

15 April 2016

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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

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## Subscription or Comments

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#### USSOUTHCOM

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- PAHO reports 4,500 new chikungunya cases
- Peru: Many ICU workers' cell phones harbor resistant *Enterobacteriaceae*

**Zika Action Plan  
Summit  
Presentations**

**Controlling and  
Responding to Mosquito-  
borne Illnesses**

5.3 MB, 52 Pages

State and Local Panel  
Moderator: Anne Schuchat,  
MD, RADM, USPHS

Panelists:

- Carina Blackmore, DVM,  
PhD, Dipl. ACVPM
- Daniel Kass, MSPH
- Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH
- Brenda Rivera-Garcia,  
DVM, MPH

**Crisis and Emergency  
Risk Communication**

542 KB, 25 Pages

Barbara Reynolds, PhD  
Leonard Jay Marcus, PhD

**Using Policy to Increase  
Public Understanding  
and Enhance State and  
Community Readiness**

1.99 MB, 22 Pages

John Auerbach, MBA  
Robert B. Eadie, JD

ZIKA ACTION PLAN SUMMIT PRESENTATIONS

**U.S. MILITARY**

## Nearly 14% of veterans have considered suicide

13 April - New research examines results from the National Health and Resilience Veterans Study. A large scale national study of VA patients found that nearly 14% have considered suicide. ... The study analyzed the responses of 2,157 veterans who participated in the National Health and Resilience Veterans Study (NHRVS), which gathered responses in 2011 (Wave 1) and again in 2013 (Wave 2). Veterans completed measures assessing suicidal ideation (SI), sociodemographic characteristics, and potential risk and protective correlates. ... According to the authors, while most veterans (86.3%) did not have SI onset at any point, 8.8% had SI in either Wave 1 or 2 and 4.9% had chronic SI with SI indicated at both waves.

[Federal Practitioner](#)

## New website tracks oversight fixes for labs working with bioterror germs

9 April - Federal lab regulators unveiled a new website Friday to publicly track their progress improving oversight of safety and security at facilities working with bioterror pathogens such as anthrax and Ebola. The website shows numerous reforms "in progress," including improved inspections and better biosafety guidance for lab operators. Officials at laboratory associations hailed the move as an example of improved transparency. ... But some community watchdogs said the CDC's new online report card shows little action on the type of transparency the public needs the most: Details about violations and incidents at individual labs. Plans are moving forward, the site shows, to release anonymous, aggregate data about information such as numbers of incidents and enforcement actions in the previous year. [USA Today](#)

## The epidemiology of herpes simplex virus type 2 infections in a large cohort of HIV-infected patients, 2006–2014

March 2016 - ... Of the 5,925 participants ever enrolled in the [U.S. Military HIV Natural History Study (NHS)], 2,178 (37%) subjects had HSV-2 testing performed after 2006. The 2,178 subjects tested were predominantly male (94%), African American (43%), Caucasian (39%), and Hispanic/Other (17%), with a median age of 37.3 years. Of those tested for HSV-2 after 2006, a total of 981 of 2,178 (45%) were positive at the time of their initial tests. The proportions of those tested for HSV-2 who were positive on their initial tests markedly varied from year to year. African American study participants had a greater burden of disease, compared with Caucasians (53% vs. 33%,  $p < .0001$ ) and Hispanic/Other. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

## Army Industrial Hygiene News and Regulatory Summary

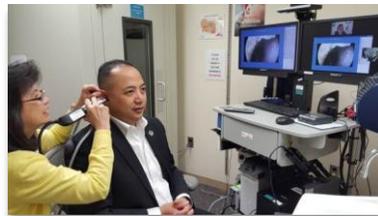
The March issue features articles on heat stress, cat poop, superbugs, daylight savings time, and employment analysis.



## Uncertain of health risks, defense team at Guantanamo keeps clear of living quarters

12 April - The general overseeing Guantanamo war court defense teams has issued an order forbidding his staff to sleep at the Camp Justice compound following a new health risk assessment on cancer-causing agents there. ... [Few] if any staff are at the crude compound built atop an obsolete airstrip at the remote U.S. Navy base in Cuba. "At this time, the potential cancer risk and non-cancer health effects associated with Camp Justice and any final conclusions (and risk management actions) cannot be determined," according to a new Navy-Marines risk assessment dated Feb. 23 that just surfaced. Baker notified staff Monday night that they are forbidden to stay at the trailer park where U.S. military defense personnel are typically housed "until I am provided a clearer explanation of the health risks associated with living at Camp Justice, and how any remedial measures will mitigate those risks." The general, however, did not forbid staff from working on the site. [Stars and Stripes](#)

## WRNMMC launches new tele-audiology service



7 April - ... Designed to demonstrate proof of concept for the Military Health System, the tele-audiology project began in August 2015. ... [The] project [is] a collaboration between Walter Reed's Audiology and Hearing Conservation Clinic, the Army Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center, and

DiLorenzo Clinic at the Pentagon. He said the demonstration is expected to continue through the end of Fiscal Year 2016, which ends in September. So far, the project has saved Pentagon staffers more than 200 work hours by conducting more than a hundred tele-audiology appointments at the beta site for the Department of Defense over the past eight months. [The Journal – Naval Support Activity Bethesda](#)

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## GLOBAL

## Bed bugs' thick skins beat insecticide



13 April - Bed bugs might be developing thicker "skins" to help them survive exposure to common insecticides. ... Insecticides are the most common way to kill them, but they have rapidly developed resistance. ... Killing resistant strains of the bug may require concentrations 1,000 times larger than those needed to eliminate non-

resistant creatures. ... The researchers say the results could explain why bed bug infestations are so difficult to control and could assist the search for more effective strategies. [BBC News](#)

## Hazardous Waste Characterization of Dietary Supplements

This technical information paper provides guidance for waste characterization of dietary supplements to ensure the protection of human health and to comply with Federal and state hazardous waste regulations.

This document applies only to waste dietary supplements at Army healthcare facilities, on-post commissary or exchange, or other on-post retailers.

This document does not apply to dietary supplements disposed by or collected from consumers.



## Chip, implanted in brain, helps paralyzed man regain control of hand

13 April - Five years ago, a college freshman named Ian Burkhardt dived into a wave at a beach off the Outer Banks in North Carolina and, in a freakish accident, broke his neck on the sandy floor, permanently losing the feeling in his hands and legs. On Wednesday, doctors reported that Mr. Burkhardt, 24, had regained control over his right hand and fingers, using technology that transmits his thoughts directly to his hand muscles and bypasses his spinal injury. The doctors' study ... is the first account of limb reanimation, as it is known, in a person with quadriplegia. Doctors implanted a chip in Mr. Burkhardt's brain two years ago. Seated in a lab with the implant connected through a computer to a sleeve on his arm, he was able to learn by repetition and arduous practice to focus his thoughts to make his hand pour from a bottle, and to pick up a straw and stir. [The New York Times](#)

## Coordinated response could reduce spread of emerging superbug in health facilities by more than 75 percent

12 April - Infection control measures recommended by CDC could dramatically stave spread of resistant bacteria. A simulation of how the so-called "superbug" carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacteriaceae* (CRE) might spread among health care facilities found that coordinated efforts prevented more than 75 percent of the often-severe infections that would have otherwise occurred over a five-year period. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

## For polio vaccines, a worldwide switch to new version

11 April - Starting on Sunday, more than 150 countries and territories will switch to a new oral polio vaccine. It will be the first worldwide vaccine change ever attempted. Polio is on the edge of eradication. There were only 74 cases last year, all in Pakistan and Afghanistan. ... [Polio] experts hope to finish the switch within two weeks. The developing world, including many populous countries like India, China and Indonesia, uses up to 1.8 billion doses of oral polio vaccine each year. By May 1, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative hopes, hundreds of millions of new vaccine doses will be moved to refrigerated warehouses all over those countries, while millions of old doses are gathered and destroyed. ... The new vaccine is bivalent instead of trivalent — that is, it contains vaccine against two polio strains, Type 1 and Type 3. Type 2 polio was eradicated in 1999. [The New York Times](#)

## Global studies reveal health financing crisis facing developing countries

13 April - Two major studies published in *The Lancet* reveal the health financing crisis facing developing countries as a result of low domestic investment and stagnating international aid, which could leave millions of people without access to even the most basic health services. ... "These changes in the growth and focus of international aid could have a serious

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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.

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impact on over 15 million people taking antiretroviral therapy in developing countries and on health services in some low-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria remain among the top threats to health." [EurekAlert](#)

## Healthcare providers in cath labs may be harmed by radiation

12 April - Healthcare workers in labs where patients undergo heart procedures guided by X-rays may be at higher risk for cataracts, skin lesions, bone disorders or cancer than other healthcare workers. ... Procedures in the "cath lab" ... "require substantial radiation exposure to patients." ... But staff members, too, are exposed to radiation. ... Almost 3 percent of interventional cardiology staff had a history of cancer, compared to less than 1 percent of the unexposed comparison group. Eight percent of lab workers had experienced skin lesions, 30 percent had an orthopedic illness and five percent had cataracts, compared to two percent, five percent and less than one percent of the unexposed group, respectively. Doctors had higher risks than nurses or technicians, and risk was higher for those who had been working more than 16 years. [Reuters](#)

## Huge leap to mass produced platelets

8 April - Scientists have made a significant leap towards mass producing platelets - the part of the blood that forms clots. of Cambridge team have grow the body's platelet laboratory. It could provide a to stop heavy bleeding, for crash. But the researchers process more efficient before



team has been trying to grow megakaryocytes - the platelet mother cells that live in your bone marrow and manufacture the clotting platelets. ... The lab-made cells produce around 10 platelets each. But each one functioning normally in the bone marrow would produce up to 2,000. [BBC News](#)

The NHS and University discovered how to factories in the new source of platelets example after a car need to make the starting trials. ... His

## Mental health care in emergencies 'not an optional luxury': experts

13 April - Mental illnesses are the world's leading cause of disability affecting millions and, even during a humanitarian crisis, treating them is not an optional luxury, experts said before a World Bank/World Health Organization meeting on the issue in Washington this week. The number of people affected by humanitarian crises has nearly doubled in the past decade, and the number of people forced to flee their homes - more than 60 million - is at its highest since World War Two. The WHO estimates the prevalence of common mental disorders, including anxiety and depression, can double during a humanitarian crisis to up to 20 percent of the population from 10 percent in normal times. [Reuters](#)

## Neurologic and optical symptoms persist in Ebola survivors

12 April - New studies of Ebola's long-term effects in survivors found evidence of neurologic, psychiatric, and optical problems more than a year after recovery, according to two presentations this week at the 26th European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases. ... Researchers ... evaluated 38 survivors who had been treated for Ebola infection at the 34th Regiment Military Hospital in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Survivors were between 25 and 43 years old. ... The most common complication more than a year after infection was headache in 28 (78%) survivors, followed by difficulty sleeping (21, or 55%), depression (12, or 32%), eye pain (11, or 29%), anxiety (11, or 29%), partial or complete visual loss (10, or 26%), and photophobia (9, or 24%). Of the 28 survivors reporting headaches, 14 also had eye symptoms, 6 experienced intermittent fever, and 5 reported dizziness. More than half the survivors (23, or 61%) were referred to a neurologic/psychiatric clinic. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## Unexplained 'genetic superheroes' overcome disease mutations

11 April - A tiny number of people in the world carry genetic mutations that were thought to guarantee the development of severe childhood diseases, but these people do not actually have these diseases. ... In the study, researchers looked at the genetic data from more than half a million people from around the world. The scientists found 13 adults who carried the exact genetic mutations that cause diseases such as cystic fibrosis, which severely affects the lungs and digestive system, or a condition called Pfeiffer syndrome, which affects the bones of the skull. But despite the mutations, these adults had not developed these diseases. ... [One] possibility is that these individuals also have other genes that somehow suppress these disease-causing mutations, preventing these people from getting sick. ... [The] investigators said they were not able to contact the 13 people identified in the study, because the researchers did not have the means to obtain consent from the people to do so. [Live Science](#)

## WHO: Better mental health care means a better economy

12 April - Improving mental health care can have a huge economic payoff, according to a study released Tuesday. The World Health Organization findings suggest every U.S. dollar invested in mental health treatment can quadruple returns in work productivity. However, most countries are investing far below what is needed for those suffering from common mental disorders, the study notes. Researchers, who studied 36 countries of all income levels, forecast that an increased mental health care investment over the next 15 years could return up to four U.S. dollars for every dollar invested. But governments worldwide currently spend just 3% of their health budgets on mental health care – ranging from less than 1% in low-income countries to 5% in high-income countries. [USA Today](#)

## ZIKA VIRUS

### Brazilian scientists find new Zika-linked brain disorder in adults

10 April - Scientists in Brazil have uncovered a new brain disorder associated with Zika infections in adults: an autoimmune syndrome called acute disseminated encephalomyelitis, or ADEM, that attacks the brain and spinal cord. ... The new discovery now shows Zika may provoke an immune attack on the central nervous system as well. ... ADEM typically occurs in the aftermath of an infection, causing intense swelling in the brain and spinal cord that damages myelin, the white protective coating surrounding nerve fibers. It results in weakness, numbness and loss of balance and vision, symptoms similar to multiple sclerosis. ... ADEM symptoms typically last about six months. [Reuters](#)

### CDC concludes Zika causes microcephaly and other birth defects

13 April - Scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have concluded, after careful review of existing evidence, that Zika virus is a cause of microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects. In the report published in the New England Journal of Medicine, the CDC authors describe a rigorous weighing of evidence using established scientific criteria. "This study marks a turning point in the Zika outbreak. It is now clear that the virus causes microcephaly. We are also launching further studies to determine whether children who have microcephaly born to mothers infected by the Zika virus is the tip of the iceberg of what we could see in damaging effects on the brain and other developmental problems," said Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., director of the CDC. "We've now confirmed what mounting evidence has suggested, affirming our early guidance to pregnant women and their partners to take steps to avoid Zika infection and to health care professionals who are talking to patients every day." [CDC](#)

### Congress sends Obama bill on Zika drug development

12 April - U.S. lawmakers on Tuesday approved a bill to provide financial incentives to companies developing treatments for the Zika virus, and the White House said President Barack Obama was expected to sign the legislation although it is insufficient to meet the challenge. The measure allows the Food and Drug Administration to include Zika drug developers in the agency's priority review voucher program. The program encourages manufacturers to study treatments for diseases that might not be profitable by expediting the regulatory review of a more lucrative drug in their research pipeline. [Reuters](#)

### U.S. officials warn Zika 'scarier' than initially thought

11 April - Top health officials expressed heightened concern on Monday about the threat posed to the United States by the Zika virus, saying the mosquito that spreads it is now

present in about 30 states and hundreds of thousands of infections could appear in Puerto Rico. At a White House briefing, they stepped up pressure on the Republican-led Congress to pass approximately \$1.9 billion in emergency funding for Zika preparedness that the Obama administration requested in February. ... "Everything we look at with this virus seems to be a bit scarier than we initially thought," said Dr. Anne Schuchat, a deputy director at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ... Fauci said it appears the first Zika vaccine candidate is on target to enter initial clinical trials in September. [Reuters](#)

## Zika study lists itchy rash among unusual features

12 April - The first full description of the Rio de Janeiro's Zika virus outbreak revealed that itching is a common feature of the disease and should be added to the case definition, and that cases were detected as early as January 2015, earlier than thought. ... The investigators wrote that they first noticed an increase in rashlike illness with or without brief fever, distinct from dengue infection, in January 2015. ... From January to the end of July the team identified 364 suspected cases. Of the 262 that were tested, 119 (45.4%) were confirmed ... as harboring Zika virus. No chikungunya or dengue positives were found among the 119 cases, and no dengue RNA was found in those who tested negative for Zika virus. Only 38% of patients recalled mosquito bites, and geographic clustering was seen for half of all confirmed cases. [CIDRAP](#)

## Zika virus and birth defects — reviewing the evidence for causality

14 April - ... Prenatal Zika virus infection has been linked to adverse pregnancy and birth outcomes, most notably microcephaly and other serious brain anomalies. To determine whether Zika virus infection during pregnancy causes these adverse outcomes, we evaluated available data using criteria that have been proposed for the assessment of potential teratogens. On the basis of this review, we conclude that a causal relationship exists between prenatal Zika virus infection and microcephaly and other serious brain anomalies. Evidence that was used to support this causal relationship included Zika virus infection at times during prenatal development that were consistent with the defects observed; a specific, rare phenotype involving microcephaly and associated brain anomalies in fetuses or infants with presumed or confirmed congenital Zika virus infection; and data that strongly support biologic plausibility, including the identification of Zika virus in the brain tissue of affected fetuses and infants. Given the recognition of this causal relationship, we need to intensify our efforts toward the prevention of adverse outcomes caused by congenital Zika virus infection. However, many questions that are critical to our prevention efforts remain, including the spectrum of defects caused by prenatal Zika virus infection, the degree of relative and absolute risks of adverse outcomes among fetuses whose mothers were infected at different times during pregnancy, and factors that might affect a woman's risk of adverse pregnancy or birth outcomes. [The New England Journal of Medicine](#)

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## INFLUENZA

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### AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 13:

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity decreased in some states and ranged from minimal to low in most states.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity remained similar to last week and was minimal with the exception of Germany (low activity) and Greece (moderate activity).
- PACOM: Influenza activity decreased to minimal throughout PACOM.
- 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 1 April 2016 (Week 13)

- Influenza activity and the number of respiratory specimens tested are continuing to decline among Army and civilian populations.
- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 13 decreased from week 12. ILI visits were 4% higher than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: Three hospitalized influenza cases were reported to APHC (Prov) through DRSi in week 13; all non-AD beneficiaries. None of the cases were vaccinated and all had underlying conditions.
- Viral specimens: During week 13, 351 of 1274 (28%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-A reported 99 influenza A-positive specimens, RHC-C reported 45, RHC-P reported 32, RHC-E reported 25, and CENTCOM reported 1.
- In week 13, 202 of 1047 (19.3%) specimens tested positive for influenza A. This was a decrease from week 12 (22.6%). 156 (77%) of the positive influenza A specimens were in non-AD personnel. RHC-A reported 99 (49%) of the total influenza A-positive specimens. RHC-C reported 45 (22%) positive specimens, RHC-P reported 32 (16%), RHC-E reported 25 (12%), and CENTCOM reported 1 positive specimen (<1%). [APHC](#)

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

During week 13 (March 27-April 2, 2016), influenza activity decreased slightly, but remained elevated in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories during week 13 was influenza A, with influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 viruses predominating. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories decreased.

- 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 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System. [CDC](#)

## ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 13/2016 (28 March–3 April 2016)

- Influenza remained widespread in countries in the western part of the WHO European Region, but most countries (88%) reported decreasing or stable trends.
- The proportion of sentinel specimens testing positive for influenza virus remained high (43%), although the total number of specimens tested has been decreasing since week 08/2016.
- As is often seen late in the northern hemisphere's influenza season, a shift towards circulation of type B influenza virus has occurred: 67% of detections in sentinel sources were type B in week 13/2016. The proportion of type B detections in hospitalized cases was 14–22%.
- The cases of severe disease reported were fewer than in previous weeks but varied between countries. Most severe cases were associated with A(H1N1)pdm09 infection and were in people aged 15–64 years.

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

## Flu contributed to big increase in overall UK mortality in 2015

8 April - England and Wales in 2015 had their largest increase in overall mortality in more than a decade, in part because of influenza in older people, which contributed along with dementia and Alzheimer's disease, the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported yesterday. The agency said 529,613 deaths were registered in England and Wales last year, an increase of 28,189 (5.6%) from 2014, with 86% of the extra deaths occurring in people older than 75 and 38% in those over 90. The numbers marked the highest annual deaths since 2003 and the biggest year-on-year percentage increase since 1968, the ONS reported.

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

## NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2016 Week 14 (through 9 April 2016):

- Influenza: One new case of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (B) among US military basic trainees at Fort Benning.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at MCRD San Diego and Fort Benning. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

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

During 27 March - 9 April 2016 (Surveillance Weeks 13 & 14), a total of 275 specimens were collected and received from 45 locations. Results were finalized for 213 specimens from 43 locations. During Week 13, 32 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, eight A(H3N2), and 27 influenza B viruses were identified. Twelve influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, one A(H3N2), and 11 influenza B viruses were identified during Week 14. Approximately 36% of specimens tested positive for influenza during Week 13. Week 14 is showing a decline with approximately 29% positive among those tested. The influenza percent positive for the season is currently at 26%. [US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

## The looming threat of avian flu

13 April - ... The 2015 avian flu emphasizes the vulnerability of farms to outbreaks — leaving the United States open to an economic catastrophe, or possibly even a human one. “If you look back to the anthrax attacks and 9/11, the investment was in surveillance for bioterrorism pathogens,” says Dr. James Roth, who ... is helping to develop a new national poultry-protection plan. “There was almost no federal money invested in biosecurity for livestock. Basically, it is the responsibility of the producer.” And what little funding there was has been diminishing. The appropriation for Aphis’s emergency-response unit, which led the federal reaction to the Midwestern epidemic, was one-fourth less in 2015 than it was as recently as 2010. ... The U.S.D.A. and trade associations have since commissioned much more detailed plans that, if carried out, could better protect farms from the flu and from one another, drawing quarantine zones among properties and prescribing what farmers should do inside their own fences. The agency also ramped up federal procedures to detect the virus earlier and cull chickens faster. [The New York Times](#)

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### VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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## Bloomberg investigation looks into antibiotics' use in poultry farms

11 April - India's chicken farming practices and how some farmers there use antibiotics could be increasing the prevalence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, according to three recent articles by Bloomberg News. The stories focused on antibiotics labeled "critically" and "highly" important by the World Health Organization. These antibiotics are meant to treat, not prevent, infections, and researchers are concerned that their widespread use could lead to more resistance. According to a February 2016 report commissioned by UK Prime Minister David Cameron, an insufficient response to antibiotic-resistant bacteria could lead

to 10 million extra deaths per year and cost the global economy \$100 trillion. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

## FDA cautions pregnant Hispanic women about *Listeria* risk



10 April - *Listeria* poses a huge risk for all pregnant women. The foodborne bacteria can cause an infection that triggers miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and infection in newborns even if the expectant mother only experienced mild flu-like symptoms. But *Listeria* poses an elevated risk for Hispanic pregnant women who are 24 times more likely than the general population to contract the infection. A major factor in the increased risk is the consumption of queso fresco and other soft cheeses. ... One way to reduce the risk of *Listeria* during pregnancy is avoid soft cheese such as queso fresco, brie, feta, camembert and blue-veined cheeses. [Food Poisoning Bulletin](#)

## Infection with pathogens transmitted commonly through food and the effect of increasing use of culture-independent diagnostic tests on surveillance

15 April - The incidence of infections transmitted commonly by food has remained largely unchanged for many years. Multifaceted approaches involving public health, regulatory agencies, industry, and consumers are required to reduce the incidence. Compared with average incidence in 2012–2014, in 2015, the incidence of *Cryptosporidium* and non-O157 STEC infections was higher and might, in part, be caused by the use of culture-independent diagnostic tests (CIDTs), which more than doubled during the comparison period. ... Increasing use of CIDTs affects the interpretation of public health surveillance data and the ability to monitor progress towards prevention efforts. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## Maryland *Vibrio* outbreak in 2010 traced to Asia



8 April - A study published in the *Journal of Applied and Environmental Microbiology* ... has discovered that a *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* outbreak in Maryland in 2010 was caused by raw oysters harvested from the Chesapeake Bay, but the bacteria in those oysters came from Asia. The outbreak sickened two people who ate raw oysters at two different restaurants in Baltimore. ... The outbreak strain of *Vibrio* ... had previously only been found in Asia. ... The Asian strain of the bacteria could have arrived in the Chesapeake Bay through ballast water released from ships coming from Asia, or from exotic oysters or fish carrying the strain introduced into the Bay. [Food Poisoning Bulletin](#)

## US military dog awarded top honor for bravery



14 April - A British animal charity has given its top award for bravery to a U.S. military service dog. Lucca, a German shepherd, completed six years of active service with the United States military in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. Marines say Lucca protected many American and allied troops. She reportedly saved thousands of

lives by identifying explosives with her nose. The 12-year-old dog and her handler, Marine Gunnery Sergeant Christopher Willingham, traveled to London this week. There, they received the British People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) Dickin Medal for bravery in battle. [VOA](#)

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### WELLNESS

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## Are there health benefits to being overweight?

10 April - A heart doctor says overweight people can be healthy. A public-health professor says the dangers of extra weight are underestimated. ...

YES: Being Fit Is More Important Than Being an Ideal Weight - ... A major 2013 study ... found that although obesity was associated with much higher risk of death, it was all due to the higher mortality in moderate and severely obese people. ... The mildly obese, or those with BMIs of 30 to 34.9, actually had a 5% lower mortality than did the normal BMI subjects ... [and] the overweight people ... had the lowest mortality and a significant 6% lower mortality than the normal BMI subjects. ...

NO: Research Supporting the Idea Suffers From a Significant Flaw - ... There is one simple but surprisingly overlooked problem with previous studies. ... They fail to account for weight history. Looking at weight at a single point in time ... misses the fact that low weight can be a sign that something is wrong—that is, sometimes people are slim because they have a serious illness. ... [Any] study that fails to distinguish never-overweight/obese people from the former overweight/obese will arrive at biased results. [The Wall Street Journal](#)

## Banned workout stimulant found in 14 dietary supplements

8 April - A stimulant not approved for use in the U.S. has been found as an ingredient in 14 dietary supplements marketed as weight loss aids or pre-workout boosters, according to research published Thursday in the journal *Drug Testing and Analysis*. A study ... detected oxilofrine, also known as methylsynephrine, in 14 products, ranging from trace amounts to 1.5 times the adult pharmaceutical dose. The research comes just days after the FDA sent

warning letters to seven dietary supplement companies informing them that products listing methylsynephrine as an ingredient must comply with federal law, which prohibits dietary supplements from containing unapproved pharmaceutical drugs. [Military Times](#)

## Marriage may help fight cancer

11 April - A wedding band may be powerful medicine against cancer, a new study suggests. Married people seem to have a marked survival advantage, the researchers found: Single men with cancer had a death rate 27 percent higher than it was for married male patients, while the death rate for single female patients was 19 percent higher than their married counterparts. ... What's more, this advantage appears to rely solely on the emotional bonds of matrimony, and not the financial advantages that marriage offers, Gomez said. "These patterns were very minimally explained by the married patients having greater economic resources," Gomez said. ... Instead, it appears that cancer patients benefit from the support that a spouse provides, such as driving them to doctor's appointments, providing nourishing meals and making sure they take their medicine, Gomez said. [CBS News](#)

## Paper tape may help prevent blisters for ultramarathoners

11 April - Ultramarathoners who apply common, inexpensive paper tape to their feet before a race get fewer blisters on those areas than on non-taped areas, according to a new study. ... "Blisters have been found to be the most common reason to adversely affect performance in ultramarathons [and] cause temporary duty restrictions in about 20 percent of active duty military personnel with them. ... The researchers studied 128 runners participating in a six-stage 155-mile ultramarathon in 2014. ... Each runner had one foot taped by a trained medical assistant who taped areas that were prone to blisters in the past or taped random areas if the runner did not usually get blisters. Each runner got a single layer of tape before the race which was reapplied before each race stage. ... While 30 runners developed blisters on the taped area of the foot, 81 developed blisters on untaped areas. [Reuters](#)

## Why are public weight loss programs not effective?

12 April - Public health programs such as First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" aren't going to win the fight against obesity because they require high levels of personal resources, according to U.K. researchers. However, interventions that limit people's choices rather than rely on their self-motivation, such as regulating how stores sell unhealthy foods, might work better, stated Jean Adams, PhD. ... "The obvious assumption of these programmes is that advice, guidance, and encouragement will change the population's diet and activity behaviours. We explore why this is unlikely to be the case and why such strategies are unlikely to reduce inequalities in diet and obesity. [MedPage Today](#)

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## Democratic Republic of the Congo: Yellow fever in DRC linked to Angola's growing outbreak

12 April - The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has had 151 suspected yellow fever cases with 21 deaths since January, with at least some of them linked to the big outbreak in neighboring Angola, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday, citing DRC government sources. The Angolan outbreak, meanwhile, has expanded to 1,751 cases and 242 deaths, with 582 confirmed cases, the WHO's Regional Office for Africa reported yesterday. On Apr 4 the WHO had put the count of confirmed cases at 490. ... In other developments, yellow fever cases have been reported in Uganda and Mauritania, but it's not clear if they have any connection to the Angola or DRC outbreaks. [CIDRAP](#)

## Sierra Leone: The women dying for an abortion in Sierra Leone

13 April - ... "Unsafe abortion is a major issue in Sierra Leone - one that accounts for an estimated 10 percent of maternal deaths in public hospitals," says Janie Benson [of] a global organisation working to end preventable deaths and disabilities as a result of unsafe abortions. ... During the recent Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, sexual violence against women and girls increased as, for example, girls were kept out of school or those who had lost parents became more vulnerable to abuse. This led to a resulting increase in teenage pregnancies. ... The country's president, Ernest Bai Koroma, came close to signing off an abortion bill last December. It would have allowed pregnancies to be terminated under any circumstances up to 12 weeks' gestation and up to 24 weeks in cases of incest, rape, foetal impairment and when the woman's health is at risk. The bill passed through Sierra Leone's parliament, but religious leaders raised objections. [Al Jazeera](#)

## Uganda's radiotherapy machine for cancer treatment breaks

8 April - Uganda's only radiotherapy machine used for treating cancer is broken beyond repair, the country's main cancer unit says. This leaves thousands unable to get potentially life-saving treatment. The capital's Mulago Hospital is waiting for building upgrades to be made before installing a new machine. It gets 44,000 new referrals a year from Uganda, as well as from neighbouring countries including Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan. Around 75% of these may require radiotherapy, the unit's spokesperson Christine Namulindwa told the BBC on the phone from Kampala. [BBC News](#)

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## USCENTCOM

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### Bahrain, Saudi MERS detections tied to camel contact

12 April - In a sign of ongoing MERS-CoV transmission from camels to people in Saudi Arabia, two new illnesses were reported in people who had contact with the animals, one of them a man hospitalized in Bahrain, as Saudi officials reported three more outbreaks in camels. Also, Saudi Arabia released information on factors that seem to be fueling MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) outbreaks in hospitals, such as a lack of recognition among healthcare providers. ... Overall, Saudi Arabia has reported 1,273 cases, 587 of them fatal, since the virus was first detected in humans in 2012. Seven people are still being treated for their illnesses. [CIDRAP](#)

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## USEUCOM

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### European mental health project targets biological roots of social withdrawal

12 April - Withdrawal from friends, family, and colleagues is one of the most painful and debilitating symptoms of major depression. It is also an early sign of diseases such as schizophrenia and Alzheimer's. Today, a large coalition of European researchers and pharmaceutical companies announced a new €16.5 million research initiative, aimed at determining whether the social withdrawal in such disorders has a common biological cause. ... Using measures such as functional magnetic resonance imaging, electroencephalogram, and blood tests, as well as smartphone apps to track social behavior, [Psychiatric Ratings using Intermediate Stratified Markers (PRISM)] will compare groups of people with Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, and major depressive disorder to determine which biological factors correlate with social withdrawal in the different groups and look for common factors. [Science](#)

### United Kingdom: Mental health services turn away 23% of under-18s referred to them

11 April - Mental health services turn away nearly a quarter of the children and young people who come to them for help, new research has revealed. A report from the liberal thinktank CentreForum shows that mental healthcare providers refuse to treat an average of 23% of the under-18s referred to them by concerned parents, GPs, teachers and others. The analysis also reveals that the longest waiting times endured by users of child and adolescent mental health services have doubled in the last two years, with waiting times of up to two

and a half years reported. Among the reasons reported for turning under-18s away included services feeling they lacked the capacity to deal with the problem, the child or young person not having being unwell for a long enough period of time or their condition not yet being serious enough. [The Guardian](#)

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## **USNORTHCOM**

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### **Canada: Suicides plague Attawapiskat First Nation in Canada**

11 April - ... Since September, 101 people in the Attawapiskat First Nation, a remote aboriginal community with about 2,000 residents, have attempted suicide. That is about 5 percent of its population. There were an astonishing 11 suicide attempts on Saturday alone. ... Overwhelmed, the chief and the council of the Attawapiskat community have declared a state of emergency. It was more of a call for help than a legal measure. ... Grand Chief Fiddler said there had been no clear pattern to the recent suicide attempts. Men and women, young and old have tried to kill themselves. ... On Monday, Health Canada, a federal department, said it was sending two mental health counselors to the area and working with a regional health authority. The province of Ontario is flying in a team of mental health nurses and social workers. Its minister of health will travel to Attawapiskat later this week. [The New York Times](#)

### **Puerto Rico: Evidence of chikungunya infection found in blood donations**

12 April - A study of blood donated during the peak of Puerto Rico's 2014 chikungunya epidemic found that 1.9% of individual donations were positive for chikungunya RNA. ... Researchers grouped 26,672 individual blood samples donated between Jun 20 and Dec 31, 2014, into minipools, each containing 16 samples. Of 1,667 minipools, 161 (9.7%) were positive for chikungunya RNA ... Most of the positive samples (125, or 78%) had high viral loads ... The likelihood of asymptomatic blood donors, the high viral RNA loads in samples, and variable testing results make chikungunya transmission via blood donation highly probable, the authors said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

### **U.S.: Can hepatitis B and C be eliminated?**

12 April - National Academies of Sciences sets ambitious goal to eliminate both hepatitis types as public health problems in the U.S. The U.S. has the "opportunity and responsibility" to lead a global action against hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV), according to a new report. ... The promise for HBV elimination rests on the success and efficacy of

vaccines, which convey 95% immunity. According to the report, a combination of comprehensive disease surveillance, immunization registries, reduction of HBV infection stigma, and improved screening are all essential for HBV elimination. ... While there is no vaccine for HCV, new therapies do offer a cure for the most patients. [Federal Practitioner](#)

## **U.S.: Early reports show mumps on the rise in 2016, including on campuses**

8 April - Recent headlines about US college mumps outbreaks appear to herald the start to a busy year for the disease and underscore the ongoing challenges that campuses face. While mumps hit a low point of 229 cases in 2011, in the past 2 years, the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recorded more than 1,000 cases annually. In updating its numbers yesterday, the CDC said that, as of Apr 1, public health departments have reported 467 mumps cases already this year. Although mumps cases have seen a sharp decline since the CDC began recommending a two-dose vaccine prevention plan in 1988, outbreaks are still prevalent, particularly in high-contact social settings like college campuses. Mumps is transmittable through the air or by touching unwashed, contaminated surfaces, and the rising cases bring into question vaccination practices, waning immunity, and college healthcare. [CIDRAP](#)

## **U.S.: Elizabethkingia outbreak spreads; source still a mystery**

12 April - The Illinois Department of Public Health confirmed one case of Elizabethkingia in a resident who died earlier this year. The individual had the same strain of Elizabethkingia that has been confirmed in 57 patients in Wisconsin since November. Eighteen of those individuals have died. All of those infected had "at least one serious underlying illness" and most are older than 65, according to the Wisconsin of Health Services. It's unknown whether the deaths were caused by the infection, the existing health conditions or the combination of both. [CNN](#)

## **U.S.: EPA - No changes to federal lead water rule until next year**

13 April - The Environmental Protection Agency's top water regulator said Wednesday that officials are working urgently to strengthen a federal rule limiting lead and copper in drinking water - a key focus in the ongoing lead-contamination crisis in Flint, Michigan. But Joel Beauvais, acting chief of the EPA's water office, said proposed changes will not be released until next year, with a final rule expected months after that. Beauvais told Congress that he and others at the EPA "certainly have a sense of urgency" about making changes to the lead and copper rule, but added, "We also want to get them right." [AP](#)

## **U.S.: For life expectancy, money matters**

11 April - Being poor in the United States is so hazardous to your health, a new study

shows, that the average life expectancy of the lowest-income classes in America is now equal to that in Sudan or Pakistan. A Harvard analysis of 1.4 billion Internal Revenue Service records on income and life expectancy that showed staggering differences in life expectancy between the richest and poorest also found evidence that low-income residents in wealthy areas, such as New York City and San Francisco, have life expectancies significantly longer than those in poorer regions. While those differences can be chalked up, in part, to healthy behaviors ... it's unclear what other factors might contribute to the difference. ... Among men, that gap is 15 years, roughly equivalent to the life expectancy difference between the United States and Sudan. For women, the 10-year difference between richest and poorest is equivalent to the health effects from a lifetime of smoking. [Harvard Gazette](#)

## **U.S.: Maryland's 2011 alcohol sales tax reduced alcohol sales, study suggests**

11 April - Maryland's 2011 increase in the alcohol sales tax appears to have led to fewer purchases of beer, wine and liquor in the state, suggesting reduced alcohol use, new ... research indicates. Specifically, sales of spirits (commonly referred to as "liquor") were 5.1 percent lower, beer sales were 3.2 percent lower, and wine sales were 2.5 percent lower. Alcohol sales are widely accepted as a proxy for alcohol consumption. ... Alcohol is more affordable in the U.S. now than at any time in the past sixty years, according to other research. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

## **U.S.: No change in tobacco use among U.S. youth; e-cigarettes preferred**

14 April - Overall tobacco use among U.S. middle and high school students has not changed since 2011, a period in which use of electronic cigarettes increased dramatically, U.S. health officials said on Thursday. Given that most adult smokers begin using tobacco before age 20, health officials are concerned over the lack of progress in reducing tobacco use among U.S. youth. According to the latest data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Center for Tobacco Products, 3 million middle and high school students reported using e-cigarettes in 2015, compared with 2.46 million in 2014. "E-cigarettes are now the most commonly used tobacco product among youth, and use continues to climb," CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

## **U.S.: Southern California's reduction in smog linked to major improvement in children's health**

12 April - A study that tracked Southern California children over a 20-year period has found they now have significantly fewer respiratory symptoms as a result of improved air quality. Researchers examined a health issue that makes many parents anxious while pulling at their pocketbooks: bronchitic symptoms that could land otherwise healthy children in a doctor's office or hospital. [ScienceDaily](#)

## U.S.: Water with unsafe lead amounts found in hundreds of schools

9 April - Responding to the crisis in Flint, Michigan, school officials across the country are testing classroom sinks and cafeteria faucets for lead, trying to uncover any concealed problems and to reassure anxious parents. Just a fraction of schools and day care centers nationwide are required to check for lead because most receive their water from municipal systems that test at other locations. State and federal lawmakers have called for wider testing. Among schools and day care centers operating their own water systems, Environmental Protection Agency data analyzed by The Associated Press showed that 278 violated federal lead levels at some point during the past three years. Roughly a third of those had lead levels that were at least double the federal limit. [AP](#)

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### USPACOM

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## China: Rural water, not city smog, may be China's pollution nightmare



11 April - More than 80 percent of the water from underground wells used by farms, factories and households across the heavily populated plains of China is unfit for drinking or bathing because of contamination from industry and farming, according to new statistics that were reported by Chinese media on Monday. ... Most Chinese cities draw on deep reservoirs that were not part of this study, but many villages and small towns in the countryside depend on the shallower wells of the kind that were tested for the report. ... The latest statistics are far from the first about the damage done to China's underground water reservoirs and basins by runoff from farming and industry. [The New York Times](#)

## India: Fireworks disaster at Kerala temple kills 106 in South India



10 April - A series of explosions early Sunday caused by a fireworks display during a religious festival at a temple left 106 people dead and hundreds more injured in the southern Indian state of Kerala, the local authorities said. P. T. Chacko, a spokesman for Chief Minister Oommen Chandy of Kerala, said that the fireworks display had been specifically

forbidden by officials in the coastal district of Kollam but that the Puttingal temple had gone ahead anyway. One of the devices landed in the building where the fireworks were being stored, setting off explosions that leveled several buildings, killing and injuring people. ... Public safety is a huge problem in India, where weak governance frequently results in the flouting of safety rules, leading to large numbers of fatalities. [The New York Times](#)

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## USSOUTHCOM

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### PAHO reports 4,500 new chikungunya cases

11 April - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) last week reported 4,587 new cases of chikungunya in the Americas over a 2-week span, bringing the 2016 outbreak total to 41,116 confirmed and suspected cases. ... According to the latest report, Bolivia reported the largest case increase, with 1,725 new infections, for a total of 6,900, to become the second most affected nation this year. Colombia, the hardest-hit nation so far in 2016, had the next largest gain, with 967 new cases and 10,415 for the year. Brazil and Guatemala were next, with 799 and 584 new cases, respectively. ... Many countries, however, have not reported new numbers for many weeks. PAHO did report did not report any new chikungunya-related deaths, leaving that number at two. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

### Peru: Many ICU workers' cell phones harbor resistant *Enterobacteriaceae*

8 April - The cell phones of half of healthcare workers (HCWs) treating very ill children were contaminated with *Enterobacteriaceae*, with half the isolates resistance to multiple drugs. ... Researchers swabbed the cell phones of 114 HCWs who worked in three pediatric and two neonatology intensive care units (ICUs) in three Peruvian hospitals. They obtained swabs every other week for an average of four swabs per phone during the 5-month study. Three quarters of the HCWs said they never decontaminated their phones, and 47% reported using their phones in the ICU more than five times while working. The team found that half of the phones were colonized with an *Enterobacteriaceae* at least once during the study period. Half of the isolates were multidrug resistant, and 33% were extended-spectrum beta-lactamase producers. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

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