

22 May 2020

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center



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## Contents

### NOTE:

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We're sorry for the inconvenience.

### U.S. MILITARY

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- [Army, Defense veterinarians forecast no meat, poultry or produce shortages in DECA food supply](#)
- [Army Public Health Center releases 5th edition of Health of the Force](#)
- [Camp Zama Army Wellness Center keeps up mission](#)
- ['Lower your shield': How Marines are defending each other in their deadliest battle yet](#)
- [Portable system demonstrates capability to save hearing downrange](#)

### GLOBAL

---

- [Age-proof your brain by keeping your heart healthy, study says](#)
- [Anti-malaria drug, chloroquine, studied to determine ability to protect health workers from COVID-19](#)
- [AstraZeneca-Merck's Lynparza gets U.S. FDA nod for prostate cancer treatment](#)
- [Changes in opioid supply create new risks as stay-at-home rules ease](#)
- [Doctors sound alarm as coronavirus sparks drop in cancer diagnoses](#)
- [FDA approves first COVID-19 at-home sample collection kit: Emergency authorization issued for self-collect nasal sample](#)
- [For cancer patients, anguish grows over deferred surgery as risk rises](#)

### INFLUENZA

---

- [AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)
- [CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report](#)
- [WHO: Influenza Update](#)

### VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

---

- [Histamine poisoning in Sweden linked to tuna from Vietnam](#)
- [Ice cream recalled after Listeria contamination discovered](#)

## Subscription or Comments

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### WELLNESS

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- "I can't turn my brain off": PTSD and burnout threaten medical workers
- Managing your cognitive resources during stressful times

### USAFRICOM

---

- Nigeria: Lassa fever cases reach 1,000 in 2020

### USCENTCOM

---

- Qatar: Introduces new coronavirus restrictions for Eid al-Fitr

### USEUCOM

---

- Netherlands: COVID-19 update- Serology Task Force says rapid tests unreliable

### USINDOPACOM

---

- Singapore: Dengue cases top 7500, doubling same period last year

### USNORTHCOM

---

- U.S.: Maine Lyme disease- 'Providers are already reporting cases in 2020, and the number will rise as we enter the summer months'
- U.S.: Pennsylvania COVID-19- Cases top 62K, seven out of ten deaths in residents of nursing homes
- U.S.: Texas- Additional rabbit hemorrhagic disease confirmations reported

### USSOUTHCOM

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- Brazil: COVID-19 outbreak tops 200,000 cases, nearly 14K cases seen in 24 hours
- Paraguay: Dengue, measles vaccines and COVID-19

## U.S. MILITARY

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### Army, Defense veterinarians forecast no meat, poultry or produce shortages in DECA food supply

19 May- Reports of COVID-19 outbreaks in U.S. poultry and meatpacking plants may have concerned some defense commissary shoppers about the continued availability of fresh meat and poultry. Veterinary health officials with the Department of Defense and Army Public Health Center who are charged with monitoring food safety and food supply for the DOD and Army say although there may be localized supply issues outside of the continental United States, there are no forecasted shortages of meat, poultry or produce. "The Army Veterinary Service is working closely with the Defense Commissary Agency, the Defense Logistics Agency and other procurement agencies to expand the available sources of food said Army Col. Nicole Chevalier, Defense Health Agency Veterinary Service chief. "This appears to be mitigating any potential shortages." Chevalier says the Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture and major DOD procurement agencies indicate that shortages in specific commodities in retail grocery stores are a result of increased customer demand and not supply chain shortages. DOD Veterinary Services stood up an interservice operational planning team in late January to monitor food safety and supply in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. While many were focused on the human healthcare sector, DoD Veterinary Services was looking in another direction and focusing on potential impacts to food safety and availability. [Army.mil](#)

[top of page...](#)

### Army Public Health Center releases 5th edition of Health of the Force

19 May- The U.S. Army Public Health Center released the fifth annual Health of the Force report May 8. The report presents Army-wide and installation-level data for Active Component Soldiers for 20 health, wellness and environmental indicators, including injury, behavioral health, sleep disorders and heat risk. It also incorporates a number of "spotlight" vignettes highlighting emerging health initiatives, success stories, or issues of Command interest. The purpose of the report is to empower Army senior leaders with knowledge and context to improve Soldier health and readiness, said Lisa Ruth, the report's product manager and APHC program manager for Population Health Reporting. [Army.mil](#)

[top of page...](#)

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## 2019 Health of the Force Report

The health of the individual Soldier is the foundation of the Army's ability to deploy, fight, and win against any adversary. The 2019 Health of the Force report is the Army's 5th annual population health report documenting conditions that influence the health and medical readiness of the U.S. Army Active Component (AC) Soldier population. Leaders can use Health of the Force to optimize health promotion measures and effect culture changes that align with Army modernization efforts to achieve Force dominance.



## Camp Zama Army Wellness Center keeps up mission

14 May- When the Camp Zama Army Wellness Center's offices had to shut down due to the threat of COVID-19, staff members continued with their mission, working from home, meeting with clients electronically and pumping out information online. "During times like these, it is important to focus on what we can control in our lives," said Lauren Williams, the center's director and leader of the effort. "The sense of routine can help us be more resilient and have a more positive, optimistic outlook towards the uncontrollable stress. Things we can control are our schedule, sleep, activity, nutrition and our stress management." The center's mission is to provide programs and services that improve and sustain the health, performance and readiness of the Army as a whole, and with the advent of COVID-19, people needed them more than ever. So when it came to focusing on what they can control, Williams and her staff led by example. For example, the center has shifted five of its in-person classes on sleep, nutrition, fitness, stress management and cooking to Facebook Live, and the schedule is on their Facebook page. In addition, although in-person services such as fitness, body composition and metabolic testing are not available due to the office being closed, staff members have continued health coaching and health assessments via electronic means, Williams said. Shannon Vo, a health educator at the center, said she welcomes new clients, and people can contact the center to schedule an appointment for coaching or an assessment. Vo said health assessments are available via telephone or face-to-face video, and although exact metabolic testing is not available, she can substitute calculations based on gender, height and weight to determine how many calories a person should consume daily. [Army.mil](http://Army.mil)

[top of page...](#)

## 'Lower your shield': How Marines are defending each other in their deadliest battle yet

18 May- This story was produced before the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the outbreak, the veterans featured in this story are using technology including Facebook live videos and group texts to stay connected and hoping to resume retreats safely in the future. Marines pull up in cars, trucks and on motorcycles. They're wearing T-shirts with the sleeves cut off, shorts, swim trunks, flip flops. They unfold cots and unroll sleeping bags in one room and light a fire outside. Meat is already grilling and the fish are biting. "It's like you're back on the base at the chow hall, but with way better food," Corp. David Bachmann, told Connecting Vets, laughing. Bachmann, a nearly 7-foot-tall biker, is one of the "War Dogs" of the Second Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment, and the first battalion to enter the country during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Reunited with brothers they haven't seen in years, some they might have given up for dead, the ice begins to melt, handshakes turn to bear hugs. The buzzword in military service is "transition" but for these Marines it was the severing of an artery of camaraderie and comfort that they never recovered from. "You become so close to each other the brotherhood becomes so tight and then all of a sudden you're spit out into society again," said Corp. Joel Cain, a 2/7 Marine who served 2001-05. He now coaches

**APHC 2019 Novel  
Coronavirus  
Updates**

This site provides Army-specific information and communication resources related to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). The resources and tools available on this site may be shared with, tailored for, and/or used to create informational and educational materials for Army beneficiaries.



football in his Georgia hometown. "When you get out, you're on your own," said Bachmann, who served 2001-05. He enlisted at 19, just before Sept. 11. [Connecting Vets](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **Portable system demonstrates capability to save hearing downrange**

13 May- With just a protective case at her side, an Army audiologist traveled across Iraq, using a novel, compact hearing test technology with a game-changing capability to effectively assess and diagnose hearing-related injuries far forward on the battlefield. Army Lt. Col. (Dr.) Jillyen Curry-Mathis recently deployed to Iraq to serve as the chief, force health protection for the XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, supporting the diverse preventive medicine mission while testing out the one-of-a-kind portable audiometric system. "Although challenging, I was able to move around the battlefield, either bringing the new capability to a site or basing out of the Role 3 with the Hospital Commander's support to receive patients," explained Curry-Mathis, who deployed as part of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, which authorized her to travel across Kuwait and Iraq to test the equipment. "The most common comment I heard from providers was they wished I had been there throughout the tour. Surprising, but very encouraging," "I was able to do full diagnostic tests for Soldiers and some civilians, and the equipment wasn't a problem regardless of movements on rotary or fixed wing aircraft." The innovative system, called the Integrated Platform for Clinical Assessment and Monitoring (IPCAM), is the result of a research project initiated in 2013 by the Department of Defense Hearing Center of Excellence, a division of the Defense Health Agency Research and Development Directorate; and was conducted in collaboration with the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command and the Army Public Health Center. [Health.mil](#)

[top of page...](#)

### **GLOBAL**

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## **Age-proof your brain by keeping your heart healthy, study says**

18 May- If you want to keep your brain sharp and focused as you age, it's important to keep your heart healthy. People with more risk factors for heart disease — such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and obesity — experienced more cognitive decline than people with healthier hearts, according to a study published Monday in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology. "There are many specific cardiovascular risk factors, and each can either individually, or in combination, push the fast-forward button towards different aspects of cognitive decline," said Dr. Richard Isaacson, director of the Alzheimer's Prevention Clinic at Weill Cornell Medicine and New York-Presbyterian. "This study focused on individual areas of cognition, such as memory and processing speed, and helps to clarify complex interrelationships between heart and brain health," said Isaacson, who was not

involved in the study. [CNN](#)

[top of page...](#)

## Anti-malaria drug, chloroquine, studied to determine ability to protect health workers from COVID-19

18 May- With \$9 million in philanthropic support, an international group of physicians and scientists is establishing a research network to evaluate promising therapies for COVID-19. The group, called the COVID-19 Research Outcomes Worldwide Network (CROWN) Collaborative, is testing whether the antimalaria drug chloroquine can prevent COVID-19 infection or decrease its severity in front-line health-care workers. An estimated 30,000 such workers from across the globe will participate in the clinical trial, which the collaborative is calling the CROWN CORONATION trial. The collaborative and the trial are funded by the COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator, an initiative with contributions from an array of public and philanthropic donors, intended to support research and development to bring effective, accessible COVID-19 treatments to market as quickly as possible. Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis is the clinical coordinating center for this ambitious international trial. The investigators comprising the CROWN Collaborative are from prominent research organizations in African, European, North American and South American countries, including Cameroon, Canada, Ireland, Ghana, Peru, South Africa, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Zambia. "Because of their repeated close contacts with infected patients, front-line health-care workers in all parts of the world have a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 than most members of the general public," said one of the study's principal investigators, Michael S. Avidan, MD, the Dr. Seymour and Rose T. Brown Professor and head of the Department of Anesthesiology at Washington University. "In some places, more than 10% of those who have become infected are health-care workers. There is an urgent need to identify drugs that are effective at preventing infection or mitigating its severity." The study will recruit front-line health-care workers globally, including those from lower- and middle-income countries. That's important because in many such countries there are relatively few health-care workers per capita, and protecting them from severe COVID-19 infection would provide a substantial public health benefit. "An important way to protect the public at large is to do our best to protect the health-care workers," Avidan said "It is very important that there is a global effort to protect health-care workers because when it comes to COVID-19, we're all in this together. Finding ways to keep health-care workers from getting seriously ill is one of the most important ways to protect vulnerable people everywhere." [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

### The Surgeon General Weekly Read Book

The Surgeon General Weekly Read Book is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level on the APHC SIPRNet site:

<https://intelshare.intelink.sgov.gov/sites/medcom-g2/SitePages/Home.aspx>

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

## Links

[A-Z Index](#)

[About APHC](#)

[Army Public Health  
Weekly Update Archives](#)

[Medical Surveillance  
Monthly Report](#)

[Medical Threat Briefings  
\(AKO\)](#)

[Request APHC Services](#)

[APHC Resource Materials](#)

[APHC Homepage](#)

[APHC Training](#)

[Contact APHC](#)

## AstraZeneca-Merck's Lynparza gets U.S. FDA nod for prostate cancer treatment

20 May- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved AstraZeneca Plc and Merck & Co Inc.'s Lynparza as a treatment for a form of prostate cancer, the companies said in a joint statement on Wednesday. The drug approval by the U.S. regulator is for treating patients with a form of prostate cancer that could not be held back by standard hormone therapy. The approval was based on results from a late-stage study where the drug reduced the risk of disease progression or death by 66% when compared with hormonal anticancer therapies such as enzalutamide or abiraterone. Lynparza leads a class of drugs known as PARP inhibitors, which keep cancer cells damaged by chemotherapy from repairing themselves, and is a key asset for AstraZeneca with approvals in ovarian, breast and pancreatic cancers. The latest approval for the blockbuster cancer drug comes just weeks after it won broader approval as a treatment for ovarian cancer in the United States. Prostate cancer is the second most common cancer in men, with more than 191,000 new diagnoses expected in the United States in 2020, according to the American Cancer Society.

[Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

## Changes in opioid supply create new risks as stay-at-home rules ease

18 May- As the country went into quarantine in March, many of Joseph DeSanto's opioid-addicted patients in Orange County, Calif., told him their supply was drying up because drug dealers in the area were worried about a border shutdown and were retreating to their hometowns in Mexico. "So we lost a lot of our larger dealers that supplied the smaller dealers," says DeSanto, an addiction specialist. But within days or weeks, many of his patients had found new sources of heroin and pain pills, with dangerous results. "When they had to use another dealer, they would be getting a different strength. So they weren't really sure of how they should measure it and how much they should use. So we started seeing a lot of overdoses and a lot of overdose deaths in the first couple of weeks of the pandemic," DeSanto says. There is no national data yet on the pandemic's impact on drug supply and overdose rates in the United States, but experts in addiction and law enforcement say availability and prices of illegal drugs have changed in different areas of the country. And as drug users adjust to new patterns of use, that's creating a patchwork of new overdose risk as well. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

## Doctors sound alarm as coronavirus sparks drop in cancer diagnoses

15 May- The coronavirus pandemic may be dissuading people from getting cancer screenings, and health experts are beginning to raise concerns. Early measures aimed at minimizing the virus' spread urged health care providers to delay "elective" in-person visits, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Those measures nixed things such as routine checkups and cancer screenings -- and Komodo Health, which has a large medical claims database, said in late April that millions of Americans had postponed health care tests. Now, doctors are worried that people avoiding such screenings because they fear COVID-19 may be hurting their chances to overcome undiagnosed cancers, ABC News reported Thursday. At the University of Pennsylvania Health System, new skin cancer diagnoses were down 80 percent from February into March, according to the report. The American Cancer Society, which had earlier encouraged the postponement of nonessential screenings, is adjusting its coronavirus response. It is now urging patients to return to seeking cancer screenings if they feel safe about visiting their health care providers, according to the report. On May 8, the American Cancer Society said that more than half of its grant recipients had halted their cancer research amid the pandemic. [Fox News](#)

[top of page...](#)

## FDA approves first COVID-19 at-home sample collection kit: Emergency authorization issued for self-collect nasal sample

18 May- The U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued an emergency authorization allowing the first coronavirus at-home sample collection kit. According to Gizmodo's latest report, FDA announced on Saturday, May 16, that COVID-19 at-home sample collection kit is approved that will allow consumers to collect their own nasal sample at the premises of their house and then sending them off to their assigned medical experts for further testing and observation. [Tech Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

## For cancer patients, anguish grows over deferred surgery as risk rises

19 May- Last June, days after her 40th birthday, Silver felt a lump in her left breast that turned out to be a tumor that had spread to her lung and liver. For eight months, she underwent chemotherapy that reduced the masses to operable size. But last month, Silver's oncologist explained a mastectomy would also require an additional procedure to take skin off her back, known as a "flap" to cover the wound. That secondary surgery was considered cosmetic and therefore nonessential, according to the standards put in place this spring because of the coronavirus pandemic. Silver's surgery, like many others, was put on hold.



"It's not necessarily considered a medical emergency by them, even though it's, like, the entire world to me," Silver says. NPR is using only her first name, at her request, to preserve her medical privacy. She felt shattered, she says, especially because she was unable to see her parents or get hugs from her friends. "My one hope to be a long-term survivor was kind of fading, and now I'm going to have to pioneer a new hope," she says. "That was tough. It was awful." COVID-19 has taken the medical focus away from many other serious diseases, including cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, more than a quarter of patients with active cancer are reporting delays in treatment. Also, cancer screenings are down, meaning many conditions will worsen while the health system diverts to fight the virus. At the same time, the pandemic is creating bottlenecks in care. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **INFLUENZA**

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### **AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary**

03 May 2020 — 09 May 2020:

NORTHCOM: ILI activity remained minimal. Influenza B predominated during the first half of the season and then Influenza A became the predominating strain for the remainder of the season, specifically A(H1N1).

EUCOM: ILI activity remained minimal. Among positive influenza specimens, the majority have been influenza A this season.

INDOPACOM: ILI activity remained minimal. The majority of positive influenza specimens have been influenza A this season. Among subtyped influenza A specimens, the majority were A(H1N1).

SOUTHCOM: ILI activity remained minimal. The majority of influenza specimens have been influenza A this season.

CENTCOM: ILI activity remained minimal. [DHA -Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch](#)

[top of page...](#)

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

Key Updates for Week 19, ending May 9, 2020: Laboratory confirmed flu activity as reported by clinical laboratories remains low. Influenza-like illness activity continues to decrease and is below the national baseline. The percent of deaths due to pneumonia or influenza (P&I) is decreasing but remains elevated, primarily due to COVID-19, not influenza. Reported pediatric flu deaths for the season are high at 174. [CDC](#)

[top of page...](#)

## WHO: Influenza Update

11 May 2020 - Update number 367, based on data up to 26 April 2020:

-The current influenza surveillance data should be interpreted with caution as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic might have influenced to varying extents health seeking behaviors, staffing/routines in sentinel sites, as well as testing priorities and capacities in Member States. The various hygiene and physical distancing measures implemented by Member States to reduce SARS-CoV2 virus transmission might also have played a role in interrupting influenza virus transmission.

-Globally, influenza activity appeared to be at lower levels than expected for this time of the year. In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere a sharp decline of influenza activity was observed in recent weeks while in the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, the influenza season has not started yet.

-In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere, influenza activity was low overall. A marked overall increase in excess all-cause mortality was seen across the countries of the EuroMOMO network.

-In the Caribbean and Central American countries, severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) activity continued to be reported though decreased in most of the countries. Influenza virus detections remained low.

-In tropical South American countries, influenza detections were low.

-In tropical Africa, there were no or low influenza detections across most reporting countries.

-In Southern Asia, influenza like illness (ILI) and SARI activity decreased in Bhutan and Nepal.

-In South East Asia, low influenza detections were reported in Thailand.

-In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels overall.

-Worldwide, seasonal influenza A viruses accounted for the majority of detections. [WHO top of page...](#)

## Histamine poisoning in Sweden linked to tuna from Vietnam

15 May- Thirty people in Sweden fell ill with scombroid poisoning after eating tuna from Vietnam earlier this month. The histamine poisoning foodborne outbreak was linked to frozen tuna loins from Vietnam, via the Netherlands. Local authorities were responsible for the outbreak investigation and tracing of food batches. The Swedish Food Agency (Livsmedelsverket) is the national contact point for Europe's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). Mats Lindblad, from the Swedish Food Agency, said about 30 people were sick but no deaths were reported. "Symptoms were typical for histamine poisoning and included swelling, hives, irregular heartbeat, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting," he told Food Safety News. "All reported cases had consumed a dish with tuna at the same restaurant. The outbreak occurred at the beginning of May. The link to the tuna loins is based on the epidemiological outbreak investigation. Samples have been taken from the incriminated batch, but results are pending. "Thirty people is more than usual for a histamine outbreak in Sweden — normally reports of histamine food poisoning concern single cases or a few persons only. Normally the agency receives reports of around ten outbreaks or single cases each year." Distribution of the frozen tuna loins also included Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, according to the RASFF portal. Onset of histamine food poisoning symptoms can range from minutes to several hours following ingestion of toxin. Typically, the average incubation period before illness is one hour. The most common symptoms of histamine or scombroid fish poisoning are tingling or burning sensation in the mouth, facial swelling, rash, hives and itchy skin, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. They usually resolve within several hours without medical intervention. If symptoms are severe an individual should seek medical attention for treatment. They can be treated with antihistamines. Production of histamine is related to mishandling of food due to storage at incorrect temperatures. Once histamine has been produced, it cannot be eliminated by normal cooking or freezing temperatures. [Food Safety News](#)

[top of page...](#)

## Ice cream recalled after *Listeria* contamination discovered

15 May- Ramar Foods of Pittsburg, CA, has recalled its 14-ounce packages of Peekaboo branded Mint Chocolate Chip with Hidden Spinach Ice Cream product for potential contamination of *Listeria monocytogenes*, an organism which can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in young children, frail or elderly people, and others with weakened immune systems. Others may suffer only short-term symptoms such as high fever, severe headache, stiffness, nausea, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, *Listeria* infection can cause miscarriages and stillbirths among pregnant women. The recalled ice cream was available for purchase at select Target stores in Florida, Georgia, and North and South Carolina. Only thirty-three (33) containers of the ice cream product were purchased by consumers and the remaining containers have been removed from commerce. The ice cream affected comes in a 14 ounce, a printed paper container with UPC# 8685400001, and a Best Before date of 10/08/2021 printed on the bottom. No illnesses have yet been associated with this recalled product. The potential for contamination was discovered after internal routine testing by Ramar Foods revealed the presence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in some packages of the ice cream. Production of the recalled product was suspended while Ramar Foods continue to work with the FDA to investigate and take appropriate corrective measures. Consumers who purchased the Peekaboo branded Mint Chocolate Chip with Hidden Spinach with the Best By date of 10/08/2021 should not consume the product and may obtain a full refund. Consumers with questions, or who would like to request an immediate refund, may contact Ramar Foods. [Food Safety News](#)

[top of page...](#)

### WELLNESS

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## “I can’t turn my brain off”: PTSD and burnout threaten medical workers

16 May- The coronavirus patient, a 75-year-old man, was dying. No family member was allowed in the room with him, only a young nurse. In full protective gear, she dimmed the lights and put on quiet music. She freshened his pillows, dabbed his lips with moistened swabs, held his hand, spoke softly to him. He wasn’t even her patient, but everyone else was slammed. Finally, she held an iPad close to him, so he could see the face and hear the voice of a grief-stricken relative Skyping from the hospital corridor. After the man died, the nurse found a secluded hallway, and wept. A few days later, she shared her anguish in a private Facebook message to Dr. Heather Farley, who directs a comprehensive staff-support program at Christiana Hospital in Newark, Del. “I’m not the kind of nurse that can act like I’m fine and that something sad didn’t just happen,” she wrote. Medical workers like the young nurse have been celebrated as heroes for their commitment to treating desperately ill coronavirus patients. But the heroes are hurting, badly. Even as applause to honor those swells nightly from city windows, and cookies and thank-you notes arrive at hospitals, the

doctors, nurses and emergency responders on the front lines of a pandemic they cannot control are battling a crushing sense of inadequacy and anxiety. Every day they become more susceptible to post-traumatic stress, mental health experts say. And their psychological struggles could impede their ability to keep working with the intensity and focus their jobs require. Although the causes for the suicides last month of Dr. Lorna M. Breen, the medical director of the emergency department at New York-Presbyterian Allen Hospital, and John Mondello, a rookie New York emergency medical technician, are unknown, the tragedies served as a devastating wake-up call about the mental health of medical workers. Even before the coronavirus pandemic, their professions were pockmarked with burnout and even suicide. [The New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

## Managing your cognitive resources during stressful times

15 May- As the COVID-19 pandemic has uprooted our lives through shifting workloads and drastic lifestyle changes, many of us have experienced significant stress as we try to adapt to uncertainty and manage responsibilities in our personal and professional lives. Unsurprisingly, this stress can impact our emotional health, well-being and job performance. So if you notice an uptick in depression or anxiety symptoms or find that it is harder to concentrate than before, the stress of the pandemic could be affecting you. The stress may impact our immune system as well. One study found that self-reported stress predicted more symptoms in volunteers exposed to influenza virus. Another study found that individuals who reported high levels of stress over a period of at least a month were two to three times more likely to develop colds than those reporting less stress when challenged with a cold virus. These results suggest that people who experience more stress are more likely to be susceptible to viruses like COVID-19. "Stress can be mitigated by good sleep, activity and nutrition," says Col. Deydre Teyhen, Commander of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, which works to identify and overcome infectious disease and brain health threats to Soldiers. [Army.mil](#)

[top of page...](#)

### USAFRICOM

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## Nigeria: Lassa fever cases reach 1,000 in 2020

17 May- On April 28, Nigerian health officials declared the emergency phase of the 2020 Lassa fever outbreak over after reporting the largest Lassa fever outbreak ever reported in any country, 'anywhere in the world'. The Lassa fever cases do continue and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) reported nine additional cases during the most recent reported week, bringing the total confirmed case count to 1,000 through May 10. The nine new cases were reported from four States (Ondo, Edo, Ebonyi and Kogi). One additional Lassa fever death in a confirmed case was reported putting the death toll at 192. [Outbreak](#)

[News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **Qatar: Introduces new coronavirus restrictions for Eid al-Fitr**

19 May- Qatar has announced a series of new measures aimed at stopping the spread of the new coronavirus, including halting most commercial activities until May 30. All shops, with the exception of food and catering shops, pharmacies, restaurants delivery services and a few other essential services, will also be closed during the same time period, which coincides with the official Eid al-Fitr holidays. All industrial activities, contracting companies, and engineering supervisory works - construction sites and engineering offices running under it - are exempted from the orders, according to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Starting May 22, all citizens and residents should also have the EHTERAZ app on their phones when leaving their homes. The app uses GPS and Bluetooth technology to help track COVID-19 cases, informing users if they come into contact with those who have tested positive. No more than two people are now allowed to be in the same vehicle. Exceptions for three people are made for private vehicles driven by the family driver, or transportation in taxis. Buses will operate at half capacity. [Al Jazeera](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **Netherlands: COVID-19 update- Serology Task Force says rapid tests unreliable**

17 May- On Sunday, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) reported fifteen additional COVID-19 cases and 10 deaths. They note not all of these reported individuals have been hospitalized or have died in the past 24 hours. Some patients are reported later. This brings the country totals to 43,995 confirmed COVID-19 patients, including 5680 deaths. Last Tuesday, the Serology Task Force of the National Coordination Centre for Testing Capacity – a partnership between RIVM National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, hospitals and laboratories – has collected research results on rapid diagnostic tests from independent Medical Microbiology Laboratories. The preliminary conclusions show that none of the rapid diagnostic tests ('point-of-care tests' or POCT) that were examined meets the requirements for individual patient diagnostics. Based on the WHO advice not to use serological rapid diagnostic tests for human testing, and on the preliminary data collected in medical microbiology labs in the Netherlands, the Task Force advises against the use of rapid diagnostic tests. The test results are not reliable. The percentage of false positive and false negative results is too high. The Task Force advises against the use of rapid diagnostic tests or self-tests. Users may become unnecessarily worried, or they may be wrongly reassured. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

## USINDOPACOM

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### **Singapore: Dengue cases top 7500, doubling same period last year**

16 May- The National Environment Agency (NEA) in Singapore has reported 7,502 dengue fever cases through May 15 this year, doubling the case count for the same period in 2019. NEA also reports at least seven dengue-related deaths to date. The deceased were between 60 and 80 years of age and had lived or worked within dengue clusters, according to the NEA. Officials warn there is usually a higher transmission of dengue in Singapore during the warmer months of May to September. This is due to accelerated breeding and maturation cycles for the Aedes mosquitoes and shorter incubation periods for the dengue virus.

[Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

## USNORTHCOM

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### **U.S.: Maine Lyme disease- ‘Providers are already reporting cases in 2020, and the number will rise as we enter the summer months’**

14 May- The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) reported a record more than 2,000 Lyme disease cases in 2019 and officials announce during this Lyme Disease Awareness Month that providers are already reporting cases in 2020, and the number will rise as we enter the summer months. This has prompted health officials to advise the public to be aware of tick bites that transmit not only Lyme disease, but also anaplasmosis (a bacterial disease), babesiosis (a parasitic disease) and Powassan virus. Individuals bitten by the deer tick can acquire more than one infection. Many individuals and families are spending more time outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic. This may put them at increased risk of exposure to tickborne pathogens. Symptoms of anaplasmosis include: fever, headache, malaise and body aches. Symptoms of babesiosis include: extreme fatigue, aches, fever, chills, sweating, dark urine, and possibly anemia. Symptoms of Powassan include: fever, headache, vomiting, weakness, confusion, loss of coordination, speech difficulties, seizures, and encephalitis and meningitis. In 2019, providers reported 685 cases of anaplasmosis, 138 cases of babesiosis and two cases of Powassan. [Outbreak](#)

[News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **U.S.: Pennsylvania COVID-19- Cases top 62K, seven out of ten deaths in residents of nursing homes**

17 May- On Sunday, the Pennsylvania Department of Health confirmed 623 additional positive cases of COVID-19, bringing the statewide total to 62,234. All 67 counties in Pennsylvania have cases of COVID-19. Philadelphia has reported the most cases with 16140 cases and more than 1000 deaths. Concerning COVID-19 related deaths, the state is reporting 4,418 total deaths, an increase of 15 new deaths. Of this total, 3,057 deaths, or 69 percent, have occurred in residents from nursing or personal care facilities. Most of the patients hospitalized are aged 65 or older, and most of the deaths have occurred in patients 65 or older. "As counties move from red to yellow, we need all Pennsylvanians to continue to follow the social distancing and mitigation efforts in place," Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. "We must continue to protect our most vulnerable Pennsylvanians, which includes our seniors, those with underlying health issues, our healthcare workers and our first responders. I am proud of the work that Pennsylvanians have done so far, but we cannot stop now, we must continue to take the necessary steps to protect ourselves from COVID-19." Non-life-sustaining businesses in the red phase are ordered to be closed and schools are closed statewide through the remainder of the academic year. Currently, 37 counties are in the yellow phase of reopening; 12 more will move to the yellow phase on May 22. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **U.S.: Texas- Additional rabbit hemorrhagic disease confirmations reported**

14 May- The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) has received two new confirmations of rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus 2 (RHDV2) in domestic rabbits in the past week. The confirmations were reported on one Lubbock County premises and one Midland County premises. To date, RHDV2 has been confirmed in domestic rabbits in the following Texas counties: El Paso, Hamilton, Hockley, Lampasas, Lubbock and Midland. "The Commission would like to remind all rabbit owners and breeders to maintain robust biosecurity practices on their farms and in their homes," said Dr. Andy Schwartz, State Veterinarian and TAHC Executive Director. Texas veterinarians have succeeded in coming closer to securing the European RHDV2 vaccination in an effort to protect and prevent the spread of this foreign rabbit disease. RHDV2 is a fatal, viral disease that affects both domestic and wild rabbits, including hares, jackrabbits and cottontails. It does not affect humans, or other animal species. This highly contagious foreign animal disease spreads between rabbits through contact with infected rabbits or carcasses, their meat or fur, or contact with contaminated food, water, or materials. RHDV2 can persist in the environment for a very long time. These factors make disease control efforts extremely challenging once it is in the wild rabbit populations. "The TAHC encourages rabbit owners to keep their rabbits secure at home and cease all unnecessary movement of rabbits to aid in preventing further exposure to or



transmission of the virus,” said Dr. Susan Rollo, State Epidemiologist. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

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## **Brazil: COVID-19 outbreak tops 200,000 cases, nearly 14K cases seen in 24 hours**

15 May- The Brazil Ministry of Health reported an additional 13,944 new cases and 844 new deaths Thursday, bringing the country totals to 202,918 cases and 13,993 deaths (a lethality rate of 6.9%) since the first case was confirmed in the country on February 26. Officials report that another 2,000 deaths are under investigation. About four out of 10 cases have recovered, according to Ministry statistics. Earlier this week, 2.1 million RT-PCR tests and 4.7 million rapid tests (serology) were distributed to states across the country. The measure is part of the Diagnose for Care strategy, a plan created by the Ministry of Health to test about 22% of the Brazilian population. Divided into two fronts, the confirmed COVID-19 action uses the molecular biology test, RT-PCR, within seven days of the onset of symptoms, that is, when the virus is acting on the patient’s body. On that front, only people with symptoms of the disease, whether mild, moderate or severe, are tested. The second front is “Testa Brasil”, which intends to leverage the use of rapid tests (serology) in the country to understand the progression of the virus nationally. This test identifies the body’s response to COVID-19 infection, that is, the antibody. It must be done from the eighth day onset of symptoms, long enough for the body to develop defense against the virus. People with symptoms of the disease will be tested. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **Paraguay: Dengue, measles vaccines and COVID-19**

20 May- The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies reports in a recent update that between January and 2 May 2020, a total of 42,710 laboratory confirmed cases of dengue were registered in Paraguay. This recent outbreak has led to the death of 64 people across 19 of the country’s health regions, mainly in the departments of Asunción and Central departments. A total of 175,082 suspected cases were reported – 70.74 per cent in the Metropolitan Area consisting of Central (111,104) and Asunción (12,750). Three serotypes (DEN-1, DEN-2 and DEN-4) are currently in circulation across the country, although the most commonly identified at the country level is the DEN-4 serotype. The number of dengue cases reported dropped in the last week of April (week 18) compared to initial weekly epidemiological statistical numbers for arbovirus. This could be attributed to the current COVID-19 context, considering that government recommendations and prevention measures suggest people refrain from going to health centres or referral hospitals if they present symptoms and instead use the hotline established for reporting these symptoms. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

[U.S. Military](#) | [Global](#) | [Influenza](#) | [Veterinary/Food Safety](#) | [Wellness](#) | [Contact Us](#)  
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