

23 October 2015

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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## U.S. MILITARY

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### Army Public Health Center breaks ground on \$210M laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Ground

After more than 30 years of planning a consolidated hub for its lab work, the U.S. Army Public Health Center broke ground Thursday on its new laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Ground.

The Army's Surgeon General, Lt. Gen. Patricia Horoho, called the groundbreaking for the Public Health Center lab "a historic moment."

The \$210 million, 279,000-square-foot building at APG's Edgewood Area will combine work now being done in 11 buildings, ranging from 43 to 90 years in age, that are scattered throughout the proving ground.



### After USA TODAY reveals problems, Army revises drug, alcohol abuse program

20 October - The Army is placing medical officials in charge of substance abuse treatment for soldiers in the wake of a USA TODAY investigation that uncovered poor treatment and a spike in suicides among those suffering addiction. Army Secretary John McHugh decided to shift oversight of the program back to the Army Medical Command to improve the counseling soldiers receive. ... Problems began surfacing after the Army decided in 2010 to place the program under the Army's Installation Management Command, which operates garrisons and lacks medical expertise. ... The Army plans call for placing substance-abuse counselors within mental health clinics now "embedded" with combat brigades to make care more accessible and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help. [USA Today](#)

### Hundreds of pounds of depleted uranium likely buried at Fort Carson, Army says

18 October - The Cold War legacy of nuclear waste at Fort Carson was quietly exposed in a routine application by the Army for a Nuclear Regulatory Commission permit to leave uranium buried on the post. Depleted uranium, as much as 600 pounds, is thought to be in the ground at several sites from training shells fired in a 1960s classified program to give soldiers a nuclear-tipped bazooka called the Davy Crockett, according to Army documents. ... Fort Carson is joined on the roster by installations in Hawaii, Washington state, Georgia, Kentucky, Kansas, Louisiana, North Carolina, Texas, Oklahoma, South Carolina and California. The Army says the waste at Fort Carson and other installations is too expensive to clean up - the cost is estimated at more than \$300 million nationwide and \$25 million in Colorado. ... There is no risk to the public or to soldiers, said Fort Carson radiation safety boss Ben Hutchinson. He said even close contact with the uranium is no cause for fear. [Stars and Stripes](#)

### Student creates app for vets to prevent night terrors

20 October - A Macalester College student is getting noticed for inventing something to help people suffering from night terrors. ... In 36 hours, he and his team "The Cure" wrote code and created a smart watch app called myBivy, short for bivouac, which he explained is a military term for a place to sleep. The app tracks heart rate and movement. ... "After a couple weeks of tracking the soldier we can find the exact symptoms the exact symptoms of the onset of the panic attack and try to use the watch or use the android phone to disrupt that or take them out of the deep sleep but keep them asleep," Tyler said. Tyler said the app will use sound or vibration to prevent night terrors. ... The app has yet to go through clinical trials but Tyler wants it on every veteran's wrist. "My team and I kind of have a saying right now that my team and I won't sleep until the veterans can," he said. [Military Times](#)

## Army Industrial Hygiene News and Regulatory Summary

Issue 49 features articles on nuclear basics, microbial clouds, deskercise, male breast cancer and an updated training schedule.



## Syphilis cases on the rise in the ranks

21 October - Syphilis cases are rising among active-duty troops — to the tune of a 41 percent increase since 2010, according to a new Pentagon report. In the past month alone, the Navy saw nine new cases, as many as the sea service's diagnoses of Lyme disease, salmonella and giardia combined, according to a separate Defense Department monthly report on infectious diseases in the ranks. Syphilis is a highly contagious sexually transmitted disease that, if left untreated, can cause blindness, dementia and paralysis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the disease was "on the verge of elimination" in the U.S. at the turn of the century. But it has rebounded with a vengeance, particularly among gay males, the CDC found. [Military Times](#)

## Technique could preserve fertility for wounded Soldiers

20 October - Sperm retrieval might help injured servicemen have children in the future, study says. Soldiers who suffer lower-body injuries on the battlefield may benefit from a technique to preserve their fertility, a small study suggests. The number of soldiers with lower-body wounds caused by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) has been increasing, the researchers said. Such blasts may result in ejaculatory duct obstructions that lead to the inability to ejaculate. Dr. Mae Wu Healy and colleagues from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., suggested that seminal vesicle sperm aspiration, or SVSA, could help these wounded soldiers retain the ability to have children. "SVSA is a reasonable option to retrieve sperm in wounded warriors or in trauma patients with pelvic or perineal injuries," said Dr. Rebecca Sokol, president of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. [MedlinePlus](#)

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## GLOBAL

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## Cancer causing worm accelerates wound healing: Australian scientists

21 October - Australian scientists have found a cancer-causing parasitic worm that kills tens of thousands of people each year may in fact aid in the healing of wounds. Scientists ... found that a growth factor excreted by the one centimetre long oriental river fluke worm drives wound healing and blood vessel growth. ... The worm kills 26,000 people from cancer starting the bile duct each year after eating certain species of raw fish from south-east Asia. JCU researcher Michael Smout on Wednesday said the discovery could help accelerate the healing of chronic wounds such as diabetic ulcers and also develop a vaccine against the worm-induced cancer. [Xinhuanet](#)

### 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.

## Declining malaria transmission and adverse pregnancy outcomes

21 October - Impressive gains have been achieved in malaria control, but with reduced exposure comes delayed acquisition of immunity. Pregnant women and their offspring are unusually vulnerable to this disease. ... [Investigators] assessed the prevalence of *Plasmodium falciparum* infection in Mozambican women who delivered infants between 2003 and 2012, a period of marked decline in such transmission. ... The prevalence of maternal malaria by microscopic exam at delivery decreased from 12% in 2003–2004 to 1% in 2010 but increased to 4% in 2012. By quantitative polymerase chain reaction assay, *P. falciparum* positivity decreased from 33% in 2003–2004 to 2% in 2010 but increased to 6% in 2012. Parasite densities in peripheral and placental blood were higher — and the malaria-related reduction in maternal hemoglobin was greater — in 2010–2012 than in 2003–2005.

[NEJM Journal Watch](#)

## Early MRI urged for suspected TBI

19 October - Performing MRIs as early as possible after a traumatic brain injury (TBI) may detect microhemorrhages or microbleeding, according to a study published in *Radiology*. Researchers ... sought to determine if they could detect cerebral microhemorrhages among members of the military who had chronic TBI. "TBI is a large problem for our military service members and their families," coauthor Gerard Riedy, MD, PhD, chief of neuroimaging at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, said in a release. "We found that many of those who have served and suffered this type of injury were not imaged until many, many months after injury occurred, thus resulting in lower rates of cerebral microhemorrhage detection which delays treatment." ... Cerebral microhemorrhage was identified in 24% of the subjects who were imaged within three months post-injury, compared to 5.2% of those who were imaged over a year later.

[Diagnostic Imaging](#)

## Global Maternal Newborn Health Conference begins in Mexico City

19 October - Several major reports will be launched at the conference, including the Countdown to 2015 report. ... [Countdown to 2015](#), an annual accounting of progress and remaining gaps in 75 high-burden countries, found that although maternal and child survival improved markedly during the Millennium Development Goals era (2000-2015), equity of coverage of key interventions remains low in many parts of the world. Countdown also found that services requiring contact with a working health system have lagged the most, with family planning, pregnancy and childbirth services having large coverage gaps.

[UNICEF Press Centre](#)

## Hospital routines may be making patients sicker

21 October - Interrupted sleep and withholding of food can make hospitalized patients sicker, according to three U.S. physicians who say patient safety in hospitals is not just a

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matter of preventing falls and infections. In a Viewpoint paper in the journal *BMJ Quality and Safety*, they point out that adequate sleep and nutrition are key to keeping the immune system strong, but noisy hospital conditions and long wait times may be compromising the body's defenses. The authors, all from Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, say poor nutrition, present in up to half of all hospital patients - can contribute to inflammation, muscle breakdown and organ damage. Sleep and nutrition have always been an issue in hospitals, but longer wait times make the problem worse. [Reuters](#)

## New UN health agency report cites measures to reduce risks from climate pollutants

22 October 2015 The World Health Organization (WHO) today spotlighted the need to reduce short-lived climate pollutants like black carbon, ozone, methane and carbon dioxide that contribute to climate change and lead to more than 7 million deaths linked to air pollution each year. "Every day, these pollutants threaten the health of men, women and children," said WHO Assistant Director-General Dr. Flavia Bustreo upon release of the report, [Reducing global health risks through mitigation of short-lived climate pollutants](#). "For the first time, this report recommends actions that countries, health and environment ministries, and cities can take right now to reduce emissions, protect health and avoid illness and premature deaths, which often take the greatest toll on the most vulnerable," Dr. Bustreo said. [UN News Centre](#)

## NIH study reveals risk of drug-resistant malaria spreading to Africa

20 October - Drug-resistant forms of *Plasmodium falciparum*, the deadliest species among malaria parasites, are able to infect the type of mosquito that is the main transmitter of malaria in Africa. ... The discovery suggests Africa—where malaria will cause an estimated 400,000 deaths in 2015—is more at risk for drug-resistant malaria infections than previously thought, which could further compromise efforts to prevent and eliminate the disease. *P. falciparum* parasites resistant to artemisinin, the main drug used to treat malaria, have been rapidly spreading in parts of Southeast Asia, making it difficult to treat and control infections there. ... [Scientists] discovered the parasites easily infected Southeast Asian mosquito carriers *Anopheles dirus* and *Anopheles minimus*, as well as *A. coluzzii*. [National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](#)

## States could be sanctioned for public health failings: WHO boss

20 October - U.N. panel is considering ways to hold governments to account for failing to stick to global health rules, World Health Organization Director-General Margaret Chan said on Tuesday. "This goes back to governments. If they sign up to the international health regulations they need to honor their commitment. Because if they don't do their part they pose a risk to their neighbors and beyond," she told a news conference. A global health

crisis review set up by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is looking at how to make them accountable, according to Chan. [Reuters](#)

## The world is not as hungry as you might think

16 October - Back in 1798, English philosopher Thomas Malthus predicted that the world would eventually run out of food for its growing population. "The power of population is so superior to the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race," he wrote. The newly released Global Hunger Index paints a different picture. Deaths due to mass famine have plummeted, according to data from the International Food Policy Research Institute, Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide. Between 1870 and 1970, about 1.4 million people died each year in what Alex de Waal, one of the index report authors, calls "epidemics of starvation." By contrast, about 40,000 people have died each year since 2000 from large-scale hunger. And hunger levels have dropped by about a third in developing countries since 2000. [NPR](#)

## Thyroid cancer still a problem for 'Chernobyl children'

22 October - The latency of radiation-induced differentiated thyroid cancer appears to last longer than 30 years, according to researchers in the Ukraine, which bore the brunt of the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe. "Children irradiated in 1986 still have a high risk of malignancy and need continued observation," said Sergiy Cherenko, MD, of the Ukrainian Scientific and Practical Center of Endocrine Surgery in Kyiv. Cherenko said that the medical community anxiously awaited the 10 to 15-year post-Chernobyl presumed peak of thyroid cancer, especially among the children born from 1982-1986. But when he and his colleagues looked at cases after that time frame, they observed no waning in the percentage of people, who were young children at the time of Chernobyl, developing differentiated thyroid cancer, which is a manifestation of radiation-induced cancer. [MedPage Today](#)

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### **INFLUENZA**

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

During week 40 (October 4-10, 2015), influenza activity was low in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories in week 40 was influenza A viruses, with influenza A (H3) viruses predominating. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories is low.
- **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.

- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.2%, which is below the national baseline of 2.1%. [CDC](#)

## ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 41/2015 (5 October – 11 October 2015)

- Influenza activity in the WHO European Region is at low levels in the 38 countries which reported data this week.
- In line with the low influenza activity across the Region, one sentinel specimen tested positive for influenza B virus, 21 positive specimens from non-sentinel sources and four laboratory-confirmed hospitalized influenza cases.
- All three seasonal influenza viruses ( A(H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2) and B) were detected.

Season: As is usual for this time of year, influenza activity in the European Region continued to be low, with few influenza viruses detected. [European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

## NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2015 Week 41 (through 17 October 2015):

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at CGTC Cape May. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

## Plans underway to handle possible fall bird flu outbreak

20 October - ... The U.S.D.A. is preparing to handle an outbreak on more than 500 farms this fall, which is twice the scale of the spring outbreak. ... Last month, Ames-based Harris Vaccines received conditional federal approval for its avian influenza vaccine, which is reported to be up to 95 percent effective. The U.S.D.A. has hired around 200 of a planned 350 additional veterinarians, animal health technicians and other workers should a bird flu emergency occur. [Radio Iowa](#)

## Recent flu vaccination associated with decreased risk for severe disease

21 October - A study of hospital admission for severe acute respiratory infections (SARIs) in military personnel found that recent flu vaccination lowered the risk of severe disease, while occupational factors and comorbidities may increase SARI risk, according to findings yesterday in *Vaccine*. An international team of researchers evaluated data on 11,086 hospitalizations due to pneumonia or influenza from 2000 through 2012 among US military

personnel. Hospitalized people had a median age of 32 and were largely male (89.5%). Among the patients, 512 progressed to severe disease and required significant supportive therapy. Receiving a flu vaccination within 180 days prior to illness was associated with a decreased risk of severe disease, even under multivariate analysis (relative risk [RR], 0.81). [CIDRAP Flu Scan](#) (first item)

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

For 4 - 17 October 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 40 & 41):

During 4 - 17 October 2015, a total of 81 specimens were collected and received from 35 locations. Results were finalized for 47 specimens from 26 locations. There were no influenza viruses identified. [US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

## WHO: Influenza Update

19 October (based on data up to 04 October, 2015) - Globally, influenza activity generally decreased or remained low in both hemispheres, with only a few countries reporting elevated respiratory illness levels.

- In the Northern Hemisphere, influenza activity continued at low, inter-seasonal levels with sporadic detections. Increased respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) activity was reported in the United States of America (USA).
- Few influenza detections were reported by countries in Africa. In countries with reported influenza activity in both Eastern and Western Africa, influenza type A viruses predominated.
- In tropical countries of the Americas, Central America and the Caribbean, influenza activity remained at low levels, with the exception of Cuba, where high numbers of severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) were still reported, associated with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus and RSV. In Colombia, acute respiratory activity (ARI) has started to decrease in recent weeks but RSV activity remains high compared to previous years.
- In tropical Asia, countries in Southern and South East Asia reported low influenza activity overall except in India and Lao People's Democratic Republic where increased activity mainly due to A(H1N1)pdm09 virus in India and A(H3N2) virus in Lao PDR continued to be reported. Influenza activity declined in southern China.
- In temperate South America, respiratory virus activity continued to decrease in recent weeks after RSV activity peaked in early July and influenza virus activity peaked at the end of August. In Chile, after a later than usual increase and peak in influenza activity in August and early September, ILI activity decreased in recent weeks with decreased influenza A and RSV detections.
- In South Africa, the influenza season ended by mid-September with only sporadic detections of influenza B viruses in recent weeks. ILI and RSV activity also remain low.
- In Australia and New Zealand, influenza activity continued to decrease after peaks in mid-August. Recent influenza virus detections were predominantly influenza B viruses. In New Zealand, ILI activity was just above the seasonal threshold. [WHO](#)

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## VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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### CDC launches improved online foodborne outbreak search tool

20 October - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today released a redesigned online tool making it easier to search data on foodborne disease outbreaks. The updated Foodborne Outbreak Online Database Tool (FOOD Tool) lets users search nearly 20 years of outbreak data by state, food or germ. Originally developed in 2009, the FOOD Tool includes national foodborne outbreak data reported to CDC from 1998 to 2014. New interactive features such as maps, graphs, and tables now allow users to search by specific foods and ingredients, view a "quick stats" display, and get case counts for multistate outbreaks. [Infection Control Today](#)

### New bill could bring four-legged heroes home

21 October - A proposed change to the National Defense Authorization Act would provide free flights home to military service dogs after they complete their tours of duty and potentially reunite them with their human counterparts. The bill has already passed through the House and Senate and awaits its fate under the tip of President Barack Obama's pen. Dr. Robin Ganzert, American Humane Association president, said in an opinion piece for Fox News that the majority of military service dogs are transported back to the U.S. to retire, "but there are cases where military dogs are retired at bases overseas, or left for adoption or euthanasia on foreign soil. [The Daily Signal](#)

### U.S.: 93 sick after shigella outbreak at California restaurant

21 October - California health officials are investigating a bacterial outbreak after at least 93 people were sickened. An outbreak of shigella occurred at the Mariscos San Juan Restaurant on 4th Street in San Jose, California, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department said. Individuals started to report symptoms including fever, abdominal pain and diarrhea last Saturday, health officials said. Currently, at least 24 of those sickened have been diagnosed with shigella, according to the health department. [ABC News](#)

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## WELLNESS

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### Alcohol ads linked to teen alcohol brand choices

20 October - The more youth are exposed to a brand's advertising on TV or in magazines, the more likely they are to consume that brand. Overall exposure to brand-specific alcohol

advertising is a significant predictor of underage youth alcohol brand consumption, with youth ages 13 to 20 more than five times more likely to consume brands that advertise on national television and 36 percent more likely to consume brands that advertise in national magazines compared to brands that don't advertise in these media. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

## Case report finds acute hypersensitivity pneumonitis in patient using e-cigarettes

19 October - Researchers from White River Junction VA Hospital, in Junction, Vermont, will present a case report of acute inhalation lung injury related to the use of e-cigarettes and a flavored e-cigarette liquid containing diacetyl. ... E-cigarette liquid contains nicotine, propylene glycol, vegetable glycerin, and flavorings. Recent reports estimate that 69 percent of sweet flavored liquids contain diacetyl. Diacetyl is used to produce a rich, buttery flavor and has been tied to a 2000 report in which eight former employees of the Gilster-Mary Lee popcorn plant developed bronchiolitis obliterans. The case garnered significant media attention and OSHA subsequently recommended respiratory protection for all workers in microwave popcorn production. Since that time, bronchiolitis obliterans has been referred to as "popcorn lung" or "popcorn worker's lung." [EurekAlert!](#)

## Health risk assessments may benefit elderly

20 October - When healthy elderly people fill out health risk questionnaires and get personalized counseling, they have better health behaviors and use more preventive care, according to a new study. ... When healthy elderly people fill out health risk questionnaires and get personalized counseling, they have better health behaviors and use more preventive care, according to a new study. [Fox News](#)

## No, you should not drink while pregnant (not even a little), pediatricians say

19 October - While some studies have hinted that a little alcohol might be harmless during pregnancy, a leading U.S. pediatricians' group has issued a new warning that no amount of drinking is safe while pregnant. "The only guarantee of having no effects from alcohol is no prenatal alcohol exposure," said Dr. Janet Williams, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Texas Health Science Center and co-author of the new statement and report from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). It's likely, she added, that future research will continue to show that "alcohol has subtle yet important lasting effects on academic performance, attention, behavior, cognition, memory, language skills, and visual and motor development." [Health.com](#)

## Prescription naproxen as good as narcotic painkillers for low back pain



20 October - Naproxen -- a drug available over-the-counter and by prescription -- appears to provide as much relief for low back pain as a narcotic painkiller or a muscle relaxant, a new study suggests. The study compared the use of prescription-strength naproxen (Naprosyn) alone to the use of naproxen with the narcotic painkiller oxycodone with acetaminophen (Percocet), or the muscle relaxant cyclobenzaprine (Amrix). Patients who took a combination of drugs fared no better than when they took naproxen alone, the researchers said. [Medline Plus](#)

## Study says Tdap vaccine safe during pregnancy

20 October - Even if a woman gets a tetanus-containing shot before she conceives, it is still safe to give her the tetanus-containing Tdap vaccine while she is pregnant, new research indicates. As it stands, federal guidelines state that the Tdap vaccine, which also guards against diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough), is recommended for every woman during every pregnancy. However, there has been a lack of research on the safety of giving the vaccine during pregnancy, the researchers noted. ... But the new study should help put those fears to rest, the researchers said. "Our findings should reassure patients and clinicians who might be hesitant to give Tdap vaccine to pregnant women who recently received a Tdap or other tetanus-containing vaccination," wrote study author Dr. Lakshmi Sukumaran, from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and colleagues. [WebMD](#)

## The fats you don't need to fear, and the carbs that you do



19 October - ... Starting in the 1970s, when accumulating evidence from animal and human studies showed that a diet high in saturated fats and cholesterol was an important risk factor for cardiovascular disease, dietary guidelines urged people to eat less fat. Although health advice focused on saturated fats from high-fat animal foods, many people generalized the advice to mean all fats, choosing in their stead a panoply of reduced-fat and fat-free foods rich in carbohydrates. ... [Saturated] fat, found in fatty animal foods like meats and dairy products, raises blood levels of cholesterol and is not healthy, "but olive oil is important — it's beneficial for cardiovascular health and body weight." ... Sugars are simple carbohydrates and starches are complex carbohydrates; all are ultimately broken down into glucose, the body fuel that circulates in blood. Sugars are digested rapidly, quickly raising blood glucose, but most starches take longer to digest. Important exceptions are refined carbohydrates, like white bread and white rice. Starchy foods with highly

processed grains that have been stripped of dietary fiber act more like sugar in the body.

[The New York Times](#)

## The number of moles on your right arm could be tied to your cancer risk, study finds

19 October - Moles are usually harmless, but they can be used to assess a person's risk for developing skin cancer. Someone with more than 100 moles across their body, for example, can be at a greater risk for melanoma, according to experts. Now a new study suggests that physicians may not have to look at a patient's entire body—instead, doctors can focus on the patient's right arm, where the presence of 11 or more moles could signal a greater risk of melanoma. [Time](#)

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### USAFRICOM

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## Democratic Republic of Congo: More than 400 dead in southeast Congo measles outbreak

16 October - A measles outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo's copper-mining southeast has killed 428 people and infected about 30,000 since the start of the year, the United Nations said on Friday. More than 100 deaths and 10,000 additional cases have been recorded since mid-August, when the United Nations committed \$2.4 million to fight the outbreak. [Reuters](#)

## Guinea: WHO notes 3 Ebola cases in Guinea as UK nurse improves

21 October - The World Health Organization (WHO) today reported three Ebola cases in Guinea, one of which is new, while a UK nurse is showing promising signs of recovery after nearly dying from meningitis caused by a relapse—not a re-infection—of the virus, hospital officials said. Sierra Leone, meanwhile, has now gone 5 weeks with no new cases, the WHO said in its weekly update. [CIDRAP](#)

## Kenyan camels test positive for MERS

20 October - Researchers have found that nearly 50 percent of camels in certain areas in Kenya have tested positive for the virus behind the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), the University of Liverpool announced on Friday. The study surveyed nine herds of single humped camels in Laikipia County and of the 335 camels studied, 47 percent tested positive with antibodies against MERS. This survey will likely lead to further research into the role these animals play in transmission of the disease. The research team consisted of

University of Liverpool researchers alongside researchers based in the U.S., Europe and in Kenya. "Although Laikipia County camel density is low relative to more northern regions of Kenya, our study suggests the population is sufficient to maintain high rates of viral transmission and that camels may be constantly re-infected and serve as long term carriers of the virus," Eric Fèvre, chair of the Veterinary Infectious Diseases within the University's Institute of Infection and Global Health, said. [BioPrepWatch](#)

## Sierra Leone: Mystery deaths in Sierra Leone spread fear of Ebola relapses

21 October - ... Throughout the two-year Ebola epidemic, thousands of West African survivors have been shunned by their communities, prompting governments to sponsor messages stressing their complete recovery in a bid to counter fear and paranoia. But the case of Scottish nurse Pauline Cafferkey – the first known Ebola survivor to have an apparently life-threatening relapse – has revived concerns about the health of some 17,000 survivors in Sierra Leone, neighboring Guinea and Liberia. Doctors and health officials in Sierra Leone told Reuters that a handful of mystery deaths among discharged patients may also be types of Ebola relapses, stirring fear that the deadly virus may last far longer than previously thought in the body, causing other potentially lethal complications. Diagnoses have not been made, partly because of a lack of relevant medical training and insufficient equipment for detecting a virus that can hide in inaccessible corners of the body. [Reuters](#)

## Uganda: Cholera, typhoid to hit 32 districts

21 October - A series of diseases such as cholera, bilharzia and typhoid are expected to break out in at least 32 districts during the El Nino season between now and February 2016, the Ministry of Health has warned. The outbreak is expected in the mountainous Rwenzori sub-region in the west, Elgon sub-region in the east and several low lying districts susceptible to flooding. "Currently, more than 100,000 people (12,500 households) are at a risk of landslides in the Mt Elgon and Rwenzori sub-regions, and up to 20,000 of them are likely to be displaced between November 2015 and February 2016. [allAfrica](#)

## United Republic of Tanzania: Cholera

21 October - The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) of the United Republic of Tanzania has notified WHO of new foci of cholera outbreaks in the country. As of 13 October, 13 regions have been affected, namely Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Pwani, Kigoma, Kilimanjaro, Iringa, Dodoma, Geita, Mara, Singida, Shinyaga, Mwanza and Zanzibar. As of 19 October, the cumulative number of cases is 4,835 cases, including 68 deaths. The region of Dar es Salam accounts for 72% of all reported cases (3,460). Zanzibar has reported 140 cases. [WHO](#)

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## Iraq: Iraq's cholera outbreak exceeds 1,800 cases

21 October - Iraq's first major cholera outbreak since 2012 has risen to more than 1,800 cases, including six deaths, and spread to the northern Kurdistan region, a health ministry spokesman said on Wednesday. The illness, which can lead to death by dehydration and kidney failure within hours if left untreated, was detected last month west of Baghdad. Most of the new cases are there and in Babel province south of the capital, spokesman Ahmed al-Rudaini said by phone from Baghdad. ... The health ministry has blamed the cholera outbreak on low water levels in the Euphrates, from where locals extract water for drinking or farming, and winter flooding that contaminated the river and shallow wells with sewage water. [Reuters](#)

## Saudi Arabia confirms 3 MERS cases, 1 likely tied to janitor cluster

22 October - Saudi Arabia today reported three more MERS-CoV cases, one of which may well be linked to a cluster in foreign women who are roommates and working in the country as janitors, an event noted today in a World Health Organization (WHO) update. ... The number of cases linked to the janitor roommate cluster is unclear, but so far eight cases that fit the profile have been reported from Saudi Arabia, and the WHO report today appears to describe the first four cases. MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) is known to spread quickly in healthcare settings, as evidenced by recent large hospital outbreaks, but clusters in domestic settings appear to be more unusual, raising more questions about virus transmission. ... Saudi Arabia's latest reports boost the global number of MERS-CoV cases reported to the WHO to 1,599, with at least 574 of them fatal. [CIDRAP](#)

## Syria's refugee crisis: Public health challenges

20 October - ... The vast majority of Syria's refugees have fled to neighboring countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. In Lebanon, now host to more than a million Syrians, roughly one in every four residents is a refugee. This huge influx of people has overwhelmed support systems in these nations, including healthcare and education. ... According to the UN Refugee Agency, more than half of Syria's refugees are under 18 years old. Before the conflict began, 90 percent of Syrian children were in school receiving an education; today, that figure is down to just 25 percent. Many children have experienced trauma, and an unknown number have been separated from their parents. "What is going to happen with a generation of children who are uneducated and exposed to brutalities and extreme ideologies? It's a major international relations and security challenge," says Boothby. [Columbia University | Mailman School of Public Health News](#)

## Yemen: Half a million Yemen children face severe malnutrition - U.N.

16 October - More than half a million children in Yemen face life-threatening malnutrition as a risk of famine grows, a senior official of the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) said on Friday. The figure, a three-fold jump since fighting erupted in March, reflects depleted food stocks compounded by a failing health system unable to care for hungry children or vaccinate them against disease, said Afshan Khan, director of UNICEF emergency programs worldwide. ... In addition to 537,000 children aged under five at risk of severe acute malnutrition, marked by visible wasting of their bodies, 1.3 million are moderately malnourished, according to the latest U.N. figures. [Reuters](#)

## Yemen: Make do or die - healthcare in Yemen

19 October - ... Before Houthi rebels took over Sana'a, before they forced President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi from power earlier this year, 8.6 million of Yemen's population of 25.2 million had no access to adequate healthcare. Since a Saudi Arabia-led coalition began trying to oust the Houthis, ... more than 5,000 people have been killed, including 2,300 civilians. Last month, the World Health Organization warned Yemen's healthcare system was "on the brink of collapse," estimating that 23 percent of the country's medical facilities were no longer functional. ... Many doctors are doing their utmost to treat patients in partially bombed-out buildings, but there is often little they can do if they don't have the right medication. ... While hospitals can't seem to get drugs into the country, they have the opposite problem with staff. Nearly all foreigners, including medical personnel, have left Yemen. [IRIN](#)

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## Germany: The public health dimension of Germany's refugee crisis

22 October - Germany is expecting up to 1.5 million asylum-seekers in 2015 who need shelter, food, and access to basic services. The continued influx of migrants is a major challenge for Germany's health care system, which is tasked with providing essential medical services for the new arrivals — and may have to deal with novel and unexpected challenges such as mushroom poisoning among foraging asylum-seekers and refugees. ... Upon arriving in Germany, an asylum-seeker will first be given shelter in a centralized reception center run by one of the German states. The center will process the migrant's application for asylum and conduct basic health screenings. Afterwards, the asylum-seeker will be relocated to the county, which is responsible for providing basic benefits such as

food, clothing, housing, and limited access to health care. Regular access to health care is available once the application has been accepted or after 15 months. ... Currently, federal law mandates that all new arrivals should immediately be screened for tuberculosis. The scope of further health examinations is determined by the states. [Health Affairs Blog](#)

## United Kingdom: UK Ebola nurse has meningitis caused by persisting virus

21 October – A Scottish nurse who contracted and initially recovered from Ebola, but then suffered relapsing illness, has meningitis caused by the virus persisting in her brain, doctors treating her said on Wednesday. Pauline Cafferkey was not reinfected with the Ebola virus, doctors said, but it had remained in her body since her initial recovery and re-emerged to cause life-threatening complications. "The virus re-emerged around the brain and around the spinal column to cause meningitis," said Michael Jacobs, an infectious diseases consultant who has been treating Cafferkey in London. ... Jacobs said Cafferkey had been critically ill and at one stage last week was at high risk of dying, but had now made a significant improvement and looked likely to be able to recover. [Reuters](#)

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## U.S.: American Cancer Society eases mammogram recommendations

20 October - In a major shift, the American Cancer Society is recommending that women at average risk of breast cancer get annual mammograms starting at age 45 rather than at age 40, and that women 55 and older scale back screening to every other year. The new guidelines, published on Tuesday in JAMA, fall more closely in line with guidelines from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, a government-backed panel of experts that recommend biennial breast cancer screening starting at age 50 for most women. The Task Force's 2009 recommendations to reduce the frequency and delay the start of mammogram screening were based on studies suggesting the benefits of detecting cancers earlier did not outweigh the risk of false positive results, which needlessly expose women to additional testing, including a possible biopsy. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: How the U.S. is trying to get ahead of the next MERS outbreak

20 October - The United States and Saudi Arabia may prepare a vaccine for Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) to try and head off the next outbreak of the disease, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Tuesday. ... There are currently no licensed

vaccines available for MERS. In July, researchers trying to develop a vaccine in the United States said they had early signs of success in animal experiments. Al-Falih, who also heads the Saudi national oil company, was "much more forthcoming" than Riyadh had been in the past, [Margaret] Chan said, and had \$70 million for research that would help fill the many gaps in the science of MERS. [Huffington Post](#)

## U.S.: Obama announces steps to combat opioid abuse

21 October - Federal healthcare providers will now be required to undergo training in opioid prescribing, and federal employee health plans must not have barriers to medication treatment for opioid addiction, President Obama said here Wednesday. "We're ensuring that federal agencies train federal healthcare providers who prescribe opioids; it's a commonsense idea that you're already implementing here in West Virginia," said Obama. "Congress should follow that lead and make this a national priority, and we look forward to working with governors and the medical community as well." [MedPage Today](#)

## U.S.: Prevalence of marijuana use among U.S. adults doubles over past decade

21 October - The percentage of Americans who reported using marijuana in the past year more than doubled between 2001-2002 and 2012-2013, and the increase in marijuana use disorder during that time was nearly as large. Past year marijuana use rose from 4.1 percent to 9.5 percent of the U.S. adult population, while the prevalence of marijuana use disorder rose from 1.5 percent to 2.9 percent, according to national surveys conducted by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), part of the National Institutes of Health. ... Based on the current study, approximately 30 percent of people who used marijuana in the past year met criteria for marijuana use disorder during 2012-2013, as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This includes symptoms such as taking the drug in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended by the user; the persistent desire to cut down or control use/unsuccessful efforts to do so; failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school or home as a result of marijuana use; and tolerance and/or withdrawal. [NIH](#)

## U.S.: Vast majority of opioid addictions go untreated

20 October - While rates of opioid use disorders in the U.S. over the last decade have jolted skyward, treatment levels have remained low, according to a research letter appearing in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reporting that one-sixth of people with an opioid addiction received treatment. ... Just 16.6% of those with opiate use disorders received any treatment between 2004 and 2008, according to Brendan Saloner, PhD, who is assistant professor of health policy and management at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a co-author on the study. That rate rose to 21.5% in 2009-2013. [MedPage Today](#)

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## Australia: Young women twice as likely to develop mental illness as boys

21 October - Young women are almost twice as likely to be struck down by mental illness during adolescence as young men, according to an eye-opening Australian study. The joint report, commissioned by Melbourne's Mission Australia and Sydney's Black Dog Institute, found Australia's 15 to 17 year olds showed signs of heightened psychological problems. The report, released on Tuesday, found that 26.5 percent of females and 13.9 percent of males from that age group suffered from a mental illness. Mission Australia chief executive Catherine Yeoman said on Wednesday the data confirmed young women were especially vulnerable to mental demons, even though young men were still more likely to commit suicide each year. [Xinhuanet](#)

## India: From national capital to mosquito metropolis, how Delhi built itself an epidemic

20 October -As India embarks on its biggest urban expansion yet, dengue prevention at construction sites must become an urgent priority in the years ahead. Paras Tiera is a massive residential complex. ... But Paras Tiera has been under a cloud of late. It made the news when several residents came down with dengue fever during the recent outbreak, the worst Delhi has experienced. Two people died. A construction area in Paras Tiera is believed to be the source for Aedes mosquitoes which transmit the dengue virus. ... Construction sites are notorious dengue hot spots. A combination of debris, stored water and leaky pipes conspire to create an ideal habitat for the Aedes mosquitoes. ... In the last decade, Delhi has experienced a historic building boom. ... Delhi's reinvention has taken a toll on its health. It has the world's worst air quality and chronic respiratory disease is pervasive. In winter, the air is choked with minute pollutants (known as particulate matter) that are in no small part due to "killer dust" from construction sites and cement factories as well as smoke from brick kilns. With dengue, the connection is less obvious but no less insidious. [The Wire](#)

## India: Over 1,800 dengue cases reported last week

20 October - With 1,800 fresh cases of dengue reported this week, the total number of people down with the vector-borne fever in [New Delhi] is 12,531 this year. A press release issued by the three civic bodies confirmed two more deaths, taking the toll to 32 till October 17. However, unofficial figures put the number over 40. September alone has seen 6,775 cases, the highest in the last six years. [The Statesman](#)

## Japan: Tokyo confirms Fukushima worker's cancer claim

20 October - The Japanese government has confirmed the first cancer case related to the meltdown of the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant after a devastating earthquake

and tsunami struck northeastern Japan in 2011, broadcaster NHK reported Tuesday. The worker, who was involved in recovery and cleanup efforts at the plant, was diagnosed with leukemia, and Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare has approved workers' compensation for him, the report said. ... Fifty-nine percent of Japanese residents oppose restarting nuclear reactors that were shut down after the meltdown, and 77 percent said they would support a plan to phase out nuclear energy. [Stars and Stripes](#)

## Malaysia: Typhoid on the rise in Malaysian capital

20 October - Typhoid fever cases have seen a sudden spike in Malaysia with 32 cases reported in the capital Kuala Lumpur since August, the health ministry said on Tuesday. Health Ministry Director-General Noor Hisham Abdullah said that since the first week of August, the Kuala Lumpur health department had received seven cases of typhoid fever, the Malaysian Star reported. According to Abdullah, those stricken were mostly construction workers living in Cheras township and near the city centre. By Sunday, the number of cases was up to 32. ... No deaths have been reported so far. [Z News](#)

## Nepal: Politics prevents Nepal reconstruction



19 October - Six months after a massive earthquake devastated Nepal, people are still living in temporary shelters as political wrangling has prevented the disbursement of billions pledged by international donors for reconstruction. Aid organisations are urging the government to activate the National Reconstruction Authority, created to formulate quake-resistant building regulations and oversee the allocation of funds. International donors pledged more than \$4 billion after the 25 April quake and another temblor on 12 May. The earthquakes killed close to 9,000 people and destroyed or damaged almost a million homes. [IRIN](#)

## Philippines: Typhoon Koppu pounds Philippines, killing at least 12

19 October - A slow-motion disaster is playing out in the northern Philippines, where thousands of residents still have days of life-threatening rainfall ahead. At least 12 people have died and six more are missing since the landfall of Typhoon Koppu (Lando) in the Philippines Sunday morning, local time, while flooding rains continue to lash parts of the country with torrential downpours. Koppu was downgraded to a tropical storm late Monday, but remains a deadly threat to the archipelago. [The Weather Channel](#)

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## Brazil: WHO recommends bacterial monitoring in recreational water at 2016 Olympic Games

16 October - The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that Brazilian authorities conduct ongoing bacterial testing of recreational waters to prevent gastrointestinal illness during the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, according to guidance issued this month. Concern has been widespread about water pollution that could pose danger to athletes in Rio during the games. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

## Chikungunya outbreak in Americas grows by almost 2,500 cases

19 October - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on Oct 16 reported 2,464 new cases of chikungunya in the Caribbean and Americas. The new total includes 573,708 suspected and 23,875 confirmed local acquired cases and 875 imported cases reported in 2015, or 598,458 total for the year. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## WHO confirms recent Zika virus detections in Brazil, Colombia

22 October - Brazil reported its first Zika virus case in May, but as of Oct 8 illnesses have been detected in 14 of the country's 26 states, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday in an update. ... The detection in Brazil marked the first identification in the Americas of the emerging disease, which is spread by Aedes mosquitoes. The illness is similar to dengue, but symptoms are generally milder. The WHO also confirmed the first Zika virus cases in Colombia. ... The WHO said nine cases have been confirmed. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

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