25 August 2017

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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2017 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Program


All active duty and reserve component personnel will be vaccinated against influenza.

The director, Defense Health Agency (DHA), will track, collect, and analyze immunization data and all confirmed vaccine compromises in coordination with the DoD Components and the Service Surgeons General will monitor influenza immunization compliance data.

This DHA-IPM is available from the DHA SharePoint site at: http://www.health.mil/dhapublications

U.S. MILITARY

Army launches holistic health and fitness initiative

16 August - ... Currently, one in 20 Soldiers fail the Army Physical Fitness Test annually and 13 percent of Soldiers are clinically obese, according to statistics from the Army Surgeon General's Office. ... The Army’s new campaign plan, called “Holistic Health and Fitness,” focuses on improving the Soldier selection process, physical performance, performance education and transforming and improving Soldier fitness/training centers. Tim Higdon, Healthy Army Communities program manager, said one suggestion is to have fitness centers provide box breakfasts so that Soldiers in a time crunch will not need to choose between having breakfast and working out. Higdon said HAC is also planning to attempt innovations such as requiring 15 to 50 percent of vending machines to have healthier options, while others will be 100-percent comprised of healthy items. ... Healthy Army Communities has identified eight demonstration installations to test some of the new measures. My Guidon

Fort Benning drill sergeants suspended for alleged sexual misconduct

23 August - The Army has suspended an undisclosed number of drill sergeants at Fort Benning in Georgia amid allegations of sexual misconduct involving trainees. The scandal came to light after one female trainee alleged she was sexually assaulted by a drill sergeant, the base said in a statement. "Initial review of the incident revealed indications of additional allegations of sexual misconduct involving trainees and drill sergeants,” the Army said. ... The accused were suspended from drill sergeant duties and will have no contact with trainees until the investigation is over. The trainees are being offered counseling, legal assistance and medical services. ... The U.S. military received a record number of sexual assault reports in 2016 — 6,172 cases compared to 6,082 the previous year and 3,604 cases in 2012 — although experts say many more go unreported. NBC News

Military's annual physicals now require mental health assessments

22 August - Starting this month, all members of the U.S. military will undergo mental health assessments as part of routine annual physicals. The assessments, which were mandated by Congress in the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act, started Aug. 1. ... [Air Force Col.

USSOUTHCOM

- Chile: With court’s OK, Chile relaxes one of the world’s strictest abortion bans
- Venezuela: Diphtheria cases rising in crisis-hit Venezuela
Epi-Tech Training

The next Epi-Tech Training sessions will be held Tuesday, 29 August 2017. The topic will be "Tuberculosis Contact Investigation Reporting".

Registration: Registration through Continuing Medical Education is required for ALL attendees.

More information

Brendan Noone] said the assessment is completed online, with airmen answering a questionnaire. "It is a fairly straightforward questionnaire, it should take less than 30 minutes," Noone said. Noone said the questions focus on issues like quality of sleep and interactions with other people. After completing the questionnaire, the airmen must do a phone interview with a mental health representative. Any "red flag" issues are then referred to the airman's primary care physician, Noone said. Pensacola News Journal

Military transgender ban to begin within 6 months, memo says

23 August - President Trump is preparing to give the Defense Department formal authority to expel transgender people from the military in an upcoming order, barring the Pentagon from recruiting transgender troops and cutting off payment for sexual reassignment surgery and other medical treatments for those already serving. A White House memo that is expected to be sent to the Pentagon in coming days gives Jim Mattis, the secretary of defense, six months to enforce the transgender ban that Mr. Trump announced abruptly last month in a series of tweets. The directive was confirmed Wednesday by a person familiar with its contents but who was not authorized to discuss its details and spoke on the condition of anonymity. ... The upcoming guidance — basing expulsion on a troop’s ability to serve — appears to be an attempt to reconcile Mr. Trump’s call for a blanket ban with concerns about whether the defense secretary should dismiss transgender forces who are currently in the ranks. The New York Times

Norovirus outbreaks among military forces, 2008–2016

July 2017 - Acute gastroenteritis (AGE) and diarrheal disease have historically posed a constant threat to military forces. Norovirus (NoV) infections specifically have been the cause of significant morbidity in military personnel and are especially problematic because outbreaks can result in sudden and widespread reductions in the operational efficiency of affected units. ... The Table in this report summarizes outbreaks in military forces in both garrison and deployed settings which occurred between 2008–2016. Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

Scientists develop infection model for tick-borne flaviviruses

22 August - National Institutes of Health scientists have filled a research gap by developing a laboratory model to study ticks that transmit flaviviruses, such as Powassan virus. Powassan virus was implicated in the death of a New York man earlier this year. The unusual model involves culturing organs taken from Ixodes scapularis ticks and then infecting those organ cultures with flaviviruses. ... The researchers say the culture model will greatly increase knowledge about how flaviviruses infect ticks and could become a tool to evaluate medical countermeasures against tick-borne viruses. ... Powassan virus and the closely related deer tick virus are the only flaviviruses known to be spread by ticks in North America. In the last 10 years, about 75 U.S. cases of Powassan virus infection have been reported. NIH
Trump signs bill to help World War II vets exposed to mustard gas

17 August - World War II veterans exposed to mustard gas by the military will find it easier to receive help under legislation President Donald Trump has signed into law. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reports that Trump on Wednesday signed the legislation that Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill, of Missouri, pushed through Congress. It requires the Veterans Affairs Department to reconsider disability benefits denied to those who claimed the testing caused health problems. McCaskill has said the military tested the effects of mustard gas and the blister agent lewisite on about 60,000 veterans by the end of World War II. Her office estimates a couple hundred participants could still be alive, including 90-year-old Missouri resident Arla Harrell, for whom the bill was named. McCaskill says, “Every once in a while, Congress gets it right.” Military Times

Virtually connecting deployed Soldiers to their health care professional of choice

18 August - Regionally Aligned Forces stationed in Eastern Europe in support of Atlantic Resolve have virtual access to health care from their Garrison provider or specialists at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, thanks to the Regional Health Command Europe TeleHealth In A Bag platform. ... RAF providers are given a standardized telehealth equipment kit and issued a virtual exam conferencing space which represents a secure, HIPAA-compliant private video chat room. THAIB leverages a secure web-based platform, which enables deployed units to connect to providers anywhere, and to share live diagnostic images. ... One of the main uses of the THIAB to date is to connect Soldiers with their embedded Behavioral Health providers and Unit Behavioral Health Officers. Army.mil

global

$417 million awarded in suit tying Johnson’s baby powder to cancer

22 August - In what may be the largest award so far in a lawsuit tying ovarian cancer to talcum powder, a Los Angeles jury on Monday ordered Johnson & Johnson to pay $417 million in damages to a medical receptionist who developed ovarian cancer after using the company’s trademark Johnson’s Baby Powder on her perineum for decades. Eva Echeverria, 63, of East Los Angeles is one of thousands of women who have sued the consumer products giant Johnson &
Johnson claiming baby powder caused their disease, pointing to studies linking talc to cancer that date to 1971, when scientists in Wales discovered particles of talc embedded in ovarian and cervical tumors. Only a few lawsuits have gone to trial, but so far most of the decisions have gone against the company. The New York Times

**Allocating scarce life-sustaining resources in a disaster**

18 August - During a catastrophe, healthcare providers may face difficult questions about who will receive limited life-saving resources. My colleagues and I [examined] the public's values regarding how scarce mechanical ventilators should be allocated during an influenza pandemic. ... Most participants indicated a preference for approaches that [give] priority to those most likely to survive the immediate illness in order to maximize the number of life-years saved. ... Fairness and social justice, for example, were also very important to many participants. ... Many, but not all, themes were consistent with the views of experts. The most important difference with experts' views related to withholding versus withdrawing ventilator support. Expert groups have suggested that these are ethically equivalent actions; however, the majority of both lay participants and healthcare providers in our forums did not agree and felt that withdrawal of a life-sustaining resource from a lower priority person in order to reallocate it to someone of a higher priority is much more fraught than not providing it in the first place. Clinicians’ Biosecurity News

**Cholesterol-lowering drugs may fight infectious disease**

21 August - Scientists found a gene variant that affects cholesterol levels also could increase the risk of contracting typhoid fever. A common cholesterol-lowering drug could protect animal models against *Salmonella Typhi*, the culprit behind the potentially deadly infection. The findings give insight into the mechanisms that govern human susceptibility to infectious disease and point to possible avenues to protect against pathogens -- like *Salmonella* or Ebola -- whose entry into host cells is regulated by cholesterol. ScienceDaily

**Global problems aid groups should prepare for, if they want to survive**

21 August - If a famine occurs, aid groups send food. If there's a war, they set up health clinics. But what to do in event of a massive cyberattack? A new disease epidemic? A July report has an alarming message for the aid community: adapt or be left in the dust. "The way in which the humanitarian sector has been operating leaves continued need," says Eilidh Kennedy, an author of the report published by Action Against Hunger. "We're proposing a new way for NGOs to see their role. What do we need to be able to continue operating in the future?" That question led Kennedy and her team of researchers to identify 23 areas of concern. While the report doesn't outline concrete solutions, it highlights issues that the aid groups must address if they want to survive, Kennedy says. NPR
Lithium in tap water may cut dementia

24 August - People with higher levels of lithium in their drinking water appear to have a lower risk of developing dementia, say researchers in Denmark. Lithium is naturally found in tap water, although the amount varies. ... The study, at the University of Copenhagen, looked at the medical records of 73,731 Danish people with dementia and 733,653 without the disease. Tap water was then tested in 151 areas of the country. The results, published in JAMA Psychiatry, showed moderate lithium levels (between 5.1 and 10 micrograms per litre) increased the risk of dementia by 22% compared with low levels (below five micrograms per litre). However, those drinking water with the highest lithium levels (above 15 micrograms per litre) had a 17% reduction in risk. BBC News

McDonald's to cut global antibiotic use in chickens

23 August - McDonald's Corp (MCD.N) on Wednesday said that it would begin curbing the use of the high value human antibiotics in its global chicken supply in 2018, as the fast-food giant joins a broad effort to battle dangerous superbugs. McDonald's, in a policy statement, said it is working on antibiotic plans for other meats, dairy cows and laying hens. McDonald's is requiring suppliers of chicken meat to begin phasing out the use of antibiotics defined by the World Health Organization as "highest priority critically important antimicrobials" (HPCIA) to human medicine. Public health and consumer groups applauded the move, which is not as strict as the company's policy for the United States, where already for a year suppliers have provided the chain with chickens raised without antibiotics deemed important to human health. Reuters

New superbug-fighting antibiotics found in human breast milk

20 August - ... Researchers from Vanderbilt University have found a new class of antibiotic hiding in plain sight: human breast milk. ... In the first experiment, the team pitted five milk sugar samples against five strep colonies. While three of the samples didn't do a whole lot, one was moderately effective and one wiped out almost the whole bacterial colony. A second round of experiments is still ongoing, with the team testing more than two dozen samples. So far, two have been found to kill bacteria and destroy the biofilm that the bugs create to protect themselves, two more kill the bacteria without breaking down the biofilm and four others destroy the biofilm without killing the strep. "Our results show that these sugars have a one-two punch," says Townsend. "First, they sensitize the target bacteria and then they kill them. Biologists sometimes call this 'synthetic lethality' and there is a major push to develop new antimicrobial drugs with this capability." New Atlas
**Prolonged standing on the job = greater risk of heart disease**

17 August - Workers who stand on the job most of the time are at greater risk of heart disease than workers who predominantly sit, according to a study just published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*. Even after taking into account a wide range of personal, health and work factors, people who primarily stand on the job are twice as likely as people who primarily sit on the job to have a heart attack or congestive heart failure. [EHS Today](https://www.ehstoday.com)

**Psychologists behind CIA 'enhanced interrogation' program settle detainee's lawsuit**

17 August - Two psychologists who were paid more than $80 million by the CIA to develop "enhanced interrogation" techniques — which have been called torture — have settled a lawsuit brought by men who were detained. The list of brutal methods devised by Bruce Jessen and James Mitchell for use by the U.S. included waterboarding. The tactics were meant to condition detainees into a state of helplessness. Mitchell has said he was told by U.S. officials that the idea was to "walk right up to the edge of the law." The case had been set to go before a jury on Sept. 5. Because of their status as contractors rather than government employees, the lawsuit had targeted Jessen and Mitchell as private citizens. Based in Spokane, Wash., the two psychologists were sued by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of two former prisoners and the family of one detainee who died of extreme cold in a secret CIA prison. [NPR](https://www.npr.org)

**The appointment ends. Now the patient is listening.**

18 August - ... Dr. James Ryan, a family practitioner in Ludington, Mich. ... routinely records appointments, then uploads the audio to a secure web platform so that patients can listen whenever they need to recall what they discussed with him. They can give family members access to the recordings as well. ... "At some point, it will become a normal thing, recording these encounters," Dr. Ryan said — though given physician resistance, he thinks that might take 20 years. But it's not a crazy idea, especially for older patients. Like Ms. Piper, they typically contend with several health conditions, so they visit more doctors more often and take more drugs. They may also have hearing loss, and research shows that they struggle more than younger patients to recall information from doctors' visits. [The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com)

**Zika infection decreases sperm count, study says**

22 August - According to a study yesterday in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, men who contract Zika virus have lower sperm counts for 1 to 2 months after infection. The study offers more insight into how Zika affects male reproductive health. The prospective, longitudinal study followed 15 French male volunteers who provided semen samples for 4 months following Zika virus diagnosis. Researchers tested sperm counts as well as Zika RNA in seminal fluid, blood, and urine. On average, the men's sperm counts plummeted from 119 million spermatozoa on day 7 post-infection, to 45.2 million by day 30. On day 60, the
average sperm count rose to 70 million spermatozoa. Total sperm count generally increased back to normal levels by day 120. CIDRAP

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

Study finds high disability rate in Ebola survivors

21 August - Ebola survivors have seven times the disability rate of their close contacts, and the virus likely causes muscle damage. ... In the first study, researchers followed 27 Ebola survivors in Sierra Leone for 1 year after diagnosis and found they were seven times more likely than their close contacts to report a disability. Almost 80% of the survivors (77.8%) reported a disability 1 year post-infection, compared with 11.1% of their close contacts. Disabilities included major limitations in vision, mobility, and cognition. ... Mobility difficulties were the most frequent disability reported, with almost all survivors reporting musculoskeletal pain. CIDRAP

The way airlines board planes affects how easily bugs are spread among passengers

21 August - ... Researchers at Arizona State University, Florida State University and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University have found that the way airlines board planes can have a huge effect on the potential for disease contagion. The researchers considered a hypothetical outbreak of the Ebola virus and the effect that different boarding methods could have on infection rates. With the standard boarding method of dividing the plane into three sections and boarding passengers from front to back, there is a 67% chance of reaching 20 or more air travel-related cases of Ebola per month, as passengers cluster together while waiting for the earlier boarders to stow their bags. It would be far better, the researchers found, to split the plane into two sections and board randomly within each section. In this scenario, the risk of infecting 20 people per month drops to 40%. The Economist

USAMRIID scientists investigate causes of lingering Ebola infection

17 August - ... The researchers [at U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases] found that Ebola virus can persist in infected rhesus monkeys even after symptoms disappear, shedding light on how the disease could linger in humans. ... Eye tissue was the most common hideout for the disease, but — notably — the researchers did not find lingering Ebola in common infection sites such as the liver, lymph nodes and spleen. That’s important, Zeng said, because it demonstrates how the virus can bypass immune system barriers to settle in parts of the body that are usually resistant to infection.” ... [R]esearchers also found evidence that some medical countermeasures could help prevent Ebola persistence. The group tested tissue samples from two groups of survivor
monkeys: one that had been exposed to the virus after receiving candidate vaccines and another that survived infection only with supportive care. Viral persistence was detected only in the monkeys that had not received vaccinations, an indicator that they could prevent the disease from surviving. Frederick News Post

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INFLUENZA

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

2016-2017 Influenza Season Week 32 ending August 12, 2017

Novel Influenza A Virus: Three human infections with novel influenza A viruses were reported by three states (North Dakota [1], Ohio [1], and Pennsylvania [1]) during week 32. All three infections were with variant viruses (influenza A viruses that normally circulate in pigs and not people are called variant viruses when detected in people.) ... All three patients reported exposure to swine in a fair setting during the week preceding illness onset. ... Two of the three patients were children younger than 18 years of age and one patient was an adult aged > 64 years. Two of the three patients were hospitalized but all have fully recovered from their illness. ... To date, a total of 19 variant virus infections have been reported in the United States during 2017.

Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) Mortality Surveillance: Based on National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) mortality surveillance data available on August 17, 2017, 5.4% of the deaths occurring during the week ending July 29, 2017 (week 30) were due to P&I. This percentage is below the epidemic threshold of 6.0% for week 30. CDC

India swine flu death toll rises above 1,000 this year

24 August - India appears to be in the grip of a swine flu outbreak with 1,094 recorded deaths over the past eight months, said an official report on Wednesday. The last three weeks have seen the highest number of fatalities, at 342. A total of 22,186 cases have been reported across the country. The number of deaths this year is four times more than fatalities recorded over the equivalent period in 2016, which itself saw a dip in occurrences of the disease. The western state of Maharashtra is the worst affected, where the death toll stands at 437, according to data revealed by the Union Health Ministry. Neighbouring Gujarat follows closely with 297 deaths, reported news agency PTI. BBC News
Meta-analysis finds no negative impact of repeated flu vaccination

22 August - In a study designed to help clinicians and health policy makers decide whether to recommend and offer annual flu vaccination, a new meta-analysis published today found no evidence that prior season immunization blunts the protection of the current seasonal vaccine. ... Some recent studies have raised the possibility that repeated flu vaccination might negatively impact protection. ... Authors of the new meta-analysis found that regardless of previous season vaccination status, current season vaccination was associated with greater protection against lab-confirmed H1N1 and influenza B infection. When compared to those who weren't immunized the season before, people who were vaccinated in the current season had greater protection against all three flu subtypes.

CIDRAP Flu Scan (first item)

NHRC: Operational Infectious Diseases - Weekly Surveillance Report

17 August - Febrile respiratory illness cases:
  - Military Recruits - 55 positive of 163 tested
  - CDC Border Infectious Disease Surveillance and Zika Surveillance - 3 positive of 13 tested
  - DoD Beneficiaries – 5 positive of 24 tested. Naval Health Research Center

WHO: Influenza Update

21 August - In the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere and in some countries of South and South East Asia, high levels of influenza activity continued to be reported. In Central America and the Caribbean influenza activity continued to be reported in a few countries. Influenza activity remained at low levels in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere. Worldwide, influenza A(H3N2) viruses are predominating. WHO

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Almost 1,000 Salmonella cases now linked to backyard birds

21 August - A total of 961 cases of Salmonella illness have been linked to exposure to backyard poultry, according to an update today from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The outbreaks have occurred in 48 states and resulted in 215 hospitalizations and 1 death. The CDC and officials from multiple states are investigating 10
outbreaks involving 10 different Salmonella strain. Seventy-four percent of interviewed patients reporting they had contact with backyard birds in the week before falling ill. Since the last update on Jul 13, 172 more people have been diagnosed as having Salmonella poisoning tied to exposure to backyard flocks of poultry, including chicks and ducklings from multiple hatcheries. CIDRAP News Scan (first item)

*Cyclospora* outbreak total continues steady rise; food source still elusive

23 August - In an ongoing multistate *Cyclospora* outbreak, 96 more patients without a history of international travel who were sick on or after May 1 have been reported to the US Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), boosting the national total to 347, according to the agency’s latest update. A rise in *Cyclospora* cases in international travelers is normal during the summer months, but spikes in illnesses in people who haven’t traveled have been reported over the past several summers, with outbreaks tied to imported fresh produce such as basil, cilantro, and raspberries. ... The latest illness-onset date is Aug 10. Outbreak-related illnesses have been reported in 31 states, though Texas is the hardest hit. ... In its latest update on Aug 18, the CDC said no specific food vehicle has been identified, and an investigation into the source of the outbreak is ongoing. CIDRAP News Scan (first item)

Fatal pneumonic tularemia associated with dog exposure—Arizona, June 2016

25 August - On June 15, 2016, Arizona public health officials were notified of a presumptive positive *Francisella tularensis* blood culture result from a woman aged 73 years with pulmonary sarcoidosis who had recently died from respiratory failure. ... Tularemia was not suspected as cause of illness until June 17 when a blood culture collected on June 6 was confirmed as *F. tularensis*, a Tier 1 select agent. ... The patient’s dog was noted to be lethargic and anorexic in late May, 3 days after being found with a rabbit carcass in its mouth. The patient and dog had frequent close contact. Serum from the dog, obtained approximately 3 weeks after its illness and the patient's death, had a *F. tularensis*-specific titer of 1:256. ... Approximately 125 human tularemia cases are reported in the United States annually. Humans are infected through arthropod bites, contact with infectious tissues, inhalation, or ingestion. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report

Report: FDA finds sprout contamination from a number of sources

22 August - Citing 2014-2016 data, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today published a report on sprout contamination, noting that 14 (1.7%) of 825 samples from across the country tested positive for Salmonella or Listeria, with most of the positive samples coming from four sprouting operations. The agency tested bean, alfalfa, and other sprouts for pathogens because, from 1996 to July of last year, sprouts were implicated in 46
foodborne disease outbreaks in the United States, which caused at least 2,474 illnesses, 187 hospitalizations, and 3 deaths. CIDRAP News Scan (third item)

**War on opioids moves to veterinarians’ offices**

23 August - Some states are taking the war on opioids into veterinarians’ offices, aiming to prevent people who are addicted to opioids from using their pets to procure drugs for their own use. Colorado and Maine recently enacted laws that allow or require veterinarians to check the prescription histories of pet owners as well as their pets. And Alaska, Connecticut and Virginia have imposed new limits on the amount of opioids a vet can prescribe. Veterinarians ... dispense Tramadol, a painkiller; ketamine, an anesthetic, and hydrocodone, an opiate used to treat coughing in dogs – controlled substances that humans abuse. But even as some states push for veterinarians to assess the records of human clients, many veterinarians maintain they’re unqualified to do so. And while a handful of states now require vets to check the prescription histories of pet owners, about two-thirds of the states explicitly prohibit it. Stateline

**WELLNESS**

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**Baby boomers' drink and drug misuse needs urgent action, warn experts**

23 August - Urgent action is needed to tackle drink and drug misuse among baby boomers, experts have warned, with a growing body of data from around the world suggesting that substance misuse is increasing among those in their mid-50s and older. The call follows the release of recent figures which revealed that in 2015/16 more than half a million adults aged between 55 and 74 were admitted to English hospitals with alcohol-related injuries, diseases or conditions – more than for any other age group. What’s more, while risky drinking is on the wane in the UK and Australia, those in the over-50 age bracket buck the trend. By 2020 the number of people receiving treatment for substance misuse problems are expected to double in Europe, and treble in the US, among those aged over 50. The Guardian

**Google rolls out tool to help diagnose depression**

24 August - Google is getting involved with people’s mental health, rolling out a tool to help steer people who may have depression toward treatment. They’ve partnered up with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to reach out to people who may be depressed, by asking a simple question: Are you depressed? The hope is that getting people to begin to assess their own mental health will act as a catalyst to seeking treatment. This is how it will work: When you type a depression-related search term into Google, atop the
main results, a box will pop up, asking “Are you depressed?” If you click “yes,” you’ll be linked to the PHQ-9, a validated questionnaire that clinicians may use to help diagnose depression. ... The hope is that people will fill out the questionnaire and, depending on the results, have more information to share with their doctors, or perhaps seek treatment where they would have otherwise been too hesitant. Forbes

Men: Taking vitamins b6 and b12 could increase your risk of lung cancer

23 August - ... A long-term study followed 77,000 senior adults for over one decade and tracked their intake of vitamin supplements. Men who used high doses of the B6 and B12 supplements for 10 years doubled their risk of lung cancer, while men who were already smokers at the beginning of the study had a threefold to fourfold risk for developing it. The researchers found no such relationship among the women in the study. ... [E]pidemiologist Theodore Brasky doesn’t believe that the vitamin B supplements actually caused the cancer. Instead, he suspects that megadoses of the vitamins hasten the growth of lung cells that have already mutated, often due to smoking. ... [E]nergy boosters that contain these two vitamins often have megadoses of B6 and B12, Brasky said. “If you look at these supplement bottles, they’re being sold in pill form at up to 5,000 micrograms per dose, which is much, much higher than the daily recommended amount,” said Brasky in a statement about his research. Huffington Post

Men who go vegetarian more likely to have serious depression

24 August - Remove meat from a man’s diet, and he may well slip into depression. The ... report entitled “Vegetarian diets and depressive symptoms among men,” comes to that conclusion. ... The authors say men who self-identify for their vegetarian dietary habits may also self-identify for their own “significant depressive symptoms.” And overall, the NIH-Bristol researchers found vegetarians had higher depression scores than non-vegetarians. ... “Vegetarian men have more depressive symptoms after adjustment for socio-demographic factors,” the authors concluded. “Nutritional deficiencies (e.g., in cobalamin or iron) are a possible explanation for these findings, however, reverse causation cannot be ruled out.” Food Safety News

New ads accuse Big Tobacco of targeting soldiers and people with mental illness

24 August - Truth Initiative, a leading tobacco-control nonprofit, has bought TV ads to run this Sunday during MTV’s Music Awards that accuse tobacco companies of purposely targeting mentally ill people and U.S. soldiers. The ads focus on this stark but little known fact: Roughly 40 percent of cigarettes sold in the U.S. are smoked by people with mental health issues, including depression, anxiety or substance-abuse problems. The ads also note that 38 percent of military smokers start after enlisting. Robin Koval, chief executive of Truth
Initiative, accused tobacco companies of exploiting the mentally ill and military for profit.

**The Washington Post**

**The case for a breakfast feast**

21 August - ... A recent review of the dietary patterns of 50,000 adults who are Seventh Day Adventists over seven years provides the latest evidence suggesting that we should front-load our calories early in the day to jump-start our metabolisms and prevent obesity, starting with a robust breakfast and tapering off to a smaller lunch and light supper, or no supper at all. More research is needed, but a series of experiments in animals and some small trials in humans have pointed in the same direction, suggesting that watching the clock, and not just the calories, may play a more important role in weight control than previously acknowledged. **The New York Times**

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**USAFRICOM**

**Africa: WHO - AIDS no longer leading cause of death in Africa**

23 August - Fewer people are dying of HIV/AIDS in Africa, with the World Health Organization (WHO) now listing respiratory tract infections such as bronchitis or pneumonia as the leading cause of death. HIV/AIDS was responsible for an estimated 760,000 deaths in Africa in 2015, which is a decrease from the 1 million deaths recorded in 2010, Business Insider reported. The findings were confirmed by Africa Check, and found diarrheal diseases took the third spot, with insufficient hygiene, unsafe water and poor sanitation as leading causes behind the spread of infections. **Fox News**

**Ghana: Drug resistant tuberculosis a major concern in Ghana**

21 August - Ghanaian experts are concerned about the rising number of tuberculosis. The Ghana Health Service said 14,632 people were diagnosed with TB and put on treatment. Health experts in Ghana are urging the government to tackle rising cases of multidrug resistance tuberculosis (MDR-TB) in the country. "We need multiple TB drugs," said Paula Fujiwara, the scientific director of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease. ... Fujiwara said Ghana is recording an increase in the number of patients who developed multidrug resistance TB. **AllAfrica**

**Sierra Leone: UN health agency rushes to prevent malaria, cholera outbreaks in flood-hit Sierra Leone**

21 August 2017 – The United Nations health agency is working closely with the Government
of Sierra Leone to prevent the spread of infectious diseases such as malaria and cholera in the wake of last week’s mudslides and flooding in the country’s capital, Freetown. “The mudslides have caused extreme suffering and loss of life, and we must do all we can to protect the population from additional health risks,” said Alexander Chimbaru, Officer in Charge of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Sierra Leone, in a press release. With damage to water and sanitation facilities, residents of affected areas are particularly vulnerable to outbreaks of pre-existing infectious diseases including malaria and diarrheal conditions such as typhoid and cholera. ... Around 500 people are known to have died as a result of the flooding and mudslides that devastated whole communities in and around Freetown, and hundreds more are still missing. UN News Centre

South Sudan: Malaria outbreak kills over 4,000 in S. Sudan

21 August - An outbreak of malaria in South Sudan has killed over 4,000 people since February, a senior health official disclosed last week. “This year’s malaria is the most severe the country has ever seen,” Dr. Isaac Mapeer, the deputy head of Malaria Control Program at South Sudan’s Ministry of Health, told Anadolu Agency on Thursday. A total of over 900,000 malaria cases had so far been registered, according to Mapeer. “4,073 deaths were recorded since February, while 2,000 deaths were reported in 2016”, he stressed. ... According to the senior health official, the country’s Epidemic Task Force headed by the Ministry of Health in partnership with United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other partners has also stepped up efforts to fight the disease. ReliefWeb

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USCENTCOM

Pakistan: Arsenic in drinking water threatens up to 60 million in Pakistan

23 August - It has been called the largest mass poisoning in history. After wells were drilled in Bangladesh and the rest of the Indian subcontinent in the 1970s, millions of people have been exposed to arsenic in drinking water. When leached into water from surrounding rocks and soil, the metal can—at high concentrations—cause skin lesions, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and neurodevelopmental delays. Now, a study suggests Pakistan might be grappling with its own arsenic emergency, with up to 60 million people exposed to contaminated water. The extent of the problem first became clear in the 1990s, when a series of studies found high arsenic concentrations across the Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta. The World Health Organization (WHO) warned that 35 million to 77 million people in Bangladesh could be at risk of drinking water with unsafe levels of arsenic. And in 2014,
WHO estimated that about 200 million people worldwide are exposed to concentrations exceeding the recommended limit of 10 micrograms per liter of water. Most live in Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, and Nepal. Science

Yemen: ‘It’s a slow death’ - The world’s worst humanitarian crisis

23 August - ... In just three months, cholera has killed nearly 2,000 people and infected more than a half million, one of the world’s largest outbreaks in the past 50 years. ... Damage from the war has turned Yemen into a fertile environment for cholera, a bacterial infection spread by water contaminated with feces. As garbage has piled up and sewage systems have failed, more Yemenis are relying on easily polluted wells for drinking water. Heavy rains since April accelerated the wells’ contamination. In developed countries, cholera is not life-threatening and can be easily treated, with antibiotics if severe. But in Yemen, rampant malnutrition has made many people, particularly children, especially vulnerable to the disease. “With the malnutrition we have among children, if they get diarrhea, they are not going to get better,” said Meritxell Relano, the United Nations Children’s Fund representative in Yemen. The New York Times

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Europe: Hunting hidden parasites - Trypanosoma cruzi

19 August - Pathogens are not aware of international borders, including pathogens that cause emerging and neglected tropical diseases. Although Chagas disease is endemic to Latin America, where it affects around 5-7 million people, it is now a disease of global concern mainly because of the movement of human populations. After the USA, Spain hosts the highest number (more than 50 000) of migrants infected with Trypanosoma cruzi, the parasite that causes this life-threatening disease. European countries should therefore adapt their legislation to control the main non-vector modes of T cruzi transmission (blood transfusions and haemoderivatives, and organ transplantation). A common European regulation is essential to implement a coherent, unified strategy to detect and treat congenital cases of Chagas disease. The Lancet

France: France reports local chikungunya cluster

21 August - France has reported two locally acquired chikungunya cases in the south, and countries in the Americas reported a small rise in their illness total. In research developments, researchers from Kenya found that, based on lab studies, Aedes aegypti from three of the country’s major cities are capable of spreading the disease.
Scotland: Syphilis cases up 13 percent in Scotland

23 August - Scotland health officials are reporting an increase in syphilis cases, in fact, overall incidence of infectious syphilis in Scotland was at its highest level since implementation of the current surveillance system in 2002/2003. A total of 356 diagnoses of infectious syphilis were reported during 2016 a 13% increase on that reported in 2015 (316) and the highest number recorded since the previous peak annual total of 260 recorded in 2008, according to Health Protection Scotland data. The number of diagnoses doubled between the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015 and has continued to rise through 2016. Of the 356 diagnoses, the majority (94%, 336) were male and the remaining 6% (20) were female. Of the males, 295 (88%) were MSM (35 of whom identified themselves as bisexual), 34 (10%) were heterosexual, and for seven (2%) no sexual orientation data were available. Outbreak News Today

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Babesiosis kills Conn. man

23 August - A 55-year-old Connecticut man died from the tick-borne disease babesiosis, the state's medical examiner's office reported, according to the Associated Press. Babesiosis is a malaria-like disease caused by parasites that infect red blood cells and typically is associated with flu-like symptoms, but in severe cases it can lead to anemia and organ failure. The Connecticut man died of liver and kidney failure after having symptoms of a "stomach bug" for weeks. Cases have been on the increase in the state in recent years, rising from 74 in 2011 to 205 in 2014. One death was reported in 2015 and another in 2016. Most of the 1,744 infections seen nationally in 2014 (the last year with published statistics) were in the Northeast. MedPage Today

U.S.: CDC reports that Candida auris cases now top 100

22 August - The number of Candida auris cases in the United States has risen to 112, according to a case count update yesterday from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The multidrug-resistant fungus has now been identified in healthcare facilities in nine states, with the vast majority of cases in New York (77) and New Jersey (23). The count reflects the number clinical cases of C auris infection, which rose from 98 in July. The pathogen has been isolated from an additional 120 patients from healthcare facilities in four of the affected states, meaning those patients were colonized with the fungus but did not show clinical signs of infection. CIDRAP News Scan (second item)
U.S.: Charlottesville - United Nations warns U.S. over 'alarming' racism

23 August - A UN committee charged with tackling racism has issued an "early warning" over conditions in the U.S. and urged the Trump administration to "unequivocally and unconditionally" reject discrimination. The warning specifically refers to events last week in Charlottesville, Virginia, where the civil rights activist Heather Heyer was killed when a car rammed into a group of people protesting against a white nationalist rally. Such statements are usually issued by the United Nations committee on the elimination of racial discrimination (Cerd) over fears of ethnic or religious conflict. In the past decade, the only other countries issued with early warnings have been Burundi, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Kyrgyzstan and Nigeria. The Guardian

U.S.: Coal mining health study is halted by Interior Department

21 August - The Interior Department has ordered a halt to a scientific study begun under President Obama of the public health risks of mountaintop-removal coal mining. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, which was conducting the study, said in a statement Monday that they were ordered to stop work because the Interior Department is conducting an agencywide budgetary review. Last year, West Virginia officials asked the Obama administration to look into the health effects of mountaintop mining, a technique used to extract underlying coal. As part of the practice, which dates to the 1960s, mining companies dump the rubble into the surrounding valleys and streams, in many cases leading to extensive pollution. The New York Times

U.S.: Hospitals are clogged with patients struggling with opioids

21 August - ... Recent research on hospitalizations related to opioid use depicts a problem of increasing urgency. According to a series of government briefs published this year, nearly 1.3 million hospitalizations involving opioids occurred in the United States in 2014. The figure includes hospitalizations for abuse of both prescription and illegal drugs, including heroin. The numbers reflect a 64 percent increase in inpatient stays and a doubling in emergency room visits related to opioids since 2005. The reports, based on data collected from hospital bills, also analyzed opioid hospitalizations by state, sex, age and characteristics of the communities in which patients lived. ... Across states, opioid hospitalization rates varied greatly. Maryland, Massachusetts and Rhode Island had the highest rates in 2014, and Iowa and Nebraska had the lowest. The New York Times

U.S.: Life expectancy tied to voting choices in last U.S. presidential election

22 August - Voters in counties where life expectancy has stagnated and declined in recent
years were more likely to abandon the Democratic Party to help elect U.S. President Donald Trump, a new study suggests. The study examined county-level data on voting patterns from the 2008 and 2016 presidential elections and on life expectancy for people born from 1980 to 2014. ... In counties with below-average gains in life expectancy or declines, a majority of voters chose Trump, the Republican nominee. But in counties with above-average gains in life expectancy, most voters chose the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. “Although economic marginalization has been cited as a reason for shifting voting patterns, the relationship between changes in life expectancy and the 2016 election results had not been previously documented,” said study author Jacob Bor of the Boston University School of Public Health. Reuters

U.S.: Strengthening Harvey forecast to slam Texas coast as first major hurricane in U.S. since 2005

24 August - Harvey rapidly intensified Thursday morning in the central Gulf of Mexico, and it officially became a hurricane early in the afternoon. The extremely dangerous storm is predicted to strengthen and plow into southeast Texas on Friday as the first major hurricane, rated Category 3 or higher (on the 1-5 Saffir-Simpson intensity scale), to strike U.S. soil in 12 years. An incredible amount of rain, 15 to 25 inches with isolated amounts of up to 35 inches, is predicted along the middle and upper Texas coast, because the storm is expected to stall and unload torrents for four to six straight days. The National Hurricane Center said it expects “devastating and life-threatening” flash flooding.

The Washington Post

U.S.: Report highlights growing health disparities in Appalachia

24 August - The 25 million people who live among the Appalachian mountains have struggled to keep up with health gains of the rest of the nation, falling behind in most major public health indicators, according to a study released Thursday. The report shows the 13-state region lags the rest of the country in 33 out of 41 population health indicators, including seven of the leading 10 causes of death in the United States. Deaths by poisoning, which include drug overdoses, were 37 percent higher than the rest of the country — a testament to the opioid addiction crisis that has gripped the area for years. Central Appalachia, which is mostly in the eastern portion of Kentucky, was the worst of the worst. It led all other regions of Appalachia in deaths from heart disease, cancer, lung disease, injuries and diabetes. STAT

U.S.: Rural-urban gap in some vaccination rates leaves health officials puzzled

24 August - New data on vaccination rates among U.S. teenagers provide some heartening news — but also pose a bit of a mystery. The report ... revealed big differences in the rates of teenagers who are vaccinated with some but not all recommended vaccines, depending
on whether they live in cities or more rural locations. ... Both rural and urban kids in large numbers were vaccinated against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis ... with nearly equal uptake rates among urban and rural adolescents. But the vaccination rate against human papillomavirus, or HPV1, was 16 percentage points lower in rural areas than urban areas. ... The rate of rural teens who received the recommended first dose (of two) of vaccine against meningococcus, which can cause fatal meningitis, was nearly 10 percentage points lower than it was for urban teens. STAT

U.S.: Trump administration dismisses climate change advisory panel

21 August - The Trump administration has fired another shot at the scientific community, this time dismantling a federal advisory committee on climate change. Members on the 15-person committee tell CNN they learned the news by email Friday. CNN has obtained a copy of the email sent from acting National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration head Benjamin Friedman. "On behalf of the Department of Commerce and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), I am writing to inform you that per the terms of the charter the Federal Advisory Committee for the Sustained National Climate Assessment (Committee) will expire on August 20, 2017," the email read. "The Department of Commerce and NOAA appreciate the efforts of the Committee and offer sincere thanks to each of the Committee members for their service." CNN

U.S.: We're underestimating slip and fall risks - New Pig survey

24 August - A new report from New Pig, an authority on leaks, drips, and spills, indicates slip and fall risks are underestimated by many organizations and aren’t being adequately addressed. The Walk Zone Safety Report looks at slips, trips, and falls in workplaces and public facilities, and the company prepared it by surveying professionals earlier this year in maintenance, safety, health risk, and facilities management across multiple industries. Underestimating floor safety risks and being unaware of high-risk walk zones within their buildings will expose employers to significant liability, medical costs, productivity losses, and damage to brand reputation, New Pig stresses, citing BLS data that same-level slip and fall accidents are the leading cause of workplace injuries, totaling nearly 200,000 in 2015, and the 2017 Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index reported this type of falls resulted in almost $11 billion in workers’ compensation and medical costs last year. Occupational Health & Safety
China: Typhoon Hato kills eight, injures hundreds in Macau

24 August - Typhoon Hato struck Macau on Aug. 23, killing eight people died and injuring about 240 others, Macau’s Government Information Bureau reported. Its report said the chief executive, Chui Sai On, pledged Aug. 24 that the government would work diligently alleviate the damage caused by the strong typhoon and help residents resume their normal lives as quickly as possible. Las Vegas' Review-Journal newspaper reported U.S. casino companies were still assessing damage to their Macau operations.

Occupational Health & Safety

Japan: Japan considers release of Fukushima tritium-contaminated water into Pacific

22 August - Authorities in Japan are trying to decide what to do with the hundreds of thousands of metric tons of contaminated water being stored at the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which went into meltdown following a 2011 earthquake and tsunami. As Henry Ridgwell reports from Tokyo, plant operator TEPCO is still studying whether it is safe to release the water into the Pacific Ocean, but scientists want a closer analysis of the water’s radioactivity levels. VOA

Singapore: In health push, Singapore gets soda makers to cut sugar content

21 August - Singapore's prime minister has urged people to drink water, eat wholemeal bread and choose brown rice over white in a health push that began with an agreement from soda makers to reduce the sugar content in drinks sold in the country. The campaign is aimed at curbing the incidence of diabetes in the city-state, where the number of adults with the disease could grow to nearly a million by 2050 from 440,000 in 2014, according to the Ministry of Health. ... The World Health Organization said last year drinking fewer calorific sweet drinks was the best way to curb excessive weight and prevent chronic diseases such as diabetes, although fat and salt in processed foods were also to blame. Several countries, including Britain, Belgium, France, Hungary and Mexico, have either imposed or plan to impose some form of tax on drinks with added sugar. Some have also implemented warning labels on sugary drinks. Reuters

Vietnam: Vietnam battles dengue outbreaks with 42 percent more cases

18 August – Vietnam has been battling raging dengue fever outbreaks with more than 10,000 new infections reported over the past week stretching its medical system.
number of admitted patients represents a 42-percent increase over the same period last year along with seven more deaths, the Ministry of Health said Friday. A total of 90,626 people have been infected, of whom 76,848 have been hospitalized and 24 have died. The ministry attributed the rise of dengue outbreaks to higher temperature, more rains and rapid urbanization that promote the breeding of virus-carrying mosquitoes. AP

USSOUTHCOM

Chile: With court's OK, Chile relaxes one of the world's strictest abortion bans

21 August - A Chilean court dealt abortion rights activists a landmark victory Monday, approving a controversial bill that rolled back parts of one of the world's strictest abortion bans. The bill passed by lawmakers earlier this month — after a years-long campaign by President Michelle Bachelet — added three exceptions to a law that for nearly three decades outlawed abortion in all cases. By a narrow margin, lawmakers rendered abortion legal when the pregnancy results from rape, when the pregnancy endangers the mother's life and when the fetus is unviable. Yet the bill remained in doubt for weeks afterward as its opponents lodged a complaint with the country's Constitutional Court, which weighs in on disputes over a potential law's constitutionality. As The Two-Way reported, the bill's conservative opposition filed a 67-page document arguing that the bill failed to fulfill the constitution's requirement to "protect the life that is about to be born." NPR

Venezuela: Diphtheria cases rising in crisis-hit Venezuela

23 August - So far this year, three countries in the Americas—Venezuela, Haiti, and Brazil—have reported 204 suspected or confirmed diphtheria infections, a number that has already exceeded the region's totals for 2015 and 2016, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said yesterday in an epidemiologic update. More than half of the cases (123) are in Venezuela, a country experiencing internal political and economic turmoil. The single case reported in Brazil probably involved exposure to the bacteria in Venezuela, PAHO said. Haiti has reported 80 cases. CIDRAP News Scan (fourth item)
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