

11 March 2016

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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## Contents

### U.S. MILITARY

---

- Army to field eye protection that adapts to changing light conditions
- Grassley asks Army Medical Command to address public health concerns, allegations of whistleblower reprisal
- Military mental health services must be easier to get, service officials say
- Use of quadrivalent human papillomavirus vaccine and the prevalence of antibodies to vaccine-targeted strains among female service members
- VA expands hepatitis C treatment to all patients with the virus

### GLOBAL

---

- Antibiotics may get new life against lethal bacteria
- Brain injury linked to increased risk of losing health insurance
- First uterus transplant in US fails
- Israeli placental cell therapy could cure radiation sickness
- Meta-analysis: Dengue in pregnant women may pose risk to fetus
- MERS antibody shows promise in rabbits; signs of infection noted in Kenyans
- MRSA, CRE, other 'superbugs' account for good portion of healthcare-associated infections
- New treatment cuts malaria infection risk in pregnant women
- Respirators not more effective than masks in the workplace
- Study IDs predictors of noncompliance with treatment for latent TB
- Study shows streamlined ZMapp-type drug protects monkeys from Ebola
- 'Stunning' operation regenerates eye's lens
- The paralysed man who can ride a bike
- ZIKA VIRUS
- Another neurological disorder tied to Zika
- Increase in reported prevalence of microcephaly in infants born to women living in areas with confirmed Zika virus transmission during the first trimester of pregnancy — Brazil, 2015
- Pair of studies add weight to link between Zika and birth defects
- Sexual transmission of Zika 'more common than thought'
- Two U.S. soldiers in South America contracted, recovered from Zika: commander
- W.H.O. advises pregnant women to avoid areas where Zika is spreading
- WHO group sets priorities for Zika-fighting tools
- Zika caught 'killing' brain cells
- Zika fears prompt feds to ship blood to Puerto Rico

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**INFLUENZA**

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- AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary
- APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report
- CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report
- ECDC: Flu News Europe
- NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update
- Possible influenza A treatment receives FDA fast-track status
- USAFSAM: DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program
- WHO: Influenza Update

**VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

---

- California pistachios recalled after *Salmonella* infects 11 people
- FDA injunction forces sprout producer to cease operations
- Mongolian livestock succumb en masse to the freezing dzud
- Pet protection

**WELLNESS**

---

- Aspirin found to reduce overall cancer risk
- Can bright light at night lead to obesity?
- Fasting diets are gaining acceptance
- Health care for seniors often goes beyond their desires
- Peanut allergy theory backed up by new research
- The always hungry teenage boy

**USAFRICOM**

---

- Democratic Republic of the Congo: Once upon a time it was Kin la belle
- UN says 34 countries don't have enough food for their people

**USCENTCOM**

---

- Iraq: 'Catastrophic' - US raises alarm over perilous Mosul Dam
- ISIS detainee tells U.S. of militants' plan to use mustard gas
- Saudi Arabia reports 2 MERS cases, 1 fatal
- Syria: No way out - How Syrians are struggling to find an exit

**USEUCOM**

---

- Brain drain: the neglected mental health of refugees in Europe
- United Kingdom: Alcohol - 2.5 million people bust weekly limit in a day
- United Kingdom: Middle-aged people targeted in Public Health England campaign

**USNORTHCOM**

---

- U.S.: Bacterial infection in Wisconsin may have killed 18; CDC investigating
- U.S.: Cancer death rates continue to decline
- U.S. health agency estimates 2015 prescription drug spend rose to \$457 billion
- U.S.: Michigan's Medicaid Section 1115 waiver to address effects of lead exposure in Flint

**USPACOM**

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- Australia: Legionnaires' disease outbreak in Sydney sparks health fears
- India: open defecation
- South Korea considers approval of North Korea tuberculosis aid despite sanctions

## WHO Zika App Available

The official World Health Organization (WHO) Zika App. Get the latest information from WHO on the Zika virus disease by downloading this app.

They plan to produce it soon in Portuguese and the official UN languages.

[iOS version](#)

[Android version](#)



## USSOUTHCOM

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- Lottery approach to health care for women in Latin America is putting thousands of lives at risk
- Uruguay: Dengue fever

## U.S. MILITARY

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### Army to field eye protection that adapts to changing light conditions

3 March- As part of its new Soldier Protection System, the U.S. Army plans to field eye protection that adjusts to daytime and night conditions so soldiers won't have to constantly change eyewear on operations. ... Army Lt. Gen. John Murray, Army deputy chief of staff, G-8, told lawmakers that soldiers have typically had to carry two pairs of protective eyewear over the last 15 years -- one for day and one for night. ... The SPS is also part of the Army's effort to lighten the soldiers load, Williamson said.

[Military.com](#)

### Grassley asks Army Medical Command to address public health concerns, allegations of whistleblower reprisal

4 March – Sen. Chuck Grassley has asked the head of the U.S. Army Medical Command to address the alleged reprisal against a whistleblower suspected of raising concerns about the safety of laboratory employees working with pathogens such as anthrax, plague and Ebola. ... Grassley wrote that according to information obtained by his office, in 2015, the Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General (DoD OIG) conducted an investigation of Department of Defense Chemical Nuclear and Biological facilities. During that investigation, the DoD OIG received reports that certain routine inspections—including Army MEDCOM inspections—of containment laboratories did not improve lab safety and in fact had failed to address key problems within certain laboratories. [Senate.gov](#)

### Military mental health services must be easier to get, service officials say

9 March - Better mental health care for service members and their families, tougher sexual assault policies and an improved retirement plan are key if the military is to retain troops, service personnel officials told lawmakers Tuesday. Speaking to the Senate Armed Services subcommittee on personnel, service officials said that rising suicide rates and mental health problems need to be addressed through better care options. ... Depression is even higher among military spouses, said Kathy Roth-Duquet, chief executive officer of Blue Star Families. The depression rate for military spouses is 12 percent and unemployment is around 25 percent. [Military Times](#)

## Army Industrial Hygiene News and Regulatory Summary

The February edition of the Army Industrial Hygiene News and Regulatory Summary includes articles on coffee roasting, dried plums, superbugs, allergy to vibration, pesticide rules, and Zika virus.



## Use of quadrivalent human papillomavirus vaccine and the prevalence of antibodies to vaccine-targeted strains among female service members

March 2016 - The quadrivalent human papillomavirus vaccine (HPV4) has been shown to generate a robust immune response among fully vaccinated individuals; however, among U.S. service members, HPV vaccine completion rates are low. This study compared the immunogenicity of HPV4 vaccine among partially and fully vaccinated service members at 4–6 years post-vaccination. ... Prior to immunization 42% were seropositive for HPV strain 6; 34% for strain 11; 29% for strain 16; and 16% for strain 18. Among those naive to all four strains prior to immunization, there was 100% seroconversion after one, two, or three doses. The results indicate that many service members had already been exposed to strains of HPV prior to receiving the vaccine.

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

## VA expands hepatitis C treatment to all patients with the virus

10 March - The Veterans Affairs Department will begin providing hepatitis C treatment to all veterans in its health system who have the virus, regardless of their disease stage, VA officials said Wednesday. Having received a boost in funding from Congress late last year for the costly medications to cure hepatitis C, the VA is now able to treat the 174,000 veterans in its health system who have the disease, according to a VA release.

[Military Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

## GLOBAL

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## Antibiotics may get new life against lethal bacteria

10 March - ... The drugs penicillin and methicillin, developed in the last century, are cheap and available but have become ineffective against [*Staphylococcus aureus*.] ... Researchers at pharmaceutical company Merck discovered two compounds that weaken the biological structure of drug-resistant Staph aureus, also known as MRSA, clearing the way for the older antibiotics to kill the pathogen. ... Merck's Terry Roemer said that on their own, the compounds are not effective in killing MRSA. But taken with penicillin, they cleared the drug-resistant infection in mice. [VOA](#)

## Brain injury linked to increased risk of losing health insurance

10 March - People who suffer traumatic brain injuries (TBI) are more likely to lose or change

## Adolescent and Adult Vaccine Quiz

A quiz from the CDC determines the vaccines that are recommended for adults and adolescents (people age 11 years and older.)



their private health insurance coverage just when they need it most, according to a recent U.S. analysis. Examining a three-year period, researchers also found that the more severe the brain injury, the quicker people lost or saw changes in their health coverage. Most subjects received health insurance through their jobs, so any change in coverage was likely due to changes in their employment. [Reuters](#)

## First uterus transplant in US fails

9 March - The United States' first uterus transplant has failed. Doctors at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio said Wednesday the 26-year-old patient developed a "sudden complication" and the transplanted organ had to be removed. Doctors gave no additional information on the condition itself. [VOA](#)

## Israeli placental cell therapy could cure radiation sickness

9 March - Israeli biotech firm Pluristem Therapeutics said it hopes its anti-radiation therapy will protect Fukushima workers decommissioning nuclear reactors and save lives in the future if ever a similar catastrophe occurs. The Haifa-based company said they have developed a placenta-based cell therapy injection that can fully cure patients with multiple organ failure caused by high radiation exposure. ... Clinical trials which have been conducted both in the United States, with the National Institute of Health and at Hadassah-University Medical Center in Jerusalem, have shown a nearly 100 percent recovery rate in animals exposed to radiation. [Reuters](#)

## Meta-analysis: Dengue in pregnant women may pose risk to fetus

4 March - A meta-analysis published yesterday in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* suggests that dengue infection in pregnant women may increase the risk of adverse fetal outcomes such as preterm birth and low birth weight. ... The studies revealed some evidence of an increased risk of miscarriage in dengue-infected women, with an odds ratio of 3.51 (95% confidence interval [CI], 1.15-10.77), but another statistical test indicated the increase was not significant (P = .765). Preterm birth and low birth weight were the most common adverse outcomes in mothers who contracted dengue, the authors found. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## MERS antibody shows promise in rabbits; signs of infection noted in Kenyans

4 March - [Researchers] from the US National Institutes of Health tested rabbits in the lab using a human monoclonal antibody called m336 before infecting them 1 day later with MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus). ... When the monoclonal antibody was administered intranasally, ... [one] day post-infection, animals receiving the

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lower dose of m366 had a more than 1,000-fold reduction in MERS-CoV RNA, while those receiving 10 mg/kg had a greater than 9,000-fold reduction. And 3 days after infection, most of the rabbits cleared MERS-CoV RNA completely. ... The Kenyan study ... reported MERS-CoV antibodies in people who tended livestock, despite the participants reporting low levels of contact with camels, a known reservoir for the virus. The team analyzed blood samples from 1,122 livestock herders. [CIDRAP](#)

## MRSA, CRE, other ‘superbugs’ account for good portion of healthcare-associated infections

4 March - America is doing a better job of preventing healthcare-associated infections (HAIs), but more work is needed – especially in fighting antibiotic-resistant bacteria. ... Many of the most urgent and serious antibiotic-resistant bacteria threaten patients while they are being treated in healthcare facilities for other conditions, and may lead to sepsis or death. In acute care hospitals, 1 in 7 catheter- and surgery-related HAIs can be caused by any of the six antibiotic-resistant bacteria listed. ... That number increases to 1 in 4 infections in long-term acute care hospitals, which treat patients who are generally very sick and stay, on average, more than 25 days. [Outbreak News Today](#)

## New treatment cuts malaria infection risk in pregnant women

9 March - A new strategy to prevent malaria, a disease that puts newborns at risk of death, offers hope that expectant mothers in malaria-endemic countries in Africa will be able to deliver healthy babies. ... Researchers have been experimenting with an artemisinin-based therapy, called dihydroartemisinin–piperaquine. [They] reported that treatment with the drug combination dramatically reduced the risk of malaria in a group of 300 Ugandan women, none of whom was infected when the study began. Some women were given three doses over the course of their pregnancies, others received it monthly, and a third group got the standard treatment. In the first group, Dorsey said, the risk of being infected with malaria was reduced to 17 percent, and for those who got the drug each month, the risk fell to 5 percent. These figures contrasted with the risk for women in the third group, which was 40 percent. [VOA](#)

## Respirators not more effective than masks in the workplace

9 March - N95 respirators may not be more effective than surgical masks in preventing transmission of acute respiratory infections to healthcare workers under normal working conditions, although they may be more effective in surrogate exposure environments, a meta-analysis suggests. ... In the meta-analysis of the clinical trials, Smith and colleagues were unable to identify any significant difference between patients who wore a N95 respirator and those who wore surgical masks in the risk of acquiring a confirmed respiratory infection or an influenza-like illness. They also observed no difference in rates of

## Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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<http://phc.army.smil.mil>

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

reported workplace absenteeism between workers who donned a N95 respirator at work and those who chose to wear a surgical mask. [Medscape](#)

## Study IDs predictors of noncompliance with treatment for latent TB

8 March - Among patients receiving treatment for latent tuberculosis (TB), noncompliance remains common, interfering with treatment efficacy and elimination of the disease. ... The authors analyzed post-hoc the cases of 6,232 US and Canadian participants in the PREVENT TB trial, a phase 3 open-label, randomized trial of treatment for latent TB carried out from 2001 to 2008. While 4,826 individuals completed their treatment, 1,406 (22.6%) did not. Adverse treatment effects accounted for the noncompliance in 317 (22.5%) of the 1,406, but other factors ... were responsible in 1,089 (77.5%). One factor that stood out in the latter group was missing an early clinical visit, which the authors called a "sentinel event" in terms of high risk of nonadherence to treatment. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

## Study shows streamlined ZMapp-type drug protects monkeys from Ebola

9 March - A drug similar to ZMapp but containing only two antibodies instead of three and produced in mammalian cells instead of plant cells protected macaques from Ebola when administered 3 days after infection. ... [An] experimental drug called MIL77E that was grown in the ovary cells of hamsters. ... Such a formulation might help improve safety, simplify production, and accelerate drug approval, the researchers wrote. ... MIL77E completely protected all three monkeys infected with the Makona strain of the Ebola virus responsible for the West African outbreak. They also used a similar two-antibody formulation of plant-cell-produced ZMapp and found that it protected only two of three monkeys. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

## 'Stunning' operation regenerates eye's lens

9 March - A pioneering procedure to regenerate the eye has successfully treated children with cataracts in China. ... An implanted lens is normally needed to restore sight, but the operation described in Nature activated stem cells in the eye to grow a new one. ... The technique ... removes the cloudy cataract from inside the lens via a tiny incision. Crucially it leaves the outer surface - called the lens capsule - intact. This structure is lined with lens epithelial stem cells, which normally repair damage. The scientists hoped that preserving them would regenerate the lens. The team reported that tests on rabbits and monkeys were successful, so the approach was trialled in 12 children. Within eight months the regenerated lens was back to the same size as normal. [BBC News](#)

## The paralysed man who can ride a bike

4 March - A man who was paralysed from the chest down after a knife attack in 2010 can now ride an adapted tricycle. In 2014, surgeons in Poland announced they had reversed

## Links

[A-Z Index](#)

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Darek Fidyka's paralysis using cells taken from his nose to repair his spinal cord. The former fireman says he has noticed a gradual return of feeling and muscle control below his injury. The surgical team are now launching a search for two more paralysed patients who they will try to help walk again. ... The approach in Poland aims to reconnect the brain with the lower limbs along the neural superhighway that is the spinal cord, enabling both motor control commands to travel down the body and sensation to travel up. [BBC News](#)

## ZIKA VIRUS

### Another neurological disorder tied to Zika

10 March - The list of neurological disorders potentially associated with the Zika virus continues to grow, health officials reported Wednesday. ... French researchers described the case of an unidentified 81-year-old man who had been in fine health before becoming feverish and then comatose while on a cruise in the South Pacific. An MRI scan and a test of spinal fluid indicated he was suffering from meningoencephalitis, an infection and swelling of the brain. The elderly cruise ship patient was admitted to an intensive care unit, where doctors were able to make a tentative diagnosis of Zika infection. Within several days, his condition began to improve without treatment, and 17 days after admission to the hospital he was removed from intensive care. By day 38, he was fully recovered, the investigators said in their report. [MedlinePlus](#)

### Increase in reported prevalence of microcephaly in infants born to women living in areas with confirmed Zika virus transmission during the first trimester of pregnancy — Brazil, 2015

8 March - ... The birth prevalence of microcephaly in Brazil increased sharply during 2015–2016. The largest increase occurred in the Northeast region, where Zika virus transmission was first reported in Brazil. This analysis of 574 cases of microcephaly, detected through a newly established ad hoc microcephaly surveillance system, identified temporal and geospatial evidence linking the occurrence of febrile rash illness consistent with Zika virus disease during the first trimester of pregnancy with the increased birth prevalence of microcephaly. The prevalence of microcephaly in 15 states with laboratory-confirmed Zika virus transmission (2.8 cases per 10,000 live births) significantly exceeded that in four states without confirmed Zika virus transmission (0.6 per 10,000). [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

### Pair of studies add weight to link between Zika and birth defects

4 March - ... [Researchers] followed 88 pregnant women who sought care for a rashlike illness at the Oswaldo Cruz clinic in Rio between September 2015 and January 2016. Of the

total, 72 tested positive for Zika virus. ... Fetal ultrasounds were done in 42 of the women who tested positive for Zika virus and in all 16 whose test results were negative. Abnormalities were detected in 12 (29%) of the women who tested positive for the virus but in none of those who tested negative. Researchers found a range of abnormal findings in the 12 women with abnormal fetal ultrasounds, including fetal death (2 fetuses), growth restriction with or without microcephaly (5), ventricular calcifications or other central nervous system lesions (7), and abnormal amniotic fluid volume or cerebral or umbilical artery flow (7). ... [Problems] were seen in the fetuses of women regardless of the week of gestation at infection. [CIDRAP](#)

## Sexual transmission of Zika 'more common than thought'

9 March - Sexual transmission of the Zika virus is more common than previously thought and there is increasing evidence that a surge in birth defects and neurological problems has been caused by Zika, according to the World Health Organization. ... After a meeting of its emergency committee on Tuesday, Margaret Chan, WHO director-general, said "reports and investigations in several countries strongly suggest that sexual transmission of the virus is more common than previously assumed". The US is investigating more than a dozen possible cases of Zika in people who may have been infected through sex. Chan also said nine countries have now reported increasing cases of Guillain-Barre syndrome, a rare condition that can cause temporary paralysis and death. She said that problems linked to Zika are now being seen not just in women of child-bearing age, but also in children, teenagers and older adults. [Al Jazeera](#)

## Two U.S. soldiers in South America contracted, recovered from Zika: commander

10 March - Two U.S. soldiers serving in South America contracted Zika but have fully recovered and returned to duty, while a third, pregnant service member left the region early for fear of contracting the virus, a top U.S. commander said on Thursday. ... Two U.S. servicemembers stationed in Brazil and Colombia, both men, were confirmed to have contracted Zika, said Navy Admiral Kurt Tidd, commander of U.S. Southern Command. "Both cases were confirmed. The cases have (been) resolved," Tidd said in a news briefing. "They both returned to duty." [Reuters](#)

## W.H.O. advises pregnant women to avoid areas where Zika is spreading

8 March - The World Health Organization advised pregnant women on Tuesday to avoid travel to areas where the Zika virus is spreading. Experts on the organization's Zika emergency committee also recommended that pregnant women and their partners who have been in areas with Zika rely on abstinence or safe sex to prevent sexual transmission of the virus. ... Local transmission of the virus has now been reported in 31 countries or territories in Latin American and the Caribbean. The agency emphasized that it was not recommending that women avoid whole countries, but only "areas" where mosquitoes were

transmitting the virus. ... This is the first time the W.H.O. has advised that pregnant women avoid travel. Previously, the W.H.O. had advised women only to "consider delaying travel."

[The New York Times](#)

## WHO group sets priorities for Zika-fighting tools

9 March - Stakeholders who met in Geneva this week to decide on the most urgently needed tools to battle Zika virus settled on diagnostic tests, inactivated vaccines targeted to childbearing-aged women, and new mosquito-control tools, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced today. ... The WHO said 67 companies as of Mar 2 are already working on Zika-related products, nearly half of them diagnostic tests. The list also includes 18 vaccines, 10 vector-control tools, and 8 drugs. Marie Paule-Kieny, PhD, the WHO's assistant director of research and development, said in the statement that medical treatments for now are a lower priority, given the importance of diagnosis and prevention tools needed to protect women and their babies, and because infections are mild in most people. At a media briefing today, she said the group also identified key knowledge gaps, such as understanding the range of mosquito species that can transmit the disease and if earlier exposure to related viruses such as dengue might affect an individual's response to a Zika virus vaccine. [CIDRAP](#)

## Zika caught 'killing' brain cells

4 March - Zika virus kills the type of tissue found in the developing brain, researchers have shown. It was able to destroy or disrupt the growth of neural progenitor cells, which build the brain and nervous system, in lab tests. The discovery, published in the journal *Cell Stem Cell*, adds weight to claims that Zika is causing brain abnormalities in babies. ... The virus was able to infect up to 90% of neural progenitor cells in a sample leading to nearly a third of cells dying and the growth of the rest being disrupted. A similar effect in a developing brain could have devastating results. The virus was able to infect only 10% of other tissue types tested including more advanced brain cells, kidney cells and embryonic stem cells.

[BBC News](#)

## Zika fears prompt feds to ship blood to Puerto Rico

7 March - The federal government is shipping blood and blood products to Puerto Rico because of worries that local supplies might be contaminated with mosquito-borne Zika virus. The Health and Human Services Department said it was organizing shipments of blood products from the continental United States to Puerto Rico, where Zika is spreading fast. [NBC News](#)

[top of page...](#)

## INFLUENZA

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### AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 8:

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity decreased to low and moderate for the majority of states.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity was minimal across EUCOM, except for Germany which had low activity.
- PACOM: Influenza activity was low across PACOM with the exception of Guam which had minimal activity.
- CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Influenza activity remained minimal across CENTCOM and AFRICOM.
- SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity in Honduras was minimal based on DMSS data.

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

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

For the week ending 27 February 2016 (Week 8)

All regions, except RHC-P and CENTCOM, demonstrated increased influenza A positive specimens.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 8 were 3% higher than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: Four hospitalized influenza cases were reported to APHC (Prov) through DRSi in week 8; 1 AD SM and 3 non-AD beneficiaries. Three of the cases had underlying conditions.
- Viral specimens: During week 8, 447 of 1579 (28%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-C reported 112 influenza A-positive specimens, RHC-A reported 99, RHC-P reported 40, and RHC-E reported 17. CENTCOM did not report any positive influenza A specimens. [APHC](#)

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

During week 8 (February 21-27, 2016), influenza activity remained elevated in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories during week 8 was influenza A, with influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 viruses predominating. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories increased.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the system-specific epidemic threshold in the NCHS Mortality Surveillance System and above the system-specific epidemic threshold in the

## ECDC: Flu News Europe

For week 08/2016 (22–28 February 2016), 25 of the 45 Member States in the WHO European Region that uploaded epidemiological data reported widespread influenza activity.

- As only five countries reported high-intensity activity, influenza may have peaked in some parts of the Region, as indicated by reports of decreasing or stable trends in 33 countries.
- Thirty-six countries reported influenza virus detections in 47% of specimens from sentinel sources, which is similar to previous weeks. Influenza B virus constituted 47% of detections in sentinel samples, compared to 43% for the previous week, indicating a gradual shift towards influenza B. Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 remained the predominant virus detected through sentinel surveillance, accounting for 85% of the A viruses subtyped.
- Cases of severe disease were fewer than in previous weeks, but varied between countries. Most severe cases were associated with A(H1N1)pdm09 and were in people aged 15-64 years.
- For the 17 countries or regions reporting to the European monitoring of excess mortality for public health action project (EuroMOMO), there is a pattern suggesting excess all-cause mortality among those aged 15-64.

[European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

## NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2016 Week 9 (through 5 March 2016):

- Influenza: Three cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H1) among US military basic trainees at MRCD San Diego.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at Fort Leonard Wood, Fort Benning, and CGTC Cape May.

[Naval Health Research Center](#)

## Possible influenza A treatment receives FDA fast-track status

9 March - MedImmune announced that its experimental treatment for patients hospitalized with influenza A received fast-track status to gain US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval, according to a Mar 7 press release. MedImmune ... recently completed a phase 1 clinical trial to determine the safety and efficacy of MEDI8852, a human monoclonal antibody intended to treat acute and uncomplicated flu A infections in hospitalized patients.

[CIDRAP Flu Scan](#) (second item)

## USAFSAM: DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program

- During 21 February - 5 March 2016 (Surveillance Weeks 8 & 9), a total of 443 specimens were collected and received from 53 locations. Results were finalized for 318 specimens from 48 locations. During Week 8, 51 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, one dual influenza co-infection, 12 A(H3N2), and 44 influenza B viruses were identified. Thirty-five influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, six A(H3N2), and 20 influenza B viruses were identified during Week 9.
- The Food and Drug Administration's Vaccine and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) met on 4 March 2016. In agreement with the World Health Organization, VRBPAC concluded that influenza trivalent vaccines for use in the 2016-2017 Northern Hemisphere influenza season will contain:
  - A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
  - A/Hong Kong/4801/2014 (H3N2)-like virus;
  - B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus.
- It is recommended that quadrivalent vaccines containing two influenza B viruses contain the above three viruses and a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus. The DoD contributed 22% of the data used to influence this decision.

[US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

## WHO: Influenza Update

7 March - In the Northern Hemisphere high levels of influenza activity continued with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 predominating and an increase in the proportion of influenza B viruses detected. In the Southern Hemisphere and in tropical countries influenza activity was generally low. [WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

### **VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

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## California pistachios recalled after *Salmonella* infects 11 people

10 March - A California pistachio producer has recalled some of its pistachios after the nuts were linked to a strain of *Salmonella* that made 11 people ill in nine U.S. states between December and February, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. The producer, Wonderful Pistachios, said the recall is voluntary. The nuts were sold throughout the United States and Canada under the brand names Wonderful, Paramount Farms and Trader Joe's. The CDC on Wednesday advised consumers not to eat any recalled pistachios that might be in their homes. [Reuters](#)

## FDA injunction forces sprout producer to cease operations

4 March - The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has forced a Virginia-based producer of soybean and mung bean sprouts to stop operating, after 3 years of recalls and violations, according to an FDA press release yesterday. The consent decree of permanent injunction was issued by the US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia against Henry's Farm, Inc., in Woodford, Va. The decree prevents Henry's Farm from receiving, processing, packing, and distributing ready-to-eat soybean and mung bean sprouts, at least until the company can show its equipment and facilities are able to prevent contamination of the products. ... Samples collected from the facility have tested positive for *Listeria monocytogenes* since 2012, and documented unsanitary conditions at the farm include insect and rodent infestations, dirty food processing equipment, and areas of standing water. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

## Mongolian livestock succumb en masse to the freezing dzud

7 March - ... Mongolia is experiencing a natural disaster called a dzud. The phenomenon, unique to the country, usually occurs after a summer drought is followed by heavy winter snowfall that makes already scarce pastures inaccessible to livestock. In the past, the country experienced widespread dzud about once in a decade, but they have recently been occurring every few years. Experts say the rising frequency is due to a combination of climate change and human activity, which has increased the size of herds to levels the grasslands cannot sustain. ... [Impassable] roads covered with thick snow and ice are making it difficult for aid workers to reach herders. More than 400,000 people in the northern and western parts of the country are at risk, with millions of livestock facing starvation in the coming weeks and months. [IRIN](#)

## Pet protection



Spring 2016 – ... [Researcher Meghan Davis's] latest findings from the Pets and Environmental Transmission of Staphylococci (PETS) study suggest that over time, pets contribute microbial diversity to the household, and this actually benefits owners. As to why, Davis isn't sure yet. "So far, research in both people and animals appears to support that higher diversity is good," she explains. "Lower diversity systems are more fragile, more likely to succumb if threatened by a disruption like a pathogen." In fact, having two or more pets was associated with a protective effect against MRSA colonization, her research shows. Based on the data, household surfaces harbored more MRSA than family pets and posed a bigger transmission threat. Among pet-owning MRSA patients, only 15 percent of them had MRSA-positive animals at home. A whopping 70 percent had the

bacterium on household surfaces. [Johns Hopkins Public Health](#)

[top of page...](#)

## WELLNESS

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### Aspirin found to reduce overall cancer risk

3 March - An analysis of data from two long-term epidemiologic studies has found that regular use of aspirin significantly reduces the overall risk of cancer, an effect that primarily reflects a lower risk of colorectal cancer and other tumors of the gastrointestinal tract. ... [Researchers] analyzed 32 years' worth of data from almost 136,000 participants [and] found that participants who reported regular aspirin use — defined as a standard or a low-dose aspirin tablet at least twice a week — had a 3 percent absolute lower risk of any type of cancer than did those not reporting regular aspirin use. Regular aspirin use reduced the risk of colorectal cancer by 19 percent and the risk of any gastrointestinal cancer by 15 percent. No effect was seen in the risk of breast, prostate, or lung cancer. [Harvard Gazette](#)

### Can bright light at night lead to obesity?

10 March - Obesity rates may surge in places where artificial lights blaze all night compared to communities where people tend to live in darkness after the sun goes down, a recent study suggests. To explore this connection, researchers analyzed U.S. military satellite images of nighttime illumination around the globe and country-level data from the World Health Organization (WHO) on the prevalence of overweight and obese people. Artificial light at night contributed to excessive weight in men and women about as much as eating junk food, the research team reports. ... Together with variables like eating habits and exercise levels, nighttime light explains up to about 73 percent of the variation in rates of excess weight and obesity in women and up to 68 percent in men, the study found. [Reuters](#)

### Fasting diets are gaining acceptance



7 March - ... In recent years intermittent fasting has been gaining popular attention and scientific endorsement. ... Valter Longo, the director of the Longevity Institute at the University of Southern California, initially studied fasting in mice that showed that two to five days of fasting each month reduced biomarkers for diabetes, cancer and heart disease. The research has since been expanded to people, and scientists saw a similar reduction in disease risk factors. Dr. Longo said the health benefits of fasting might result from the fact that fasting lowers insulin and another hormone called insulinlike growth factor, or IGF-1, which is linked to cancer and diabetes. Lowering these hormones may slow cell growth and development, which in turn

helps slow the aging process and reduces risk factors for disease. [The New York Times](#)

## Health care for seniors often goes beyond their desires

8 March - As people get older, their health care goals may shift from living as long as possible to maintaining a good quality of life: quality over quantity. In many cases, the medical treatment older people receive often doesn't reflect this change in priorities. ... Among other things, the researchers found five key areas where too many older people continue to receive treatments that don't meet established guidelines or, often, their own goals and preferences. Two of the five have to do with preventive care that may not benefit seniors: screening for breast and prostate cancer. The other three address care at the end of life: late referral to hospice care, time in the intensive care unit in the last six months of life, and the placement of feeding tubes in patients with dementia. [NPR](#)

## Peanut allergy theory backed up by new research

5 March - The effects of eating peanut products as a baby to avoid the risk of allergy have been backed up by new research. In 2015, a study claimed early exposure to peanut products could cut the risk of allergy by 80%. Now researchers say "long-lasting" allergy protection can be sustained - even when the snacks are later avoided for a year. ... Lead author Prof Gideon Lack said ... that part of the problem was that people lived in a "culture of food fear". "I believe that this fear of food allergy has become a self-fulfilling prophecy, because the food is excluded from the diet and, as a result, the child fails to develop tolerance." [BBC News](#)

## The always hungry teenage boy

7 March - ... In January, when the recently revised Dietary Guidelines for Americans came out, adolescent boys were specifically mentioned in a slightly unexpected context: "Some individuals, especially teen boys and adult men, also need to reduce overall intake of protein foods by decreasing intakes of meats, poultry and eggs, and increasing amounts of vegetables or other underconsumed food groups. ... The dietary guidelines include graphs of what people in different age groups eat. ... No one will be surprised to hear that when it comes to vegetables, both males and females of all ages eat significantly less than what is recommended. For protein, the graphs look very different. For males, intake rises steadily from the 9- to 13-year-old category up through 31- to 50-year-olds, so that by the time they reach late adolescence and young adulthood, males report eating significantly more protein than recommended. [The New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

## Democratic Republic of the Congo: Once upon a time it was Kin la belle

3 March - According to estimates by UN-Habitat, the UN agency concerned with sustainable urban development, 390,000 people pour into Kinshasa each year to escape war and poverty, but also to study or to follow a dream. ... This year Kinshasa made it into the top three of African mega-cities, third after Cairo and Lagos, in a region with the world's highest rate of urbanisation. According to forecasts, by the year 2035, half of all Africans will live in urban areas. And yet already, two inhabitants out of three in Africa's cities live in shantytowns. The action plan from a recent finance for development conference in Addis Ababa warned that the too-rapid demographic boom could undermine already fragile urban areas, especially in terms of water infrastructure and waste disposal services, increasing the risk of epidemics. [IRIN](#)

## UN says 34 countries don't have enough food for their people

9 March - Thirty four countries — nearly 80 percent of them in Africa — don't have enough food for their people because of conflicts, drought and flooding, according to a U.N. report released Wednesday. The Food and Agriculture Organization's Crop Prospects and Food Situation report said conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and the Central African Republic have taken a heavy toll on agricultural production, worsening the humanitarian crisis in those countries. And the impact of these conflicts extends to neighboring countries that are hosting refugees, straining food resources in those countries, it said. [ABC News](#)

[top of page...](#)

## Iraq: 'Catastrophic' - US raises alarm over perilous Mosul Dam

9 March - The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations today left a "chilling" briefing about the danger posed by Iraq's Mosul Dam and called on the international community to realize the "magnitude of the problem and the importance of readiness to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe of epic proportions." The briefing from geotechnical experts said the dam, already described nearly a decade ago as the "most dangerous dam in the world," now faces a "serious and unprecedented risk of catastrophic failure with little warning." The

Mosul Dam ... has been a danger ever since it was constructed in the mid-1980s on unstable foundation. But officials fear that in recent years the problem has gotten much worse as the terror group ISIS was able to temporarily take control of the dam and may have interfered with the constant, massive grouting operation that is necessary to keep the dam functional. ... In a worst case scenario, should the dam breach, it could send a flood wave several stories high into Mosul and inundate cities with devastating effect as far down the Tigris as Baghdad, more than 200 miles away.

[ABC News](#)

## ISIS detainee tells U.S. of militants' plan to use mustard gas

9 March - An Islamic State detainee currently in American custody at a temporary detention facility in Erbil, Iraq, is a specialist in chemical weapons whom American military officials are questioning about the militant Sunni group's plans to use the banned substances in Iraq and Syria, defense officials said. ... Mr. al-Afari ... has, under interrogation, provided his captors with details about how the group had weaponized mustard gas into powdered form and loaded it into artillery shells, the officials said. One official said that the gas was not concentrated enough to kill anyone, but that it could maim people. [The New York Times](#)

## Saudi Arabia reports 2 MERS cases, 1 fatal

9 March - A healthcare-related MERS-CoV cluster in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia, has grown by 1 case to 14 cases in less than a week, and a man in Jeddah has died from the disease, the Saudi Ministry of Health (MOH) reported today. The agency also noted that a previously reported patient died from his infection. ... Neither of today's newly reported patients are healthcare workers. Saudi Arabia has already had 20 MERS cases so far this month, the same number the MOH confirmed for all of February.

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

## Syria: No way out - How Syrians are struggling to find an exit

10 March - Over the last five years, close to 4.8 million Syrians have fled the conflict in their country by crossing into Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. But as the war drags on, neighbours are sealing their borders. Forced from their homes by airstrikes and fighting on multiple fronts, the vast majority of Syrian asylum seekers now have no legal escape route. Earlier this week, EU leaders reached a hard-won deal with Turkey aimed at ending a migration crisis that has been building since last year, and that in recent weeks has seen tens of thousands of migrants and refugees stranded in Greece. But the agreement turns a blind eye to the fact that even larger numbers of asylum seekers are stranded back in Syria, unable to reach safety. [IRIN](#)

[top of page...](#)

## Brain drain: the neglected mental health of refugees in Europe

9 March - ... [A] study published by the German Federal Chamber of Psychotherapists last September estimated that as many as half of the refugees living in Germany ... have mental health issues. Besides depression, the most common problem is PTSD. But according to the study, only four percent of PTSD sufferers are receiving treatment. ... [The Berlin Centre for Torture Victims's (BZFO)] psychologists say they've seen positive results from the use of relatively new methods like Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET), first used to treat Sudanese child soldiers. Patients recall their experiences chronologically in order to crystallise the trauma as a past event and prevent it from haunting them in the present. The method's relative simplicity means it can be administered by professionals with only basic training.

[IRIN](#)

## United Kingdom: Alcohol - 2.5 million people bust weekly limit in a day

8 March - Around 2.5 million people in Great Britain - 9% of drinkers - consume more than the new weekly recommended limit for alcohol in a single day, latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show. The 2014 data predates the new limit of 14 units of alcohol per week for men which began in January. ... The ONS figures show 58% of people - 28.9 million - drink some alcohol in a typical week. This figure is lower than a decade ago but has remained stable over the last few years. Young people are less likely to have consumed alcohol in the last week than those who are older. Wine (including champagne) is the most popular choice of alcohol. ... Of the 2.5 million who bust the weekly alcohol guideline in a single day, the majority were men. The most common age group was 25-44-year-olds, closely followed by 45-64-year-olds. [BBC News](#)

## United Kingdom: Middle-aged people targeted in Public Health England campaign

7 March - Middle-aged people are the target of the biggest national healthy living drive of the past seven years, to send the message that keeping fit in mid-life can more than double the chances of a healthy retirement. Drinking, smoking, lack of exercise and obesity are the key targets of the new Public Health England campaign, One You. ... The campaign aims to reduce the 40% of deaths in England which are put down to lifestyle choices. [The Guardian](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **U.S.: Bacterial infection in Wisconsin may have killed 18; CDC investigating**

9 March - A blood infection known as Elizabethkingia has been linked to 18 deaths in Wisconsin and local health officials and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are investigating the source, officials said on Wednesday. The infection has been found in 48 people between Nov. 1, 2015 and March 9. ... Most of the patients, in southeastern and southern Wisconsin, are older than 65 and have a history of at least one underlying serious illness. [Reuters](#)

## **U.S.: Cancer death rates continue to decline**

9 March - The Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer (1975-2012) shows that death rates continued to decline for all cancers combined, as well as for most cancer sites for men and women of all major racial and ethnic populations. The overall cancer death rates for both sexes combined decreased by 1.5 percent per year from 2003 to 2012. Incidence rates—new cancer cases that are diagnosed per 100,000 people in the U.S.—decreased among men and remained stable for women between 2003 and 2012. [CDC](#)

## **U.S. health agency estimates 2015 prescription drug spend rose to \$457 billion**

8 March - Spending on prescription drugs is projected to have risen to \$457 billion in 2015 and will likely continue to grow as a percentage of overall healthcare spending. ... The 2015 increase is an increase of about 8 percent from 2014's prescription drug spending. Prescription drug spending is estimated to have accounted for 16.7 percent of \$2.729 trillion spent on healthcare last year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation said in a report. ... The agency said that from 2010 to 2014, the spending increase was due to the following factors: 10 percent due to population growth, 30 percent due to the numbers of prescriptions per person increasing, 30 percent due to inflation and 30 percent due to price increases that were greater than inflation. [Reuters](#)

## **U.S.: Michigan's Medicaid Section 1115 waiver to address effects of lead exposure in Flint**

7 March - ... The Medicaid program has a history of being used in prior emergencies to provide coverage and access to needed services. ... Governor Rick Snyder submitted a Medicaid Section 1115 waiver proposal to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in February 2016 to address the long-term health impacts from potential lead exposure from the contaminated water. Section 1115 authorizes experimental, pilot or

demonstration projects that, in the judgment of the Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary, promote the objectives of the Medicaid program. Under expedited review, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved the waiver on March 3, 2016. ... An estimated 15,000 people will be newly eligible for coverage under the waiver. [Kaiser Family Foundation](#)

[top of page...](#)

## USPACOM

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### Australia: Legionnaires' disease outbreak in Sydney sparks health fears

8 March - NSW Health is urging anyone who has visited the Town Hall area in the Sydney [Central Business District (CBD)] and has symptoms such as fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath to see their doctor after an outbreak of legionnaires' disease. Four men are in hospital with the disease, which is thought to have been contracted from air-conditioning systems in central Sydney. The men each spent time in the Sydney CBD, NSW Health said on Wednesday. Cooling towers in the area are being inspected as outbreaks are often associated with contaminated air-conditioning systems in large buildings. [The Guardian](#)

### India: open defecation

Spring 2016 - ... Despite years of effort to curb it, the practice of relieving oneself outside has persisted in India. ... The practice has disastrous and well-recognized public health consequences. It results in premature death from diarrheal illness. It also leads to opportunistic violence against women and girls as they search for a place to relieve themselves, often alone at night. .... Tragically, poor sanitation contributes to physical and cognitive stunting of children. ... "I think there is a real preference [for open defecation]," [Andrés Hueso, policy analyst] says. "There are many reasons why and they vary for each individual. You can call it religion or culture or tradition or some kind of disgust of having to handle feces. So a lot of people prefer to go somewhere, drop it and leave instead of having it near the house and having to figure out what to do when [the toilet pit] fills up." [Johns Hopkins Public Health](#)

### South Korea considers approval of North Korea tuberculosis aid despite sanctions

10 March - South Korea is considering allowing a shipment tuberculosis medication to North Korea, a government official said on Thursday, despite newly imposed sanctions against the reclusive state for its recent nuclear test and rocket launch. The World Health

Organization says 20 in every 100,000 North Koreans died of tuberculosis in 2014, more than five times the rate of South Korea. The Eugene Bell Foundation, a non-profit group, said its shipment of medicine intended for the North has been held back at a South Korean port for a month. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

**USSOUTHCOM**

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## Lottery approach to health care for women in Latin America is putting thousands of lives at risk

7 March - The lives of millions of women and girls across Latin America are at the mercy of “lottery-style” health care systems that prioritize religious doctrine and stereotypes over the lives of patients, Amnesty International said in a new report. The study explores access to sexual and reproductive health care for women in eight countries. It reveals that access to basic rights such as contraception, safe abortions or sterilizations usually depends on the wealth of the patient and the personal and religious views of the health professionals or public officials. “Tragically, for women across Latin America, receiving life-saving medical treatment depends on the good will of a health professional or the depth of her pockets. [Amnesty International](#)

## Uruguay: Dengue fever

10 March - On 1 March 2016, the National IHR Focal Point of Uruguay provided PAHO/WHO with an update on the country’s ongoing dengue outbreak. Since the confirmation of the first autochthonous case (see DON published on 25 February), Uruguay has been experiencing a sustained increase in the number of notifications of suspected and confirmed cases (570 and 17, respectively). The majority of cases have occurred in three departments: Montevideo (59%), Canelones (17%) and Salto (4%). All confirmed cases were positive for dengue virus by reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR). The serotype circulating is DEN 1. [WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

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