1 September 2017

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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Amid 7th Fleet turmoil, sailors open up about the Navy’s silent threat: sleep deprivation

23 August - ... After four different groundings and collisions in less than a year in its Japan-based 7th Fleet ... the Navy is cleaning house and doing some soul-searching. ... The Navy knows sleep deprivation is a perpetual problem in its ranks. “Fatigue has measurable negative effects on readiness, effectiveness and safety,” Vice Adm. Thomas Rowden, commander of Naval Surface Force—Pacific, said. ... Rowden and other senior Navy leaders have been taking pointers on keeping a ship’s crew well-rested from a “Crew Endurance Team” of military and civilian experts at the Naval Postgraduate School. Their suggestions include setting a “circadian watchbill” — organizing watches to conform to a 24-hour rotation, more in line with the human body’s natural sleep rhythms. Task and Purpose

Combating the opioid epidemic

24 August - Opioids are the main driver of drug overdose deaths across the U.S., and West Virginia has been among the hardest hit by the crisis, experiencing the highest overdose death rates in the country. With a shared vision of combating this growing epidemic, health care providers and researchers from the Uniformed Services University (USU) and West Virginia University (WVU) recently came together and established an official collaboration to pool their resources. DVIDS

NFL making $40 million available for medical research

29 August - A year after the NFL pledged $100 million in support of independent medical research and engineering advancements, a huge chunk of that soon will be awarded to such research, primarily dedicated to neuroscience. A Scientific Advisory Board assembled by the NFL is set to launch its program to solicit and evaluate research proposals for funding. The board ... will provide direction for the $40 million allocated under the league’s initiative. ... The NFL has an ongoing affiliation with the armed forces, and in April partnered with the U.S. Army Medical Research and Material Command on a three-year venture to collaborate on head health research and development. NFL

Review finds indoor spraying may protect against Aedes mosquitoes

31 August - A meta-analysis published today in *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases* found some solid evidence for the effectiveness of indoor spraying to control *Aedes* mosquitoes, but the authors said more well-designed studies are needed. CIDRAP News Scan (second item)
Truth Initiative
Video on
Military Smoking
Among military smokers, 38 percent started after enlisting. The much higher than average prevalence of tobacco use among these two groups is not a coincidence.
For decades, the tobacco industry has exploited these and many other populations to sell its products, including those with mental illness, as well as African-Americans, low-income communities and LGBTQ individuals. While the industry positions this as targeting and consumer choice, the facts reveal a darker pattern of exploitation.

Transgender military service unchanged as Mattis announces study of policy implementation
29 August - Transgender troops can continue to serve pending a study and recommendation from Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, the Defense Department announced Tuesday. The DoD has received Trump’s memorandum on transgender service members and will implement the president’s policy direction, according to a prepared statement from Mattis. “As directed, we will develop a study and implementation plan, which will contain the steps that will promote military readiness, lethality, and unit cohesion, with due regard for budgetary constraints and consistent with applicable law,” Mattis said. “The implementation plan will address accessions of transgender individuals and transgender individuals currently serving in the United States military,” Mattis added. Military Times

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GLOBAL

Anti-inflammatory drug 'cuts heart attack risk'
28 August - Anti-inflammatory drugs could cut the risk of heart attacks and strokes, a study of 10,000 patients suggests. A trial of the drug canakinumab could represent the biggest breakthrough in treatment since the advent of statins to lower cholesterol, its authors say. The study reported a 15% reduction in the risk of a repeat heart attack among patients - but others questioned the drug’s efficacy, side-effects and cost. Recipients of the drug had an increased risk of potentially fatal infections. However, the British Heart Foundation (BHF) said the “exciting and long-awaited trial” could still help save lives. BBC News

Case-control study finds more evidence of Zika-GBS link
31 August - Findings from a case-control study in Brazil published yesterday strengthened the connection between Zika infection and Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS) and found that older adults were hardest hit by the complication. Based on their analysis, the scientists found that the incidence of GBS in the Salvador area was four times higher than expected, with the risk even higher in older adults. CIDRAP

Cutting U.S. foreign aid for HIV would cost lives, without much savings
28 August - Reducing U.S. foreign aid for HIV prevention and treatment might not save that much money in the long run, and it could lead to a surge in new infections and fatalities, a new study suggests. A U.S. budget proposal to reduce foreign aid by one-third would affect more than $6.7 billion currently earmarked for HIV/AIDS research, prevention and treatment,
Reducing the Risk of Injuries

Hundreds of thousands of unintentional injuries experienced by Army personnel each year. These injuries cost the Army millions of lost or restricted work hours and dollars.

It’s a common belief that injuries are just unfortunate accidents - the inevitable result of physically demanding jobs that require repetitive body motions or awkward positioning. But even though they are unplanned, many injuries can be avoided.

Manganese in underground drinking water is cause for concern

24 August - Underground drinking water sources in parts of the U.S. and three Asian countries may not be as safe as previously thought due to high levels of manganese, especially at shallow depths, according to a study led by a researcher at the University of California, Riverside. Manganese, a metal that is required by the body in tiny amounts, can be toxic at elevated levels, particularly in children. ... The paper describes manganese levels that exceed World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines in groundwater wells in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, and the Glacial Aquifer, which spans 26 states in the northern U.S. and provides drinking water to more than 41 million Americans. Of the four regions, the Glacial Aquifer had the fewest contaminated wells. ScienceDaily

New meningitis test ’could save lives’

30 August - Meningitis can kill in hours yet the current way to positively identify the infection takes about two days. UK researchers say the new test ... gives results in under 60 minutes. This should let doctors treat fast and accurately, rather than "just in case". Speedy treatment is vital because the infection can quickly overwhelm the body, and symptoms may not be obvious until it is dangerously advanced. At the moment, doctors rely on clinical judgement to decide whether antibiotics are urgently needed. They err on the side of caution, which means some patients are given treatment they don't need. However, on rare occasions cases can be missed, which is where a rapid "Lamp" (Loop Mediated Isothermal Amplification) test on blood, spinal fluid or nasal swab samples could help. BBC News

Red powder used in Hindu ceremonies could have unsafe lead levels

28 August - Sindoor powder sold in the United States and India could have unsafe levels of lead, researchers warn. Sindoor, also called vermilion, is a brilliant scarlet powder used during Hindu religious and cultural ceremonies. ... Some manufacturers use lead tetroxide to give it a distinctive red color. Of the 118 sindoor samples tested in the study, 95 were from South Asian stores in New Jersey. Another 23 came from stores in Mumbai and New Delhi, in India. Overall, about 80 percent of the samples had at least some lead, and about a third contained levels above the limit set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Reuters
Robert Koch Institute: Towards digital epidemiology

26 August - The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) is setting its sights on a digital future, in which epidemiological intelligence does not rely solely on conventional monitoring through surveys and field data, but links up with machine learning and artificial intelligence. “The goal is to identify illness in real time when it comes to infectious disease outbreaks, but also to track behavioural changes in the community”, says Lothar Wieler, President of the RKI, Germany’s central scientific institution in the field of biomedicine. ... Wieler believes in the possibilities of big data and sees digital epidemiology as a way to adapt a data-driven institution to what he calls the modern realities: societal and environmental changes on the one hand—such as increased international mobility, climate change, and non-communicable diseases—and on the other, technological changes that influence data flows and modes of communication. The Lancet

‘Trojan cows’ lure malaria mosquitoes to their doom

29 August - A “Trojan cow” could be the next weapon deployed to defeat malaria. A biotech company is going further than a net or an insecticide to thwart the mosquitoes that carry malaria from person to person and are using livestock, doused in human scent, to lure mosquitoes to their deaths. ... Normally mosquitoes in Africa prefer humans. In the hope of tricking them into biting animals instead, a potent cocktail of four or five human odour compounds was developed that could be sprayed onto animals. ... [R]esearchers conducted experiments in which they shut a goat and a human in a greenhouse and then released mosquitoes and analysed where they landed. ... [W]hen the goat was sprayed with human perfume, the mosquitoes made a beeline for it 50 per cent of the time. They could not tell the difference between a human and a goat that smelled like a human. The Times

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INFLUENZA

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

2016-2017 Influenza Season Week 33 ending August 19, 2017

- Novel Influenza A Virus: No additional human infections with novel influenza A viruses were reported to CDC during week 33.

- Based on National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) mortality surveillance data available on August 24, 2017, 5.2% of the deaths occurring during the week ending August 5, 2017 (week 31) were due to P&I. This percentage is below the epidemic threshold of 5.9% for week 31. CDC
NHRC: Operational Infectious Diseases - Weekly Surveillance Report

24 August:
Moderately elevated FRI rates at Fort Benning and MCRD Parris Island.

Febrile respiratory illness cases:
• Military Recruits - 88 positive of 247 tested
• CDC Border Infectious Disease Surveillance and Zika Surveillance - 4 positive of 16 tested
• DoD Beneficiaries – 7 positive of 27 tested. Naval Health Research Center

Philippines watching suspected bird flu cases in humans

25 August - The Philippines started monitoring suspected bird flu cases in humans on Friday after 34 farm workers in two towns north of the capital Manila developed flu-like symptoms after direct exposure to infected fowl. Officials from the Departments of Health and Agriculture said laboratory tests in Australia confirmed an outbreak of the deadly H5N6 strain of the bird flu virus. The strain is transmissible to humans, but the mortality rate is low. Health Minister Paulyn Ubial [said] “All of them had direct exposure to fowls and they developed common symptoms of influenza. They were already given medicines but we are now monitoring their conditions.” Reuters

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

170 more Cyclospora cases confirmed in multistate outbreak

29 August - Yesterday the CDC reported 170 more cases of Cyclospora infection since its previous outbreak report released on Aug 18. The CDC said it is still not known if cases in different states are related to each other, nor has the food source for the pathogen been identified. As of Aug 25, officials have reported 882 lab-confirmed cases of the intestinal infection caused by the single-celled parasite, Cyclospora cayetanensis. At least 478 cases (54%) are in people who did not report international travel and were likely infected within the United States. A total of 34 states have reported cases in people with no international travel history; Texas (151 cases), Florida (61), North Carolina (36) New York City (2), and Connecticut (20) have reported the most locally acquired cases. CIDRAP News Scan (second item)
DHA-IPM 17-007: Humane Slaughter of Animals in DoD Programs

14 August - This Defense Health Agency-Interim Procedures Memorandum (DHA-IPM) ... Provides guidance and describes procedures for the humane slaughter of animals in DoD food procurement and survival training programs and details the tasks and procedures necessary to ensure humane slaughter and compliance with applicable DoD, Federal, State, and local laws and regulations; is effective immediately and will be incorporated into a Defense Health Agency-Procudural Instruction when DoD Directive 6400.04E (Reference (c)) is updated; will expire effective 12 months from the date of issue; and cancels DoD Veterinary Service Activity Policy Memorandum B-003 (Reference (e)). Health.mil

Turtle-linked *Salmonella* outbreak sickens 37 in 13 states

29 August - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today said a *Salmonella* outbreak linked to pet turtles has sickened 37 people in 13 states, about one third of them children younger than 5 years. In its outbreak announcement, the CDC said the outbreak strain is *Salmonella* Ambani, which was also implicated in illnesses in 2015. ... In the latest outbreak, illness onsets range from Mar 1 to Aug 3, and of 33 people with available information, 16 (48%) were hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. Eleven of the cases are from New York, with most affected states hailing from Middle Atlantic, Southeast, and Western regions. CIDRAP News Scan (first item)

WELLNESS

Coffee's health perks may be strongest for people over 45

29 August - Adults who drank four cups of coffee a day had a 64% lower risk of dying during a new 10-year Spanish study, compared to those who rarely or never drank the beverage. The link between coffee and reduced mortality risk was strongest for people over 45, the authors say, suggesting that the drink’s protective elements are even more important in older age. ... Previous studies have suggested that coffee consumption reduces the risk of early death from all causes, but this provided some additional insights into how coffee might affect people of different ages. Time

HIV testing among transgender women and men — 27 States and Guam, 2014–2015

25 August - Transgender persons are at high risk for HIV infection. ... This analysis of 2014 and 2015 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data showed that ... [t]ransgender
women and men self-reported testing at levels similar to cisgender heterosexual men and women. Transgender women and men reported current HIV testing levels that were inconsistent with their HIV risk profiles. Innovative, tailored approaches might be needed to reach transgender persons who are not being reached by existing HIV prevention strategies. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*

**Huge diet study shows carbs, not fats are the problem**

29 August - An enormous prospective study of food intake in adults, reported here, challenges several staunchly held beliefs about dietary components and their association with health risks: finding, for example that diets rich in fats, including saturated fats, don’t increase mortality risk, but high-carbohydrate diets do. And the study, called PURE (Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology), also found that the benefits of fruits, vegetables, and legumes top out at just three to four total servings per day. In sum, the results suggest that nutritional guidelines and conventional wisdom regarding these basic dietary elements may be seriously mistaken. *MedPage today*

**Hunting a killer - Sex, drugs and the return of syphilis**

24 August - For months, health officials in this socially conservative state capital [Oklahoma City] have been staggered by a fast-spreading outbreak of a disease that, for nearly two decades, was considered all but extinguished. Syphilis, the deadly sexually transmitted infection that can lead to blindness, paralysis and dementia, is returning here and around the country, another consequence of the heroin and methamphetamine epidemics, as users trade sex for drugs. … Although syphilis still mostly afflicts gay and bisexual men who are African-American or Hispanic, in Oklahoma and nationwide, rates are rising among white women and their infants. Nearly five times as many babies across the country are born with syphilis as with H.I.V. *The New York Times*

**Obese America Report: 1 in 3 U.S. adults are beyond overweight**

31 August - One-third of American adults and one in six children are now obese, although an annual report released Thursday by two nonprofit groups found that rates could be stabilizing. The report released by the Trust for America’s Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that West Virginia had the highest obesity rate at 37.7 percent. Mississippi was second at 37.3 percent and Alabama and Arkansas were tied for third at 35.7 percent. The report says the adult obesity rate increased between 2015 and 2016 in Colorado, Minnesota, Washington and West Virginia, fell in Kansas, and was stable elsewhere. Colorado had the lowest rate, at 22.3 percent. This is the first time in 14 years of conducting the annual report that any state’s rate dropped, and rates of increases in other states have begun to slow, Trust for America’s Health President and CEO John Auerbach said. *STAT*
Religious young women less educated about HPV vaccine

29 August - Religious young women are less knowledgeable about a vaccine that guards against several different types of cancer, suggests a new study from Utah. Compared to women who didn’t practice a religion, those who did were nearly 60 percent less likely to know about the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine and about half as likely to have received at least one dose, researchers found. “One thing you might expect is that they might be less likely to receive the vaccine or they may perceive themselves as having less risk,” said senior author Deanna Kepka, of the University of Utah’s Huntsman Cancer Institute and College of Nursing in Salt Lake City. “I wouldn’t expect them to be less informed about the vaccine.” Reuters

Sudan: Dozens die of cholera in Darfur’s East Jebel Marra within a week

28 August - The cholera infection rates are rapidly increasing in East Jebel Marra in South Darfur. Last week, more than 300 new patients were recorded in the locality. Dozens of them died. In Kalma camp, eight people died and more than 200 new cases were reported over the weekend. Parents of students in Kass are calling for a temporary closure of the schools until the cholera epidemic is halted in the area. “The epidemic is taking its toll among villagers and displaced people in ten densely populated areas in East Jebel Marra,” Hussein Abusharati, the spokesman for the Darfur Displaced and Refugees Association, told Radio Dabanga. ... “Since the outbreak of cholera in the locality on August 22, the number of infections reached 316. Dozens of them died.” Abusharati said that there are no humanitarian organisations or doctors operating in the area. ReliefWeb

Egypt: Egypt promotes birth control to fight rapid population growth

30 August - Egypt is pushing to educate people in rural areas on birth control and family planning in a bid to slow a population growth rate that President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said poses a threat to national development. The country is already the most populous in the Arab world with 93 million citizens and is set to grow to 128 million by 2030 if fertility rates of 4.0 births per thousand women continue, according to government figures. In 2016,
Egypt saw the birth of 2.6 million babies, the country’s statistics agency CAPMAS said last month. … Egypt’s health minister last month started Operation Lifeline, a strategy to reduce the birth rate to 2.4 and save the government up to 200 billion Egyptian pounds ($11.3 billion) by 2030. Reuters

Saudi Arabia: MoH - Health status of pilgrims is reassuring

28 August - Saudi Ministry of Health announced that the health status of pilgrims is safe and reassuring and that neither epidemic nor quarantine diseases have been reported among them to date. In a statement issued on Sunday, the ministry stated that it is focusing on the preventive aspects of pilgrims, following developments and changes in the health situation globally, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and international health bodies, such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). It pointed out that many precautionary measures were taken including the issuance of medical conditions that all pilgrims arriving at Saudi Arabia should have. So far this month, Health Ministry hospitals in Makkah and Madinah performed 277 cardiac catheterizations, 11 open heart surgeries, 1049 renal dialysis and 54 endoscopic procedures. The ministry also reported that the number of pilgrims who went to emergency rooms reached 15,242 while 23321 pilgrims attended clinics for medical reviews. Asharq-Al-Awsat

United Arab Emirates: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

28 August - On 29 July 2017, the national IHR focal point of the United Arab Emirates reported one additional case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). … The patient is currently in ICU on mechanical ventilation. Investigations into the source of infection are ongoing. … Globally, 2067 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV including at least 720 related deaths have been reported to WHO. WHO

Yemen: Yemen's cholera numbers rise again

30 August - The World Health Organization (WHO) said cholera cases in Yemen are climbing again after a 6-week decline. There were 30,648 cases and 14 deaths reported in the last week, bringing the total number of cases to 580,206, including 2,028 deaths. The case-fatality ratio remains at 0.35%. Children under the age of 5 represent 24% of the cases, and the mean age of the cases is 20.5 years. More than one-third, or 32%, of the deaths occurred in children ages 14 and under. … Yemen’s cholera outbreak is the world’s largest, and fueled by civil unrest and a crumpling public health infrastructure. CIDRAP News Scan (fifth item)
Europe: Divergent policy responses to increasing vaccine scepticism in southern Europe

September 2017 - ... Antiestablishment parties from across the political spectrum have expressed sympathy with vaccine sceptics. In Italy, the antivaccine agenda is supported by the Five Star Movement, which does not subscribe to the left-right political division, and in France, the right-wing Front National have raised doubts about the safety of vaccines. These factors indicate that vaccine scepticism is part of a broad mistrust of the state, established political parties, and experts, which stems in part from the 2008 financial crisis. The crisis has resulted in an increase in infectious disease in southern Europe. The rise of populist, antiestablishment parties in the wake of the crisis threatens to have further adverse effects because such parties support, legitimise, and—when elected—legalise vaccine refusal.

The Lancet Infectious Diseases

France: France to vote against license renewal for weedkiller glyphosate

30 August - France will vote against renewing the European license for weedkiller glyphosate, an official at the environment ministry said, adding to uncertainty over the future of widely-used products such as Monsanto’s Roundup in the European Union. Concerns over glyphosate’s risk to human health have prompted investigations by U.S. congressional committees and delayed a relicensing decision in the EU. “France will vote against the reauthorization of glyphosate due to the doubts that remain about its dangerousness,” a ministry official said. Reuters

France: More sickened in France's chikungunya outbreak

28 August - The number of people sickened in France’s outbreak of locally acquired chikungunya has grown from 2 to 13, all of them in the Provence-Alpes-Cote d’Azur region in the south who were sick during the first half of August, the World Health Organization (WHO) said in an Aug 25 statement. ... The 13 infections in France include 4 confirmed, 1 probable, and 8 suspected cases, all involving patients ages 3 to 77 years old from Cannet des Maures commune in the region’s Var department, according to the WHO. “Chikungunya is an emerging disease in southern Europe, and an outbreak is considered unexpected,” the WHO said, reiterating that *Ae albopictus* is establishing itself in a large part of the Mediterranean basin and beyond. CIDRAP

Romania: Romania measles count nears 9000, Iraqi girl is 33rd death

26 August - A 10-year-old Iraqi girl who arrived in Romania in July has become the 33rd
measles fatality in the country since 2016, according to a local media account (computer translated). The National Center for Surveillance and Control of Communicable Diseases puts the total case count at 8937 from 41 counties through Aug. 25. Outbreak News Today

Russia: 'In six months I’ll be dead' - Russian activists warn of looming spike in AIDS deaths

22 August - Activists in Russia are warning that the country faces a dramatic rise in the number of deaths from AIDS because of the government’s failure to fund the battle to stop the spread of HIV, the virus that causes the deadly disease. With more than 900,000 people in Russia on the official register of HIV infections, the government has budgeted only 17.5 billion rubles ($297 million) for treatment. Experts with the Federal AIDS Center say at least five times that amount is needed. ... In 2016, 17,500 people died of AIDS in Russia, according to official figures. This year, [Vadim] Pokrovsky predicted, that figure will likely top 20,000 as part of an ongoing upward trend. ... By comparison, according to UNAIDS, there were 22,000 AIDS-related deaths in Western and Central Europe and North America combined in 2015. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

United Kingdom: Scores treated after mystery 'chemical haze' hits UK coast

28 August - More than 100 people have been treated for streaming eyes, sore throats and breathing problems after a chemical haze spread over a stretch of the southern England coastline. The emergency services say they are working to establish the origin of the mist, which sent people fleeing from the beach and cliffs at Birling Gap, a coastal beauty spot about 60 miles (100 kms) south of London. Life boats were dispatched to help clear people from beaches, and Eastbourne District General Hospital said it had treated more than 130 people after Sunday’s incident. The cause of the haze has not been determined. Pollution has been known to drift to Britain from industrial units in France. Sussex Police said Monday that “this was an isolated incident and is not expected to recur.” Fox News

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Ecstasy deemed ‘breakthrough’ therapy for PTSD

30 August - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration designated the illegal psychedelic drug MDMA, commonly known to partygoers as Ecstasy, as a “breakthrough therapy” to treat post-traumatic stress disorder. The designation was announced Saturday and provides a fast-track for possible approval of MDMA as a prescription drug. It’s the result of years of trials sponsored by the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, or MAPS, that
have included veterans since 2010. “It doesn’t mean anything is approved or guaranteed, but it does mean this gets special attention from the FDA and allows it to move through the regulatory process more quickly,” said Michael Mithoefer, a clinical investigator who’s involved in the study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy. Stars and Stripes

U.S.: FDA approves first drug for Chagas disease

30 August - The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced yesterday that it has granted accelerated approval for the nation’s first treatment for Chagas disease, a parasitic infection caused by Trypanosoma cruzi spread by kissing bugs that has increasingly been found in the United States, especially in Texas’s Rio Grande Valley area. The drug benznidazole, made by Chemo Research, SL, of Madrid, is approved for use in children ages 2 to 12 years old who have Chagas disease. CIDRAP News Scan (second item)

U.S.: Feds seize vaccinia virus vaccine used in 'stem cell' centers

28 August - US marshals on Aug 25 confiscated five vials of vaccinia virus vaccine, reserved only for military members and other people at high risk of smallpox, from a California clinic, part of an effort to prevent a company from using potentially dangerous and unproven treatments for cancer patients. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said today in a statement that the treatments belonging to StemImmune, Inc., based in San Diego, were given to patients at the California Stem Cell Treatment Centers in Rancho Mirage and Beverly Hills. Authorities seized five vaccinia virus vaccine vials, each of which contained 100 doses. One vial was partially used, and the other four were still intact. Because the vaccine is not commercially available, the FDA said it has serious concerns about how StemImmune obtained the product and is actively investigating the circumstances. CIDRAP

U.S.: Offshore herpes vaccine trial under investigation

31 August - The government of St. Kitts and Nevis has launched an investigation into the clinical trial for a herpes vaccine by an American company because it said its officials were not notified about the experiments. The vaccine research has sparked controversy because the lead investigator, a professor with Southern Illinois University, and the U.S. company he co-founded did not rely on traditional U.S. safety oversight while testing the vaccine last year on mostly American participants on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts. ... Neither the Food and Drug Administration nor a safety panel known as an institutional review board, or an “IRB,” monitored the testing on the 20 human subjects. Now, the government of St. Kitts and Nevis says that the researchers also did not officially seek permission to test the vaccine, which took place from April to August 2016. Scientific American

U.S.: Powerful Hurricane Irma could be next weather disaster

31 August - While much of the United States’ focus is still on Texas and the destruction left
behind by Hurricane Harvey and its historic rainfall, powerful Hurricane Irma is rapidly intensifying in the open Atlantic and poses a major threat to the Caribbean and potentially the United States next week. ... Hurricane Irma is forecast to continue to strengthen as it moves westward over the next five days and the official forecast from the National Hurricane Center puts a dangerous Category 4 Hurricane Irma on the doorstep of the Caribbean by the end of the five-day forecast on Tuesday afternoon. CNN

U.S.: The case for sharing all of America's data on mosquitoes

24 August - For decades, agencies around the United States have been collecting data on mosquitoes. Biologists set traps, dissect captured insects, and identify which species they belong to. They've done this for millions of mosquitoes, creating an unprecedented trove of information. ... The problem, according to Micaela Elvira Martinez from Princeton University and Samuel Rund from the University of Notre Dame, is that this treasure trove of data isn’t all in the same place, and only a small fraction of it is public. The rest is inaccessible, hoarded by local mosquito-control agencies around the country. ... Martinez and Rund are now calling for the creation of a national database of mosquito records that anyone can access. “There’s a huge amount of taxpayer investment and human effort that goes into setting traps, checking them weekly, dissecting all those mosquitoes under a microscope, and tabulating the data,” says Martinez. The Atlantic


1 September - Opioid overdose deaths in the United States have been increasing since 1999, initially driven by prescription opioid misuse and more recently by heroin and other illicit opioid use. Rates of deaths involving heroin increased in all U.S. Census regions from 2006 to 2015. The increase appears to be driven in part by increases in the heroin supply after 2010 and by the introduction of illicitly manufactured fentanyl (IMF), a synthetic opioid, into the heroin market. Deaths involving both heroin and synthetic opioids increased sharply after 2013. The largest increases were in regions where white powder heroin is primarily used. Deaths involving synthetic opioids without heroin also increased sharply after 2013, indicating emergence of synthetic products without heroin or mixing of IMF into other drugs, including cocaine. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
HARVEY

A sea of health and environmental hazards in Houston’s floodwaters

31 August - Officials in Houston are just beginning to grapple with the health and environmental risks that lurk in the waters dumped by Hurricane Harvey, a stew of toxic chemicals, sewage, debris and waste that still floods much of the city. Flooded sewers are stoking fears of cholera, typhoid and other infectious diseases. Runoff from the city’s sprawling petroleum and chemicals complex contains any number of hazardous compounds. Lead, arsenic and other toxic and carcinogenic elements may be leaching from some two dozen Superfund sites in the Houston area. ... Dr. David Persse, Houston’s director of Emergency Medical Services, said officials were monitoring the drinking water system and the sewer system, both of which he said were intact so far. But hundreds of thousands of people across the 38 Texas counties affected by Hurricane Harvey use private wells, according to an estimate by Louisiana State University researchers, and those people must fend for themselves. The New York Times

DoD, VA join federal response to Harvey

30 August - The DoD has deployed about 3,000 Texas National Guardsmen and Guardsmen from other states for search and rescue. Director of domestic operations for the National Guard Bureau, Air Force Maj Gen. James C. Witham, says the bureau has identified “20,000 to 30,000 additional soldiers and airmen that could be used.” The Texas National Guardsmen has its personnel and about 16 aircrafts conducting day and night searches. National Guardsmen from all over the country have been involved in the rescue of more than 3,500 people and 300 pets through boats, vehicles, and helicopters. The DoD also is providing 11 generators, and 50,000 gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel through the Defense Logistics Agency. Federal Practitioner

Experts: Avoid unneeded tetanus shots in wake of Harvey

30 August - As emergency responders and health officials continue to battle displacement and injuries after Hurricane Harvey and the resulting catastrophic flooding continue to batter Texas, some authorities are urging residents to get a tetanus shot as a necessary precaution. US Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Tex.) said on CNN on Aug 28 that residents should get a tetanus shot before they wade into waters. And a report from National Public Radio (NPR) said Texas officials had already begun filling requests for tetanus vaccinations and sending supplies of the vaccine to affected areas. But this advice could be misconstrued at best, and wasteful of public health resources at worse. Experts are warning against offering tetanus shots to those who don’t need them. CIDRAP
Harvey aftermath: Houston 'open for business'; other cities suffering

31 August - Days after Harvey struck, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner struck an optimistic tone on Thursday, declaring the city "is open for business." The mayor and other officials pointed to small signs of recovery, such as fewer people in shelters, more bus lines resuming and the city's shipping channel reopening on a limited basis. The mayor said parts of Houston still face flooding issues because of standing water but the rest of the city is drying out. Traffic is returning to the roadways and power has been restored to much of the region. And the Houston Astros will play a doubleheader at home on Saturday, Turner said. ... But flood-stricken southeast Texas was still struggling with a new series of blows that left one city without running water, the operators of a flood-damaged chemical plant warning of additional fires and at least one hospital unable to care for patients. Nearly a week after Hurricane Harvey slammed into the Texas coast, desperate residents remain stranded without food and water in the wake of unprecedented flooding. Meanwhile, authorities continue searching for survivors and made helicopter rescues from rooftops as the death toll from Harvey climbed to at least 40. CNN

Harvey is a 1,000-year flood event unprecedented in scale

31 August - As Harvey’s rains unfolded, the intensity and scope of the disaster were so enormous that weather forecasters, first responders, the victims, everyone really, couldn’t believe their eyes. Now the data are bearing out what everyone suspected: This flood event is on an entirely different scale than what we’ve seen before in the United States. A new analysis from the University of Wisconsin’s Space Science and Engineering Center has determined that Harvey is a 1-in-1,000-year flood event that has overwhelmed an enormous section of Southeast Texas equivalent in size to New Jersey. ... [T]he concept of a 1,000-year flood event has been criticized by some academics and flood planners. For one, rainfall and flood data generally go back only 100 years or so, so statistical tricks must be applied to determine what 500-year and 1,000-year events actually represent. Furthermore, the climate is changing and precipitation events have become more intense in recent decades, so what constitutes different return frequencies (100-year, 500-year, 1,000-year and so forth) is probably changing. MSN

Health issues stack up in Houston as Harvey evacuees seek shelter

29 August - As floodwaters continue to rise in parts of Houston, health workers are trying to keep people safe and well, though that challenge is escalating. "The first and foremost thing that everybody’s concerned about is just getting folks out of harm's way with the flooded waters," says Dr. Umair Shah, Executive Director of Harris County
Public Health, whose own home came under mandatory evacuation Tuesday morning. Before the storm hit, Harris County Public Health sent out a number of messages warning residents of to avoid hazards presented by flood waters: downed power lines, sewage contamination, rusted nails and the possibility of critters in the water — everything from snakes to spiders to alligators. Now that people are showing up in shelters, efforts are turning to helping people with both health issues arising from the flood — including respiratory and gastrointestinal problems — and with getting care for preexisting conditions, some of which can be life-threatening if not treated promptly. NPR

Mexico offers hurricane help; No decision on whether to accept it

29 August - Mexico has offered assistance in the massive disaster response in next-door Texas, the State Department said late Tuesday, but there has been no decision on whether to accept the help. The Mexican government made a formal offer of help Tuesday as the United States copes with the effects of Hurricane Harvey, the State Department said in response to questions about Mexico's role. ... Any Mexican disaster assistance would be coordinated through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Washington Post

The agony of deciding to evacuate a city

28 August - ... Like any big American city, [Houston] had a plan at the ready, a playbook crafted over years that was constantly updated with the freshest intel. Asking a metro area of 6.7 million people (the fifth largest in the country) to flee for higher ground is not a decision anyone makes lightly. And it’s important to note that, even now, there's no consensus on whether local leaders made the right decision. Even with the benefit of hindsight, experts will debate the question for years. They may never agree. And there are serious downsides to leaving. “Evacuations are enormously costly and disruptive, not just to the areas that are being evacuated but to the areas they’re going to,” says Brian Wolshon, a transportation engineer who studies evacuations at Louisiana State University. “It’s a tough call to get right.” Wired

What Sandy teaches us about Harvey

28 August - ... Some of our findings and recommendations refer to strategic actions that take years to implement; however, others can be implemented now and have immediate impact on the response to and recovery from Harvey:

- Most of the healthcare visits after the storm will not be people injured or sickened directly but rather people with chronic health conditions who have been displaced from their normal source of health care.
- Disruption of outpatient, community-, and home-based care adversely affects patients not only directly but also indirectly by placing an extraordinary burden on hospitals that are ill-prepared for both the volume of patients and the types of problems that these patients experience. For example, hospital emergency departments are not equipped to provide care for more than a handful of patients
needing dialysis or methadone maintenance.

- Nonhospital residential facilities are usually less prepared and, therefore, inherently less resilient than hospitals.
- The storm can easily splinter the already fragile support systems on which many vulnerable people (e.g., elderly, young, chronically ill, addicted, poor, and non–English speaking people) rely, such as home-based care, public clinics, just-in-time medications, and public transportation. Clinical Biosecurity News

Why does America need the Cajun Navy?

31 August - Among the heroes of Hurricane Harvey have been hundreds of volunteer boaters, members of the so-called Cajun Navy and other similar groups, who have patrolled the flooded streets of Houston in their own boats, pulling stranded families off of roofs and bringing them to shelter. ... The heroism of the boaters is so vivid and so moving that it obscures the most important question about them: Why are they so needed in the first place? The New Yorker

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USPACOM

China: C diff rates in Hong Kong adults more than double in 9 years

30 August - The disease burden of Clostridium difficile in Hong Kong adults more than doubled from 2006 to 2014, according to a study yesterday in Emerging Infectious Diseases. Investigators identified 15,753 C difficile cases in the 9-year study period, 91.4% of them healthcare-related and 5.1% community-associated infections. After adjusting for diagnostic testing, the researchers determined that the incidence increased from 15.41 cases/100,000 persons in 2006 to 36.31 cases/100,000 persons in 2014, for an annual increase of 26%. CIDRAP News Scan (sixth item)

China: Hypervirulent, highly resistant Klebsiella identified in China

30 August - Chinese researchers say an outbreak of severe pneumonia at a Chinese hospital was caused by hypervirulent, highly drug-resistant, and highly transmissible strains of Klebsiella pneumoniae. ... The ST11 carbapenem-resistant hypervirulent K pneumoniae strains were identified in five patients in the intensive care unit (ICU) of a hospital in Hangzhou, China. All five patients—who were admitted to the ICU between late February and April of 2016—had undergone surgery for multiple trauma followed by ventilation and subsequently developed carbapenem-resistant K pneumoniae infections and severe
pneumonia that responded poorly to all available antibiotics. All five patients died of severe lung infection, multi-organ failure, or septic shock. CIDRAP

India/Nepal/Bangladesh: Floods kill over 1,200

27 August - The death toll from monsoon floods in India, Bangladesh and Nepal has climbed above 1,200, as rescue workers scramble to provide aid to millions of people stranded by the worst such disaster in years. All three countries suffer frequent flooding during the June-September monsoon season, but international aid agencies say things are worse this year with thousands of villages cut off and people deprived of food and clean water for days. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducted an aerial survey of flood-hit Bihar state on Saturday and has pledged a relief fund of $78m. Al Jazeera

India: What's making these dogs In Mumbai turn blue?

26 August - Five dogs turned blue in Mumbai. That was a story that journalist Deepak Gharat broke this past week. He was following up on a story in the industrial zone of Taloja, home to about 1,000 pharmaceutical and chemical factories. ... "The dogs go looking for food in the dye factory compound," Gharat found. Locals have seen the dogs crawling on their bellies under the factory’s gate to loll in the ubiquitous puddles of cool, blue water in the grounds. ... All the animals have been given a clean bill of health, and the dye has been scrubbed off. The factory has put up a temporary net under the gate to prevent dogs from getting back in. ... the media attention pushed the state pollution control board to shut down the chemical factory, identified as Ducol Organics & Colours Pvt Ltd. The factory was releasing untreated chemicals into the river and toxic residual dye powder into the atmosphere, violating India’s Water Act from 1974 and the Air Act from 1981. NPR

Nepal: Viral outbreak takes hold of flood victims in Nepal

27 August - After going through the worst flooding in decade which has claimed lives of almost 150 people and left 90,000 homes destroyed, Nepal yet again seems to be facing with another shamble as an epidemic viral outbreak has taken hold of hundreds of flood-affected people in several districts of the country. The viral outbreak has affected the lives of flood victims, who are now suffering from health problems like fever, cold, diarrhea, headache and skin infections. ... One of the doctors from the medical camp said the outbreak was due to water contamination, poor hygiene and exposure to elements and nearly 80 percent of flood survivors were diagnosed with some form of viral illness at the medical camps. Business Standard
Brazil: Brazil may face a new threat, this time from biting midges

25 August - Brazil, which has recently suffered serious outbreaks of Zika virus and yellow fever, now faces a new threat, according to reports from local scientists: Oropouche fever. ... The virus has caused occasional outbreaks, short but intense, in towns in tropical areas of Brazil, Peru and Panama, and on some Caribbean islands. But in the last few years, Oropouche cases have turned up more often in urban areas, including some in northeast Brazil, where Zika began its explosive spread in this hemisphere. Oropouche causes symptoms resembling those of dengue: high fever, headaches and joint pain, nausea and malaise. The infection is not normally fatal, although it can cause meningitis. ... There is no vaccine. The virus is typically transmitted by a biting midge, *Culicoides paraensis*, that ranges from Argentina to as far north as Wisconsin. The insects are known variously as no-see-ums, because of their size, or gunpowder midges, because they resemble black gunpowder grains. ... Dr. Luiz Tadeu Moraes Figueiredo, an emerging-disease specialist at the University of São Paulo, warned that Oropouche could soon be a serious public health problem in Brazil. *The New York Times*

Cuba: Botched surveillance job may have led to strange injuries at US embassy in Cuba

25 August - An outbreak of hearing loss and other health problems affecting at least 16 employees at the US embassy in Havana could have been caused by an electronic surveillance operation that went wrong, former intelligence officials said on Friday. The state department said it was investigating the outbreak, and that some of the worst affected diplomats had been evacuated to Miami for examination and treatment. ... Earlier this month, US officials had said the symptoms appeared to have resulted from a covert sonic device. But Nauert said on Thursday no device nor any perpetrator had yet been found and that Cuba was cooperating with the US investigation. *The Guardian*

Guyana: Fatal yellow fever in French Guiana woman

31 August - The World Health Organization (WHO) yesterday said French officials have notified it of a fatal yellow fever case in a 43-year-old Brazilian woman in French Guiana whose vaccination status isn’t known. In a statement, the WHO said the woman was hospitalized on Aug 7 and died 2 days later. An investigation found that she may have visited a gold mining area in the northern part of the country, and officials are still trying to pinpoint the woman’s travel route. Though yellow fever is endemic in French Guiana, the woman’s illness is the first case confirmed there since 1998. *CIDRAP News Scan* (first item)
Venezuela: Hunger eats away at Venezuela’s soul as its people struggle to survive

26 August - Hunger is gnawing at Venezuela, where a government that claims to rule for the poorest has left most of its 31 million people short of food, many desperately so. …

Nearly three-quarters of Venezuelans have lost weight over the past year, and the average loss was a huge 9kg, or nearly a stone and a half, according to a survey by the country’s top universities. For many that is simply because food is too expensive. Nine out of 10 homes can’t cover the cost of what they should eat. And 10 million people skip at least one meal a day, often to help feed their children. … When crude prices began sliding in 2014, bringing down oil earnings, it left the country short of dollars, and the government decided to focus its income on servicing the national debt rather than importing food. The Guardian