Medical Department Museum on Oct. 11, 2017. DC Military.com

New Wounded Warrior Project survey shows PTSD as biggest health problem for veterans

6 November - … [A] new survey from the Wounded Warrior Project shows PTSD is a growing problem. 77% of veterans surveyed say PTSD is their main health challenge, the number rose slightly from 76 percent compared to last year. The survey shows obesity among veterans has risen to 87% this year from 86 % last year. Rob says injuries contribute to that number. “The injuries, in some cases, prevent them from being able to exercise as much as they did in the military.” Louis says. The survey doesn’t show all bad numbers for veterans. The unemployment rate for non-active duty military has gone down to 13% from 16% and 1 in 3 have earned their bachelor’s degree or better. One good number the survey shows is that more veterans are receiving VA benefits. WOKV

Poll: More than 90 percent of vets support medical marijuana research

3 November - More than 90 percent of veterans support expanding research into medical marijuana and over 80 percent back allowing federal doctors to prescribe it to veterans,
Hazardous Waste Identification

This Technical Information Paper provides an introduction on hazardous waste (HW) identification for U.S. Army Medical Command research and medical treatment facilities. Not characterizing or incorrectly characterizing HW may result in monetary fines by state or federal regulators.

Report: Full cost of U.S. wars overseas approaching $6 trillion

7 November - Overseas combat operations since 2001 have cost the United States an estimated $4.3 trillion so far, and trillions more in veterans benefits spending in years to come, according to the latest analysis from the Costs of War project. Veterans spending has increased by almost $300 billion so far as a result of those conflicts, and future spending on those benefits over the next four decades is estimated to top $1 trillion more.

Military Times

Unprecedented’ Pentagon health committee could undermine FDA

6 November - The Defense Department — and not FDA — would have the power to approve drugs and medical devices under the defense policy bill that’s being hammered out by a conference committee, alarming congressional staff and Health and Human Services officials who say it would undermine medical safety and potentially put soldiers at risk. Section 732 of the Senate’s version of the National Defense Authorization Act creates a new regulatory structure that would allow the Pentagon to sign off on unapproved devices and drugs for emergency use on military personnel and others in harm’s way. The language states that the Defense Department would be able to approve “emergency uses for medical products to reduce deaths and severity of injuries caused by agents of war.” For instance, the Defense Department could approve the use of freeze-dried plasma, which the department has repeatedly said can save the lives of military personnel who have suffered blood loss on the battlefield. The product is still awaiting full FDA approval, which isn’t expected until 2020.

Politico

Update: Cold weather injuries, active and reserve components, U.S. Armed Forces, July 2012–June 2017

October 2017 - From July 2016 through June 2017, a total of 387 members of the active (n=328) and reserve (n=59) components had at least one medical encounter with a primary diagnosis of cold injury. Among active component service members, the total number of cold injuries in the 2016–2017 cold season was the lowest since 1999 and the overall incidence rate was lower than in any of the previous four cold seasons. Frostbite was the most common type of cold injury. During the five cold seasons in the surveillance period (2012–2017), rates tended to be higher among service members who were in the youngest age groups, female, non-Hispanic black, or in the Army. The numbers of cold injuries
associated with overseas deployments have fallen precipitously in the past three cold seasons and included just 10 cases in the most recent year.

Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

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GLOBAL

Alternatives to opioids for pain relief

8 November - A combination of Tylenol and Advil worked just as well as opioids for relief of pain in the emergency room, a randomized trial has found. Researchers studied 416 men and women who arrived in the E.R. with moderate to severe pain in their arms or legs from sprains, strains, fractures or other injuries. They randomly assigned them to an oral dose of acetaminophen (Tylenol) with either ibuprofen (Advil) or the opioids oxycodone, hydrocodone or codeine. Two hours later, they questioned them using an 11-point pain scale. The average score was 8.7 before taking medicine. That score decreased 4.3 points with ibuprofen and Tylenol, 4.4 with oxycodone and Tylenol, 3.5 with hydrocodone and Tylenol, and 3.9 with codeine and Tylenol. In other words, there was no significant difference, either statistically or clinically, among any of the four regimens.

The New York Times

Cellphone-based microscope leads to possible strategy for treating river blindness

8 November - River blindness, or onchocerciasis, is a disease caused by a parasitic worm found primarily in Africa. ... Mass distribution of ivermectin is currently used to treat onchocerciasis. However, this treatment can be fatal when a person has high blood levels of another filarial worm, Loa loa. ... [Scientists] describe how a cell phone-based videomicroscope can provide fast and effective testing for L. loa parasites in the blood, allowing these individuals to be protected from the adverse effects of ivermectin. NIH

Daytime wounds 'heal more quickly'

9 November - Wounds heal more quickly if they occur during the day rather than after dark, a study suggests. It found burns sustained at night took an average of 28 days to heal, but just 17 for those that happened in daytime. The team, at the UK's MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, said they were astounded by the difference they saw in 118 burns patients they studied. The effect was explained by the way body clock ticks inside nearly every human cell across a 24-hour cycle. ... Detailed lab work showed skin cells called fibroblasts were changing their abilities in a 24-hour pattern. Fibroblasts are the body's first responders, rushing to the site of injury to close a wound. During the day they are primed to react, but they lose this ability at night. BBC News
APHC Playing Cards

The popular APHC playing cards have been updated and are now available from the APHC Health Information Products eCatalog. Each card in the deck addresses a different deployment health issue.

From Brussels to Arkansas, a tough week for Monsanto
9 November - Opposition from France and Italy doomed a European Union vote on Thursday to reauthorize the world’s most popular weedkiller, glyphosate, a decision that came hours after Arkansas regulators moved to ban an alternative weedkiller for much of 2018. … Taken together, the decisions reflect an increasing political resistance to pesticides in Europe and parts of the United States, as well as the specific shortcomings of dicamba [which] has damaged more than 3.6 million acres of soybean crops in 25 states, roughly 4 percent of all soybeans planted this year in the United States. The New York Times

Genetically altered skin saves a boy dying of a rare disease
8 November - A child who was on the verge of death from a rare inherited disease has been treated with genetically engineered skin cells that replaced most of the skin on his body. The treatment represents a notable success for the field of gene therapy, which has suffered many setbacks. And it's potentially good news for children suffering from a painful and often deadly skin condition called epidermolysis bullosa. In this disease, children are born with a flawed gene that prevents the outer layer of the skin, the epidermis, from binding to the inner layer. This can cause excruciating blisters to form all over these children's bodies. … [Michele] De Luca used a virus to insert a healthy gene into cells taken from the boy's skin. Some of those cells, stem cells, multiply indefinitely. So De Luca was able to grow entire sheets of engineered epidermis, which were shipped to the hospital in Germany. NPR

New evidence of brain damage from West Nile virus, scientists say
7 November - Experts who work on the mosquito-borne West Nile virus have long known that it can cause serious neurological symptoms, such as memory problems and tremors, when it invades the brain and spinal cord. Now researchers have found physical evidence of brain damage in patients years after their original infection, the first such documentation using magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI. Brain scans revealed damage or shrinkage in different parts of the cerebral cortex, the outer part of the brain that handles higher-level abilities such as memory, attention and language. … “The thought is that the virus enters the brain and certain parts are more susceptible, and where those susceptibilities are is where we see the shrinkage occurring.” The Washington Post

Scientists solve 50-year-old mystery about breakbone fever
2 November - … In [a new] study, researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, followed about 6,600 children in Nicaragua where dengue circulates. For 12 years, the researchers drew the children’s blood annually and measured their concentrations of
The sweet smell of malaria: 'Breath Test' promising for Dx
7 November - The breath of children who tested positive for malaria smells different than the breath of those who tested negative, suggesting it may be possible to identify the malaria based on a "breathprint," researchers here found. Children who were infected with malaria displayed significantly higher levels of two known mosquito attractants compared to children who tested negative for the disease, reported Chad Schaber, MD, of Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, and colleagues. By identifying which odorants had the highest correlation with malaria infection, the authors developed a diagnostic algorithm to predict malaria positive or negative infection using this breath test, which had overall 83% accuracy with 94% sensitivity and 71% specificity. MedPage Today

Trainers, lawyers say sexual harassment training fails
8 November - In its report on harassment last year, the EEOC admitted, flat out, that the last three decades of sexual harassment training haven't worked. As more victims speak out about their allegations, employers ... are having to confront the failure of their sexual harassment training and reporting systems. Even trainers themselves say the system has failed. ... The primary reason most harassment training fails is that both managers and workers regard it as a pro forma exercise aimed at limiting the employer's legal liability. Being focused on legality is problematic because, for example, the letter of the law prohibits "severe or pervasive" harassment when, in fact, Wise notes, there are plenty of examples that might not meet that standard but clearly should not be tolerated in the workplace. Also, Wise says, effectiveness is hard to measure, and companies have little incentive to study it. NPR

Unlocking the secrets of the microbiome
6 November - ... Under the auspices of the National Institutes of Health, a large team of scientists is now engaged in creating a "normal" microbiological road map for the following tissues: gastrointestinal tract, oral cavity, skin, airways, urogenital tract, blood and eye. The effort, called the Human Microbiome Project, takes advantage of new technology that can rapidly analyze large samples of genetic material, making it
possible to identify the organisms present in these tissues. Depending on the body site, anywhere from 20 percent to 60 percent of the organisms that make up the microbiota cannot be cultured and identified with the older, traditional techniques used by microbiologists. The New York Times

Workplace mental health training could cut sick leave costs

8 November - A four-hour mental health training program for managers could yield fewer employee sick days and a roughly 10-to-1 return on investment, a study in Australia suggests. "Across the developed world, mental health has taken over as the leading cause of long-term work absence," said senior study author Samuel Harvey of the University of New South Wales Faculty of Medicine in Sydney. ... The program included the key features of common mental health issues, the roles of senior officers in employee mental health and the development of skills for discussing mental health with staff. ... Among employees of managers who had the training, the average rate of work-related sick leave dropped by 0.28 of a percentage point, from 1.56 percent to 1.28 percent, which corresponds to a reduction of nearly 6.5 hours per employee over six months, the study team writes in The Lancet Psychiatry. Reuters

You can't hide from calorie counts: FDA will implement Obama-era rule

8 November - Scott Gottlieb, the Food and Drug Administration commissioner appointed by the Trump administration, has this in common with Michelle Obama: He wants to know what’s in the food he eats. And this, it seems, includes calorie counts. Now, the FDA has released its guidance on implementing an Obama-era rule that requires chain restaurants and other food establishments to post calories on menus or menu boards. The mandate was written into the Affordable Care Act back in 2010. ... The FDA will aim to implement the new rules by May 2018. And Gottlieb says he's "committed to making sure we implement these provisions in a way that is practical, efficient and sustainable." NPR

ZIKA VIRUS

Data from meeting indicate 2nd mosquito feeding key to Zika spread

7 November - The proportion of Zika virus–carrying Aedes albopictus and Aedes aegypti mosquitoes capable of transmitting the virus increased dramatically after a second blood meal, according to data presented today at the 66th annual meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH). ... "The percentage of our Asian tiger mosquitoes [Ae albopictus] that were capable of transmitting virus jumped from 25% to 75%." ... A related study noted that Ae albopictus mosquitoes are expanding their range deeper into New England, according to the release. CIDRAP Zika Scan (first item)
French Guiana study finds 77% of pregnant women with Zika symptom-free

3 November - A study of Zika-infected pregnant women in French Guiana found that 77% were symptom-free, but with wide variations among different populations. The study did not look at the effects of Zika infection on the women’s fetuses or babies. The researchers enrolled 3,050 girls and women aged 14 to 48 who were pregnant from Feb 1 to Jun 1, 2016. Of those, 573 (19%) had lab-confirmed Zika virus (ZIKV) infection. Among the 23% who reported at least one symptom consistent with ZIKV, the most common symptoms were rash, joint pain, muscle aches, and conjunctival hyperemia (eye redness). The rate of symptomatic infections varied from 28% in those 30 and older to 20% in younger women and girls, a statistically significant difference. In addition, the proportion of symptomatic infections varied from 17% in the remote interior to 35% in the urban population near the Atlantic coast. CIDRAP News Scan (fourth item)

INFLUENZA

AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary - Week 43:

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity was minimal to low throughout the U.S.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity was minimal to low across EUCOM.
- PACOM: Influenza activity was minimal across PACOM.
- CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Influenza activity was minimal in Saudi Arabia, but moderate in other locations with available data in CENTCOM.
- SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity was minimal in Honduras this week based on DMSS data. DHA - Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch

APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 28 October 2017 (Week 43):

- Overall activity remains low in both Army and civilian populations. The number of influenza A-positive specimens also decreased in 43.
- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 43 were 29% lower than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: No hospitalized influenza cases were reported to APHC through DRSi in week 43; At this same time during the last influenza season, one influenza-associated hospitalization was reported.
- Viral specimens: During week 43, 68 of 861 (8%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-A reported most (39%) of the influenza A-
Positive specimens. APHC

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

During week 43 (October 22–28, 2017), influenza activity was low in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories during week 43 was influenza A. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories is low.
- Novel Influenza A Virus: Three human infections with novel influenza A viruses were reported.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the system-specific epidemic threshold in the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Mortality Surveillance System.
  
ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 43/2017 (23 – 29 October 2017)

- Intensity of influenza activity in Europe is still low.
- Sporadic or local influenza virus detections were reported by 10 out of 38 countries.
- Overall, 2.5% of sentinel specimens tested positive for influenza virus.
- Data from the 19 countries or regions reporting to the EuroMOMO project indicated that all-cause mortality was at expected levels for this time of the year.
  
NHRC: Operational Infectious Diseases - Weekly Surveillance Report

2 November - Febrile respiratory illness cases:

- Military Recruits - 20 positive of 43 tested
- CDC Border Infectious Disease Surveillance and Zika Surveillance - 19 positive of 35 tested
- DoD Beneficiaries – 16 positive of 49 tested. Naval Health Research Center

Study: H3N2 mutation in egg-based vaccines lowered efficacy

8 November - In experiments designed to discover reasons for the relatively low effectiveness of last season's flu vaccine against the H3N2 strain ... researchers found that the culprit was a mutation that arose during production when the virus was passaged in chicken eggs. ... They found that the egg-adapted virus lacked a key glycosylation site on the hemagglutinin protein. The findings raise concerns, because the same H3N2 vaccine strain is in the 2017-18 flu vaccines and may again provide an underwhelming level of protection. Also, the investigators said the findings underscore ongoing problems with
producing flu vaccine antigen in eggs and that antigens grown in systems other than eggs are more likely to protect against H3N2 viruses that are currently circulating.

CIDRAP News Scan (first item)

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

During 15 - 28 October 2017 (Surveillance Weeks 42 & 43), a total of 185 specimens were collected and received from 52 locations. Results were finalized for 173 specimens from 50 locations. During Week 42, one influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and four influenza A(H3N2) were detected. During Week 43, three influenza A(H3N2) were detected. The influenza percent positive for Week 42 was approximately 5% and during Week 43 was approximately 4%.

**U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine & Defense Health Agency**

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**BEST OF THE REST**

**VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

Irish raw milk cheese recalled around world because of *Listeria*

8 November - A *Listeria*-related recall in mid-October of organic, raw milk cheddar cheese announced by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland has made it half way around the world, with authorities in Hong Kong posting a recall this week of the cheese sold under the brand of The Little Milk Co. No such announcements have yet been made in the United States, even though the Irish raw milk cheese producer’s website indicates its products are sold in New York City. There is a good chance consumers may still have unused portions of the organic, raw milk cheddar cheese in their homes because its best-before dates range from October this year through July of 2018. *Food Safety News*

**WHO calls for an end to antibiotic use in healthy animals**

7 November - Citing the benefits to public health, the World Health Organization (WHO) today called for an overall reduction in the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals, recommending that farmers stop using antibiotics for growth promotion and disease prevention in healthy animals. *CIDRAP*

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Banned, novel stimulants found in supplements
8 November - Chemical testing revealed two banned stimulants, and two novel formulations, in sports and weight-loss supplements, researchers found. In six different brands of supplements, the two banned stimulants found were 1,3-dimethylamylamine (1,3-DMAA) and 1,3-dimethylbutylamine (1,3-DMBA), according to Pieter Cohen, MD, of Harvard Medical School and Cambridge Health Alliance in Massachusetts, and colleagues. The two novel formulations, which were previously unidentified, were 1,4-dimethylamylamine (1,4-DMAA) and 2-amino-6-methylheptane. MedPage Today

Cutting back on alcohol can prevent cancers: experts
7 November - ... [T]he American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) hopes to draw attention to the strong links between drinking alcohol and risks for several types of cancer. ... The call to action from ASCO follows a survey the group commissioned, which found that 70 percent of Americans do not recognize drinking alcohol as a risk factor for cancer. In fact, alcohol consumption is known to increase the risk of several cancers, including head and neck, esophageal, liver, colorectal and female breast cancers. Alcohol is classified as a carcinogen by the International Agency for Cancer Research. Approximately 3.5 percent of all cancer deaths in the U.S. - about 19,500 deaths - are alcohol related, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reuters

Don’t nudge me: The limits of behavioral economics in medicine
6 November - ... [A] recent Cochrane review concluded that “current methods of improving medication adherence for chronic health problems are mostly complex and not very effective.” At first glance, behavioral economics ... seems like a rich field of potential solutions. ... But those excited about the potential of behavioral economics should keep in mind the results of a recent study. It pulled out all the stops in trying to get patients who had a heart attack to be more compliant in taking their medication. ... One group received the usual care. ... [The other] involved direct financial incentives, social support nudges, health care system resources and significant clinical management. It failed. The New York Times

Fruit, vegetable, and legume intake, and cardiovascular disease and deaths in 18 countries (PURE): a prospective cohort study
4 November – ... We did a prospective cohort study (Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology [PURE] in 135,335 individuals ... in seven geographical regions: North America and Europe,
South America, the Middle East, south Asia, China, southeast Asia, and Africa. Higher fruit, vegetable, and legume consumption was associated with a lower risk of non-cardiovascular, and total mortality. Benefits appear to be maximum for both non-cardiovascular mortality and total mortality at three to four servings per day (equivalent to 375–500 g/day).

*The Lancet*

**Greater health benefit from exercise than previously reported**

6 November - Based on better tracking methods, researchers found that women who exercise reduce their risk of death by 60-70 percent, much larger than previously estimated from self-report studies. Lack of exercise or physical activity is estimated to cause as many deaths each year as smoking, according to a new study led by investigators at Harvard-affiliated Brigham and Women’s Hospital (BWH). This is one of the first studies to investigate physical activity, and a clinical outcome, using the newer-generation triaxial wearable devices, which have increased sensitivity to recognize physical activity and are capable of more precise measurements than the previously used uniaxial devices, or studies relying on self-reports only. *Harvard Gazette*

**IUDs may have a surprising health benefit**

8 November - IUD contraceptive devices may reduce a woman's risk of cervical cancer by about a third, a new review concludes. Researchers think IUDs might promote an immune response that kills off human papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that causes virtually all cases of cervical cancer. "The data say the presence of the IUD in the uterus stimulates an immune response, and that immune response very, very substantially destroys sperm and keeps sperm from reaching the egg," explained lead researcher Victoria Cortessis. "It stands to reason the IUD might influence other immune phenomenon." These results could be potentially lifesaving for young adult women who are too old to benefit from the HPV vaccine, said Cortessis. *CBS News*

**NSC: Few Americans can spot signs of opioid abuse**

9 November - ... The National Safety Council (NSC) has released survey results examining opioid misuse in the United States. Only 20 percent of those polled said they are "very confident" they can spot the signs of an overdose, and 28 percent said they are aware of treatment options. ... Study findings show that one in four Americans personally have a connection to the epidemic sweeping the U.S. However, 40 percent of them indicated they are not concerned about prescription pain medication as a health and safety threat to their family. Results also discovered that only 16 percent of respondents who take prescriptions actually are concerned about becoming addicted, and, overall, only 63 percent of Americans believe that opioids are very addictive. However, the survey found one in three Americans who were prescribed an opioid in the last three years did not realize the medicine they took
**Poor social skills may be harmful to health**

6 November - Those who struggle in social situations may be at greater risk for mental and physical health problems, according to a new study from the University of Arizona. That’s because people with poor social skills tend to experience more stress and loneliness, both of which can negatively impact health, said study author Chris Segrin, head of the UA Department of Communication. The study, published in the journal Health Communication, is among the first to link social skills to physical, not just mental, health. ... Segrin focused on four specific indicators of social skills: the ability to provide emotional support to others; self-disclosure, or the ability to share personal information with others; negative assertion skills, or the ability to stand up to unreasonable requests from others; and relationship initiation skills, or the ability to introduce yourself to others and get to know them.

**Scripps Florida scientists find ‘functional cure’ for HIV**

2 November - In findings that could point to a better treatment for HIV infections, Scripps Florida scientists say they’ve found a new way to manage the virus. Scripps Associate Professor Susana Valente says she successfully tested a drug that promises a “functional cure” for HIV: The infection isn’t gone, but the virus lies dormant. The results of a study led by Valente were published in October in the journal *Cell Reports*. Valente and researchers from Scripps Florida, the University of North Carolina and Walter Reed Army Institute of Research used a natural compound known as didehydro-Cortistatin A, or dCA. It stops the spread of HIV by inhibiting the protein Tat. "It is really the proof of concept for a functional cure," Valente said.

**Sleepless night leaves some brain cells as sluggish as you feel**

6 November - When people don’t get enough sleep, certain brain cells literally slow down. A study that recorded directly from neurons in the brains of 12 people found that sleep deprivation causes the bursts of electrical activity that brain cells use to communicate to become slower and weaker, a team reports online Monday in *Nature Medicine*. The finding could help explain why a lack of sleep impairs a range of mental functions, says Dr. Itzhak Fried, an author of the study and a professor of neurosurgery at the University of California, Los Angeles.

**Why is the opioid epidemic overwhelmingly white?**

4 November - ... [O]ur new opioid addiction epidemic is sparing African-American and Latino communities, and it’s striking when you look at the data. Whether you’re looking at overdose deaths or emergency room visits for opioid use problems or treatment admissions...
for opiate addiction, it's very clear that this epidemic is overwhelmingly white. And it begs
the question, why? I can share with you a theory, and it is a theory that's based on evidence.
... [D]octors prescribe narcotics more cautiously to their non-white patients. It would seem
that if the patient is black, the doctor is more concerned about the patient becoming
addicted, or maybe they're more concerned about the patient selling their pills, or maybe
they are less concerned about pain in that population. But the black patient is less likely to
be prescribed narcotics, and therefore less likely to wind up becoming addicted to the
medication. So what I believe is happening is that racial stereotyping is having a protective
effect on non-white populations. NPR

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USAFRICOM

Africa: Chasing a killer

3 November - Along a narrow, winding river, a team of
American scientists is traveling deep into the Congo rain
forest to a village that can be reached only by boat. The
scientists are from the Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention, and they have embarked on this watery journey
to solve a decades-old mystery about a rare and fatal
disease: monkeypox. A cousin to the deadly smallpox virus, the monkeypox virus initially
infests people through contact with wild animals and can then spread from person to
person. ... Over the past year, reports of monkeypox have flared alarmingly across Africa,
one of several animal-borne diseases that have raised anxiety around the globe. The
Congolese government invited CDC researchers here to track the disease and train local
scientists. Understanding the virus and how it spreads during an outbreak is key to stopping
it and protecting people from the deadly disease. The Washington Post

Africa: Focused on ending hunger, Africa neglects rising
obesity

6 November - Focused for decades on ending hunger, African countries have largely failed
to address a rising obesity epidemic that could soon become the greater public health crisis,
experts said as new data was released. A quarter of the world's 41 million overweight
children under five live in Africa, a figure that has nearly doubled on the continent in the last
two decades, according to the Global Nutrition Report published on Saturday. There are still
six times more children on the continent whose growth is stunted from malnutrition, and
that number is also increasing, the report said. ... “Diets are changing, but they are not
Reuters
Africa: WHO weighs in on Marburg virus risk to Uganda, other areas

8 November - Uganda's Marburg virus outbreak poses a high risk to the country and neighboring African nations because of a combination of factors, including that the affected districts are near caves in Mount Elgon National Park that are a major tourist attraction and harbor fruit bats that are known to transmit the virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday in an announcement. CIDRAP News Scan (second item)

Nigeria: Nigeria's monkeypox total climbs to 38 confirmed cases

7 November - Nigeria's number of lab confirmed monkeypox cases has jumped from 9 to 38 from eight states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) ... though the number of cases reported over the last 2 weeks shows signs of slowing, the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) said in its latest update. Over the course of the outbreak, which began in late September, 116 suspected cases from 20 states and the FCT have been reported. ... The epidemiologic investigation has found that twice as many males as females have been infected, and patients ages 21 to 40 years are the most affected age-group. States with the highest numbers of suspected and confirmed cases are in the southern part of Nigeria. So far no deaths have been reported. CIDRAP News Scan (third item)

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Saudi Arabia: Camel links continue in latest Saudi MERS cases

8 November - The WHO released a new update on recent MERS-CoV cases, noting that 9 out of 12 cases reported from Saudi Arabia in the month of October were linked to camel contact. None of the cases share an epidemiologic link with other known cases. Both indirect and direct contact, including drinking raw camel milk, was implicated in the nine camel-linked cases. ... Since 2012, the WHO has reported 2,102 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 733 related deaths. In other MERS news, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) reported the detection of MERS-CoV on two camel farms in Taif and Buraydah. A total of 5 of 12 animals tested positive for the virus. CIDRAP News Scan (third item)
Yemen: A new Saudi blockade could worsen Yemen’s cholera crisis

7 November - The International Committee of the Red Cross said Tuesday it was unable to get clearance to ship chlorine tablets used to prevent cholera from Saudi Arabia into Yemen, where a massive outbreak of the disease has affected more than 900,000 people. Saudi Arabia announced Monday it was temporarily closing all of Yemen’s ground, sea and airports in retaliation for a missile strike on the Saudi capital carried out last week by a rebel group in Yemen. The Saudi government had vowed it would “take into consideration” the delivery of humanitarian aid supplies. The United Nations on Tuesday urged the Saudi authorities to reopen the air and sea ports, fearing the blockade would sharply exacerbate an already dire humanitarian crisis. In addition to the cholera epidemic, roughly 7 million Yemenis are on the brink of famine, aid workers said. The Washington Post

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Portugal: Legionnaires' disease in Lisbon hospital kills two, 32 infected

7 November - An outbreak of Legionnaires’ disease in a large Lisbon hospital has killed two people and made at least another 32 sick since it was first detected a week ago, Portugal’s health authority DGS said on Tuesday. Five people were in intensive care after contracting the severe form of pneumonia while interned at the São Francisco Xavier hospital in Lisbon’s western Restelo area. Most of the 34 confirmed cases involved elderly people with other chronic conditions. The authorities said experts were working to establish the source of the bacteria and it was still too early to say whether it was inside the hospital itself. Reuters

United Kingdom: The battle for minds - Britain expands project on mental health in terrorism

7 November - A project looking at links between mental health and terrorism in three English cities has been expanded nationwide after it found a significant number of people referred to counter-radicalization programs suffer some form of mental illness. Studies have suggested the prevalence of mental health issues among militants working together on major strikes is very low but a string of killings by so-called lone wolves has fueled concerns mental illness could be a factor behind some attacks. Authorities say some of those involved in four attacks in Britain this year blamed on Islamist militants appeared to people who had self-radicalized via the internet and whose mental state had been questioned. Reuters
U.S.: EPA approval of bacteria to fight mosquitoes caps long quest

8 November - The Environmental Protection Agency has approved the use of mosquitoes infected with *Wolbachia* bacteria as a "biopesticide" in 20 states and the District of Columbia. The bacteria keep mosquitoes from spreading diseases like dengue and Zika. ... It had taken [Scott] O'Neill 20 years to get his big idea to work. ... The problem was that O'Neill couldn't figure out how to infect mosquitoes with *Wolbachia*. ... You can't just spread *Wolbachia* bacteria around and hope the mosquitoes catch it. Instead, you have to puncture a mosquito egg or embryo about the size of a poppy seed with a hair-thin needle containing the bacteria, peering through a microscope the entire time so you can see what you're doing. ... Then the scientists have to wait a week until the adult mosquitoes emerge to see if any are infected with Wolbachia. Walker says in this latest round of work he's injected 18,000 eggs — with nothing to show for it. "The success rate is very low," says Walker, in something of an understatement. NPR

U.S.: House Republicans aim to yank tax credits for orphan drugs

2 November - As part of a sweeping tax reform bill, House Republicans on Thursday proposed eliminating billions of dollars in corporate tax credits that have played a key role in the booming "orphan drug" industry. For more than three decades, pharmaceutical and biomedical companies have claimed a 50 percent tax credit for the cost of clinical trials on orphan drugs, or those that treat rare diseases affecting fewer than 200,000 people. ... Drugs that win special orphan status get a package of financial incentives, including the credits and seven years of market exclusivity. ... The National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD) predicted, drawing from a 2015 report, there would be 33 percent fewer orphan drugs coming to market if the credit vanishes. Kaiser Health News

U.S.: OSHA new recordkeeping rule: Top 3 challenges coming down the line

9 November - In May 2016, OSHA published its new recordkeeping rule, officially named "Improve Tracking of Workplace Injuries and Illnesses." Among many revisions, the rule dictates that employers must submit their work-related injury and illness records to a new OSHA website. This data is then published into the public domain. At the time, then-Assistant Secretary of Labor David Michaels explained that the new rule would capitalize on the fact that employers do not want to be perceived negatively or as poorly managed. ... Roll-out has not been smooth sailing for the administration. ... Complying with the new rule will not be an easy ride, either. A lack of guidance for employers has cast uncertainty over how EHS professionals can accurately comply with such changes. EHS Today
U.S.: Sickle cell patients endure discrimination, poor care and shortened lives

4 November - ... About 100,000 people in the United States have sickle cell disease, and most of them are African-American. Patients and experts alike say it’s no surprise then that while life expectancy for almost every major malady is improving, patients with sickle cell disease can expect to die younger than they did more than 20 years ago. In 1994, life expectancy for sickle cell patients was 42 for men and 48 for women. A 2013 study found that life expectancy had dipped to 38 for men and 42 for women in 2005. Sickle cell disease is "a microcosm of how issues of race, ethnicity and identity come into conflict with issues of health care," says Keith Wailoo, a professor at Princeton University who has written about the history of the disease. It is also an example of the broader discrimination experienced by African-Americans in the medical system. Nearly a third reported that they have experienced discrimination when going to the doctor, according to a poll by NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. NPR

U.S.: U.S. report says humans cause climate change, contradicting top Trump officials

3 November - Directly contradicting much of the Trump administration’s position on climate change, 13 federal agencies unveiled an exhaustive scientific report on Friday that says humans are the dominant cause of the global temperature rise that has created the warmest period in the history of civilization. Over the past 115 years global average temperatures have increased 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit, leading to record-breaking weather events and temperature extremes, the report says. The global, long-term warming trend is "unambiguous," it says, and there is "no convincing alternative explanation" that anything other than humans — the cars we drive, the power plants we operate, the forests we destroy — are to blame. The New York Times


10 November - Despite ongoing prevention measures, waterborne disease outbreaks caused by environmental exposure to water (linked to water not associated with a recreational water venue or drinking water system) continue to occur. For certain waterborne disease outbreaks, the specific water exposure cannot be determined based on available evidence, including certain Legionella outbreaks involving multiple water exposures. CDC collects data on all waterborne disease outbreaks from states and territories through the National Outbreak Reporting System. Fifteen outbreaks associated with an environmental exposure to water and 12 outbreaks with an undetermined exposure to water from 2013 to 2014 were reported to CDC, resulting in at least 289 cases of illness, 108 hospitalizations, and 17 deaths. Legionella was responsible for 63% of outbreaks, 94% of
hospitalizations, and all deaths. All outbreaks of legionellosis were associated with human-made water systems, including infrastructure intended for water storage or recirculation. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report

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**Burma: Life or death - Giving birth in Burma**

3 November - ... [Some] 2,800 women in Burma ... die every year from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. ... This is nearly 10 times higher than that of neighbouring Thailand. ... Probing into the figures reveals that most deaths occur postnatally. ... Burma’s maternal mortality rate is the second-highest in ASEAN. To investigate the causes of this, the UNFPA and World Health Organization are supporting the government’s introduction of a maternal death survey. ... Bro...
The air quality index, which measures the concentration of poisonous particulate matter in the air, hit the “severe” level of 451 on a scale where the maximum reading is 500 and where anything above 100 is considered unhealthy by the Central Pollution Control Board. Reuters

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Americas: PAHO/WHO Malaria Champion awards go to Brazil, Haiti, and Dominican Republic

3 November - The Pan American Health Organization and partner agencies recognized new Malaria Champions from Brazil, Haiti and the Dominican Republic today for work on “Closing local gaps toward Malaria Elimination.” Two projects, one in a remote area of the Amazon in Brazil and another one in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, won recognition for their outstanding work in interrupting malaria transmission and developing local systems to access malaria diagnosis and treatment. The project in the Municipality of Eirunepé in the Amazonas, Brazil, was recognized for reducing the malaria burden in isolated population groups living in logistically challenging areas. Because of their work, malaria cases have dropped from 8,000 in 2013 to 126 cases for October 2017. [...]
The Dominican Republic and Haiti received the Malaria Champion award for using innovative technologies that involve the private sector and community and traditional health workers to improve surveillance, diagnosis and treatment of malaria in both countries. ReliefWeb

Brazil: Brazil study shows chikungunya spike as Zika outbreak wound down

7 November - Brazilian investigators writing yesterday in *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases* detail the waning of the Zika outbreak in Recife in the northeast, which was then replaced by a chikungunya outbreak. The experts assayed acute and convalescent blood samples from 263 patients who had fever and other symptoms suggestive of an arboviral disease and attended an urgent care clinic in the Recife metropolitan area. [...]
Polymerase chain reaction testing determined that 26 (9.9%) were positive for Zika virus and 132 (50.2%) for chikungunya virus but none for dengue virus. [...]
The authors concluded, "We show that when Zika cases started to decrease, chikungunya cases appeared and increased rapidly, remaining high until the end of the study. We also highlight the high levels of cross-reactivity on dengue serological assays with ZIKV-positive samples, emphasizing the importance of choosing appropriate tests in areas with simultaneous circulation of arboviruses." CIDRAP Zika Scan (third item)
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