

21 August 2015

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center



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USSOUTHCOM

- Chikungunya outbreak in Americas grows by 5,700 cases

Army Vector-borne Disease Report

West Nile Virus:

Nationally, 38 cases and 1 death have been reported this WNV season; 1 acute WNV case in an active-duty Soldier has been reported in 2015.

Dengue Fever: As of 3 August, 11 dengue fever cases have been reported in Army beneficiaries in 2015.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever:

6 cases of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever have been reported in Army beneficiaries; 2 AD cases reported duty-related exposure.



U.S. MILITARY

Efficacy of PTSD treatments questioned

19 August - Two treatments for post-traumatic stress that are considered the gold standard for treating the condition in combat veterans are not significantly more effective than some other approaches, including medication, stress management therapy and mindfulness, according to a new study. Two types of therapy that focus on confronting and dealing with trauma — cognitive processing therapy and prolonged exposure therapy — are largely considered front-line treatments for PTSD. But a review of PTSD treatment studies dating back to 1989 found that while the two therapies reduce symptoms, they also have high dropout rates and low follow-through, making them less effective and less likely to completely alleviate symptoms. ... According to the review, ... medications, as well as therapies that teach personal skills and coping strategies or focus on relaxation, mindfulness, yoga and exercise, were nearly as effective as the CPT and PE therapy. [Military Times](#)

Healthy Base Initiative ends, but concept continues

19 August - The Defense Department's Healthy Base Initiative is about to end, but the emphasis on health and wellness is merely making a transition. The Healthy Base Initiative, a DoD demonstration project at 14 installations that tested ways to improve the health and wellness of troops, civilians and their families, is ending this month. However, the successful ideas that have emerged from the project will be made available next spring for other installation commands. ... Bases tested a variety of ideas and programs, some of which were started before the Healthy Base Initiative demonstration project, in order to identify effective ways to improve the overall health and wellness. Examples included establishing indoor walking trails and farmers markets, making fruits and other healthy items more visible in convenience stores, and increasing the number of tobacco-free areas. [Military Times](#)

Hidden damage revealed in veterans' brains from IED blasts

13 August - A research team at Johns Hopkins University says they have found a unique honeycomb pattern of broken and swollen nerve fibers in brains of Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans who survived improvised explosive device (IED) blasts, but later died of other causes. In doing so, the team says they may have found the signature of "shell shock" - a problem that has afflicted many soldiers since World War One warfare. [Researchers] studied the brains of five U.S. combat veterans and compared them to 24 other brains of people who died from causes such as car accidents, drug overdoses and heart attacks. Koliatsos says the honeycomb pattern is unique to the combat veterans' brains, and was

**Performance Triad:
Back to School -
Be Ready Poster**

A new poster on establishing healthy habits for children headed back to school is available on the [Health Information Product eCatalog](#).



found in the frontal lobe which controls decision-making, reasoning and other executive functions. ... Koliatsos says this hidden brain injury may later play a role in a veteran's psychological and social problems. [Reuters](#)

Incidence of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2005–2014

July 2015 - Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a common condition among adults that can cause symptoms such as frequent heartburn, substernal chest pain, and regurgitation of food. During 2005–2014, a total of 137,081 active component service members had an incident (first-ever) diagnosis of GERD (incidence rate: 101.3 per 10,000 person-years). Incidence rates were higher than their respective counterparts among females, black and white non-Hispanics, service members in the Coast Guard and Air Force, officers, and those in healthcare occupations. Rates increased monotonically with increasing age groups. Most GERD cases (79.2%) were uncomplicated GERD; however, 20.8% were identified as having a symptom or complication linked to their GERD diagnosis. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

New VA studies examine genetic influences on chronic illness

August 2015 - Four new VA-funded studies will examine the connections between genetics and heart disease, kidney disease, and substance use. Researchers will tap the VA's Million Veteran Program (MVP), the nation's largest database linking genetic, clinical, lifestyle, and military exposure information. Consortia of VA and university researchers are exploring specific questions related to chronic illnesses common among veterans, the VA says. The new studies join others already under way on posttraumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. [Federal Practitioner](#)

Study: Children from military families prone to high-risk behavior in wartime

17 August - Children in military families during wartime are more likely than their nonmilitary peers to abuse drugs and alcohol, get into fights or bring guns to school, among other risky forms of behavior, says a study of California school-age students published Monday. Compared to those in civilian families, adolescents in military families were more likely to report alcohol use (45 percent vs. 39 percent), prescription drug misuse (36 percent vs. 27 percent), physical violence such as being pushed, slapped, hit or kicked (36 percent vs. 27 percent), and carrying a gun on campus (10 percent vs. 5 percent). [Stars and Stripes](#)

Three organizations to join the Defense Health Agency

20 August - Three organizations are set to join the Defense Health Agency in the coming weeks. On Aug. 23 the National Museum of Health and Medicine and the Armed Forces

Army Immunization Program

Immunizations are the best protection against vaccine preventable disease, and have saved more lives than any other medical measure in history. ... Morbidity from vaccine-preventable diseases has fallen 90 percent or more since the mid-20th century.

August is National Immunization & Influenza Awareness Month. It is important that every Soldier, Family member, DA Civilian and health beneficiary receive all of their immunizations, including yearly influenza immunizations, to ensure the Army is a healthy and mission-ready force.

STAND-TO!
THE OFFICIAL FOCUS OF THE U.S. ARMY

Health Surveillance Center, both in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C., and the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, become part of DHA. Health.mil

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GLOBAL

Alcohol involvement in sexual behaviour and adverse sexual health outcomes from 26 to 38 years of age

12 August - Research on alcohol and sexual behaviour has focused on young adults or high-risk groups, showing alcohol use contributing to riskier sexual choices. ... Alcohol involvement in sex continues beyond young adulthood where it has been well documented, and is common at 38. Women appear to be more affected than men, and heavy drinking is associated with poorer outcomes for both. Improving sexual health and wellbeing throughout the life course needs to take account of the role of alcohol in sexual behaviour.

[PLOS ONE](#)

Lyme disease may linger for 1 in 5 because of "persisters"



18 August - Lyme disease is a truly intractable puzzle. Scientists used to consider the tick-borne infection easy to conquer: patients, diagnosed by their bull's-eye rash, could be cured with a weeks-long course of antibiotics. But in recent decades the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has realized that up to one in five Lyme patients

exhibits persistent debilitating symptoms such as fatigue and pain, known as post-treatment Lyme disease syndrome, and no one understands why. ... [New] research lends support to the controversial notion that the disease lingers because these bacteria evade antibiotics—and that timing drug treatments differently could eliminate some persistent infections. ... [Whereas] most of the bacteria died within the first day, a small percentage—called persister cells—managed to survive the drug onslaught. ... "These are some of the most robust persisters we've seen," says Lewis. [Scientific American](#)

Study shows vomiting can aerosolize norovirus

20 August - Vomiting can aerosolize virus particles similar to norovirus in infected people, according to a study yesterday in *PLoS One* that involved a simulated vomiting device. Investigators ... inoculated fake vomit with MS2 bacteriophage, which is commonly used as a proxy for norovirus and doesn't harm humans, to determine if viruses would become airborne during simulated vomiting. They used a biosampler to capture particles. They

NARMS Now: Human Data

A new interactive tool from CDC contains antibiotic resistance data from bacteria isolated from humans as part of the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS).

NARMS Now: Human Data makes it easier and quicker to find out how antibiotic resistance has changed over the past 20 years for four bacteria transmitted commonly through food—*Campylobacter*, *E. coli* O157, *Salmonella*, and *Shigella*.



found that a small percentage of bacteriophages were aerosolized—but plenty to cause an infection if they were noroviruses, which require only a minuscule dose to be infectious. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

Sweden suspects meningitis outbreak at major scout jamboree in Japan

18 August - Sweden's health authority is urging nearly 2,000 scouts returning from a gathering in Japan to get medical treatment after a suspected outbreak of meningitis. The Swedish Public Health Agency on Monday said one Swedish participant was likely to have contracted the disease at the World Scout Jamboree. Two other cases were under investigation. The agency also said three cases have been reported in Scotland. The Scout Association of Japan said it was aware of the cases in Scotland, and that it had warned others who had camped near the Scottish scouts, including groups from Sweden, Switzerland, France, Finland, the United States and Japan. [U.S. News and World Report](#)

The Drinkable Book holds promise of safe water



19 August - It is called The Drinkable Book. Its pages are made from technologically advanced filter paper made of nanoparticles of silver nitrate that eliminate the bacteria behind waterborne diseases such cholera, *E. coli* and hepatitis. ... The results were that 99.9 percent of the bacteria were killed by the papers, which

is basically as good as tap water. [Al Jazeera](#)

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INFLUENZA

Bird flu spreads to third location in Ivory Coast

14 August - Ivory Coast said on Friday that H5N1 bird flu had spread to a third location in the country, in the latest in a series of outbreaks in West Africa. The case was discovered on a farm in the village of Modeste, about 15 km (nine miles) east of the commercial capital Abidjan. Farm owner Moussa Dicko said he had lost 27,000 chickens in the outbreak, including about 7,000 slaughtered by veterinary agents. The H5N1 strain of the virus can be transmitted to humans, though such cases are rare. Jonas Oulai, vice-director of animal health at the Ministry of Animals and Fisheries, told journalists that there was cause for concern about the spread of the virus, which struck in Ivory Coast in April. [Reuters](#)

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 31 ending August 8, 2015, 5.9% of all deaths reported through the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia and influenza. This percentage was above the epidemic threshold of 5.8% for week 31. [FluView](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For Week 32 (through 15 August 2015):

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated elevated FRI at Fort Benning, MCRD San Diego, and CGTC Cape May. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

USDA says that H5N8—and most H5N2—outbreaks officially resolved

20 August - In two separate reports this week to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced closure to its follow-up to H5N8 avian flu outbreaks and noted that 11 states—because of measures taken after H5N2 outbreaks—are now free to move poultry domestically and internationally. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

WHO Influenza Update

- 10 August - Globally, influenza activity remained at low levels in the Northern hemisphere and increased in some countries in the Southern hemisphere.
- In North America and Europe, influenza activity remained at low, inter-seasonal levels with influenza B predominating in sporadic detections.
- In most of the countries in Africa, where reports were available, influenza activity remained at low levels except in Senegal which had increased detections of influenza B viruses.
- In tropical countries of the Americas/Central America and the Caribbean, influenza activity was reported to be at low, inter-seasonal levels with only Cuba reporting an increase in detections of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and parainfluenza viruses.
- In western and temperate countries of Asia, influenza activity was at low, inter-seasonal levels with influenza B predominating with co-circulation of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 in western Asia.
- In tropical Asia, countries in Southern Asia reported elevated but decreasing influenza activity with influenza A(H3N2) predominating. South-East Asia reported low levels of activity; however, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam reported elevated influenza activity.

- In temperate South America, influenza activity decreased with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) predominating. Overall, influenza activity was at lower levels than in previous years.
- In South Africa, influenza activity decreased with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) predominating in recent weeks.
- In Australia and New Zealand, influenza activity increased with both influenza A(H3N2) and B viruses in circulation. [WHO](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

CDC: *Salmonella* in Washington state pork outbreak is multidrug resistant

17 August - The 134-case *Salmonella* outbreak in Washington state that has been linked to pork involves a multidrug-resistant form of the bacterium, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported late last week. In an Aug 14 outbreak update, the CDC said that all three patients' *Salmonella* samples tested were resistance to ampicillin, streptomycin, sulfisoxazole, and tetracycline. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

CDC – U.S. *Cyclospora* outbreak grows to 476 cases

19 August - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) yesterday reported 19 new cyclosporiasis cases in the past week, bringing the 2015 outbreak total to 476 infections in 29 states. About 59% of the patients (282) became sick May 1 or later and did not have a history of international travel in the 2 weeks before illness onset. Sixteen patients have required hospitalization, but none have died from infection with the parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

GMOs, herbicides, and public health

20 August – ... The vast majority of the corn and soybeans grown in the United States are now genetically engineered. ... Two recent developments are dramatically changing the GMO landscape. First, there have been sharp increases in the amounts and numbers of chemical herbicides applied to GM crops. ... Second, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified glyphosate, the herbicide most widely used on GM crops, as a “probable human carcinogen.” ... The National Academy of Sciences has twice reviewed the safety of GM crops — in 2000 and 2004. Those reviews, which focused almost entirely on the genetic aspects of biotechnology, concluded that GM crops pose no unique hazards to human health. They noted that genetic transformation has the potential to produce unanticipated allergens or toxins and might alter the nutritional quality of food. ... [Widespread] adoption of herbicide-resistant crops has led to overreliance on herbicides

and, in particular, on glyphosate. In the United States, glyphosate use has increased by a factor of more than 250. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Recalls of organic food on the rise, report says

20 August - New data collected by Stericycle, a company that handles recalls for businesses, shows a sharp jump in the number of recalls of organic food products. Organic food products accounted for 7 percent of all food units recalled so far this year, compared with 2 percent of those recalled last year, according to data from the Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Agriculture that Stericycle uses to compile its quarterly report on recalls. In 2012 and 2013, only 1 percent of total units of food recalled were organic. Kevin Pollack, a vice president at Stericycle, said the growing consumer and corporate demand for organic ingredients was at least partly responsible for the increase. "What's striking is that since 2012, all organic recalls have been driven by bacterial contamination, like salmonella, listeria and hepatitis A, rather than a problem with a label," Mr. Pollack said. [New York Times](#)

Tainted drinking water plays important role in waterborne disease

13 August - The rate of waterborne disease outbreaks caused by *Legionella* in drinking water has been increasing, according to a study released today. ... The outbreaks were responsible for at least 431 illnesses, 102 hospitalizations (24% of cases), and 14 deaths. Sixteen (50%) of the outbreaks involved exposure in hospitals or healthcare settings, 4 (13%) to exposure in hotels, and 3 (9%) to exposure in camps or cabins. Twelve (86%) of the fatal cases were associated with healthcare settings. More than half (56%) of the outbreaks involved drinking water that used surface-water sources. [CIDRAP](#)

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WELLNESS

Birth control pills may offer lasting endometrial cancer protection

20 August - Women who use oral contraceptives during their reproductive years may gain long-term protection against endometrial cancer, a review of previous research suggests. Researchers analyzed 36 studies including more than 140,000 women from around the world. They found that every five years of taking birth control pills was linked to a 24 percent reduction in the risk for endometrial cancer, even more than three decades after women stopped using the contraceptives. [Reuters](#)

Hepatitis C infection may fuel heart risk

14 August – People infected with the hepatitis C virus are at risk for liver damage, but the results of a new Johns Hopkins study now show the infection may also spell heart trouble. The findings, described online July 27 in *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, emerged from a larger ongoing study of men who have sex with men, many but not all of whom were infected with HIV and followed over time to track risk of infection and disease progression. A subset of the participants had both HIV and hepatitis C, two infections that often occur together. Even though people infected with HIV are already known to have an elevated risk for heart disease, researchers emphasize their results offer strong evidence that hepatitis C can spark cardiovascular damage independent of HIV. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#)

Insect group pushes national tickborne disease reduction policy

11 August – A statement yesterday from the Entomological Society of America (ESA) called for a national strategy to invest in approaches that address the spread of ticks and the rising prevalence of tickborne diseases in humans. Tickborne diseases are responsible for about 300,000 human illnesses per year in the United States, accounting for \$700 million to \$1.3 billion in annual costs, the ESA said. The economic burden on public health systems is estimated to be at least three times higher. Research, training, and development of technology are at the heart of the ESA's strategy, partly because ecological changes and the identification of new tickborne diseases have led to what ESA President Phil Mulder, PhD, calls a "tick literacy deficit" in both scientists and members of the public. [CIDRAP](#)

Researchers link longer work hours and stroke risk

19 August - People who work 55 hours or more per week have a 33 percent greater risk of stroke and a 13 percent greater risk of coronary heart disease than those working standard hours, researchers reported on Wednesday in the *Lancet*. The new analysis includes data on more than 600,000 individuals in Europe, the United States and Australia, and is the largest study thus far of the relationship between working hours and cardiovascular health. But the analysis was not designed to draw conclusions about what caused the increased risk and could not account for all relevant confounding factors. [New York Times](#)

The vernacular of risk — rethinking direct-to-consumer advertising of pharmaceuticals

19 August - ... Earlier this year, the FDA sought public comments on new guidance for pharmaceutical marketers on communicating risks to consumers in print advertisements. This proposal, which the FDA has kicked around in one form or another since 2004, responds to mounting research showing that reprinting highly technical package inserts in print ads does very little to communicate risks to consumers. The goal is to communicate those risks in a new vernacular. Instead of reproducing the fine print meant for physicians

and pharmacists, the FDA proposes that drug marketers use a new “consumer brief summary” focused “on the most important risk information . . . in a way most likely to be understood by consumers.” [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Today's teen e-cig users may be tomorrow's smokers

18 August - Compared with non-users, teen e-cigarette users were more than four times as likely to later start using cigarettes or other smokable tobacco products, according to the results of a longitudinal study of California high school students. When averaged across 6- and 12-month follow-up periods, Adam M. Leventhal, PhD, of the USC Keck School of Medicine in Los Angeles, and colleagues found that e-cigarette users at baseline had a more than fourfold increased risk of using "combustible tobacco products" (odds ratio 4.27, 95% CI 3.19 to 5.71, P<0.001), and with a more than twofold risk of smoking cigarettes (OR 2.65, CI 1.73 to 4.05, P<0.001) versus teens who had never used e-cigarettes. [MedPage Today](#)

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USAFRICOM

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Measles outbreak kills over 300 in Congo

18 August - An outbreak of measles is wreaking havoc in the Democratic Republic of Congo. At least 315 people have died in Katanga, a copper and cobalt mining province about the size of Spain, and more than 20,000 people have caught the disease. According to Reuters, United Nations officials said last week many deaths likely have gone unreported, and the outbreak is “only worsening and gaining ground.” That’s in spite of an ongoing Doctors Without Borders campaign that has vaccinated 287,000 Congolese children against measles, more than half of them in Katanga province. [World News Group](#)

Ghana to bring Cuban doctors to mitigate medical strike

19 August - Ghana plans to bring in more than 170 doctors from Cuba to help mitigate the deficiencies from a crippling strike by medics over pay and training. Health Minister Alex Segbefia said on Wednesday that several people have died without proper emergency attention since the strike began early this month. About 2,800 public sector doctors started withdrawing services to out-patient departments before extending the strike to emergency wards. Staff at the police and military hospitals that have remained open in the capital say they have been stretched thin as civilians come there for medical services. [Al Jazeera](#)

Guinea: WHO reports 3 new Ebola cases—all in Guinea

19 August - The number of newly confirmed Ebola infections in West Africa's outbreak region stayed at three last week for the second straight week, with Guinea the only country to report new cases, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today in its weekly snapshot of the epidemic. Earlier this week, the WHO announced that Sierra Leone had gone a full week without reporting a new case, the first time since the outbreak began last year. However, in reporting further progress against the virus, the WHO also warned of a significant risk of transmission, because some contacts have been lost to follow-up in Guinea and in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital. [CIDRAP](#)

Lassa virus has thousand-year history in Nigeria

14 August - Lassa virus (LASV) genome sequences have revealed that although the virus was only discovered in 1969, it originated more than a thousand years ago in present-day Nigeria and continues to undergo significant evolutionary change. ... LASV, which causes the highly lethal hemorrhagic Lassa fever in humans, is endemic in West Africa and causes several thousand deaths in the region each year. ... Molecular dating revealed that LASV originated in the area that is now Nigeria more than a thousand years ago and spread into present-day Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia within the last several hundred years, undergoing significant evolutionary change during its migration. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Laws prohibiting bush meat are actually a boon for the bush meat biz

14 August - What's for dinner? Porcupines, giant squirrels, dwarf crocodiles and a variety of primates, including golden-bellied crowned monkeys and Bioko black colobus monkeys. Those are some of the bush meat offerings at the outdoor covered market in Malabo on Bioko Island, part of Equatorial Guinea in Central Africa. And shoppers are willing to pay more for these prized delicacies than they'd fork over for chicken or fish. A new study of the Malabo market offers mostly bad news. A booming economy has caused an increase in bush meat hunting over a 13-year period, with a particularly sharp rise in the numbers of imperiled monkeys showing up for sale at the market. Even worse, the study found, efforts to curb killings of those species have repeatedly backfired — producing a temporary lull followed by an even more intense boom once hunters realized they wouldn't face any real consequences. [NPR](#)

Sierra Leone records zero new Ebola infections

17 August - For the first time since the Ebola outbreak was declared in Sierra Leone, the country has recorded zero new infections. There were no new Ebola cases reported last week according to the WHO. At the height of the outbreak Sierra Leone was reporting more than 500 new cases a week. Last week, for the first time since May last year, there were zero new cases. But authorities are warning against complacency. OB Sisay, Director of the

National Ebola Response Centre (NERC), said: "This does not mean Sierra Leone is suddenly Ebola free. As long as we have one Ebola case we still have an epidemic. People should continue to take the public health measures... around hand-washing, temperature checks, enhanced screening." [BBC](#)

University of Manchester board game to train African midwives

11 August - University researchers have created a board game designed to help African midwives prevent women dying in childbirth. The game, called Progression, has been made by the University of Manchester's school of nursing and midwifery. It has been designed to help in the use of a chart which many midwives find difficult to complete. The partograph records heart rate, blood pressure and temperature and is used to detect problems during labour. The game's creators noted that midwives generally struggle to use the chart as a decision-making aid. [BBC](#)

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USCENTCOM

Iraq: Measles cases in Iraq up in 2015

17 August - The number of measles cases in war-torn Iraq has risen this far in 2015 compared to the previous two years, according to an OCHA Humanitarian Crisis Situation Report. The country, which has seen more than 3 million people displaced during the past year and a half, has seen the number of confirmed measles cases between January and July this year to be 976, this compares to 834 in 2014 and 603 in 2013. Baghdad and Babylon governorates have registered most cases. A nation-wide measles campaign is yet to take place this year. [Outbreak News Today](#)

Pakistan, Afghanistan must step up fight against polio: WHO



19 August - Pakistan and Afghanistan must intensify efforts to halt spread of the crippling poliovirus, including better screening of travelers heading abroad, the World Health Organization said on Monday. The WHO emergency committee of experts warned in a statement that vaccinations of international air travelers in Afghanistan are not being tracked "and no exit screening and restriction of unvaccinated travelers has been implemented at international airports". "The increasing risk of international spread associated with the ongoing suspension of mass vaccination

campaigns in Kandahar province was another major source of concern," the U.N. agency said, referring to Taliban factions that have halted vaccination campaigns. Pakistan and Afghanistan - two of only three countries where the poliovirus remains endemic - have reported 29 and seven cases, respectively, so far this year, against 108 and eight at this time in 2014, WHO spokeswoman Sona Bari said. [Fox News](#)

Saudi Arabia: MERS outbreak prompts Saudi Arabian hospital to close emergency ward

19 August - Saudi authorities closed an emergency ward in one of the kingdom's largest hospitals after at least 46 people, including hospital staff, contracted the potentially fatal Middle East respiratory syndrome, also known as MERS, a health official said Wednesday. Dr. Hanan Balkhi of the Health Ministry's department for infectious diseases said that of the 46 people infected at King Abdulaziz Medical City in the capital, Riyadh, 15 were medical staff. Another 20 people showing symptoms are being tested, she added. The patients from the ward, set to remain closed for two weeks, are being transferred to other hospitals, she said. [Huffington Post](#)

Saudi Arabia: Thirteen new MERS cases confirmed in Riyadh outbreak

17 August - Saudi Arabia reported 14 new MERS-CoV illnesses, along with 4 more deaths, over the past 3 days, with all but 1 of the infections linked to an ongoing hospital-related outbreak in Riyadh. Today alone 9 new MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) cases were reported in the country's capital, vaulting the nation's overall total from the disease above the 1,100 mark, to 1,105. The only case confirmed over the past few days outside of Riyadh involves a 64-year-old foreign man in the southern city of Najran who works in a health setting... The 14 new cases in Riyadh, many of them with hospital-related links, bring the number of Saudi MERS illnesses since Aug 1 to 46. [CIDRAP](#)

Syria: Typhoid outbreak hits Palestinian refugees in Syria

19 August - The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said Tuesday that there is a typhoid outbreak among civilians from a besieged Palestinian refugee camp on the outskirts of the Syrian capital, with at least six confirmed cases. Christopher Gunness, spokesman for the agency known as UNRWA, said its staff gained access to Yalda, an area east of the Yarmouk camp hosting displaced Palestinian refugees and Syrian civilians, for the first time since June 8 and established a mobile health point. UNRWA said in a situation report that its medical personnel provided 211 consultations over the course of Tuesday in Yalda, including confirming six cases of typhoid. [Al Arabiya News](#)

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United Kingdom: Call for Army to stop using malaria drug mefloquine

17 August - A call has been made for an immediate ban on a controversial anti-malaria drug given to British soldiers. The side-effects of mefloquine, or Lariam, have been linked to severe depression and other mental illnesses. Conservative MP Johnny Mercer says he has received dozens of letters from service personnel claiming they have become affected since taking it. The MoD said mefloquine's use was based on expert advice, and it was widely used by civilians and military. Mefloquine is a once-a-week anti-malarial tablet for soldiers serving overseas. [BBC](#)

United Kingdom: Diabetes cases soar by 60% in past decade

17 August - The number of people living with diabetes has soared by nearly 60% in the past decade, Diabetes UK warns. The charity said more than 3.3 million people have some form of the condition, up from 2.1 million in 2005. The inability to control the level of sugar in the blood can lead to blindness and amputations and is a massive drain on NHS resources. The NHS said it was time to tackle poor lifestyle, which is a major factor behind the rise. ... Roughly 90% of cases are type 2 diabetes, which is the form closely linked to diet and obesity. [BBC News](#)

United Kingdom: UK approves e-cigarettes as healthier alternative

20 August – Smokers in the UK could be prescribed e-cigarettes to help them kick the habit, after they were approved as a healthier alternative by the UK's public health body. The surprising decision comes despite Public Health England (PHE) having previously criticised e-cigarettes as a gateway to tobacco use. Now PHE is saying that vaping is safer than smoking and could lead to the demise of the traditional cigarette. The health body has said in the first official recognition that e-cigarettes are less damaging to health than smoking tobacco. PHE concludes that, on "the best estimate so far", e-cigarettes are about 95 percent less harmful than tobacco cigarettes and could one day be dispensed as a licensed medicine in an alternative to anti-smoking products such as patches. [Al Jazeera](#)

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U.S.: 3 firefighters killed, 4 hurt battling one of Washington state's many wildfires

20 August - Three firefighters died and four others were injured while battling a wildfire in northern Washington state, Gov. Jay Inslee said Wednesday evening. The firefighters, confronting a blaze in Okanogan County that prompted evacuations in the towns of Twisp and Winthrop, about 150 miles northeast of Seattle, "were engaged in initial attack operations and were involved in a vehicle accident when it is believed that the fire overtook the vehicle," according to an account by Okanogan County Sheriff Frank Rogers that was provided by the Forest Service and the Washington Department of Natural Resources. [Los Angeles Times](#)

U.S.: California officials announce 2nd Yosemite plague case

19 August - A tourist from Georgia who visited Yosemite National Park this month represents the park's second presumed case of plague, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) said yesterday in a news release. The patient vacationed in Yosemite, the Sierra National Forest, and surrounding areas in California in early August before falling ill. ... The first plague case, announced by the CDPH on Aug 6, involved a child from Los Angeles County. She had been camping at Crane Flat Campground in Yosemite before contracting the disease, one of two campgrounds in the park that were closed for spraying to control fleas. ... Earlier this summer two people in Colorado died after contracting plague. Two other Coloradans this year survived their infections. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

U.S.: CDC notes high rate of risky behaviors in contact lens wearers

20 August - Almost all US contact lens wearers engage in activities that might place them at risk of an eye infection, and almost a third reported a doctor visit for potential lens-related issues, according to the results of a study published today in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*. Risky activities reported by more than half of the 1,141 contact wearers surveyed online include: napping with contacts in (87.1%), showering with contacts (84.9%), keeping cases longer than the recommended 3 months (82.3%), swimming in contact lenses (61.0%), topping off solution in case instead of replacing it (55.1%), and sleeping overnight with contact in (50.2%). More than 99% percent reported at least one risk behavior. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

U.S.: Chickenpox decline continues, even in unvaccinated groups

14 August - Varicella (chickenpox) has continued to decline in the United States as vaccination coverage with the two-dose program has increased, according to a retrospective cohort study published online August 12 in the Journal of the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society. The findings suggest herd immunity, protecting those who were not vaccinated. ... "We saw significant declines in rates of varicella after the one-dose vaccine was recommended in 1995 in the U.S., and we're continuing to see additional declines in varicella after two doses were recommended in 2006." [Medscape](#)

U.S.: FDA approves use of opioid painkiller in 11-16 year olds

14 August - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the use of opioid painkiller OxyContin in patients aged 11 to 16 who have not benefited enough from alternatives. The long-acting drug already treats adults suffering from around-the-clock pain, and has been reformulated over the years to combat rising prescription drug abuse in the United States. Unlike adults, doctors are to prescribe the medicine only for children who can already tolerate a minimum dose of 20 milligrams of oxycodone, the active drug ingredient in OxyContin. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Lyme disease incidence high among young boys and older adults

14 August - The incidence of Lyme disease diagnoses and inpatient visits in the United States is likely higher than previous surveillance data have estimated, especially among young boys and older adults. ... Both inpatient and outpatient cases peaked in number during the summer months, comprising 62% and 50% of average annual Lyme disease cases. Fifteen states, all in the Northeast except for Minnesota and Wisconsin, reported 81% of Lyme disease cases. Inpatient admissions were highest for boys 5 to 9 years old (1.8 admissions per 100,000 population) and men aged 60 to 64 (1.9 admissions per 100,000). Outpatient diagnoses were highest for boys 5 to 9 years of age (54.5 cases per 100,000) and women 60 to 64 (54.7 cases per 100,000). Researchers also found that the incidence for Lyme disease diagnoses was higher than expected among women 15 to 34 years old when compared with national surveillance data. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

U.S.: Occupational hydrofluoric acid injury from car and truck washing — Washington State, 2001–2013

21 August - Exposure to hydrofluoric acid (HF) causes corrosive chemical burns and potentially fatal systemic toxicity. Car and truck wash cleaning products, rust removers, and aluminum brighteners often contain HF because it is efficient in breaking down roadway matter. The death of a truck wash worker from ingestion of an HF-based wash product and

48 occupational HF burn cases associated with car and truck washing in Washington State during 2001–2013 are summarized in this report. Among seven hospitalized workers, two required surgery, and all but one worker returned to the job. Among 48 injured workers, job titles were primarily auto detailer, car wash worker, truck wash worker, and truck driver.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: White House launches plan to counter explosion in heroin use

17 August - The White House announced a new strategy on Monday to tackle the explosion in heroin use in a collection of eastern states, focusing on treating addicts rather than punishing them and targeting high-level suppliers for arrest. ... Announcing the 'Heroin Response Strategy' on Monday, Michael Botticelli, Director of National Drug Control Policy, said the new plan will address the heroin and painkiller epidemics as both "a public health and a public safety issue." Under the plan, \$2.5 million of \$13.4 million in new funding to combat drug trafficking will target regions the White House said are facing a severe heroin threat: Appalachia, New England, New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. [Reuters](#)

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China: How dangerous is the sodium cyanide at the Tianjin explosion site?

18 August - Officials investigating a huge explosion at a warehouse in Tianjin in China have discovered a store of 700 tonnes of sodium cyanide. ... However, if officials act fast they should be able to limit its damaging effects. ... As with the very similar potassium cyanide used in the L-pill, sodium cyanide is extremely toxic to humans. Although there are risks with skin absorption, the biggest risk is ingestion. Inhaling or swallowing sodium cyanide blocks oxygen transport causing serious medical problems and ultimately death. However, the safety of sodium cyanide changes if it is present during an explosion. Avoiding oral ingestion should usually be relatively simple but an explosion can cause it to be inhaled as a fine powder (this danger should have passed quickly – and face masks will also prevent fine powder inhalation). The biggest fear is the formation of hydrogen cyanide upon exposure to water or high temperatures. Hydrogen cyanide, as a gas, is very dangerous if inhaled.

[Scientific American](#)

China: Study links polluted air in China to 1.6 million deaths a year

13 August – Outdoor air pollution contributes to the deaths of an estimated 1.6 million people in China every year, or about 4,400 people a day, according to a newly released scientific paper. The paper maps the geographic sources of China's toxic air and concludes that much of the smog that routinely shrouds Beijing comes from emissions in a distant industrial zone, a finding that may complicate the government's efforts to clean up the capital city's air in time for the 2022 Winter Olympics... According to the data presented in the paper, about three-eighths of the Chinese population breathe air that would be rated "unhealthy" by United States standards. [New York Times](#)

India court scraps Nestle noodle recall order, but demands tests

13 August – An Indian court on Thursday ruled in favor of Nestle in its battle to overturn a nationwide ban of its Maggi instant noodles, but demanded the popular snack be tested again for safety before it can go on sale again. The ruling marks a partial victory for the Swiss food giant, which withdrew the noodles from Indian stores in June after the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said they contained unsafe levels of lead. A spokesman said Nestle India would comply with the court order, which it hopes will mark the beginning of the end of India's worst packaged food scare in a decade. [Reuters](#)

Malaysia: Record dengue outbreak fans fears in Malaysia

12 August – ... Malaysia's Health Ministry has warned the country is facing its largest dengue outbreak ever, with 201 deaths so far this year. The number of annual fatalities has been rising sharply. There were 215 deaths in the whole of 2014, with 92 in 2013, and 35 in 2012. In addition to the increased number of cases, doctors are seeing different types of symptoms, which raises the alarming possibility that the virus is becoming even more deadly and difficult to control. [IRIN](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Chikungunya outbreak in Americas grows by 5,700 cases

18 August - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) late last week reported 5,700 new cases of chikungunya in the Caribbean and Americas, bringing the outbreak total to 1,634,535. The new total includes 480,860 suspected and 15,947 confirmed locally acquired cases and 781 imported cases reported in 2015, or 497,588 total, according to an Aug 14

PAHO update. ... Colombia, which has reported thousands of cases per week for the past several months, reported the largest increase with 3,690 new cases, bringing its outbreak total this year to 316,563. Venezuela reported 1,425 new cases for a 2015 outbreak total of 14,203. Many countries, however, have not reported cases in weeks. Three new fatalities were reported, bringing the 2015 death toll to 64. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

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