

20 May 2016

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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

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## NOTICE:

There will be no APH Weekly Update next week. Publication will resume 3 June 2016.



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### VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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## U.S. MILITARY

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### A call to armor: Army explores stronger, lighter, cheaper protection

13 May – ... Army scientists have designed a lightweight harness of stretchy tethers that connect players' helmets to their torsos or waists. The tethers act as shock absorbers to protect players' heads. The tethers are elastic straps embedded with shear thickening fluid. Most of the time, the tethers permit normal head movement. But when players are hit suddenly and powerfully, the shear thickening fluid in the tethers seizes up, and the tethers prevent violent movements of the head that cause brain injuries such as concussions. ...

"Second skin" is fabric the Army is developing to be sewn into protective suits for troops operating around chemical and biological weapons. The fabric contains a layer of "responsive polymer gels" that sense the presence of chemical or biological agents and close the pores of the textile to keep the agents out. Army, Air Force and MIT scientists are working to develop polymers that will sense mustard agents, detect and deactivate nerve agents and blister agents, and sense and kill anthrax spores and bacteria. [Army Magazine](#)

### Despite \$10B 'fix,' veterans are waiting even longer to see doctors

16 May - ... Two years ago, vets were waiting a long time for care at Veterans Affairs clinics across the country. ... Congress and the VA came up with a fix: Veterans Choice, a \$10 billion program that was supposed to give veterans a card that would let them see a non-VA doctor if they were more than 40 miles away from a VA facility or they were going to have to wait longer than 30 days for a VA provider to see them. There was a problem, though. Congress gave the VA only 90 days to set up the system. Facing that extremely tight time frame, the VA turned to two private companies to administer the program and help veterans get an appointment with a doctor and then work with the VA to pay that doctor. ... Wait times have gotten worse — not better. Compared to this time last year, there are 70,000 more appointments where it took vets at least a month to be seen. [NPR](#)

### Hospitalizations among members of the active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2015

April 2016 -... In 2015, there were 68,754 records of hospitalizations of active component members of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps; 32% of the hospitalizations were in non-military facilities. The hospitalization rate (all causes) was 52.8 per 1,000 service member person-years (p-yrs). The annual hospitalization rate (all causes) for 2015 was the lowest rate reported within the last 10 years covered in this report. As in prior years, in 2015, three diagnostic categories accounted for more than half (54.3%) of all hospitalizations of active component members: mental disorders (22.4%), pregnancy- and delivery-related conditions (22.0%), and injuries and poisonings. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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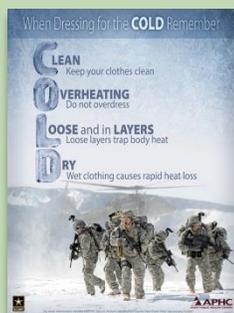
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YouTube

## Cold Weather Injury Products

A new card and poster are now available in print from the [Health Information Products eCatalog](#).



## Lawmakers again rally for VA medical marijuana in budget bills

17 May - Lawmakers will take another shot this week at allowing doctors at the Department of Veterans Affairs to prescribe medical marijuana. ... The proposals to give veterans access to medical marijuana through the VA in states where it is legal put Congress on the verge of making a major policy shift for the second year in a row. ... [The] proposal last year was defeated in a 213-210 House vote. House lawmakers were scheduled to take a new vote on adding it to the VA appropriations bill late Wednesday or Thursday. [Stars and Stripes](#)

## Military sexual assault victims discharged after filing complaints

18 May - ... Even as the military scrambles under congressional pressure to prevent future cases of sexual abuse, past victims are suffering for having stood up for themselves. Thousands of victims have been pushed out of the service with less-than-honorable discharges, which can leave them with no or reduced benefits, poor job prospects and a lifetime of stigma. Worse, when they try to rectify their situation ... fewer than 10% of them succeed, the advocacy group Human Rights Watch estimates (the Pentagon doesn't compile such data). "Military personnel who report a sexual assault frequently find that their military career is the biggest casualty," the group says in a new study. It spoke to 163 veterans ousted from the military between 1966 and 2015 after complaining about sexual abuse, ranging from harassment to rape. "Our interviews suggest that all too often superior officers choose to expeditiously discharge sexual-assault victims rather than support their recovery and help them keep their position." [TIME](#)

## New documentary set to blast stereotypes of PTSD

18 May - A team of filmmakers vow to break down the stigma and stereotypes associated with post-traumatic stress disorder among veterans with a new documentary showcasing the success stories of those who've broken through the fog after war. "We believe that the mainstream media has chosen to go with stories that have shock value, rather than telling the stories of veterans who deal with the disorder but still lead highly productive lives," said Derek Brown, director of "The Face of PTSD," now in preproduction. "This has created a mischaracterization of those with the disorder as violent, abusive, or addicted. We will show how that mischaracterization is a leading cause for veterans not seeking treatment, and thus further perpetuating the problem." [Military Times](#)

## Senators back 1.6% troop pay raise, women in draft, health care reform

13 May - A key Senate panel on Thursday voted to approve a 1.6 percent pay raise for troops, requiring women to register for the draft and overhauling the military health care system. The Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday approved the proposals as part

## COCA Call: Little Bite, Big Disease - Recognizing and Managing Tickborne Illnesses

Ticks transmit over a dozen infectious pathogens in the United States, including Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. During this COCA Call, clinicians will learn about the treatment, management, and prevention of tickborne diseases in the U.S., with an emphasis on Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and newly emerging tickborne diseases.

**Date:** Tuesday, May 24, 2016

**Time:** 2:00 - 3:00 pm ET

**Join by Phone:**

800-857-9697  
(U.S. Callers)

312-470-7286  
(International Callers)

**Passcode:** 1921389



of the fiscal 2017 defense authorization bill. ... The Senate panel's version of the legislation would also require women to register for the draft beginning Jan. 1, 2018, and create a commission to study whether the so-called selective service is still needed. ... The commission recommended doing away with the three Tricare programs for military families, reservists and working-age retirees (not elderly retirees in the Tricare for Life program) in favor of a new health care program, similar to the one for federal civilian employees, that would allow recipients to choose from a list of commercial health care plans. [Military.com](#)

## Should veterans with PTSD be exempt from the death penalty?

18 May - ... Advocates for [convicted murderer, John] Thuesen aren't claiming he wasn't responsible for his actions, just that his PTSD lessened his culpability to a degree that makes him undeserving of the death penalty. They argue that combat-related PTSD should play a key role in the sentencing phase. The result of this argument could affect the fates of an estimated 300 veterans on death row in the United States. ... [Some] PTSD advocates claim that such a punishment is not warranted for veterans due to the effects of military service in combat. ... [Combat-related] PTSD is separate and distinct from any other type of PTSD because "combat veterans would not have service-related PTSD or TBI but for government action in the form of training them to kill and sending them to war." ... [On the other hand, making] a special categorical exclusion for combat PTSD ... would further stigmatize millions of law-abiding veterans. [Task & Purpose](#)

## US military court addresses 'incapable of consent' to sex issue

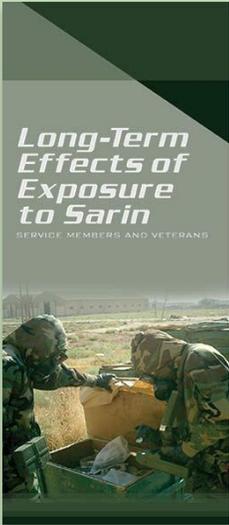
17 May - How drunk is too drunk to consent to sex? ... The issue has been at the heart of many cases in military courtrooms over the past decade. How many drinks an alleged victim consumed and how much alcohol rendered him or her "incapable of consenting" is frequently disputed at trial. Now, for the first time, a military court decision has defined the term "incapable of consenting." ... The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces agreed in a March decision that a person is incapable of consenting when he or she lacks "the cognitive ability to appreciate the sexual conduct in question or the physical or mental ability to make or to communicate a decision about whether they agree to the conduct." ... "The key has always been mental ability," said Don Christensen, formerly the top Air Force prosecutor. ... The spectrum goes from no alcohol and no impairment to unconsciousness. "Somewhere between those two extremes, people can't consent to sex," he said. "The key is to find out where that point is. [Stars and Stripes](#)

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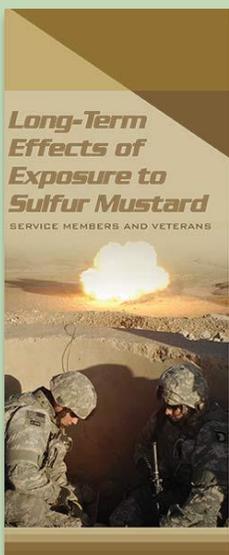
## Chemical Weapons Agents Brochures

Two new brochures are now available in print from the [Health Information Products eCatalog](#).

### Long-Term Effects of Exposure to Sarin



### Long-Term Effects of Exposure to Sulfur Mustard



## GLOBAL

### Billion people face global flooding risk by 2060, charity warns

16 May - A British aid charity is warning that by 2060 more than a billion people worldwide will live in cities at risk of catastrophic flooding as a result of climate change. A study by Christian Aid says the US, China and India are among the countries most threatened. It says the Indian cities of Kolkata and Mumbai will be most at risk. The eight most vulnerable cities on the list are all in Asia, followed by Miami in the US. The report urges governments to take action to reduce global warming and invest in disaster reduction programmes. [BBC News](#)

### Doctors have performed the first penis transplant in the U.S.

16 May - ... The complex, basically uncharted surgery carries immense physical and psychological risks. Until this month, it had been performed only twice worldwide, and one of those patients asked doctors to remove the organ a few days into his recovery. Massachusetts General announced on Monday that Thomas Manning, 64, has received a penis from a deceased donor and become the third penile transplant patient in history — the first of his kind in the United States. The 15-hour surgery performed on May 8 is intended to restore a sense of self and sexual functionality to people with traumatic injuries or amputations. Manning should have normal urinary function within a few weeks and could regain sexual function in weeks or months. ... In the United States, it's presumed that troops — increasingly suffering from devastating genital injuries in explosions — will be the main patient base. [The Washington Post](#)

### Global meningitis cases peak annually in dry winter months

17 May - Bacterial meningitis incidence follows a yearly pattern, peaking in dry winter months. ... [Researchers] compiled the first global database of monthly bacterial meningitis incidence comprising about 700,000 cases from 66 countries reported during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Of 51 countries reporting 5 or more years of continuous data and at least 40 meningitis cases per year, 49 displayed annual seasonal incidence patterns, the authors said. In Europe, North America, and China, meningitis cases largely caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* peaked during January and February each year. Peak incidence in the African meningitis belt, which stretches from West Africa to Ethiopia, occurred during the dry season in February and March. The highest number of cases was observed from June to July in South America, Oceania, and South Africa, the authors said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fifth item)

**AFHSB: Detecting  
& Reporting  
DoD Cases of Acute  
Zika Virus Disease**

The Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch has updated their guidance as of 17 May 2016.



## Industry hits back at idea of pharma levy in superbug fight

19 May - The drug industry hit back on Thursday at a proposal to charge firms a levy to help fund development of new antibiotics and said the idea, set out in a high-level UK review of drug-resistant superbugs, would "undermine goodwill". The government-commissioned review by former Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O'Neill suggested companies should be rewarded for developing a new antibiotic but face a surcharge if they decided not to invest in the area. Trade associations representing British, European and international drug companies said in a joint statement that such a surcharge would be "punitive" and counter-productive. [Reuters](#)

## MERS studies explore risk of secondary cases, countermeasure progress

19 May - A preponderance of secondary MERS-CoV infections tend to occur in older and/or male relatives of a primary MERS patient and those with preexisting medical conditions. ... Risk factors for household transmission included sleeping in the same room with a MERS patient and direct patient care. The researchers, from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and institutions in Saudi Arabia, evaluated 79 members of the extended families in a cluster of five MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) case-patients living in four households in 2014. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## New study tallies environmental and public health benefits of solar power

18 May – Solar power could deliver \$400 billion in environmental and public health benefits throughout the United States by 2050, according to a new study. ... The study finds that the 20 gigawatts (GW) of solar installed as of the end of 2014 is already lowering annual [greenhouse gases (GHGs)] by 17 million metric tons, worth about \$700 million per year if valued with a central estimate of the "social cost of carbon" - the Obama Administration's estimate of the long-term damage done by one ton of carbon emissions. Over half of these benefits come from emissions reductions in California. Solar is also reducing conventional air pollutants from power plants - sulfur, nitrogen, and particulates - and the corresponding health benefits are greatest in the eastern United States. Overall, the health and environmental benefits of this pollution reduction are worth an estimated \$890 million from avoiding premature mortality and a range of other negative health outcomes. [Phys.org](#)

## Repeated sub-concussion head impacts may affect eye function

18 May - For U.S. college football players, head impacts that don't cause concussion symptoms do still cause subtle and lingering changes in the eyes' ability to focus, according to a new study. The results might provide a new tool for measuring the severity of the "sub-

## Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

concussive" brain impacts that athletes and others, like soldiers, experience regularly, researchers say. We believe that it is possible that there may be long-term effects, but we have no conclusive evidence currently," said lead author Dianne Langford of Temple University in Philadelphia. "The changes are not clinically significant and in our study they resolved after three weeks of rest." [Reuters](#)

## Sex, breast milk may have helped spread Ebola in Africa

19 May - The Ebola virus was transmitted by semen and breast milk during the latter stages of the outbreak in Sierra Leone, a new study shows. Researchers from the United Kingdom identified several instances of unconventional transmission of the deadly disease, including a mother who may have passed it to her baby through breast-feeding. In another instance, an Ebola survivor sexually transmitted the virus a month after being released from quarantine. "Close contact with an infected individual is still by far the most common way for Ebola to spread, but this study supports previous research suggesting that the virus can persist in bodily fluids for a long time after recovery," said Jeremy Farrar, director of Britain's Wellcome Trust, which funded the study. [HealthDay](#)

## Superbug threat requires urgent action: report

19 May - A report of the global rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria or superbugs has called for dramatic changes to the way antibiotics are used both by humans and animals. The result of a two-year investigation by former Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill, the report warns that without action superbugs could cause 10 million deaths a year by 2050 and cost governments \$100 trillion a year. "We've all got to change how we are behaving, all 7 billion of us," O'Neill told Al Jazeera. ... The report details ten steps governments around the world can take to address the issue. These include requiring doctors to do tests confirming that antibiotics are required, before they are prescribed, developing and using more vaccines as an alternative to antibiotics, and reducing the use of antibiotics in animals. [Al Jazeera](#)

## ZIKA VIRUS

### Department of Defense increases Zika virus research funding

17 May - The Pentagon is stepping up its Zika virus surveillance efforts by pumping an extra \$1.76 million into Defense Department research labs and military partner labs worldwide. Those labs had already received \$51 million for research to look into how the Zika virus is spreading, DoD officials said. Army or Navy medical research labs in Egypt, Georgia, Kenya, Peru, Thailand, Cambodia and Singapore will benefit from the funding. Army, Navy and Air Force labs in the United States will also benefit. ... At U.S military-operated facilities, the majority of the research funding plus-up will allow an increase to ongoing global clinic-based surveillance of service members and civilians. The rest of the funding will be focused

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on the DoD's blood serum repository, which houses serum samples collected from more than 10 million U.S. service members when they join the military, as well as before and after deployments. [Military.com](#)

## Researchers unveil first human-made Zika virus clone

16 May - In a development that could help unravel key questions about the spread of Zika virus and speed the hunt for drugs and vaccines, Texas researchers today described the first genetically cloned version of the virus. ... Existence of a Zika clone allows researchers to more easily identify reasons for the explosive spread of the virus, which could include easier transmission by *Aedes* mosquitoes or that it gained the ability to sustain high viral levels in humans. [CIDRAP](#)

## UN: Risk of Zika outbreak across Europe is "low to moderate"

18 May - The World Health Organization says the risk of a Zika outbreak across Europe is "low to moderate," in a new risk assessment. The U.N. health agency said Wednesday there is a "high likelihood" the mosquito-borne virus could spread in three European regions with the mosquitoes that carry Zika: Madeira Island in the Atlantic and the Black Sea coastal areas of Georgia and Russia. ... There have been more than 400 imported Zika cases in Europe although no local spread has been detected. [ABC News](#)

## U.S. Senate approves \$1.1 billion to fight Zika virus

19 May - An election-year fight over addressing the spreading Zika virus intensified in the U.S. Congress as the Senate on Thursday approved \$1.1 billion in emergency money one day after the House of Representatives voted \$622.1 million financed through cuts to existing programs. The two chambers would have to reach agreement on a spending level before they can send it to President Barack Obama, who in February requested \$1.9 billion. The White House has called the House measure "woefully inadequate." The Senate goes into the negotiations with the House with a strong hand: a bipartisan 68-30 vote in favor of the emergency funds. [Reuters](#)

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## INFLUENZA

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

During week 18 (May 1-7, 2016), influenza activity decreased in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public

health laboratories during week 18 was influenza B. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories decreased.

- Novel Influenza A Virus: One human infection with a novel influenza A virus was reported.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below their system-specific epidemic threshold in both the NCHS Mortality Surveillance System and the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System.
- Influenza-associated Pediatric Deaths: Three influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported. [CDC](#)

## ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 18/2016 (2-8 May 2016)

- Influenza activity continued to decrease in the WHO European Region. Most countries (94%) reported low intensity. Although the percentage of positive specimens increased slightly from the previous week, the absolute number of influenza virus detections further decreased.
- As is often seen late in the northern hemisphere's influenza season, a shift towards circulation of type B influenza virus has occurred. Type B accounted for 82% of influenza virus detections in specimens from sentinel sources and 84% from non-sentinel sources.
- Fewer cases of severe disease were reported than in previous weeks. Most severe cases were associated with A(H1N1)pdm09 infection and were in people aged 15–64 years. [European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

## NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2016 Week 19 (through 14 May 2016):

- 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 elevated at MCRD Parris Island. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

## Swine-origin flu infection reported in Minnesota

13 May - The gradual fade of seasonal influenza in the United States was punctuated last week by a novel swine-origin flu case in Minnesota and reports of three more flu-related deaths in children, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced today. The novel case involved a variant H1N2 (H1N2v) virus in a Minnesota patient who was hospitalized but has recovered, the agency said. Health officials are trying to determine the source of the infection and if there are any other related cases. No other details about the patient or case were given. The CDC noted that flu viruses that circulate in swine are called swine influenza viruses when isolated from swine, but are dubbed variant influenza viruses when isolated from humans. [CIDRAP](#)

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

During 1 - 14 May 2016 (Surveillance Weeks 18 & 19), a total of 105 specimens were collected and received from 32 locations. Results were finalized for 101 specimens from 32 locations. During Week 18, five influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, four A(H3N2), and seven influenza B viruses were identified. Three influenza B viruses were identified during Week 19. Approximately 20% of specimens tested positive for influenza during Week 18. The percent positive for Week 19 decreased to approximately 12%. The influenza percent positive for the season is currently 26%. [US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

## WHO: Influenza Update

16 May - Influenza activity in the northern hemisphere continued to decrease. A predominance of influenza B virus activity continued to be reported in most of the northern hemisphere and in some tropical areas. In a few countries in the southern hemisphere, slight increases in influenza-like illness (ILI) activity were reported. [WHO](#)

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### VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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## 2 dogs with canine influenza die

17 May - Two dogs with canine influenza have died as the outbreak continues to sicken hundreds of dogs in the Bloomington-Normal area, veterinarians said Monday. However, the number of new cases appears to be declining and most dogs are responding to treatment, said Dr. Kirsten Pieper of the Animal Emergency Clinic of McLean County. ... Vets are concerned because the H3N2 canine influenza strain is new and few dogs have been exposed to it so they have no protection. [Herald & Review](#)

## Four multistate outbreaks of human *Salmonella* infections linked to small turtles

18 May - Since 2015, CDC, multiple states, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS), and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Veterinary Medicine have investigated four separate multistate outbreaks of human *Salmonella* infections linked to contact with small turtles. In the four outbreaks, a total of 133 people infected with the outbreak strains of *Salmonella* were reported from 26 states between January 16, 2015 and April 8, 2016. 38 ill people were hospitalized, and no deaths were reported. 41% of ill people were children 5 years of age or younger. Epidemiologic and laboratory findings linked the four outbreaks of human *Salmonella* infections to contact with small turtles or their environments, such as

water from a turtle habitat. [CDC](#)

## Canine vector-borne pathogens in semi-domesticated dogs residing in northern Cambodia

10 May - In Southeast Asia, [several] canine vector-borne pathogens ... cause significant morbidity and mortality in dogs. Moreover, dogs have also been implicated as natural reservoirs for *Rickettsia felis*, the agent of flea-borne spotted fever. ... The most common canine vector-borne pathogens found infecting dogs in this study were *Babesia vogeli* (32.7 %) followed by *Ehrlichia canis* (21.8 %), *Dirofilaria immitis* (15.8 %), *Hepatozoon canis* (10.9 %), *Mycoplasma haemocanis* (9.9 %) and "Candidatus *Mycoplasma haematoparvum*" (2.9 %). A high level of co-infection with CVBD agents (23.8 %) was present, most commonly *B. vogeli* and *E. canis*. Naturally occurring *R. felis* infection was also detected in 10.9 % of dogs in support of their role as a natural mammalian reservoir for flea-borne spotted fever in humans. [Parasites & Vectors](#)

## GMO crops not harmful to humans, but weed resistance is a problem

17 May - Genetically engineered crops present no more risk to human health than conventionally bred crops, but the evolution of resistance in both insects and weeds caused by growing such crops has become "a major agricultural problem," according to a long-awaited study released Tuesday by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. ... Those supportive of GMOs lauded the report's clear message that genetically engineered crops are not a food safety issue; those opposed trumpeted the report's finding that bioengineered crops have not increased the rate of crop yield in the U.S.

[Chicago Tribune](#)

## The dark side of trendy food trucks: A poor health safety record

18 May - It's a daily culinary performance that plays out across Los Angeles: Top food truck chefs whipping up gourmet meals in spaces no bigger than a restaurant's stockroom or walk-in freezer. But even as the trucks have become a popular staple of the local food scene, with Twitter followers and long queues, they have been lagging behind restaurants and even sidewalk food carts in one important category -- health safety, a Times data analysis found. About 27% of food trucks earned lower than A grades over the last two years, according to a Times review of Los Angeles County Department of Public Health data. By comparison, slightly less than 5% of brick-and-mortar restaurants and about 18% of food carts fell below that mark. [Los Angeles Times](#)

## U.S. FDA approves first appetite-stimulating drug for dogs

17 May - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the first drug to stimulate

appetite in dogs. ... The drug, Entyce, is a flavored oral liquid that works by mimicking ghrelin, the hunger hormone, and will be launched by February 2017, the company said. ... Earlier this year, Aratana secured regulatory approval for Galliprant, a therapeutic designed to control pain and inflammation associated with osteoarthritis in dogs. [Reuters](#)

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## WELLNESS

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### Health care costs nosedive when smokers quit

19 May - When cigarette smokers quit, societal health care costs immediately plunge, a new study shows. If 10 percent of American smokers gave up cigarettes and the rest cut back by 10 percent, the U.S. could shave \$63 billion off medical costs the next year, the analysis found. "You start to see the benefits quickly, and they're huge because health care costs are so gigantic," study coauthor Stanton Glantz told Reuters Health. ... The report points out that California and Arizona slashed health care costs following smoking reductions. ... The new study found that regions with lower smoking rates had substantially lower medical costs from 1992 through 2009. [Fox News](#)

### In 2013, U.S. spent more on mental disorders than on any other medical condition

18 May - A new study ... estimated health spending by medical condition for the entire US population and found that in 2013, \$201 billion were spent on mental disorders — more than on any other medical condition. These estimates ... include health spending by the military and institutionalized populations and are benchmarked to the National Health Expenditure Accounts. ... The 2016 study highlights the low rate of increase in spending on heart conditions and cerebrovascular disease during this period. According to the study, the slow spending growth is explained by reductions in smoking and better control of risk factors such as hypertension and hyperlipidemia, credited with declining death rates for these conditions. [Health Affairs](#)

### Increased physical activity associated with lower risk of 13 types of cancer

16 May - A new study of the relationship between physical activity and cancer has shown that greater levels of leisure-time physical activity were associated with a lower risk of developing 13 different types of cancer. The risk of developing seven cancer types was 20 percent (or more) lower among the most active participants (90th percentile of activity) as compared with the least active participants (10th percentile of activity). These findings, from researchers at the National Cancer Institute (NCI), part of the National Institutes of Health,

and the American Cancer Society, confirm and extend the evidence for a benefit of physical activity on cancer risk and support its role as a key component of population-wide cancer prevention and control efforts. [NIH](#)

## What happens when major companies take mental health seriously

16 May - ... Approximately one in five American adults experience a mental health issue in a given year, but frank discussions about these illnesses are still lacking in the workplace. Many employees stay quiet about their conditions out of fear that they'll only be further stigmatized — or even held back professionally — if they discuss medication, time off or therapy with a boss or coworkers. "Studies have shown that [more accepting] workplaces have happier employees with better productivity," [says] Michelle Riba, a professor of psychiatry. ... While there are laws in place that protect people with serious illnesses including depression from being fired because of their health challenges, employees need to disclose the nature of their condition in order to get this protection. [Huffington Post](#)

## Why heavy drinking seems to boost desire to smoke more

19 May - The reason alcoholics struggle to stop smoking may be because their heavy drinking speeds up how quickly their body breaks down nicotine, a new study suggests. ... Nicotine metabolism is the term used to describe how quickly a body breaks down this addictive substance. People who break down nicotine more slowly may have an easier time quitting because the nicotine stays in their body longer. But, the investigators found, alcohol appears to speed up the breakdown of nicotine. [HealthDay](#)

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### **USAFRICOM**

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## Africa: Early vaccination might be crucial for growth, health of African children

19 May - Vaccination of African babies directly after birth seems favorable for their growth and health, while vaccination later in life may have negative effects. [Researchers] analysed the medical data of more than 350,000 African children. ... The team studied the effects of BCG vaccination (against tuberculosis), DTP vaccination (against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) and measles vaccination on growth and health of sub-Saharan African children under five. Timing of vaccination was found to be important for all these vaccines: 'the sooner, the better' seems to be the motto for each of them. Early vaccination leads to lower odds on stunting (retarded growth) and also offers general health advantages. Findings also indicate that delayed vaccinations may be harmful. [ScienceDaily](#)

## **Africa: Self-injectable contraceptives could be life-saver**

17 May - Self-injectable contraceptives, which are being trialled in Uganda and Senegal, could revolutionize women's lives in rural Africa and dramatically cut maternal and newborn deaths, health experts said on Tuesday. The disposable \$1 device consists of a small needle connected to a plastic bubble containing the contraceptive Depo-Provera which can be squeezed to inject a dose that lasts three months. Self-injectables could have a major impact on the lives of women who cannot access clinics or who face opposition to contraceptive use from their partners, said the global health organization PATH which has designed the device called Sayana Press. [Reuters](#)

## **Liberia: Lassa fever in Liberia 2016 to date**

18 May - Since the beginning of the year, the West African country of Liberia has reported 38 suspected Lassa fever cases. Suspected cases were reported from 6 prefectures. ... Laboratory testing to date performed in Kenema, Sierra Leone has revealed seven confirmed cases. All the Lassa fever confirmed cases tested negative for Ebola virus disease. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 134 contacts have completed the 21-day follow-up period. A total of 17 additional contacts are being monitored. None of these contacts have so far developed symptoms. ... Although occasional travel-associated cases of Lassa fever have been reported in the past, the risk of disease spread from Liberia to non-endemic countries is considered to be low. [Outbreak News Today](#)

## **Morocco slams U.S. human rights report as a list of lies**

17 May - Morocco slammed the U.S. State Department's report on human rights in the North African kingdom as a list of inventions and even lies. The official MAP news agency on Tuesday quoted the Interior Ministry as saying the report's content is "truly scandalous." Morocco is an important U.S. ally in a volatile region, particularly valuable for its help in the fight against terrorism, making its irate, public reaction to last month's report highly unusual. ... The latest report, issued April 13, listed corruption and widespread disregard by security forces for the rule of law as two significant ongoing problems in Morocco. ... In Washington, State Department spokesman John Kirby rejected the criticism of the report by Morocco. "The Department of State stands by the information contained in the 2015 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Morocco," Kirby said. [ABC News](#)

## **South Africa: Large-scale HIV vaccine trial to launch**

18 May - An early-stage HIV vaccine clinical trial in South Africa has determined that an investigational vaccine regimen is safe and generates comparable immune responses to those reported in a landmark 2009 study showing that a vaccine can protect people from HIV infection. Consequently, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and its partners have decided to advance the experimental HIV vaccine regimen into a large clinical trial. This new study ... is designed to determine whether the regimen is safe, tolerable and effective at preventing HIV infection among South African adults. The trial is

slated to begin in November 2016. [NIH](#)

## South Sudan: Haemorrhagic fever syndrome

19 May - Between late December 2015 and early May 2016, the National IHR Focal of South Sudan notified WHO of an outbreak of haemorrhagic fever syndrome. As of 9 May, a total of 51 suspected cases, including 10 deaths, had been reported. ... No health care workers had been reported among the cases. The majority (74.5%) of the suspected cases are below 20 years of age. ... Samples of 33 patients ... were tested. ... All samples were negative for Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever, Ebola virus disease, Marburg virus disease, Rift Valley fever, yellow fever, West Nile virus and Zika virus; 5 samples tested positive for Onyong-nyong virus; 3 samples were positive for Chikungunya; and 1 sample tested positive for dengue virus. Further laboratory testing is ongoing that may confirm the causative agent. Other causes under investigation include bacterial diseases (e.g., Leptospirosis) and food intoxication (mycotoxines). Ecological risk factors for arboviral disease transmission were identified in the affected areas. [WHO](#)

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### USCENTCOM

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## Afghanistan: 20 dead as flash floods hits north

18 May - At least 20 people were killed in flash floods that hit the northern Afghan province of Sari Pul, an official said on Wednesday. The floods hit the district of Kohistanat in the remote south of Sari Pul in the early hours of Wednesday morning, said Zabihullah Amani, the spokesman for the provincial governor. He said the floodwaters swept away and destroyed several houses. Around 22 people were wounded in the disaster, which happened as people slept. The area is controlled by Taliban insurgents, he said, complicating access for rescue operations. ... The environmental degradation, which is largely unchecked across war-torn Afghanistan, has seen deadly landslides caused by heavy rain and snows in recent years. [AP](#)

## Iraq: Children face high rates of death and disability

13 May - One in six childhood injuries in Iraq were caused by violence, compared with only one in 50 childhood injuries worldwide, according to a recent study. Iraqi children injured by violence, including by gunshots, shrapnel and explosives, were also more than 10 times more likely than those hurt by other means to be killed or disabled, the authors found.

[Reuters](#)

## Iraq: ISIS bombed us with chemical weapons, Iraqi police say

18 May - It was midmorning on Sunday May 8 when the rockets began to fall on the

abandoned town. At first there was the thud of the shells, followed by black and white smoke and an acrid smell. The police officers deployed in the deserted town later said they began to feel pains in their chests and their airways close up. They called for urgent medical help, and were evacuated to a hospital in the next town. In interviews two days after the shelling, two police officials who were on the scene during the attack and a physician who treated the victims said the rockets contained chemical weapons, possibly sulfur mustard (so-called mustard gas) or chlorine. A police report obtained by TIME says that rockets fired by Islamic State militants on May 8 landed in Bashir, just south of the city of Kirkuk, releasing toxic gasses. [TIME](#)

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## **USEUCOM**

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### **United Kingdom: UK court rejects Big Tobacco's appeal against plain packaging**

19 May - Britain got the go-ahead on Thursday to make plain packaging compulsory on cigarettes when a court struck down a legal challenge brought by the world's top four tobacco companies. British American Tobacco (BAT), Philip Morris International, Japan Tobacco International and Imperial Brands had argued the law, due to take effect on Friday, unlawfully took away their intellectual property. In its ruling, the High Court rejected their argument and highlighted the moral dimension to the new regulations. [Reuters](#)

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## **USNORTHCOM**

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### **Canada: The Fort McMurray fire has grown 40 percent in two days**



17 May - Raging wildfires are once again threatening Fort McMurray, Alberta and have now forced the evacuation of oil sands facilities and worker camps in the region, moving in places at around 100 feet per minute. The latest rounds of

evacuations come just two weeks after the wildfires forced nearly 90,000 people to flee the city — and a couple days of cooler weather provided a brief respite for the hundreds of firefighters trying to keep the blaze at bay. About 8,000 workers are affected by the new

evacuation orders, issued late on Monday, as the wildfire grew to its biggest scale yet, a whopping 354,000 hectares. On Sunday evening, it was 251,000 hectares. [VICE News](#)

## Mexico/U.S.: Binational dengue outbreak along the United States–Mexico border, 2014

20 May - During September–December 2014, while a dengue outbreak was ongoing in Sonora, Mexico, 93 travel-associated dengue cases were reported in Arizona; 75% of cases were among residents of Yuma County, which borders San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora, Mexico. Among 194 persons in Yuma County surveyed, 152 (78%) reported travelling to Mexico  $\geq 1$  time/month, and elevated Breteau, household, and container *Aedes* mosquito density indices were consistent with an increased risk for DENV transmission, demonstrating that Yuma County is at risk for local DENV transmission. Sharing surveillance data among local, state, and federal public health workers in the United States and Mexico can enable timely detection of binational disease outbreaks. Border communities with *Aedes* mosquitos are at risk for local transmission of DENV, chikungunya virus, and Zika virus infections. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Update](#)

## U.S.: Asian-Americans in better health than other U.S. adults

19 May - Asian-Americans are healthier than other U.S. adults. So say federal health officials who added that, compared to other Americans, most Asian-Americans are less likely to report that they're in fair or poor health, have multiple chronic conditions or serious psychological problems. They're also less likely to say they must limit work or social activities compared to others their age, researchers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Thursday. ... For the report, researchers collected data on Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese Americans from the 2010-2014 National Health Interview Survey. The survey asked nearly 170,000 American adults about their health. ... "Chinese adults reported better health on all measures, compared to other U.S. adults. But, Vietnamese were more likely to be in fair or poor health compared with other Americans," said lead author Barbara Bloom. [HealthDay](#)

## U.S.: Chickenpox outbreak affects 75 children in New York City

17 May - The city Health Department is investigating an outbreak of chickenpox that has infected infants and young children in the Orthodox Jewish community of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. "There have been 75 reports of persons with varicella [chicken pox] who became ill during or after March 2016. The median age of patients is 3 years (range 0 to 10 years)," health officials said a Monday alert to medical providers. Of those who had chickenpox, 72 percent were not vaccinated and 14 percent had not yet received the full recommended number of doses of vaccine. [Fox News](#)

## U.S.: Children are using health services less—but medical costs still rising

16 May - Kids are going to the doctor's office and emergency rooms less often, and even using fewer prescription drugs — but overall health spending on children is still going up. A study released Monday ... indicates that price increases for health services and brand-name drugs were the biggest drivers of higher overall medical spending on kids from 2010 through 2014. ... Out-of-pocket health spending — money that has to be personally paid, instead of by an insurance plan — on health care for children grew by an annual average percentage of 5.5 percent during the same time frame, starting at \$381 per capita in 2010 and ending at \$472 per child in 2014. [CNBC](#)

## U.S.: Drop in childhood obesity cannot be explained by health behaviors

19 May - A 2014 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed a decline in the prevalence of obesity among 2- to 5-year-olds between 2003-2004 (a 13 percent child obesity rate) and 2011-2012 (a 7 percent child obesity rate); however, the study did not identify the health and demographic factors linked to the decline. Rice and Temple researchers replicated the CDC's study with 1,900 children between the ages of 2 and 5 in an attempt to explain the changes. Their discovery: The 6 percent drop in childhood obesity cannot be explained by changes in maternal or child health behaviors such as smoking cessation, breast-feeding or physical activity. "Even though maternal and child health behaviors changed in important ways, none of these changes contributed to the decline in obesity overall or for boys or girls," said the study's lead author. [ScienceDaily](#)

## U.S.: H.I.V. rates among gay men are higher in south, study finds

18 May - More than a quarter of gay and bisexual men in some cities and states in the South are living with H.I.V., according to a new study — a far higher rate than in the country as a whole. The study shows how much more common H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS, is among gay black men, especially in the South, as well as how little is being done to prevent its spread in a group whose members face discrimination and are less likely to have medical insurance. Gay men with insurance are more likely to be in treatment if they are infected or to be using pre-exposure prophylaxis if they are not, both of which significantly cut the chances that an infection will be passed on. [The New York Times](#)

## U.S.: Motorcycle deaths up 10 percent in last year

19 May - Motorcyclist deaths in the United States topped 5,000 last year -- a 10 percent increase from 2014, according to a new report. ... Preliminary statistics suggest there were 5,010 motorcyclist deaths in 2015, which is 450 more than the previous year. It's only the third year in U.S. history and the first time since 2008 that the number of motorcyclist

deaths was above 5,000, the report authors said. Compared with 2014, motorcyclist deaths rose in 31 states, fell in 16 states and stayed the same in three states and the District of Columbia, the findings showed. Restoring universal helmet use laws in the 32 states without them would be the most effective way to reduce motorcyclist deaths, according to the association. ... The rate of helmet use is 89 percent in states with universal helmet laws, compared with 48 percent in all other states. [HealthDay](#)

## U.S.: Pfizer ban on lethal drug sales complicates executions in 20 states

17 May - More than 20 U.S. states that use a combination of drugs to carry out lethal injections will find it harder to conduct executions due to Pfizer's ban on sales of its chemicals, but the move will have little impact on the handful that rely on a single drug. The pharmaceutical giant's move last week cuts off the last major U.S. source for drugs in the deadly mixes, and it adds to the difficulties of states that were already struggling to procure chemicals for lethal injections. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Visual impairment, blindness cases in U.S. expected to double by 2050

19 May - With the youngest of the baby boomers hitting 65 by 2029, the number of people with visual impairment or blindness in the United States is expected to double to more than 8 million by 2050, according to projections based on the most recent census data and from studies funded by the National Eye Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health. Another 16.4 million Americans are expected to have difficulty seeing due to correctable refractive errors such as myopia (nearsightedness) or hyperopia (farsightedness) that can be fixed with glasses, contacts or surgery. .... Over the next 35 years, Varma and his colleagues project that the number of people with legal blindness will increase by 21 percent each decade to 2 million by 2050. [NIH](#)

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### USPACOM

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## China and India burdened by untreated mental disorders

18 May - The growing burden of untreated mental disorders in the world's two most populous countries, India and China, cannot be adequately addressed without changes to their health care systems and by training folk healers to become collaborators, a new report has found. The analysis ... draws on years of medical surveys in those countries. ... The new research, presented in three papers, found that less than 10 percent of people in India and China with a mental disorder received effective treatment, and that the resulting burden of

disability from those two countries was higher than in all Western countries combined. ... In the past decade, both India and China have taken steps to expand access to mental health care. ... An Indian government program to increase care in communities has effectively reduced hospital costs, in some areas, though implementation has been spotty at best, experts said. But particularly in rural areas, the majority of people in both countries still have little means or access to psychiatrists or therapists. [The New York Times](#)

## Sri Lanka: Hopes fading for Sri Lanka's landslide survivors

18 May - Heavy rains are hampering rescue efforts and hopes are fading for the possibility of finding survivors among the 130 missing in the Sri Lankan region which was hit by landslides that have left 58 people dead. About 220 families are reported missing, the Sri Lankan Red Cross said in a statement on Wednesday. Tuesday's landslides wiped out at least three villages in the central hills of Aranayaka following torrential rains that have affected up to 350,000 people, according to the country's Disaster Management Centre. [Al Jazeera](#)

## USNS Mercy set to lead Pacific's largest disaster-relief preparation mission

16 May - The hospital ship USNS Mercy will stop off at Pearl Harbor Wednesday on its way to lead the region's largest annual multilateral disaster-relief preparation mission. ... This year's deployment – which includes more than 600 military and civilian personnel from the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United Kingdom, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Japan – will be led from aboard the Mercy by Capt. Tom Williams, commander of the San Diego-based Destroyer Squadron 23. ... Teams specializing in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and civil engineering will partner with host nations East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia, Palau, the Philippines and Vietnam to conduct community-health exchanges, medical symposiums, infrastructure projects and disaster-relief drills. [Stars and Stripes](#)

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### USSOUTHCOM

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## Ecuador rattled by two powerful earthquakes

18 May – Two earthquakes shook western Ecuador on Wednesday, one month after the worst temblor to hit the country in decades killed more than 650 people and injured more than 16,600. ... The first earthquake struck in the early morning in the province of Esmeraldas, about 100 miles northwest of the capital, Quito, according to the United States

Geological Survey. Reuters, citing witnesses, said that the 6.7-magnitude quake had cut electricity in several coastal areas, and that people had been running in the streets. The second earthquake occurred nearby at midday and had a magnitude of 6.8, with the epicenter in the small coastal town of Mompiche. [The New York Times](#)

## PAHO reports 3,000 new chikungunya cases

17 May - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) late last week reported 3,095 new suspected and confirmed cases of chikungunya, bringing the 2016 total to 86,694 cases. A large share of the new cases of the mosquito-borne disease came from Argentina, which jumped from 171 cases the week before to 2,354 last week, a 1,283-case increase. PAHO also noted in the May 13 report that Colombia had 481 new cases and 13,510 for the year. Honduras was next with 337 new cases and 8,315 total. Many countries, though, have not reported new cases for many weeks. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

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