

14 October 2016

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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Medical Cost Avoidance Model

The Medical Cost Avoidance Model

(MCAM) was originally developed in 1998 and updated in 2005. The MCAM became a publicly available web application in 2013 and was last updated to include occupational fields in 2016.

The MCAM is a web accessible application that provides the information needed to make informed decisions based on anticipated cost avoidance benefits. It predicts medical and lost time costs such as; average clinic costs, average daily hospital costs, and expected lost time, fatality, and replacement training costs for active component Army personnel affected by injury or illness.



U.S. MILITARY

And the fattest U.S. military service is ...

9 October - The U.S. military is fatter than ever, and the Army is leading the way with more than one in 10 soldiers considered clinically overweight, according to new Defense Department data obtained by Military Times. Coming in a close second is the Air Force, followed by the Navy. Marines appear to be the fittest service members in today's force. Yet despite the Corps' culture of fitness and vigor, more than 4,800 Marines appear to be heavier than regulations allow. These previously undisclosed health statistics offer new insights into the military's growing problem with obesity and how it varies from service to service. The issue has broad implications for the health and readiness of today's force.

[Military Times](#)

Army wants to field better jungle boots in 2017

10 October - The Army wants to get upgraded jungle boots to soldiers by March, according to a program manager at PEO Soldier. Soldiers have been enduring missions in the wet, humid Pacific with boots geared toward the hotter, drier environments of Iraq and Afghanistan. The result: soggy, heavy boots. The Army has been testing new uniform designs over the past year and a half to help soldiers perform in tropical regions, and now officials say they want to take those designs to the field. ... The boots undergoing testing aim to be puncture resistant, yet also comfortable, supportive and quick drying. [Army Times](#)

Post-Hurricane Matthew cleanup begins for US military bases, surrounding communities



9 October - Fort Bragg and other military installations in the Southeast were cleaning up and getting back to normal Sunday after Hurricane Matthew roared through the area over the weekend before turning into the Atlantic. Fort Bragg, located near Fayetteville, N.C., resumed normal operations at noon Sunday at most facilities, including

Womack Army Medical Center, although some including the South Post Food Court and the Pope Exchange remained closed due to damage or flooding. A statement on Facebook said a "liberal leave policy" would be in effect for those who could not get to work.

[Stars and Stripes](#)

PTSD likely to remain a casualty of war for veterans, active military

9 October - ... [Researchers] developed a simulation model to project the prevalence of PTSD by 2025 among military personnel and veterans and to find out what policies actually reduce the burden. ... In an optimistic scenario where 1 percent of all military personnel are

What's New for the 2016-2017 Flu Season: Recommendations for Children

For the 2016-2017 flu season, several new recommendations have been identified that particularly impact flu vaccination for children. During this COCA call, subject matter experts from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will highlight this critical information and discuss strategies that primary care providers and medical subspecialists can use to improve flu prevention and control in children.

CE Free Continuing Education

Date: October 27, 2016

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Participate by Webinar

deployed to combat zones (which reflects deployment in 2014) that no war happens in the next decade, we estimate that 7 percent of military personnel and 10 percent of veterans will have PTSD by 2025. But that could increase to 20 percent in the military and more than 11 percent among veterans in 2025 if the U.S. gets involved in a war requiring 5 percent deployment of all military personnel on battlefield. ... We also estimated the delay in mitigating the effects of a hypothetical war. Let's assume that the U.S. involves in a five-year war with 10 percent troop deployment (similar to the maximum deployment in Iraq in 2008). After the end of this hypothetical war, it will take about 40 years for PTSD prevalence to go back to its initial rate. ... We found that, before and during wars, prevention interventions (focusing on resiliency-related training) are the most effective policy to decrease the prevalence of PTSD. Improving resiliency can work as a "vaccine" or early treatment before the onset of the cascading effects of PTSD. [Newsweek](#)

Self harm may predict suicide in vets

7 October - Past diagnoses of self-inflicted injuries, bipolar disorder, major depression, and substance misuse are the strongest predictors of suicide among veterans, researchers found. Compared "with service members who were never deployed, hazard rates of suicide ... were lower among the currently deployed (HR 0.50, 95% CI 0.40–0.61) but significantly higher in the quarters following first deployment (HR 1.51 [1.17–1.96]," Yu-Chu Shen, PhD, and colleagues reported. ... "The hazard rate of suicide increased within the first year of separation from the military (HR 2.49, 95% CI 2.12–2.91), and remained high for those who had separated from the military 6 or more years ago (HR 1.63, 1.45–1.82)," they wrote. The retrospective study analyzed U.S. military personnel data from "all active uniformed personnel in the Marine Corps, Air Force, Navy, and Army between 2001 and 2011, totaling 3,795,823 service personnel and 4,492 suicides." A history of self-inflicted injury was the strongest predictor of suicide among veterans who had been deployed, with these veterans having a more than twofold higher risk of suicide than those never deployed (HR 2.31, 95% CI 1.84-2.89, P<0.0001)", they wrote. [MedPage Today](#)

Update: Diagnoses of overweight and obesity, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2011–2015

September 2016 - Excessive weight and body fat among currently serving active component members have a detrimental effect on operational effectiveness and increase the risk of both acute and chronic health effects related to overweight and obesity. During 2011–2015, the number and prevalence of active component members who received at least one clinical overweight diagnosis increased steadily (2011: n=71,168; 4.5%; 2015: n=113,958; 7.8%). Annual prevalences of clinical overweight increased most rapidly between 2011 and 2013, then remained relatively stable for the remainder of the surveillance period. Continued emphasis on improving "nutritional fitness" as well as physical fitness should continue as a priority of military medical and line leaders at every level.

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site:

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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Updated guidelines for severe TBI still have holes

7 October - New guidelines for the management of severe traumatic brain injury (TBI) provide an update of all available evidence and recommendations since the third edition of the guidelines was published in 2007, researchers reported -- but, sadly, it lacks answers to many key clinical questions. ... [T]he guidelines include 14 new or changed recommendations and 14 unchanged recommendations. Evidence to support seven previous recommendations did not meet current standards, experts said. Despite major developments in the management of severe TBI, however, the guidelines do not include recommendations in many key areas because of a lack of evidence. As a result, the guidelines should not be considered a complete protocol for clinical use, the authors said.

[MedPage Today](#)

Vets are still dying from burn-pit illnesses, advocates say

6 October - Veterans exposed to burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan are begging government leaders and the public to keep paying attention to their crippling health problems. "We write because these veterans are seriously ill, dying or have passed away, and more must be done," a group of 700 veterans and family members with Burn Pits 360 wrote in an open letter to President Barack Obama on Thursday. ... The letter comes just days after a Government Accountability Office report found shortfalls in the Defense Department's monitoring of burn-pit victims. ... It also calls for significant changes in how the National Airborne Hazards Open Burn Pit Registry is administered, to allow more families to record veterans' post-service problems. ... More than 81,000 veterans and current service members are in the registry, reporting illnesses from respiratory fatigue to rare cancers and neurological disorders. [Military Times](#)

With electronic health record on the way, DHA expands what it means to be 'interoperable'

13 October - As the Defense Health Agency prepares for the initial launch of a new electronic health record in the next few months, the Pentagon says it's broadening its definition of interoperability. Rear Adm. Raquel Bono, director of the Defense Health Agency, said she's "widened her aperture" on what interoperability means. ... "I started realizing that interoperability meant being able to share in a bi-directional manner...health data information with our commercial and private hospitals that help take care of our beneficiaries." For Bono, interoperability starts within military medical treatment facilities and hospitals. To that end, DHA is making sure that the hundreds of programs and devices military hospitals use and speak the same language as the forthcoming electronic health record, Bono said. The new EHR must be able to interface with forward-deployed elements within the military health system and within different combatant commands, in addition to medical centers at VA or private facilities. [Federal News Radio](#)

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GLOBAL

Prior bed occupants may raise risk for hospital *C diff*

11 October - Patients who occupy hospital beds in which the prior occupant received antibiotics may be more likely to develop *Clostridium difficile* infection (CDI). ... While the increase in associated risk is small, the study's authors suggest the findings provide more evidence that antibiotic use in hospitals can increase host susceptibility to CDI—the most common cause of hospital-associated diarrhea—even when patients don't themselves directly receive antibiotics. And that's another argument, they say, for the value of antibiotic stewardship. [CIDRAP](#)

Progress toward global eradication of dracunculiasis — January 2015–June 2016

14 October - ... The number of new cases of dracunculiasis (Guinea worm disease) occurring worldwide has decreased each year since 1986, when the World Health Assembly declared global elimination as a goal, from an estimated 3.5 million in 1986 to 22 in 2015. The number of dracunculiasis cases reported worldwide during 2015 declined by 83% compared with 2014, but increased by 25% in January–June 2016 compared with January–June 2015. Despite missing earlier target dates for global dracunculiasis eradication, progress in eradicating human disease accelerated in 2015, although the rate of decline has been modest so far in 2016. Transmission is ongoing in four countries: Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, and South Sudan. The emergence of *Dracunculus* infections in domestic dogs in Chad and program disruptions caused by civil unrest and insecurity in Mali and South Sudan are now the greatest challenges to interrupting transmission. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Update](#)

Scientists at NIH and Emory achieve sustained SIV remission in monkeys

13 October - Scientists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Emory University have experimentally induced sustained remission of SIV, the simian form of HIV, in infected monkeys. The animals' immune systems have been suppressing the virus to undetectable levels for as long as 23 months since the monkeys completed an investigational treatment regimen. In addition, the regimen has led to the near-complete replenishment of key immune cells that SIV had destroyed, something unachievable with antiretroviral therapy (ART) alone. ... "The new findings suggest an alternative form of HIV therapy that may eliminate a requirement for lifelong daily ART, potentially improving the quality of life for people living with the virus and reducing the staggering, unmet cost of antiretroviral therapy for the 37 million people worldwide who need it," said Aftab A. Ansari, Ph.D., senior author. [NIH](#)

Study says only health workers in close contact with MERS patients at risk

12 October - A retrospective cohort study conducted in a hospital in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, after a 17-case MERS outbreak found that only healthcare workers (HCWs) who had close contact with patients contracted the virus, and their illnesses were mild. ... Testing for MERS-CoV antibodies showed positive results in 20 of 250 HCWs, for an attack rate of 8.0%. The attack rate varied from 11.7% in the ICU to 4.1% in the ED, with none of the 33 HCWs in the neurology unit testing positive. Radiology technicians had the highest attack rate, at 29.4%, followed by nurses (9.4%), respiratory therapists (3.2%) and physicians (2.4%). Of the 20 HCWs who tested positive, 3 (15%) were asymptomatic, 12 (60%) had mild illness (hospitalization not required), 2 (10%) had moderate illness (required hospitalization), and 3 (15%) had severe illness (required mechanical ventilation). ... Nineteen of the 20 MERS-positive HCWs reported having been in the same room as or within 2 meters of a patient known to be infected with MERS-CoV. The other HCW shared an automobile with a symptomatic person who subsequently tested positive for MERS-CoV.

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

Trial offers mixed view of Ebola drug ZMapp

12 October - A study today in the *New England Journal of Medicine* shows that ZMapp, the promising treatment for acute Ebola virus disease, narrowly missed the statistical threshold but demonstrated high efficacy after being used on 72 patients during the 2014 to 2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The study was a randomized control trial called the PREVAIL I, or the Partnership for Research on Ebola Virus in Liberia. In order to be considered statistically significant and a viable treatment option, researchers ... needed to demonstrate that treatment with ZMapp (in addition to the current standard of care) was better than the current standard alone 97.5 % of the time. In these 72 patients, ZMapp demonstrated efficacy 91.2% of the times. [CIDRAP](#)

Why scientists are keeping an eye on a little-known virus

8 October - When an 8-year old boy showed up at his school's clinic in rural Haiti with a low-grade fever and abdominal pain, he was told he had typhoid and given medicine to treat it. But blood tests showed something else: Mayaro, a mosquito-borne virus that may now be circulating in the Caribbean. The Haitian boy remains an isolated case. Still, the new finding, reported in the November issue of a CDC journal, suggests the need for vigilance — along with more research into why viral epidemics seem to be happening with increasing frequency, says Glenn Morris, director of the Emerging Pathogen Institute at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Ebola, chikungunya and Zika have all emerged as sudden and serious threats to public health in recent years. "We need to recognize that while Zika understandably has all the attention, it's not the first virus to move through in epidemic form, nor is it going to be the last," Morris says. Under the right conditions, he says, Mayaro could be next. [NPR](#)

ZIKA VIRUS

Florida declares new area of Zika transmission in Miami

13 October - Florida officials on Thursday announced a new area of Zika transmission in the Miami region and have called on the federal government for funding to help fight the outbreak. Florida Governor Rick Scott said state health officials have confirmed that local transmission of the mosquito-borne Zika virus is occurring in a new small area in Miami-Dade County, where the state believes two women and three men have been infected by the virus. The governor said the state's health department believes Zika transmission is only occurring in Miami-Beach and in the new area, which covers about 1 square mile (2.6 square km). [Reuters](#)

More Zika in the US as RNA vaccine gets funding

7 October - While many countries in the Americas are reporting a slowing of Zika transmission, the United States is seeing an increased rate in Florida. ... The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) released a new Zika situation report yesterday, noting that since the last report published on Sep 22, no new countries or territories have reported transmission of the mosquito-borne illness. Forty-seven countries or territories in the Americas have confirmed Zika transmission, with five countries reporting sexual transmission of the virus. ...

Yesterday the Infectious Disease Research Institute (IDRI) announced it received \$491,000 from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to develop an RNA-based Zika vaccine over the next 2 years. RNA-based vaccines use the genetic makeup of the virus and synthetic materials, which allows them to be manufactured quickly, according to an IDRI news release. [CIDRAP](#)

Zika virus highly likely to spread in Asia, says WHO

11 October - Zika infections are "highly likely" to keep spreading in Asia, the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned. Hundreds of cases of the virus have been reported in Singapore while two cases of Zika-linked microcephaly have already been confirmed in Thailand. The mosquito-borne virus has been detected in 70 countries worldwide, at least 19 in the Asia Pacific region. WHO director Margaret Chan said experts were still looking for ways to deal with the virus. In a report released on Monday at its annual meeting in Manila, the WHO said it is "highly likely that the region will continue to report new cases and possibly new outbreaks of Zika". This is because the carrier of the disease - the Aedes mosquito - is widely found in the region, which also sees a high volume of travel. There is also still uncertainty about the level of immunity in the regional population, the report added. [BBC News](#)

Zika virus infection may prevent reinfection, collaborative study finds

13 October - People infected with Zika virus may not be susceptible to Zika virus again, according to the latest research involving Kansas State University's Biosecurity Research Institute. "The research shows that infection provides excellent protection against reinfection," said Stephen Higgs, director of the Biosecurity Research Institute. ... Other important findings in the *Nature Medicine* article include:

- Zika RNA was detected in blood plasma as early as one day after Zika virus infection. It also was detected in saliva, urine, cerebrospinal fluid and semen, and was briefly detected in vaginal secretions.
- Zika RNA cleared from blood plasma and urine within 10 days, but viral RNA was detectable in saliva and seminal fluids until at least three weeks after Zika virus was no longer present in the blood.
- During early and late states of infection, Zika RNA was detected in tissues, including the brain and male and female reproductive tissues. [EurekAlert!](#)

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INFLUENZA

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

Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) Mortality Surveillance for 2015-2016 Influenza Season Week 39 ending October 1, 2016:

- NCHS Mortality Surveillance Data: Based on NCHS mortality surveillance data available on October 6, 2016, 5.6% of the deaths occurring during the week ending September 17, 2016 (week 37) were due to P&I. This percentage is below the epidemic threshold of 6.1% for week 37.
- 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System: During week 39, 5.7% of all deaths reported through the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to P&I. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 5.8% for week 39. [CDC](#)

ECDC: Flu News Europe

Weeks 36-39/2016 (5 September-2 October 2016)

- Influenza activity in the WHO European Region has remained at low levels, all countries reporting low intensity.
- Few influenza viruses were detected in both sentinel and non-sentinel specimens.
- Data from the 17 countries or regions reporting to the "European monitoring of

excess mortality for public health action" (EuroMOMO) project indicate that all-cause mortality was within the normal range in reporting countries during this period. [European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2016 Week 40 (through 8 October 2016):

- Influenza: Eleven cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at CGTC Cape May.
- A cluster of influenza A/H3 at Fort Jackson in late September; seems to have slowed by early October. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

WHO: Most recent H5N1 cases in Egypt, both in 3-year-olds, were fatal

11 October - The WHO yesterday, in its latest update on influenza at the human-animal interface, provided more details on two fatal Egyptian cases of H5N1 avian flu that its Eastern Mediterranean office first mentioned 2 days ago. Neither case is recent, but they have not previously been reported by Egypt's health officials. The first patient was a 3-year-old boy from Faiyum governorate, just southwest of Cairo. He first had symptoms May 7 and was hospitalized and treated with antivirals but died on May 20. He was exposed to healthy-appearing poultry before he contracted the disease. The second patient was a 3-year-old girl from Giza governorate, which wraps around Faiyum to its north, extending both east and southwest of it. The girl first became ill on Jul 24 and was also hospitalized. After receiving antiviral drugs for pneumonia, she died on Jul 31. She was exposed to market poultry that had died. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fifth item)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Backyard chickens linked to record high in salmonella infections, CDC says



8 October - ... The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has documented a record high number of salmonella infections linked to these domestic flocks. "This year saw the largest number of illnesses linked to contact with backyard poultry ever recorded," the CDC writes in an investigation update. So far this year, 895 people from 48 states have gotten sick, and 209 people have been hospitalized. In

Mississippi, a salmonella infection linked to backyard poultry was determined to be the cause of death of one person. ... This year, about 30 percent of the documented infections were in small children, 5 years or younger. The CDC says children are "much more likely to get sick from contact with chicken and other live poultry," so the recommendation is that children under 5 shouldn't handle or touch the birds. [NPR](#)

Dogs may be a source of community-acquired *C difficile* infection

12 October - A new study in *PLoS One* suggests that companion animals may be a potential source of community-acquired *Clostridium difficile* infection (CDI) in humans. With US dog ownership estimated to be 36%, and a small body of research suggesting that farm animals and companion animals are contributors to community-associated reservoirs for *C difficile* bacteria, the authors of the study hypothesized that domestic dogs could be a potential source of community-acquired CDI. To determine the prevalence and diversity of *C difficile* in the dog population, the authors systematically collected and screened 216 canine fecal samples from a single city (Flagstaff, Ariz.), genotyped the *C difficile* isolates obtained from those samples, and then compared the results to a global database of strains isolated from human CDIs. The investigators found *C difficile* isolates in 37 of the 216 samples, for an overall colonization rate of 17.1%, with 10% of those samples containing toxigenic strains that are known to cause human disease. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Making sense of Fort Polk horses plan

9 October - Horse advocates continue to raise questions and concerns about whether removing horses from Fort Polk is necessary, and about how it will be done. ... Colonel David "Gregg" Athey, Garrison Commander ... pointed out that Fort Polk "just went through land purchase for 45,000 acres. "This was done to expand our training area," he said. ... Creating a horse sanctuary "would be taking a huge step backwards by giving up property that we just got, as authorized by Congress." ... Col. Athey explained that the Army has partnered with the LSU Agriculture Department to assist in these endeavors and assure that they are taking proper care of the horses while administering a form of contraception called porcine zona pellucida, commonly known as PZP. ... The Army's chosen course of action determines that "the horses will be adopted, given away, sold, and relocated."

[Beauregard Daily News](#)

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WELLNESS

Coke and Pepsi give millions to public health, then lobby against it

10 October - The beverage giants Coca-Cola and PepsiCo have given millions of dollars to nearly 100 prominent health groups in recent years, while simultaneously spending millions to defeat public health legislation that would reduce Americans' soda intake, according to public health researchers. The findings, published on Monday in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, document the beverage industry's deep financial ties to the health community over the past five years, as part of a strategy to silence health critics and gain unlikely allies against soda regulations. [The New York Times](#)

How exercise may turn white fat into brown

12 October - Exercise may aid in weight control and help to fend off diabetes by improving the ability of fat cells to burn calories, a new study reports. It may do this in part by boosting levels of a hormone called irisin, which is produced during exercise and which may help to turn ordinary white fat into much more metabolically active brown fat, the findings suggest. [The New York Times](#)

Pokémon Go's immediate impact on public health: 144 billion steps and counting

12 October - Pokémon Go was an instant summer sensation that many people in the healthcare and technology industries hailed as a harbinger of apps and devices designed to engage patients in new ways. The exact extent to which it activated those people, and the promise that such tools ultimately hold for health apps, has been very difficult to calculate. Researchers at Microsoft, however, conducted a study by using large-scale wearable sensor data collected from Microsoft Band users and search engine logs. Pokémon Go players increased their physical activity by 26 percent in the 30-day period measured and, what's more, the most engaged players took an average of 1,473 additional steps daily. Those same highly engaged users, in fact, were three times more likely to meet the official guideline of 8,000 steps per day. [EIN World News Report](#)

Skip the math: researchers paint a picture of health benefits and risks

12 October - ... [T]wo Maryland researchers want people ... to re-examine the usefulness of cancer exams, cholesterol tests, osteoporosis pills, MRI scans and many other routinely prescribed procedures and medicines. ... Lazris and Rifkin want to give people a more realistic way of evaluating medical hopes and worries. They ask patients to picture a hall of people getting a test, operation or prescription. Patients might be shocked at how few in the crowded room get any benefit from the expensive care. Their "benefit-risk

characterization theater" images vividly show the odds, based on solid research. There's a sold-out house of 1,000 playgoers or concertgoers, all getting a particular kind of exam, screen or pill. Then the curtain falls. Everybody helped by the procedure or prescription gets up and leaves. Often it's only a few people. Sometimes very few. Or nobody. [NPR](#)

Tax on sugary foods and drinks backed by World Health Organisation

11 October - The World Health Organisation (WHO) has added its support to countries which place a "sugar tax" on soft drinks. A new report from the body found that raising prices by 20% or more results in lower consumption and "improved nutrition". The global health group has previously advised a lower sugar intake, but stopped short of backing tax measures. Several countries, including Mexico and Hungary, already tax added sugar products. South Africa is introducing a sugar tax next year. It's the only country in Africa to do so. The WHO said it wants to see lower consumption of "free sugars", which it said will lower incidences of obesity, diabetes and tooth decay. [BBC News](#)

U.S. dietary supplement use stable

11 October - Dietary supplement use remained stable among U.S. adults from 1999 to 2012, according to data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). ... The researchers found that 52% of respondents reported use of any of these supplements in 1999-2000 and the same proportion reported such use in 2011-2012. ... [Researchers] did identify strong trends of use among particular sociodemographic groups. The highest use of dietary supplements was found among non-Hispanic white adults (58% versus 29%-52% of other ethnic groups), women (58% versus 45% of men), and highly educated individuals (65% versus 37% of those with less than a high school education). Furthermore, supplement intake significantly increased along with age, with 72% of individuals over the age of 65 reporting supplement use (versus 40% of individuals between the ages of 20 to 39). ... Highlights from the findings included increases in the prevalence of vitamin D use (5.1% in 1999-2000 to 19% in 2011-2012, $P < 0.001$) and in use of fish oil (from 1.3% to 12%, $P < 0.001$). [MedPage Today](#)

Wrist-worn heart monitors unreliable during exercise

12 October - In another blow to wearable activity trackers, a head-to-head comparison showed that four popular heart rate monitors worn on the wrist were not very accurate, especially when people would be most relying on them: while exercising. These wristwatch-like devices that track heart rate optically had variable accuracy against standard electrocardiogram leads, and none were as accurate as a chest strap-based heart rate monitor. "In general, accuracy of wrist-worn monitors was best at rest and diminished with exercise." ... Some of the individual wrist-worn devices used in the treadmill study over- or underestimated heart rate by 50 bpm or more when, according to the electrocardiograph, heart rate was in the 120-130 bpm range. [MedPage Today](#)

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Africa: Bitter harvest - cassava and konzo, the crippling disease



3 October - Little known in the West, the paralytic disease konzo has inflicted polio-like symptoms on thousands of the most impoverished people in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other African countries. Eating insufficiently processed cassava, which naturally contains cyanide, can lead to irreversible paralysis of the legs. Konzo leaves its victims

dependent on others for their livelihood and forces them to use makeshift crutches or crawl in the dirt. [Global Health Now](#)

Africa: Malaria mapping finds 57% drop in deaths in sub-Saharan Africa

11 October - Malaria deaths in Africa have dropped by more than half in the past 15 years, but some countries still struggle with high malaria mortality rates. ... UK and US researchers combined data from the Malaria Atlas Project and the Global Burden of Disease Study to estimate malaria mortality across sub-Saharan Africa geographically from 1990 through 2015. ... Their calculations showed that from 2000 to 2015, overall malaria deaths across the entire region declined from an estimated 57%, from 12.5 per 10,000 population per year in 2000 to 5.4 per 10,000 per year in 2015. This means that sub-Saharan Africa had a 37% annual net drop in the number of malaria deaths, from 1,007,000 in 2000 to 631,000 in 2015. The share of malaria deaths among children 5 years and younger ranged from more than 80%—at a rate of death of more than 25 per 10,000—to less than 40% at rates below 1 per 10,000. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Angola: 32 probable new cases of yellow fever in Angola

10 October - The World Health Organization (WHO), in its yellow fever situation report late last week, said there were 32 probable cases of yellow fever in Angola. ... The yellow fever outbreak, which began in Luanda, Angola, in January of this year, has had no confirmed cases since Jun 23, but the 32 probable cases reported in September means active surveillance is still necessary, the WHO said. As of Sep 29, there have been 4,188 suspected cases, with 373 deaths, representing a case-fatality rate of 8.9%. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) reported 7 probable cases. ... As of Oct 5, the DRC reported 2,870 suspected or confirmed cases of yellow fever and 16 deaths, for a case-fatality rate of 21%. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Central African Republic: Monkeypox

13 October - On 6 September 2016, the Ministry of Health staff from Haute-Kotto health

district alerted the central level of suspected monkeypox cases admitted at Ira Banda health centre. The index case was a hunter who fell ill on 17 August and died in his village without specimens being collected for laboratory testing. Between 4 September and 7 October, 26 cases have been admitted and of these, three have been laboratory confirmed for monkeypox. Epidemiological investigations are currently on-going to evaluate the magnitude of the outbreak. [WHO](#)

Central African Republic, Chad, Zambia top global hunger index

11 October - Hunger levels in developing countries have fallen 29 percent since 2000, but efforts to curb hunger must be accelerated in order to meet an international target to eradicate it by 2030, according to an annual index published on Tuesday. Hunger levels are "alarming" in seven countries, with Central African Republic (CAR), Chad and Zambia experiencing the worst levels, according to the 2016 Global Hunger Index. Haiti, reeling from last week's Hurricane Matthew and still recovering from a massive 2010 earthquake, has the fourth highest hunger score. Another 43 countries, including India, Nigeria and Indonesia, have "serious" hunger levels. At the current rate of decline, more than 45 countries - including India, Pakistan, Haiti, Yemen, and Afghanistan - will have "moderate" to "alarming" hunger scores in the year 2030, the authors of the index said.

[Thomson Reuters Foundation News](#)

Niger: Rift Valley fever outbreak could spread across borders: health experts

10 October - An outbreak of Rift Valley fever that has killed at least 28 people in western Niger in recent months could spread to neighboring Mali and Algeria, health officials warned on Monday. The highly contagious disease, which is transmitted to humans by mosquitoes or close contact with contaminated animals, has infected 90 people in Niger's western region of Tahoua since early August, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). ... There is a high risk that the disease could spread to the West African nation's neighbors amid insecurity in the region, the movement of nomadic herdsman and limited health facilities in the affected areas, the WHO said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

Nigeria: 'A famine unlike any we have ever seen'

13 October - ... Across the northeastern corner of [Nigeria], more than 3 million people displaced and isolated by the militants are facing one of the world's biggest humanitarian disasters. Every day, more children are dying because there isn't enough food. Curable illnesses are killing others. Even polio has returned. About a million and a half of the victims have fled the Islamist extremists and are living in makeshift camps, bombed-out buildings and host communities, receiving minimal supplies from international organizations. An additional 2 million people, according to the United Nations, are still inaccessible because of the Boko Haram fighters, who control their villages or patrol the surrounding areas. ... The staggering hunger crisis created by the insurgents has been largely hidden from view,

partly because it has been extremely dangerous for aid groups and journalists to visit the area. But institutional failures have exacerbated the situation. [The Washington Post](#)

Sudan and chemical weapons – a serial offender?



10 October - An Amnesty International investigation that has put the spotlight on the Sudan government's possible use of chemical weapons against civilians in the western region of Darfur, may not be the only instance of the security forces allegedly launching chemical attacks. Witnesses in South Kordofan, another region resisting government control, also

report seeing civilians with symptoms suggesting chemical weapons' exposure, from as recently as April. The Amnesty report, released in late September, claimed government aircraft conducted at least 30 chemical attacks in the remote Jebel Marra region of Darfur this year. Based on testimony from caregivers and survivors, it said that as many as 250 people may have been killed. Two separate, independent chemical weapons experts concluded that the injuries and reported symptoms suggested a chemical attack from blister agents such as sulfur mustard, lewisite or nitrogen mustard gases. [IRIN](#)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan, Pakistan each report a new polio case

10 October - Despite increased efforts to eradicate wild polio virus (WPV) within the next 2 years, the weekend brought news of at least one new case of WPV in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. So far there have been 5 cases of polio recorded in Pakistan this year and 8 in Afghanistan. ... Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nigeria are the only three countries in the world where polio is endemic. The mountainous and war-torn regions have been reservoirs for the virus, and vaccination campaigns have failed in light of political turbulence in the area and violence against immunization teams. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

Yemen: More cholera cases registered in Yemen but disease not spreading - WHO

11 October - More cases of cholera have been registered in the Yemeni capital Sanaa, a World Health Organization (WHO) official said on Tuesday. The United Nations first reported the cholera outbreak on Friday. "The number of cases has increased from five to 11 people," WHO official Omar Saleh told a news conference in Sanaa. Medics were working to curb the epidemic, which has yet to claim any deaths or spread beyond the capital, he said. Thousands of families fleeing Yemen's war are living in camps outside Sanaa, where conditions could lead to the spread of cholera, including through contaminated food or

water. Much of the country's infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, has been destroyed by the 18-month old conflict ... Saleh said that more than half of Yemen's health centers had ceased to operate since the start of the war after not receiving funds from the health ministry. [Thomson Reuters Foundation News](#)

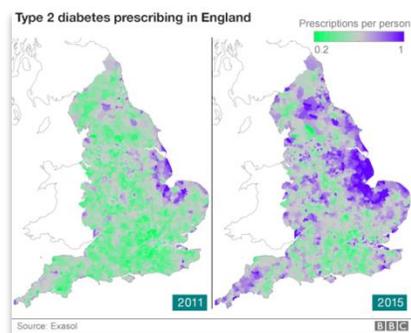
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USEUCOM

The Netherlands: Dutch may allow assisted suicide for those who feel life is over

12 October - The Dutch government intends to draft a law that would legalize assisted suicide for people who feel they have "completed life," but are not necessarily terminally ill, it said on Wednesday. The Netherlands was the first country to legalize euthanasia, in 2002, but only for patients who were considered to be suffering unbearable pain with no hope of a cure. In a letter to parliament, the health and justice ministers said details remain to be worked out but that people who "have a well-considered opinion that their life is complete, must, under strict and careful criteria, be allowed to finish that life in a manner dignified for them." The proposal is likely to provoke critics who say Dutch euthanasia practice has already expanded beyond the borders originally envisioned for it, with "unbearable suffering" not only applying to people with terminal diseases, but also to some with mental illnesses and dementia. [Reuters](#)

United Kingdom: Type 2 diabetes - data reveals hotspots for cases



10 October - Prescriptions for type 2 diabetes have risen by a third in England in the last five years from 26 million to 35 million a year, according to NHS data. The analysis of the data also shows there are hotspots for the disease in London and Lincolnshire, with the London borough of Newham having twice the national average of prescriptions. ... The data analysis also showed that the prescribing of second line drugs, used when people with the condition are

getting sicker, has doubled in five years. [BBC News](#)

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U.S.: Arkansas investigates mumps outbreak with more than 400 possible cases

10 October - The Arkansas Department of Health is investigating a mumps outbreak that may have infected hundreds of people. A total of 427 suspected cases of mumps are being investigated in the state, with the majority of them children, the department reported on Friday. More than 30 schools in the state have reported one or more student contracting the mumps virus. The health department is requiring any student with a MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine exemption to stay home for at least 26 days if they were exposed to the mumps virus. If students get the MMR vaccine, they will be able to return to school immediately. The mumps virus can be spread through coughing, sneezing, talking or sharing eating utensils, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ... The recommended two doses of the MMR vaccine is approximately 88 percent effective at preventing a mumps infection. [ABC News](#)

U.S.: Breast cancer deaths drop; rate among white women falls most

13 October - U.S. death rates from breast cancer have dropped, although the decline was still greater among white women than black women, according to a study released Thursday. From 2010 to 2014, there were approximately 41,000 deaths each year from breast cancer, the second-most deadly cancer for women after lung cancer, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. While total death rates dropped during the five-year period, the decline was greater for white women at 1.9 percent per year compared with 1.5 percent per year for black women, the study found. ... However, there were indications that disparity could be diminishing, particularly among women under 50 for whom the decline in death rates was the same among white and black patients. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: HHS enhances nation's health preparedness for radiological threats

6 October - As a part of its mission to help protect Americans' health following even the most unthinkable of disasters, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) is purchasing two medical products to treat injuries to bone marrow in victims of radiological or nuclear incidents. Bone marrow is essential to producing blood. The two products, called colony stimulating factors, stimulate bone marrow to produce blood cells including neutrophils that reduce the body's risk of developing an infection and decrease risk of death from acute radiation syndrome. Infections often occur after exposure to high doses of radiation.

[HHS.gov](#)

U.S.: Hurricane Matthew leaves trail of devastation with at least 26 dead across 5 southern states



10 October - Hurricane Matthew brutalized the Southeast coast for four days before weakening and veering out over the Atlantic Ocean Sunday, leaving a trail of devastation with at least 26 dead, over 1 million homes and businesses without power today and

billions of dollars in damage. Matthew wreaked havoc in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia before it was downgraded to a post-tropical cyclone Sunday as it headed east over the Atlantic. The death toll spans all five states: at least 10 people were killed in North Carolina, eight people including a 9-year-old boy died in Florida, four died in Georgia, three were killed in South Carolina and one died in Virginia. The storm brought winds of up to 100 mph, as much as 15 inches of rain and powerful storm surges of up to 9 feet to some areas. [ABC News](#)

U.S.: Minnesota identifies source of Hopkins Legionnaires' disease outbreak

12 October - The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) announced today that it has identified the likely source of the Legionnaires' Disease outbreak in Hopkins. A set of cooling towers at Citrus Systems, Inc., at 415 11th Avenue South in Hopkins tested positive for the pathogenic bacteria. Test results of water samples taken from Citrus System's cooling towers showed the outbreak strain of bacteria. ... Twenty-three people have been sickened in this outbreak. Of those patients, 17 were hospitalized. One person died. The last date that an illness was reported was on September 22, 2016, almost three weeks ago. There have not been any more reported cases since that date. [Food Poisoning Bulletin](#)

U.S.: Survey points to higher U.S. birth rate in future

13 October - More U.S. women expect to have children some time in the future than they did in 2002, according to a federal study released on Thursday, which could point to a higher U.S. birth rate. A survey by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that half of women aged 15–44 expected to have children, up from 46 percent in a 2002 survey. "It's not a huge increase but it is a statistically significant increase," one of the study's authors, Jill Daugherty, said. ... The overall number of U.S. births declined slightly in 2015 to 3.97 million from 3.98 million the year before, according to the CDC. The drop followed an increase in 2014, the first since 2007, the agency said. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Toxic inequality

11 October - ... Flint and East Chicago are ... just two more examples of the "ecology of toxic inequality," or the theory that higher lead levels in the blood are often directly tied to racial and ethnic segregation. ... [T]he researchers did a comparative analysis of more than a

million blood tests given to Chicago children from 1995 to 2013. Their results show that the city's black and, to a lesser extent, Hispanic neighborhoods disproportionately bear the burden of the city's lead toxicity. ... Using data from the 1990 Decennial Census, Sampson and Winter demonstrated that socioeconomic factors such as poverty and lower levels of education correlated with higher lead levels. But their research went even further, following links between elevated lead levels and environmental and housing factors. ... [They] showed that areas with dilapidated housing stock, including many homes with peeling lead paint, as well as a neighborhoods' proximity to former smelting plants were connected to higher lead levels in the blood. [Harvard Gazette](#)

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USPACOM

China: Chemical weapon for sale - China's unregulated narcotic

8 October - For a few thousand dollars, Chinese companies offer to export a powerful chemical that has been killing unsuspecting drug users and is so lethal that it presents a potential terrorism threat, an Associated Press investigation has found. The AP identified 12 Chinese businesses that said they would export the chemical - a synthetic opioid known as carfentanil - to the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium and Australia for as little as \$2,750 a kilogram (2.2 pounds), no questions asked. Carfentanil burst into view this summer, the latest scourge in an epidemic of opioid abuse that has killed tens of thousands of people in the United States alone. Dealers have been cutting carfentanil and its weaker cousin, fentanyl, into heroin and other illicit drugs to boost profit margins . Despite the dangers, carfentanil is not a controlled substance in China, where it is manufactured legally and sold openly online. The U.S. government is pressing China to blacklist carfentanil, but Beijing has yet to act, leaving a substance whose lethal qualities have been compared with nerve gas to flow into foreign markets unabated. [AP](#)

India: 'True scale' of India's tuberculosis problem: 2.8 million new cases

13 October - ... India is preparing a radical overhaul and expansion of its national treatment program to fight an affliction that kills more adults worldwide than any other infectious disease. The severity of the matter was underscored on Thursday when the World Health Organization substantially increased its estimate of the number of new patients with TB in India, to 2.8 million in 2015, compared with 2.2 million in 2014 — more than any other country in the world and more than a quarter of the world total. ... Tuberculosis ... has been curable for decades using a cocktail of antibiotics taken for six months. India brought this cure to the masses in the 1990s, and had early success in reducing the number of cases. But

that faded, in part because it failed to reach patients in the private sector, where the vast majority of Indians get medical care. ... To reach more patients, Dr. Khaparde said the government planned to provide free TB drugs and diagnostic tools to patients being cared for by private medical practitioners, as it does now for patients in government programs.

[The New York Times](#)

Philippines to open giant rehab center soon, funded by China tycoon

12 October - The Philippines on Wednesday announced plans to open in November what it called a "mega" drug rehabilitation facility, funded by a Chinese tycoon, to treat up to 10,000 patients in President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs. The news comes six days ahead of a visit to Beijing by Duterte, accompanied by hundreds of businessmen, as he seeks to forge closer ties with the Asian giant and daily airs his dissatisfaction with traditional ally the United States. Several thousand people, mostly small-time drug users and dealers, have died at the hands of police and suspected vigilantes since Duterte took office on June 30, promising to eradicate the drug menace. [Reuters](#)

Singapore comes under pressure over female genital cutting of babies

13 October - Medical clinics in Singapore are carrying out female genital cutting on babies, according to people with first-hand experience of the procedure, despite growing global condemnation of the practice which world leaders have pledged to eradicate. The ancient ritual - more commonly associated with rural communities in a swathe of African countries - is observed by most Muslim Malays in Singapore where it is legal but largely hidden, said Filzah Sumartono of women's rights group AWARE. [I]ts existence in Singapore, a wealthy island state which prides itself on being a modern, cosmopolitan city with high levels of education, shows the challenge of tackling a practice rooted in culture, tradition and a desire to belong. [Thomson Reuters Foundation News](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Haiti: Iwo Jima racing to Haiti loaded with sailors, Marines and relief supplies

11 October - An additional 150 Marines and four MV-22 Ospreys flew aboard [the amphibious assault ship Iwo Jima] Monday afternoon, adding to the 1,700 troops and four MH-60 Seahawks headed to help Haiti after a ferocious hurricane. Six days since Hurricane Matthew carved a swath of destruction through southern Haiti, U.S. Southern Command

stood up Joint Task Force Matthew at the Port au Prince airport. The amphibious transport dock Mesa Verde arrived in Haiti with 300 Marines on Sunday. Iwo Jima will arrive later in the week. ... On Sunday alone, Marines conducted nine sorties, delivering 50,240 pounds of supplies to USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Relief and non-governmental organizations teams on the ground, according to Marine Corps officials. ... Within 36 hours of Matthew's landfall, SOUTHCOM had boots on the ground. Task Force Matthew grew within days to about 170 military personnel and nine helicopters. The Mesa Verde's crew of about 375, along with 300 Marines, brought the number to nearly 850. The Iwo's arrival will almost triple the number of U.S. troops involved in relief efforts in Haiti. Mesa Verde will depart once Iwo arrives on station, but will transfer its 300 Marines and the Expeditionary Strike Group 2 staff over to Iwo first. [Navy Times](#)

Haiti: Medics dash to rural Haiti as cholera kills 13 in Matthew's wake

8 October - Cholera has killed at least 13 people in southwest Haiti in the wake of Hurricane Matthew, officials said on Saturday, as government teams fanned out across the hard-hit southwestern tip of the country to repair treatment centers and reach the epicenter of one outbreak. The storm took the lives of nearly 900 people in Haiti, many in remote towns clustered near the headland, according to a Reuters tally of numbers given by local officials. ... Dr. Donald Francois, head of the Haitian health ministry's cholera program, said 62 others were sick with cholera as a result of the storm. [Reuters](#)

Haiti: WHO sending 1 million cholera vaccine doses to Haiti

11 October - The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Tuesday that it was sending 1 million doses of cholera vaccine to Haiti, where cases of the killer disease have climbed in the wake of Hurricane Matthew. "The top priority for those people affected by the hurricane is to give them access to clean water. That is the only way we can control cholera," Dominique Legros, WHO cholera expert, told a news briefing before travelling to the Caribbean country. Some 150 suspected cholera cases have been reported in Grande'Anse department and 50 in South department, he said. ... WHO was considering giving people a single dose of the vaccine rather than the classic double dose, to cover more people, albeit it with a shorter protection period, Legros said. [Thomson Reuters Foundation News](#)

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