

16 October 2015

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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- Cholera in the Americas - Situation summary
- PAHO reports 3,400 new chikungunya cases

Army Vector-borne Disease Report

West Nile Virus: Nationally, 1,197 cases and 63 deaths have been reported this WNV season; 1 previously reported case of WNV in an AD Soldier from Fort Bliss, TX has been reported in 2015.

Saint Louis Encephalitis: Nationally, 12 cases and no deaths have been reported; no cases have been reported among Army beneficiaries.

RMSF: 10 cases of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever have been reported in Army beneficiaries; 4 AD cases reported duty-related exposure.



U.S. MILITARY

Rate of prescriptions by therapeutic classification, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2014

September 2015 - ... In 2014, there were 9,395,892 prescriptions written for active component service members. The overall rate was ... approximately six prescriptions per service member in 2014. Prescription rates varied substantially by type of drug and by service, age, and occupation for active component service members. Drugs categorized as [central nervous system] CNS agents accounted for 38% (n=3,606,665) of all prescriptions and had the highest rate of prescriptions (2,341.5 per 1,000 persons) among all of the drug categories. Army service members had the highest rate of prescriptions for this drug class compared with other services. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Senate bill aims to expand telehealth services for veterans

13 October - Sens. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) [have introduced](#) a bill that would allow Department of Veterans Affairs physicians to provide telehealth services across state lines, *FierceHealthIT* reports (Hall, *FierceHealthIT*, 10/12). Currently, VA only can waive state licensure requirements if the patient and physician both are located at a federally owned facility (KTIV, 10/8). Under the Veterans E-Health & Telemedicine Support - or VETS -- Act, VA physicians would be able to practice across state lines and provide telehealth services, including mental health care, to patients in their homes. [iHealth Beat](#)

Surgeon General outlines future of Army medicine

12 October - Improving fitness across the force remains a top priority for Army leadership, and the service's Surgeon General believes the Performance Triad is key to achieving that goal. A three-pronged approach involving nutrition, exercise, and sleep — the Performance Triad also includes an online and mobile tool available for every soldier. A test of 20,000 soldiers is underway. As part of the test, which will include spouses, troops will work with master fitness trainers and dining facilities will retool their menus to incorporate healthier offerings. [Army Times](#)

War vets suspect burn pits causing thousands of serious illnesses



12 October - ... Chris Lang, a Marine from Doylestown ... is among thousands of veterans who blame an illness on open-air trash burning at bases in Iraq and Afghanistan. They believe the U.S. government has failed to take responsibility for the consequences, likening the issue to Vietnam vets'

STARRS-LS Fall Pilot Study

The **Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers - Longitudinal Study** (STARRS-LS), like Army STARRS, is a strictly voluntary and confidential study that will continue the research from Army STARRS to better understand risk and resilience factors associated with behavioral health issues in Soldiers.

The STARRS-LS Fall Pilot Study will begin on October 14, 2015. STARRS-LS will continue collecting data during the Fall Pilot Study through January 2016. Continued data collection with the remaining 72,000 Army STARRS respondents will begin in April 2016. STARRS-LS respondents will be asked to complete a survey approximately every other year to assist the research team to better understand risk and resilience factors.

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exposure to Agent Orange, the toxic herbicide. Lang and others have fought protracted battles to win coverage, but the Department of Veterans Affairs has declined to declare a cause of their illness or acknowledge that burn-pit smoke may have played a role. ... The VA maintains that research has so far failed to prove a link between exposure and long-term disease. "In general, the VA needs some scientific basis," explained Paul Ciminera, director of the agency's Post-9/11 Era Environmental Health Program. Major burn-pit studies are underway. ... And since the VA opened a registry last year to track the health of exposed vets, nearly 45,000 have signed on. [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

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GLOBAL

Antibiotic stewardship program cuts pediatric *C diff* rates 70%

9 October - Children treated in a hospital that implemented an antibiotic stewardship program were three times less likely to develop a *Clostridium difficile* infection, according to a study presented at IDWeek in San Diego, according to a news release today from the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), a sponsor of the conference. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Clinical, demographic factors identify patients at risk for measles transmission

12 October - Clinical and demographic features of patients in particular regions may be used to identify those at risk for measles transmission during an outbreak. ... The researchers reviewed all cases of measles reported to the California Department of Public Health from January 2000 to July 1, 2015. Epidemiologic linkage was used to classify patients as "measles transmitters," if they were found to have transferred measles to another adult or child. ... Study results showed that coughing increased the likelihood of measles transmission (OR = 3.3; 95% CI, 1.1-9.7). Furthermore, children who received at least two doses of measles vaccine reported coughing (P < .0001), coryza (P < .0001), conjunctivitis (P < .0001), fever (P < .01) and hospitalization (P = .03) less frequently than children who received one dose or no vaccine. Study results also showed that children aged younger than 12 months (OR = 0.1; 95% CI, 0.03-0.06) and those vaccinated against measles (OR = 0.3; 95% CI, 0.1-0.9) had a decreased likelihood of being a measles transmitter. [Healio](#)

Enterovirus D68 not tied to elevated risk for death in kids during 2014 outbreak

14 October - Children diagnosed with enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) in late 2014 were not at greater risk for death or critical care admission, compared with children with other

NCHHSTP Atlas

The NCHHSTP Atlas gives you the power to access data reported to CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention (NCHHSTP). Use HIV, STD, hepatitis, and TB data to create maps, charts, and detailed reports, and analyze trends and patterns. [More about the Atlas](#)



respiratory viruses, suggests a case-control study in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. From August through October 2014, nearly 90 children who tested positive for EV-D68 were matched to those who tested positive for rhinovirus or other enteroviruses at a pediatric hospital in Canada. After adjustment for allergy and other comorbidities, the primary outcome — a composite of admission to the critical care unit or death — did not differ significantly between groups. Children with EV-D68 were at greater risk for needing magnesium sulfate (odds ratio, 2.62). [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

Hospital workers often transfer germs when removing gloves, gowns



13 October - Florescent lotion and black light revealed that health care workers often contaminate their skin and clothing while removing their protective gear, researchers say. This contamination can spread germs and place the health care workers at risk for infection, the authors write in *JAMA Internal Medicine*. ... Skin or clothing contamination happened 46 percent of the time, more frequently during glove removal. ... Contamination happened 70 percent of the time when proper technique was not followed, compared to 30 percent of the time when it was followed. [Reuters](#)

Malaria protein shows potential as cancer treatment

14 October - Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to the malaria parasite because it produces a protein that binds readily to a sugar molecule in the placenta. This same sugar molecule is also found in most cancers. Now, researchers have shown it is possible to attach anticancer drugs to the malaria protein and use it to deliver them precisely to tumors by targeting the sugar. [Medical News Today](#)

Study of antibodies in HIV patient may help lead to vaccine

13 October – The difficulty creating a vaccine against the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, has been the inability to stimulate the production of "broadly neutralizing" antibodies that can keep up with its mutations. A new study of a woman whose body makes the antibodies sheds new light on how they develop to mutate with and combat HIV. ... "As the HIV-swarm struggled to evade these potent early antibodies, it toggled through many mutations in its surface protein. This exposed the maturing antibodies to a diverse range of viruses within this single infected woman. Antibodies exposed to this high level of viral diversity in turn mutated to be able to tolerate variation, thus acquiring the ability to neutralize diverse global viruses." [UPI](#)

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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.

WSJ report: Theranos is struggling with its blood test technology

15 October - The blood test company Theranos, which has received widespread acclaim for its development of a cheaper test mainly relying on finger pricks, might not be all that it's cracked up to be. According to a report published by the Wall Street Journal, based on interviews with anonymous former Theranos employees, only a fraction of the blood samples Theranos handles are actually processed with the company's proprietary analyzer, which the Journal's sources referred to as the "Edison" device. The rest, according to the report, are processed with traditional machines. The article's sources also suggest that the small samples Theranos uses, whether collected by finger stick or by venipuncture using smaller than ordinary needles, do not always produce accurate results. [Fortune](#)

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

CDC says 17 states went beyond Ebola monitoring policies

15 October - A review today from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that 17 states exceeded the agency's Ebola screening and monitoring policies, officials noted in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*. ... The actions led to a more fine-tuning of federal guidelines. On Oct 27, 2014, CDC guidance was updated to establish new risk categories, recommend public health actions for the various risk categories, and add response steps for specific groups and settings. ... The authors said that although states have the right to set their own policies, differences can confuse the public and have the potential to hamper the flow of volunteers to the outbreak region. The group added that states can minimize the confusion by making their policies clear and easily accessible. [CIDRAP](#)

Chinese firm says plans to 'mass produce' Ebola vaccine

14 October - A Chinese firm plans to mass produce a military-developed vaccine against Ebola, even as the epidemic which killed more than 11,000 people in West Africa begins to fade. Privately held Tianjin CanSino Biotechnology Inc is investing 2 billion yuan (\$315.14 million) to build a facility in the northeastern city of Tianjin where it will produce the vaccine. ... The vaccine has been developed by a team at the China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences. ... The world already has one successful Ebola vaccine, with Merck and NewLink Genetics' product proving 100-percent effective in a clinical study in Guinea in July. [Reuters](#)

Ebola beds prevented 40,000 deaths

13 October - The global response to the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone helped avert 40,000 deaths but if aid had been offered sooner, thousands more lives there might have been

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saved, say researchers. Britain's donations of more than £100m in the summer of 2014 helped to set up nearly 3,000 hospital beds. This vital provision, researchers estimate, prevented 56,000 Ebola cases. But a further 12,500 cases could have been averted if the beds been available even a month earlier, they calculate. The UK government insists that it did act swiftly and says the international community as a whole could have done more. [BBC News](#)

Ebola: PPE experiments, training needs

13 October - ... [PPE] experiments that used fluorescent lotion in place of Ebola virus or other pathogens shed new light on contamination risk during doffing and can be a useful part of training for healthcare workers. ... Of 435 gown and glove removal simulations, contamination of skin or clothing occurred in 200 (46%), with a similar pattern seen at each of the four hospitals. Contamination occurred more frequently with glove removal than with gowns and when observers saw lapses in technique. Contamination occurred a third of the time, even when observers noted no technique lapses. [CIDRAP](#) (second subheading)

Ebola region goes 2 weeks with no cases

14 October - For the second week in a row, Ebola cases remained at zero in West Africa's outbreak region, but the threat of more cases still looms, with response workers still tracing case contacts, many of whom are in the high-risk category, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today. ... In its weekly update, the WHO said the outbreak region has now gone 11 straight weeks with five or fewer confirmed cases. Guinea is still following 150 contacts in Forecariah district. ... In addition, officials are still trying to locate 259 contacts in the country. ... Meanwhile, Sierra Leone has gone 4 consecutive weeks without a new case, the WHO said. Though all contacts in its two most recent transmission chains have completed their follow-up periods, public health workers are still trying to find two high-risk contacts. [CIDRAP](#)

Neuro complications cited in UK nurse's Ebola case

15 October - Post-Ebola complications that recently hospitalized a Scottish nurse who had initially recovered from her infection in January include a severe central nervous system (CNS) disorder, and her spinal fluid has tested positive for the virus, an official said. Scottish health officials said last week that Pauline Cafferkey, sickened by Ebola last December while working in Sierra Leone, was hospitalized and is in critical condition after suffering an unusual late complication from the disease. ... The closely watched case has infection control implications and promises to shed more light on the clinical spectrum of complications in survivors. ... Little is known about the long-term consequences of the disease, because earlier outbreaks occurred on a much smaller scale, with only sporadic case studies to guide clinicians. With more than 17,000 survivors in West Africa's outbreak, however, researchers are ramping up investigations on complications. [CIDRAP](#)

Nigerian at center of Ebola scare did not have the virus: WHO

9 October - A person who died in a suspected case of Ebola in Nigeria, triggering a scare and the quarantine of 10 others, did not have the deadly virus, World Health Organization spokesman Gregory Hartl said by email on Friday. "(The) dead person tested negative for Ebola. So this person is not going to be the source of an Ebola event," Hartl wrote. A laboratory investigation showed the dead person did not have Ebola or Lassa fever, Hartl said. [Reuters](#)

Semen can harbor Ebola 9 months after illness onset

15 October - Ebola virus RNA is able to survive in the semen of male survivors months after they recover, according to a cross-sectional study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Researchers from the World Health Organization and the CDC collected semen specimens from 93 male patients in Sierra Leone who had contracted Ebola within the prior 10 months. Ebola RNA was detected in semen with reverse-transcriptase polymerase chain reaction up to 9 months after symptoms began, although the likelihood decreased with increasing time from illness onset. For instance, all of the men who provided specimens within 3 months after becoming ill still had Ebola in their semen. For those who provided specimens 7 to 9 months after onset, 26% were positive for Ebola RNA. It is not clear whether Ebola RNA's presence in semen means that the men are infectious. The RNA could be from smaller fragments of virus that cannot replicate and infect host cells, the authors note. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

Study: Most health workers infected in non-Ebola settings

15 October - Ebola infections in healthcare workers (HCWs) were much more likely to occur in a non-Ebola hospital or at home than in an Ebola treatment center, according to a study yesterday in *BMC Infectious Diseases* that involved 293 infected HCWs in Sierra Leone. ... The most common self-reported location of infection was in a regular hospital, with 120 (47.4%) reporting such exposure. Other sites were at home (48, 19%), at non-Ebola health centers (45, 17.8%), or at other types of health facilities (13, 5.1%). Only 27 (10.7%) of all HCW infections were associated with Ebola treatment units (ETUs). [CIDRAP](#)

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INFLUENZA

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

For 2014-2015 Influenza Season Week 39 ending October 3, 2015:

- Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) Mortality Surveillance: During week 39, 5.6% of all deaths reported through the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to P&I. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 5.9% for week 39.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: Nationwide during week 39, 1.1% of patient visits reported through the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) were due to influenza-like illness (ILI). This percentage is below the national baseline of 2.0%. [CDC](#)

ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 40/2015 (28 Sep –4 Oct 2015)

- This is the first weekly influenza report for the season 2015–2016.
- Epidemiological data were reported by 38 countries, all of which reported low influenza activity.
- Two sentinel specimens tested positive for influenza A virus.

Season so far - As is usual for this time of year, influenza activity in the European Region is low. [European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

High-dose flu vaccine might give older people more protection

13 October - The high-dose version of the flu vaccine might offer nursing home residents slightly higher protection from hospitalization during the flu season, researchers reported late last week at IDWeek in San Diego. US and Canadian investigators studied data on more than 50,000 people 65 years old and older from 823 nursing homes in 38 states, according to an Oct 10 press release from University Hospitals Case Medical Center. The residents were given either the standard or high-dose flu shot from November 2013 to March 2014. Hospital admission rates were 20.9% for the standard-shot group and 19.7% for the high-dose recipients. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2015 Week 40 (through 10 October 2015):

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at

or below expected values. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Blue Bell workers detail unsanitary conditions inside plant

12 October - For the first time, former Blue Bell Ice Cream workers are claiming management ignored their complaints about conditions at their factory in Texas that was linked to an outbreak of listeria. During the outbreak, 10 people became sick and three died. The company recalled 8 million gallons of ice cream. ... When the FDA inspected Blue Bell's main plant in Brenham, Texas, in March, they found a number of violations detailed in a report, including condensation dripping into the ice cream, dirty equipment, and paint chipping from the ceiling directly above an ice cream mixer. In the years leading to the outbreak, the state inspected the Brenham factory about every six weeks and the Army, which had a \$4.8 million contract with Blue Bell, inspected it four times a year. None of their inspections revealed violations that stopped production. [CBS News](#)

Canada: Public Health Notice - Outbreak of Salmonella infections under investigation

15 October - The Public Health Agency of Canada is collaborating with federal and provincial public health partners to investigate an outbreak of *Salmonella* infections in eight provinces. At this time, no source has been identified and the investigation is ongoing. The risk to Canadians is low. ... Currently, there are 34 cases of Salmonella Infantis illness in eight provinces: British Columbia (3), Alberta (6), Saskatchewan (2), Manitoba (2), Ontario (16), Quebec (3) Nova Scotia (1), and New Brunswick (1). Individuals became sick between June 12 and September 20, 2015. The majority of cases (62%) are female, with an average age of 41 years. Eight people have been hospitalized, and all have recovered or are recovering. No deaths have been reported. [CNW](#)

Salmonella risk: Dole recalls spinach in 13 states

14 October - Dole Fresh Vegetables is voluntarily recalling bagged spinach distributed in 13 states due to possible salmonella contamination, the company said. Dole said in a press release that no illnesses had been reported and that the company is cooperating with the Food and Drug Administration. ... This precautionary recall stems from an "isolated instance" in which a sample of Dole Spinach yielded a positive result for *Salmonella* in a random sample test conducted by Michigan's Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, the company said. [USA Today](#)

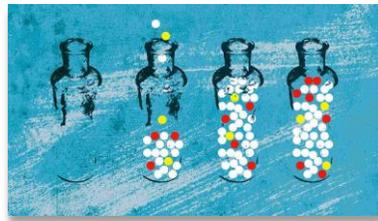
Study shows stick puncture may spur *Listeria* in caramel apples

13 October - A study in *mBio* today that was spurred by a 2014 outbreak of listeriosis in caramel apples found that the act of puncturing the apple with a dipping stick produces conditions favorable for growing *Listeria monocytogenes*, especially at room temperature. ... The team found *Listeria* increased 1,000-fold on caramel apples with sticks stored at room temperature for 3 days, but *Listeria* growth was delayed on apples without sticks at the same temperature. Refrigeration substantially slowed the growth of the bacteria, but refrigerated apples with sticks had some growth after 1 week that continued for the next 3 weeks, while those without stick had no *Listeria* growth in the 4 weeks of cold storage. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

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WELLNESS

Dietary supplements send thousands to ERs yearly



14 October - Tens of thousands of Americans are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year for problems caused by dietary supplements, federal health officials are reporting. The complications include heart problems such as irregular or rapid heartbeat or chest pain, says Dr. Andrew Geller of the federal Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention, who led the study published Wednesday in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Two other big problems are children ingesting supplements purchased by an adult, or older people choking on pills, he says. Nearly three-fourths (71.8 percent) of the ER visits were related to the use of weight-loss or energy-boosting supplements. [NPR](#)

DMAA is back: DoD names 39 workout stimulants to avoid

14 October - The Defense Department's Human Performance Resource Center is warning troops that DMAA, an ingredient found in some workout supplements banned by federal regulators in 2013, remains widely available online. Nearly 40 supplements containing 1,3 dimethylamylamine, sometimes called "geranium extract," can be purchased through online retailers, according to the center. Roughly a quarter of those products are made by Georgia-based Hi-Tech Pharmaceuticals, which has filed a lawsuit against the Food and Drug Administration, alleging it illegally seized products containing DMAA in 2013 and failed to take the legal steps required to restrict the substance. [Military Times](#)

Higher risk of surgery seen with Bayer Essure contraceptive –study

14 October - Women implanted with Bayer AG's Essure permanent contraception device were more than 10 times more likely to require post-procedure surgery than those who underwent laparoscopic sterilization, a study published on Tuesday found. The findings could cast additional doubt on the safety of the Bayer device, which was approved in 2002 as an alternative to surgical sterilization and acquired by Bayer in 2013. It has faced recent scrutiny from U.S. health regulators following numerous patient complaints and calls for its withdrawal from the market. [Reuters](#)

Military health officials consider fast food, vending machine changes



13 October - Military officials said they want to make vending machines and fast food on base healthier by changing menus and bringing in nutritionally better brands and options. ... But to change what each of those restaurants or machines carries, officials must work with the Exchanges to change the contracts, a process that can take a long time to implement, they said. ... "I'd immediately like to see menu labeling at all of the establishments on the installation" ... [Capt. Kimberly Elenberg, the director of United States Public Health Service's medical readiness and training program] told [Military.com](#). ... Another push would place products in the vending machines that align with a set of nutrition standards developed by the National Automatic Merchandising Association ... said Amy Cowell, a public health associate at the Army Public Health Command. Current military vending machine standards require that only 15 percent of the options be healthy. [Military.com](#)

Physical therapy for back pain not as good a treatment as time



13 October - Early physical therapy can help patients with lower back pain, however a recent study found it was not significantly more effective than the usual care -- allowing time for spontaneous recovery. Lower back pain can be indicative of other conditions, such as kidney stones or a fracture. Without symptoms or evidence of such a condition, however, researchers at the University of Utah found even skipping unnecessary diagnostic tests can help to alleviate the pain by reinforcing the idea that it should go away. The researchers said patients simply understanding they are being helped can have an effect on the pain patients feel. [UPI](#)

Red wine 'benefits people with type 2 diabetes'

13 October - A glass of red wine a day can improve cardiac health and help manage cholesterol for patients with type 2 diabetes, according to findings in a 2-year study published in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*. ... [Participants] were randomly assigned to 150 mL of mineral water, white wine or red wine with dinner. ... After 2 years, no material differences were identified across the groups in blood pressure, adiposity, liver function, drug therapy, symptoms or quality of life, except that sleep quality improved in both wine groups compared with the water group. However, patients who drank wine showed decreased cardiometabolic risks compared with those drinking mineral water. The red wine drinkers experienced the most significant changes in lipid variables. [Medical News Today](#)

Sitting may not actually increase risk of death

14 October - Recent research has shown sitting for long periods of time is detrimental to health and linked to an increased risk of death, however a new study in England shows that a lack of physical activity is more relevant. ... "Our study overturns current thinking on the health risks of sitting and indicates that the problem lies in the absence of movement rather than the time spent sitting itself," said Dr. Melvyn Hillsdon. ... Researchers analyzed data on 5,132 men and women who were followed for 16 years as part of the Whitehall II Stress and Health Study. The participants, none of whom had cardiovascular disease, provided information on the time they spent sitting each week at work, watching television, leisure time not spent watching television, and at work and leisure time combined. Over the course of the study, about 450 participants died. Researchers report in the new study, published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*, no associations between the five sitting indicators and mortality risk. [UPI](#)

Trends in quit attempts among adult cigarette smokers — United States, 2001–2013

16 October – ... During 2001–2010, the proportion of adult cigarette smokers who had made a quit attempt in the past year increased linearly in 29 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands; during 2011–2013, this proportion increased in Hawaii and Puerto Rico and decreased in New Mexico. During 2011–2013, a majority of smokers in all age groups tried to quit in almost all states, although the proportion of smokers who attempted to quit decreased with increasing age. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

What a nightmare: sleep no more plentiful in primitive cultures

16 October - ... Research unveiled on Thursday showed that people in isolated and technologically primitive African and South American cultures get no more slumber than the rest of us. Scientists tracked 94 adults from the Tsimane people of Bolivia, Hadza people of Tanzania and San people of Namibia for a combined 1,165 days in the first study on the

sleep patterns of people in primitive foraging and hunting cultures. Even without electricity or other modern trappings, they logged an average of 6 hours and 25 minutes of sleep daily, a figure near the low end of industrialized society averages. ... University of New Mexico anthropologist Gandhi Yetish said the research suggests 8 hours of sleep, long touted as the ideal total, "may be a longer sleep duration than can be realistically expected."

[Reuters](#)

Yes, soda taxes seem to cut soda drinking

13 October - For about a decade now, policy makers and the soda industry have been fighting about the idea of a big soda tax. Proponents say it would fight obesity by reducing consumption of sugary drinks. A leading objection by the industry is that the tax simply would not work. Those discussions were largely theoretical, because no big city, state or country had passed the kind of tax that advocates wanted. That recently changed. In 2013, Mexico passed a tax right out of the public health literature. And now the theoretical debate is becoming more real. Preliminary data from the Mexican government and public health researchers in the United States finds that the tax prompted a substantial increase in prices and a resulting drop in the sales of drinks sweetened with sugar, particularly among the country's poorest consumers. The long-term effects of the policy remain uncertain, but the tax is being heralded by advocates, who say it could translate to the United States. [The New York Times](#)

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USAFRICOM

Praying for a cure



11 October - In West Africa, hundreds of people with mental illness live in awful conditions. One organization is fighting for a new approach to treatment. This video was supported by The Global Reporting Center. [New York Times](#)

Sudan: Whooping cough outbreak in North Darfur

14 October - State Ministry of Health in North Darfur has reported the outbreak of whooping cough in El Sareif Beni Hussein locality in early September. As of 7 October, 323 suspected cases of the highly contagious disease were reported in the locality. Preparations are underway to conduct a vaccination campaign for children under five in the locality, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Sudan reported in its latest news bulletin. [allAfrica](#)

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Iraq: Cholera

12 October - WHO has received notification from the National IHR Focal Point of Iraq of additional laboratory-confirmed cases of cholera. As of 8 October, a total of 1,263 laboratory-confirmed cases of *Vibrio cholerae* 01 Inaba were reported. These cases were reported from at least 15 governorates of the country. ... The Cholera task force led by the Ministry of Health (MoH) has established a Cholera Command and Control Centre to enhance multisectoral coordination for effective response to the outbreak. ... In cholera affected areas, and particularly in the camps hosting the internally displaced people and refugees, preparedness activities have been geared up as well. [WHO](#)

Jordan: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

12 October - On 7 October 2015, the National IHR Focal Point of Jordan notified WHO of 1 additional case of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). ... The patient is a contact of a laboratory-confirmed MERS-CoV case reported to WHO on 21 September. [WHO](#)

Saudi Arabia: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

12 October - Between 27 September and 1 October 2015, the National IHR Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia notified WHO of 1 additional case of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection. ... The National IHR Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also notified WHO of the death of 3 MERS-CoV cases that were reported in previous [Disease Outbreak Notifications]. ... Globally, since September 2012, WHO has been notified of 1,595 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 571 related deaths. [WHO](#)

Syria: Treating the trauma of young Syrian refugees

12 October - A 2014 report from Unicef cited a survey that found that a third of Syrian children at the Za'atari refugee camp in northern Jordan displayed unusually aggressive behavior and engaged in self-harm. The report warned that without help, these children were at risk of drifting into crime, addiction and violence, and that some were joining criminal gangs or armed groups. ... With funding from international aid groups, [Syria Bright Future] works with women and people with disabilities, but most of its programs are focused on children. These include one-on-one therapy, in which children begin to describe terrifying memories, and group sessions that try to help children cope with nightmares and flashbacks. They learn to visualize a safe space, use relaxation techniques and confront bad memories by drawing them. [The New York Times](#)

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USEUCOM

Poland: Poisonings in Poland illustrate global challenge of synthetic drugs

14 October - ... Almost 1,000 people were poisoned [in Poland] in July and August — at least two fatally — by so-called designer drugs, concocted by chemists to mimic the psychoactive effects of marijuana, cocaine, LSD and other illicit substances. These new drugs started spilling onto global markets around 2008, at first legal and uncontrolled. Poland found itself at the forefront in battling the worldwide epidemic, which is now affecting at least 70 countries, after it imposed a ban on the sale of new psychoactive substances in 2010. ... [The] Silesian poisonings were an inadvertent consequence of an amendment to the country's drug law that went into effect on July 1 and added 114 drugs to the list of outlawed substances. As a result, drug dealers started unloading large quantities of the newly illegal substances at below-market prices and introducing new chemicals that were not on the outlawed list. [The New York Times](#)

United Kingdom: UN to probe the UK's deadly disability cuts

12 October - The UK has become the first country in the world to be placed under investigation by the United Nations for violating the human rights of people with disabilities amid fears that thousands may have died as a consequence of controversial welfare reforms and austerity-driven cuts to benefits and care budgets. ... Figures released by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in August showed that 2,380 people died between 2011 and 2014 shortly after having their benefits stopped. A further 7,200 people also died after having their benefits reduced and being put in groups to help them prepare for a return to work. ... Iain Duncan Smith, the minister responsible for welfare reform since 2010, argues that the government's changes to the system are incentivising work, tackling a deep-rooted culture of benefit dependency, and supporting hundreds of thousands of disabled people in finding jobs. [Al Jazeera](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Both US rotavirus vaccines shown 80% effective in kids

9 October - Vaccine effectiveness (VE) for both US-approved rotavirus vaccines— the five-strain (RV5) and single-strain (RV1) versions—is 80% in children, according to a study

published yesterday in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. ... The authors conclude, "In this large, geographically and demographically diverse sample of US children, we observed that RV5 and RV1 rotavirus vaccines each provided a lasting, and broadly heterologous protection against rotavirus gastroenteritis." [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

U.S.: Excessive alcohol use continues to be drain on American economy

15 October - Excessive alcohol use continues to be a drain on the American economy, according to a study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Excessive drinking cost the U.S. \$249 billion in 2010, or \$2.05 per drink, a significant increase from \$223.5 billion, or \$1.90 per drink, in 2006. Most of these costs were due to reduced workplace productivity, crime, and the cost of treating people for health problems caused by excessive drinking. [PR Newswire](#)

U.S.: Fracking tied to premature births

14 October - Researchers have found that living near hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, operations is associated with premature births. Scientists studied records of 10,496 singleton births by 9,384 mothers from 2009 to 2013 in Pennsylvania where fracking is conducted. They recorded gestational time, birth weight, five-minute Apgar score and size for gestational age. ... The 25 percent of mothers most exposed to fracking were 40 percent more likely to give birth preterm (after less than 37 weeks of gestation) than the quarter least exposed. There was no association with Apgar score or being small for gestational age. [The New York Times](#)

U.S.: Native Americans turn to 'safe stars' for help with sexual assaults

13 October - One in three Native American women will be sexually assaulted during her life, and even fewer will actually report the crime, per the Justice Department. Female elders in Wyoming want to change that. On the Wind River Indian Reservation in central Wyoming, there's not a single trained sexual assault nurse examiner. ... The cultural insensitivity of non-tribal hospitals leads a lot of women not to report. ... [More] women might report with the help of an organization called Safe Stars. Safe Stars is a national group that allows victims to call a respected tribal woman in the community for confidential emergency care and evidence collection. ... [Even] if Safe Stars can't get more convictions, Jacobson says it'll do something equally important: give victims a circle of respected women to protect them [NPR](#)

U.S.: Pet turtles implicated in multistate Salmonella outbreaks

12 October - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently announced that two *Salmonella* outbreaks linked to contact with small pet turtles have sickened 51

people in 16 states, half of them children 5 years old and younger. ... Illnesses in the latest outbreak have been reported since Jan 22. Among the 34 cases with available information, 15 hospitalizations (44%) have been reported. Interviews with 34 sick patients revealed that 20 (59%) had contact with small turtles or their environment, such as water from their habitats, before they got sick. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S.: Planned Parenthood revises reimbursement policy after video uproar

13 October - Planned Parenthood would no longer accept reimbursement for fetal tissue donated for medical research after abortions, the women's healthcare provider said on Tuesday, a response to allegations by anti-abortion campaigners that it profited from abortions. The policy change was announced amid a months-long controversy after the release of videos secretly recorded by anti-abortion activists that grew into demands by some Republicans in Congress to cut off funding to the group, even threatening a government shutdown last month. Planned Parenthood said the videos inflamed anti-abortion sentiment in the United States and in Congress by falsely portraying its participation in tissue donation programs for medical research. The organization said it did not sell the tissue and only accepted reimbursement for handling it - a cost it would now bear itself. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Prescription opioid misuse and deaths increase

14 October - The proportion of people reporting use of prescription opioids for reasons other than medical necessity fell between 2003 and 2013, but use disorders and overdose deaths increased, according to a new study. ... The researchers used survey data from 472,000 people who reported their nonmedical use and use disorders related to opioids between 2003 and 2012, as well as national vital statistics on cause of death for the same period. The rate of nonmedical use of opioids – not using a prescription as directed, or using a prescription that was written for someone else – fell from 5.4 to 4.9 percent over the 10-year period, but during the same time, the rate of use disorders rose from 0.6 to 0.9 percent. The number of people reporting opioid use for more than 200 days also increased. ... Drug overdose deaths involving prescription opioids increased from 4.5 to 7.8 per 100,000 people, according to national vital statistics. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Study shows doubling of drug-resistant *E coli* incidence in Southeast

14 October - Infections from extended-spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL)-producing *Escherichia coli* bacteria—which are highly resistant to antibiotics—have almost doubled in community hospitals, according to a study yesterday in *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*. A Duke University team analyzed data from health records at 26 community hospitals in the southeastern United States from 2009 through 2014. The researchers found that the incidence of ESBL-producing *E coli* increased from 5.28 to 10.5 infections per 100,000 patients during that period. The number of hospitals reporting ESBL-producing *E*

coli infections also increased, from 17 to 20. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

U.S.: Upsurge in HCV deaths despite new treatments

13 October - Despite dramatic improvements in treatment, mortality from hepatitis C (HCV) continues to rise in the U.S., a researcher said here. In fact, annual HCV-associated deaths have surpassed the total number of deaths linked to the other 60 nationally notifiable infectious diseases combined, according to Scott Holmberg, MD, MPH, of the CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis in Atlanta. ... The main problem, he said, is that new and highly effective drugs are not being "deployed" as widely as they could be, largely because of cost. "It is usually better to treat someone early in the disease," he said but that's not what's happening. [MedPage Today](#)

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USPACOM

India faces its worst dengue outbreak in 20 years with over 12,000 positive cases

16 October - The dengue menace in the National capital as crossed new heights. The number of positive cases has crossed the 12000 mark the highest since 1996. As of October 15 2015, the total number cases is 10,683 in Delhi alone .The report also said that the data released by the Municipal corporations said that the number of cases rose by 1337 from Sunday till Thursday. The death toll according to the official data still stands at 32 this year whereas, in 1996, the number of positive dengue cases was 10,253 and the death toll was 423, said a report in The Hindu. [The Health Site](#)

Indian drug retailers protest against e-pharmacies

14 October - Indian drug retailers shut up shop for the day on Wednesday to protest against the country's growing online pharmacy industry, and threatened to close indefinitely if the federal government did not shut down e-pharmacies. The nationwide protest was widely supported, with as many as 850,000 chemists closing their doors, leaving patients waiting in long queues at any pharmacies that were open. ... [Online] retailers pose a threat to their bricks-and-mortar peers in a market IMS Health estimates is worth about \$13 billion. [Reuters](#)

India: Staff deaths at leading hospital put India's TB battle in spotlight

11 October - Campaigners and a former official overseeing Asia's largest tuberculosis hospital in Mumbai say staff deaths there are being under-reported, highlighting India's

growing struggle to contain multi-drug resistant forms of the contagious, airborne disease. Many of India's toughest TB cases end up in the metal cots of the state-run Sewri Hospital, where on a recent Reuters visit open wards were lined with emaciated patients, many left alone by families scared by the disease and its stigma. Medical Superintendent Rajendra Nanavare, Sewri's top doctor, says an average of six patients a day die at the 1,200-bed hospital. Nanavare says a dozen hospital workers had also died from TB in the last five years. But others say the real number of staff deaths is higher - although they could not give a precise figure - pointing to a public health crisis at the heart of one of the world's most densely populated cities. [Reuters](#)

Lao People's Democratic Republic: Circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus

12 October - On 8 October 2015, the National IHR Focal Point of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) notified WHO of one confirmed type 1 vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV) case ... with onset of paralysis on 7 September. The patient was 8 years old when he died on 11 September. Genetic sequencing of the virus confirmed on 6 October that it is vaccine-derived and suggests that it has been circulating in the area for more than two years. ... The district has chronically low immunization rates: reported coverage with 3 doses of oral polio vaccine (OPV) was of 40% to 66% between 2009 and 2014; and 44% in 2015 to date. Lao's last case of indigenous wild poliovirus was reported in 1993. [WHO](#)

Singapore: SGH hepatitis C outbreak

14 October - The Singapore General Hospital (SGH) said in its latest update on Tuesday (Oct 13) evening that 290 patients and 263 staff tested negative for the hepatitis C infection. A total of 402 out of 678 patients were screened, with 112 results pending. Patients who tested negative have been informed of their results. As for staff, 270 out of 319 have undergone screening for the virus. ... The hospital revealed last week that 22 patients staying in its renal wards had contracted hepatitis C infections while receiving treatment. Eight patients have died from the virus. Questions were raised as to why SGH, which first suspected that the cases were related as early as mid-May, took so long to inform the public about the situation. [The Straits Times](#)

South Korea: Last S. Korean MERS patient hospitalized again in 11 days

13 October - The last South Korean patient, who had been infected with the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and discharged lastly from hospital after being tested negative, was hospitalized again Monday, the country's health authorities said Tuesday. The 80th infectee, 35, entered hospital again as he was confirmed positive with the MERS corona virus, according to the Ministry of Health and Welfare. He left hospital on Oct. 1 after being tested negative twice. Medical staffs treating the patient, who has already suffered from lymphoma causing immunity disorder, stressed the "near-zero" possibility for him to have

infected other people, but the authorities put about 60 people believed to have had contact with the patient into self-quarantine. [Xinhua](#)

Taiwan: Death toll from Taiwan's dengue fever outbreak exceeds 100

14 October - Taiwan's dengue fever outbreak reached an alarming milestone on Wednesday when the death toll from the mosquito-borne disease exceeded 100, the island's health authorities said. Center for Disease Control Deputy Director General Chuang Jen-hsiang told a press conference that, as of Tuesday, the accumulated death toll from the disease since January was 108 -- or 106 since May. ... The number of confirmed cases jumped to 20,000 last week -- 31.5 percent more than the whole of last year. [Nikkei Asian Review](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Cholera in the Americas - Situation summary

9 October - Since the beginning of 2015 up to epidemiological week (EW) 38 of 2015, a total of 22,950 cholera cases have been recorded in three countries in the Region of the Americas: Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. **Haiti** alone registered 98% (22,511) of the total cases in the Region of the Americas. In **Cuba**, on 9 October national health authorities reported that as of EW 39 a total of 23 cholera cases due to *Vibrio cholerae* O1, serotype Ogawa were confirmed. ... Cases related to a drought in the province that has led to a shortage of safe drinking water. ... In the **Dominican Republic**, ... [between] EW 1 and EW 36 of 2015, a total of 416 suspected cholera cases were registered, including 13 deaths. [PAHO/WHO Epidemiological Update](#)

PAHO reports 3,400 new chikungunya cases

12 October - The chikungunya outbreak in the Caribbean and the Americas continued to expand slowly, as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) added 3,409 new cases in its weekly update published late last week. ... The total cases in 2015 have now reached 595,994, PAHO said in an Oct 9 update. The number of outbreak-related deaths stayed the same, at 62 for the year. Most of the new cases were reported by Colombia, which in recent months has often noted the most cases. ... Mexico reported 529 new infections. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* is published by the Public Health Information Directorate, Army Public Health Center.

