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Updated Fact Sheets

Two fact sheets on shipping specimens to test for cervical cancer have recently been updated:

**Shipping ThinPrep® Solutions and Samples within CONUS:**
- 1-50 Vials – Small/Excepted Quantity Shipments by Highway and Commercial Air
- 51-500 Vials – Limited Quantity Shipments

**U.S. MILITARY**

Absolute and relative morbidity burdens attributable to various illnesses and injuries, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2017

May 2018 - ... In 2017, more service members (n=538,945) received medical care for injury/poisoning than any other morbidity-related category. In addition, injury/poisoning accounted for more medical encounters (n=2,775,393) than any other morbidity category and approximately one-quarter (24.9%) of all medical encounters overall. Mental health disorders accounted for more hospital bed days (n=152,566) than any other morbidity category and 45.5% of all hospital bed days overall. Together, injury/poisoning and mental health disorders accounted for more than half (57.3%) of all hospital bed days and more than two-fifths (42.1%) of all medical encounters. Of note, maternal conditions (including pregnancy complications and delivery) accounted for a relatively large proportion of all hospital bed days (n=53,165; 15.9%) but a much smaller proportion of medical encounters overall (n=177,496; 1.6%). Routine prenatal visits are not included in this summary.

**Army 'leans in' to protect a shooter's brain from blast injury**

17 May - ... Tracie Lattimore, who directs the Army's traumatic brain injury program, [says,] "We are leaning in and trying to do everything in our power to protect soldiers and service members while they continue to get their job done," says Lattimore, who works in the Office of the Army Surgeon General. She describes a wide-ranging effort that's already begun and includes scientific research on troops' exposure to blast during weapons training, enforcing limits on the firing of certain weapons, and even looking into whether special helmets could help stop blast waves. The Army also has plans to monitor service members' total blast exposure during their military careers, Lattimore says. NPR

**Defense bill amendment would protect open transgender military service**

18 May - A bipartisan group of House lawmakers is looking to codify the ability of transgender troops to serve openly with a proposed amendment to the annual defense policy bill. The amendment would make the open-service policy crafted by the Obama
Drum trial targets veterans’ PTSD-driven sleep disorders

18 May - The U.S. Department of Veterans affairs estimates that depending on the war or service era, between 10 to 20 percent of those who served went on or will go on to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The inability to fall, or stay, asleep is among a group of PTSD symptoms called Hyperarousal Symptoms, which are thought to come from the mind’s inability to relax or let down its guard after trauma. ... Tentatively called Tonmya, [a new drug] is currently in phase III of clinical trials and has shown promise in helping veterans fall asleep and stay asleep. However, it also acts on two other receptors in the brain, which have shown promise in reducing depression and anxiety in test subjects, above and beyond the lessened depression and anxiety some of them were seeing because they were starting to sleep better. Fox 61

Ernst and Warren introduce bipartisan bill to improve servicemember blast exposure injury prevention

20 May - United States Senators Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) today introduced the bipartisan Blast Exposure and Brain Injury Prevention Act of 2018. The legislation would improve research on traumatic brain injury (TBI) among servicemembers and strengthen the Department of Defense’s (DOD) capacity to track and prevent blast pressure exposure. Since 2000, more than 370,000 servicemembers have received a first-time diagnosis of traumatic brain injury, in many cases due to the use of improvised explosive devices (IED) in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. KIOW


25 May - Each year, approximately 350 new human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections are diagnosed in U.S. military service members, with most diagnoses occurring among men who have sex with men (MSM). Among 769 service members prescribed preexposure prophylaxis (PrEP) during February 1, 2014–June 10, 2016, 87% were MSM. In a survey of health care providers, 49% rated their knowledge of PrEP as poor, and 29% reported ever having prescribed PrEP. Strategies for reducing barriers to receipt of HIV prevention and care services include patient self-referrals for PrEP evaluations and development of new health policy to provide universal access to the provider, laboratory, and pharmacy services required for an effective PrEP program. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
Lawyers claim anti-malarial drug to blame for soldier who killed 16 in Afghanistan massacre

18 May - The legal team working for a former 2nd Infantry Division soldier convicted of a 2012 mass murder in Afghanistan is making another push at an appeal. A review petition filed with the U.S. Supreme Court on May 16 alleges that prosecutors disregarded evidence that an anti-malarial drug given to troops could cause violent behavior, as well as indications that Afghan villagers flown in to testify as witnesses against former Staff Sgt. Robert Bales were enemy combatants. Bales’ attorneys argue that the U.S. Army Court of Criminal Appeals, which heard the case in 2017, was mistaken when it ruled that the case’s original prosecutor did not have to disclose the side effects of mefloquine when building a case against him. Army Times

Military caregivers survey

18 May - The U.S. Army Medical Command’s Army Public Health Center has launched a survey for military caregivers - those family members and friends who provide assistance to a wounded, ill or injured soldier, sailor, airman or Marine – at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, and Joint Base San Antonio, Texas. The goal of the survey is to get a better idea of the impact of caregiving to military caregivers. According to the 2014-RAND Hidden Heroes Report, post 9/11 caregivers suffer worse health outcomes, greater relationship strain and more workplace problems than pre 9/11 or civilian caregivers. The anonymous, 15-minute survey aims to supplement what was learned in the RAND report to understand the social, economic and health impact of caregiving and identify gaps in services. Surveys can be completed from a cell phone, tablet or desktop. Federal Health Care News (third item)

NFL helmet maker wants to help curb head injuries of soldiers and Marines

23 May - The creator of the innovative football helmet that performed best in NFL testing the past two years is taking its concussion-reducing technology from the playing field to the battlefield. VICIS, maker of the Zero1 football helmet, is partnering with the U.S. Army to research ways to reduce head injuries in the military through a development grant announced Tuesday. The Seattle-based company will replace foam pads in existing Army and Marine Corps combat helmets with liner technology developed for its Zero1 football helmet, said VICIS CEO and co-founder Dave Marver. “This aligns with our mission and it allows us to protect those who have signed up to protect us,” Marver told The Associated Press. “The technology remains in development, but it’s very promising and we’re hopeful it will make a big difference in the lives of our servicemen and
Nightmare disorder increases mental health risks in servicemembers

22 May - ... Nearly a third of servicemembers referred for sleep disturbances experienced nightmares at least once a week, and 60% of those had trauma-related nightmares, according to a [new] study. ... Less than 4% of military personnel reported nightmares as a concern that warranted evaluation, however. ... The presence of nightmare disorder also substantially elevated the risk of other issues associated with sleep disturbances. Patients with nightmare disorder were twice as likely to have suffered traumatic brain injury and five times as likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder as those without clinically significant nightmares. They also had a 355% increased relative risk of depression, 257% increased relative risk of anxiety and 159% increased relative risk of insomnia compared to those with sleep disturbances but without frequent nightmares. U.S. Medicine

Senate sends major overhaul of veterans health care to Trump

23 May - The Senate gave final passage on Wednesday to a multibillion-dollar revamp of the veterans health care system, consolidating seven Veterans Affairs Department health programs into one and making it far easier for veterans to take their benefits to private doctors for care. The legislation, which passed 92 to 5, also expands popular stipends to family caregivers of veterans who served during the Vietnam War era or after. And it establishes a nine-member commission to study the department's current infrastructure to determine where its health system should expand and contract. The comprehensive bill had been a year in the making, and ultimately won the support of Republicans and most Democrats. The House passed it last week, 347 to 70, and President Trump plans to sign it into law. The New York Times

Soldiers may soon have implantable health monitors and robotic surgeries done remotely

18 May - Soldiers may soon be carrying monitoring devices that can alert doctors thousands of miles away to medical emergencies and the need for treatment. The devices may even be implanted in soldiers and continuously monitor their status, the Army’s top doctor said in describing the near future of Army medicine. “We should be monitoring all soldiers, all the time, looking for patterns of injury or other signs for early detection,” said Lt. Gen. Nadja West, the Army’s surgeon general, during a talk May 8 at the Association of the U.S. Army in Arlington, Virginia. ... The monitors would send out streams of detailed data on a soldier’s health. For example, a device could measure blood sugar levels and a doctor or
nurse hundreds or thousands of miles away can check on a soldier’s diabetes and recommend treatment or calibrate insulin. Army Times

The VA wants veterans to be part of a new DNA database

22 May - The US Department of Veterans Affairs is asking veterans to be part of a new DNA database that could help deliver them better care. The initiative – called the Million Veteran Program – is a national, voluntary research program funded entirely by the VA’s Office of Research & Development. The goal of MVP is to partner with veterans receiving their care in the VA Healthcare System to study how genes affect health, according to VA officials. To do this, MVP collects blood samples and health information from one million veteran volunteers. … Data collected from MVP is then stored and will be coded for researchers so that they cannot directly identify you, according to the VA’s website. … Researchers will study diseases like diabetes and cancer, and military-related illnesses, such as post-traumatic stress disorder. WCPO

Women vets carry heavy psychological baggage

18 May - The number of female veterans has been growing rapidly. And as more women struggle to adapt to civilian life, awareness of the different psychological challenges they face is growing. Mental health experts have begun focusing more on female troops’ transition to the civilian world. … [New] meetings are only for female veterans, and they’ve been occurring over the past few weeks all over the country, thanks to a grant from Walmart and with support from the VA. The idea behind the Women Veteran Network, or WoVen, is to build a gender-specific support system. North Country Public Radio

GLOBAL

A warming climate may produce more drug-resistant infections

21 May - A person’s chances of acquiring a drug-resistant infection may be higher if she lives in a warmer area. A study appearing today in Nature Climate Change … links the emergence of drug-resistant bacteria to a hotter climate. Researchers found a 10-degree Celsius increase in daily minimum temperature was associated with a small increase in resistance in common pathogens, including those that develop into methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), the root of many persistent and sometimes deadly hospital infections. … They found a 10-degree C increase in temperature was associated with increases in antibiotic resistance of 4, 2 and 3 percent for E. coli, K. pneumoniae and S. aureus, respectively. Scientific American
Chiropractic has role to play in easing lower back pain - Study

18 May - ... Chiropractic care can help ease low back pain when added to a comprehensive treatment plan, a new clinical trial has found. Active-duty military personnel reported having fewer back problems when they visited a chiropractor along with receiving usual medical care, the researchers said. ... “We found that at every time point, those patients that received chiropractic care had better outcomes in terms of their level of pain intensity and pain-related disability,” Goertz said. ... However, more adverse events were associated with chiropractic care. The group receiving usual medical care reported 19 adverse effects, mostly muscle or joint stiffness attributed to physical therapy or exercise. But 43 adverse events were reported by those also receiving chiropractic care. U.S. News and World Report

First human study of MERS monoclonal antibody treatment set to launch

18 May - Federal health officials today announced the start of enrollment for the first human clinical trial to test the safety of two monoclonal antibody (mAb) treatments for Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infections. ... Anthony Fauci, MD, NIAID's director, said in the statement that currently there are no specific treatments for MERS-CoV. ... Investigators will enroll 48 healthy adults ages 18 to 45 divided into six groups that will receive placebo or both mAbs intravenously. The first group will receive the lowest dosage, with successive groups receiving successively higher dosages.

For first time, W.H.O. names some lab tests ‘essential’

21 May - For the first time, the World Health Organization has published a list of diagnostic tests that it considers essential to every health care system in the world. The list, published Wednesday, is similar to the agency’s essential medicines list, which the W.H.O. launched in 1977. In its day, the medicines list was revolutionary because it was both a global guide to rational treatment regimens and because it fostered the idea that certain medicines were so important that they should be available to the whole world, regardless of price. The W.H.O. expert panel that created the diagnostics list hopes it will eventually be just as revolutionary. ... The W.H.O. lists 113 diagnostics. Fifty-eight are the routine blood and urine tests that are run in most American medical offices: measurements of red and white blood cells, blood sugar, liver enzymes and so on, plus tests for one-time events like pregnancy or transfusion blood-typing.

Growing resistance to antifungal drugs 'a global issue'

18 May - Scientists are warning that levels of resistance to treatments for fungal infections
are growing, which could lead to more outbreaks of disease. Intensive-care and transplant patients and those with cancer are most at risk because their immune systems cannot fight off the infections. Writing in Science, researchers said new treatments were urgently needed. Fungal infections had some of the highest mortality rates of infectious diseases, an expert said. An international team, led by researchers from Imperial College London and the University of Exeter, found a huge increase in resistance to antifungal drugs worldwide over the past 30-40 years. BBC News

NIH-funded researchers identify target for chikungunya treatment

21 May - Scientists have identified a molecule found on human cells and some animal cells that could be a useful target for drugs against chikungunya virus infection and related diseases. ... In this study, scientists aimed to better understand which traits make humans susceptible to chikungunya virus infection. Using the gene-editing tool CRISPR-Cas9, they performed a genome-wide screen that identified the molecule Mxra8 as a key to the entry of chikungunya virus and related viruses into host cells. In the laboratory, scientists were able to reduce the ability of chikungunya virus to infect cells by editing the human and mouse genes that encode Mxra8. The researchers also administered anti-Mxra8 antibodies to mice and infected the mice with chikungunya virus or O’nyong-nyong virus, another alphavirus. The antibody-treated mice had significantly lower levels of virus infection and related foot swelling as compared with a control group. NIH

Red Cross: Over 2,000 attacks on health care in conflict

22 May - Over 1,200 violent incidents against hospitals and medical personnel have taken place in 16 countries in the two years since the U.N. adopted a resolution demanding that combatants protect staff and facilities treating the wounded and sick, the Red Cross said Tuesday. Yves Daccord, director-general of the International Committee of the Red Cross, told the U.N. Security Council that "the gap between words and action is rather dramatic." Without identifying the 16 countries, he cited incidents of health workers being killed, threatened and kidnapped as well as ambulances obstructed, medical supplies destroyed or prevented from crossing front lines, and hospitals bombed or looted. ... The fifth report by Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, which was released Tuesday, said there were more than 700 attacks on hospitals, health workers, patients and ambulances in 23 countries around the globe in 2017. Business Insider

Study finds pneumococcal vaccine 73% effective in older adults

22 May - In the first study to test real-world effectiveness of the 13-valent (13-strain) pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13) in US seniors, researchers with the vaccine's
maker found an unadjusted vaccine effectiveness (VE) of 72.8% against hospitalized cases of community-acquired pneumonia (CAP). ... Scientists ... employed a test-negative design to test VE in 2,034 patients 65 and older in Louisville who were hospitalized for CAP. Sixty-eight of them (3.3%) had PCV13 serotypes. Of the 68 cases, 3 (4.4%) had received PCV13, while 285 of 1,966 controls (14.5%) had not. CIDRAP News Scan (fifth item)
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Study: GBS symptoms more severe when caused by Zika
22 May - Since an outbreak of Zika began in Brazil in 2015, clinicians have documented subsequent cases of Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS) in some infected patients. A study published yesterday... found that patients with GBS and Zika had more severe symptoms, including facial weakness, abnormal facial sensation, and protein in cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) during the acute phase of the disease. GBS is a post-infectious, autoimmune disorder, characterized by damage to the peripheral nerves resulting in weakness and poor reflexes. Several studies have linked Zika to an increase risk for developing GBS, and though incidence is still low, countries with large Zika outbreaks have reported a spike of GBS cases in the months following a wave of Zika activity. CIDRAP News
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The sensors that could sniff out chemical weapons
21 May - As Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad has shown, chemical weapons are no longer on the forbidden fringe of warfare. ... That evolution has breathed new urgency into U.S. military efforts to more effectively detect the use of chemical and other non-conventional arms. ... Researchers in the Material Science and Technology Division are developing atomically-thin semiconductors to serve as sensors in emerging detection systems. ... We’re now in the applied phase of basic research. We’re going to start building prototypes that we can test in real world situations,” said Adam Friedman, the lead researcher on the team which includes at least seven physicists, chemists and engineers. "We’re looking for ways to build the technology that we can put into real sensors in the field.” C4ISRNET
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Tuberculosis: Pharmacists develop new substance to counteract antimicrobial resistance
23 May - Antimicrobial resistance is on the rise worldwide. This is becoming a problem for infectious diseases like tuberculosis as there are only a few active substances available to combat such diseases. Pharmacists ... have now found a way to increase the efficacy of a common tuberculosis agent while, at the same time, reducing resistance to it. ... The pharmacists developed a new chemical compound, combined it with conventional tuberculosis antibiotics and tested the effectiveness. They were able to demonstrate that the compound achieves very good results with the antibiotic isoniazid, and blocks the pumping mechanism in the bacteria. "This improves the effects of the isoniazid," concludes Hilgeroth. Science Daily
With PTSD reaching well beyond combat vets, trauma experts see need for 'healing spaces'

18 May - ... The U.S. National Institutes of Health, in the nation's most recent and comprehensive study, estimates more than 14 million Americans will be diagnosed at some point in their lives with PTSD. ... The NIH conducted 36,309 face-to-face interviews to create a nationally representative cross section of the U.S. population. Only a relatively small share of respondents indicated that their most stressful life event stemmed from military combat, prisoner-of-war status, being a civilian in a war zone or being a refugee. Far more identified sexual assault before age 18 or “intimate partner violence.” ... The VA itself recently acknowledged the urgency for healing environments, a recognition some say is overdue. This year, the VA approved its first-ever set of Healing Environment Design Guidelines — a 209-page document meant to influence all future construction, renovation and architecture at VA facilities around the nation. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

INFLUENZA

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

During week 19 (May 6-12, 2018), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Overall, influenza A(H3) viruses have predominated this season. Since early March, influenza B viruses have been more frequently reported than influenza A viruses. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories decreased.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the system-specific epidemic threshold in the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Mortality Surveillance System.
- Influenza-associated Pediatric Deaths: Three influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported. CDC

NHRC: Operational Infectious Diseases - Weekly Surveillance Report

17 May - Febrile respiratory illness cases:
- Military Recruits - 31 positive of 70 tested
- CDC Border Infectious Disease Surveillance and Zika Surveillance – 2 positive of 10 tested
- DoD Beneficiaries – 8 positive of 16 tested. Naval Health Research Center
CDC: Probe of *Salmonella* outbreak linked to dried coconut over

21 May - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced late last week the end of an investigation into a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* Typhimurium tied to dried coconut. A total of 14 people in eight states were sickened after eating dried coconut products, which the CDC warns may still be in people's homes, as the products have a long shelf life. Three patients required hospitalization. The total represents 1 new case since the CDC first reported the outbreak on Mar 21. Epidemiologic investigations connected the bacteria to bulk packages of International Harvest, Inc. brand Go Smiles Dried Coconut Raw. *CIDRAP News Scan* (first item)

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GAO calls for coordinated efforts to detect arsenic in rice

22 May - The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) commissioner should develop timelines for updating the risk assessment on arsenic in rice and for finalizing the agency’s draft guidance on arsenic in infant rice cereal, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommended in a recent report. In addition, the GAO recommended that the FDA commissioner and the secretary of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) develop ways to better coordinate the development of methods to detect contaminants in food, including arsenic in rice. ... In 2016, the FDA issued a ... draft guidance recommending that industry not exceed a level of 100 parts per billion of inorganic arsenic in infant rice cereal. *JAMA Network*

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Iran mushroom poisoning: More than 800 sick from deadly fungi

21 May - More than 800 people have been poisoned after eating toxic wild mushrooms in around 10 provinces in the west of Iran. At least 11 people have died from the effects of the fungi and hundreds more have been hospitalised. There is no effective treatment for this kind of poisoning, Iran’s Tasnim News Agency reports. At least two people have received liver transplants. The mushrooms concerned look similar to edible ones. People have been urged not to buy loose mushrooms and only purchase those packed and sealed in shops. According to BBC Persian, mushrooms can sometimes be seen for sale in the street in Iran, and local folk wisdom about which ones are safe to eat can be unreliable. *BBC News*

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Egg a day tied to lower risk of heart disease

21 May - People who eat an egg just about every day may have a lower risk of heart attack and stroke than individuals who don't eat eggs at all, a large Chinese study suggests. Researchers examined survey data on egg consumption among 461,213 adults who were 51 years old on average. When they joined the study, none had a history of heart disease. ... At least half of the participants were followed for nine years or more. ... Compared to people who never ate eggs, individuals who ate an average of 0.76 eggs per day were 11 percent less likely to develop cardiovascular diseases and 18 percent less likely to die from these conditions, the study found. Reuters

FDA issues warning letters to companies selling kratom products

22 May - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said on Tuesday it issued warning letters to three companies that illegally marketed and distributed products containing the substance, kratom, which they claimed treat opioid addiction and withdrawal. The regulator has been clamping down on the substance, which it says has similar effects to narcotics such as opioids and has resulted in dozens of deaths. The leaves of the kratom tree, native to Southeast Asia, can be used as a stimulant or sedative. Front Range Kratom of Aurora, Colorado; Kratom Spot of Irvine, California; and Revibe Inc of Kansas City, Missouri received letters for illegally selling unapproved kratom-containing drug products with unproven claims, the FDA said. Reuters

For smoking cessation, money whispers louder than nicotine replacement

23 May - In a large, workplace-based randomized trial, smokers offered up to $600 to remain tobacco-free for 6 months were significantly more successful than those given free access to conventional cessation aids or to e-cigarettes. But in absolute terms, the efforts were all wildly unsuccessful, with 6-month abstinence rates not even reaching 3% with the top-performing inducements, researchers reported in the New England Journal of Medicine. MedPage Today
Health insurance coverage for healthy groceries? More food-based interventions may be coming

24 May - Health insurance plans cover a variety of medical procedures, prescriptions and provider visits. A recent change in how some plans interpret health-related insurance benefits may see more plans offering food-based benefits, including meals and healthy groceries. …

The federal government recently gave the go-ahead for Medicare Advantage plans to broaden the scope of supplemental, “health-related benefits” for individuals. … Time will tell how successful these additional “health-related benefits” will be at improving health outcomes or driving down the costs of healthcare. As Kaiser Health News noted, some consumer advocates warn that the extra benefits in Medicare Advantage could come at the detriment of individuals on traditional Medicare. Forbes

Lung cancer rates in younger white and Hispanic women surpass those of men

23 May - Reversing a historic trend, rates of lung cancer among younger white and Hispanic women have surpassed those of men — and the change cannot be fully explained by gender differences in smoking behavior, researchers said Wednesday. … The new study … is the largest and most definitive on the topic and one that incorporates smoking patterns and tumor characteristics in its analysis, according to its authors. The research … doesn’t explain why lung-cancer rates for white and Hispanic women born since the mid-1960s are higher than for men. But it raises some possibilities, including biological and genetic ones. … It notes, for example, that when people stop smoking their risk of developing cancer drops every year. But the risk for adenocarcinoma, a common type of the disease, drops more slowly than that for other types of lung cancer. And women are more likely than men to develop adenocarcinoma. The Washington Post

Mediterranean diet may blunt air pollution's ill health effects

21 May - … The researchers created five groups of participants based on their level of adherence to a Mediterranean diet and linked participants to estimates of long-term exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5), nitrous oxide (NO₂) and ozone (O₃) based on census tract information. When comparing those least and most adherent to a Mediterranean diet, the study found that:

- Deaths from all causes increased by 5 percent for every 10 parts per billion (ppb) increase in long-term average NO₂ exposure in those least adherent, compared to 2 percent among the most adherent.
- Cardiovascular disease deaths increased by 17 percent for every 10 micrograms per
Adherence to a Mediterranean diet did not appear, however, to protect against the harmful effects of long-term exposure to O₃. Science Daily

cubic meter (µg/m³) increase in long-term average PM2.5 exposure in those least adherent, compared to 5 percent among the most adherent. ...

Suicide rates for black children twice that of white children, new data show

21 May - African American children are taking their lives at roughly twice the rate of their white counterparts, according to a new study that shows a widening gap between the two groups. The 2001-2015 data, published Monday in the journal JAMA Pediatrics, confirm a pattern first identified several years ago when researchers at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Ohio found that the rate of suicides for black children ages 5 to 12 exceeded that of young whites. The results were seen in both boys and girls. Although suicide is rare among young children, the latest findings reinforce the need for better research into the racial disparities, lead author Jeffrey Bridge said Monday. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death for older children and adolescents in the United States. The Washington Post

USAFRICOM

Cameroon: Cameroon reports first monkeypox outbreak in 3 decades

22 May - Cameroon’s health ministry recently notified the WHO about a monkeypox outbreak involving seven suspected cases, one of them confirmed, marking the country's first known appearance of the disease in three decades. So far two districts in northwestern Cameroon are affected, with the first two cases reported in Njikwa district, according to a weekly health emergencies report from the WHO’s African regional office. ... Active case finding turned up five more suspected cases, including two in Akwaya district in Cameroon’s
southeast region. A preliminary investigation suggests that the index case involves a guard at a game park who handled a gorilla 3 weeks before he got sick.

**Democratic Republic of the Congo: Congo starts vaccinating health workers against Ebola virus**

21 May - Health workers lined up to get vaccinated against Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Monday, just as officials there said a nurse had died of the virus. It's the first time vaccines have been used to fight a new outbreak of the virus, which has infected 49 people and killed 27 of them in the sprawling central African nation. WHO hopes quick use of vaccines can prevent the kind of explosive spread that ended up infecting 28,000 people and killing more than 11,000 of them in the 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa. ... WHO is starting with doctors, nurses and other staff in the river port town of Mbandaka. The global health agency has 8,000 doses of vaccine to distribute and wants to focus first on urban areas, because the potential for fast spread is higher there. NBC News

**Democratic Republic of the Congo: Ebola outbreak in DRC on 'epidemiological knife-edge,' says WHO official**

22 May - The next two weeks will tell whether a vaccination campaign and public health measures can stop the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from "exploding" in urban centers and spreading to other countries, according to a top World Health Organization official. Dr. Peter Salama, deputy director-general of emergency preparedness and response, told Devex on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly that confirmation last week that the virus had reached Mbandaka ... meant the situation was now "on an epidemiological knife-edge." Cases had previously been confined to more remote villages, where it was considered easier to contain. Devex

**Democratic Republic of the Congo: WHO - 58 Ebola cases in DRC, 27 deaths**

23 May - In its latest outbreak update, the World Health Organization (WHO) today confirmed 58 Ebola cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), including 27 deaths, resulting in a case-fatality rate of 47%. The total number includes 28 confirmed, 21 probable, and 9 suspected cases in three health zones in Equateur province. Three identified cases involve healthcare workers. The updated tally comes as officials announced that in recent days three Ebola patients being kept in isolation had left a Mbandaka hospital. A
WHO official told Reuters that the patients left an isolation ward to travel to a place of worship. One patient was found dead, another returned to the clinic and died shortly after, and the third returned to the hospital and is currently under observation. The WHO said its workers have redoubled their efforts to trace contacts of patients. The WHO also said it now has a list of 628 people (known contacts to current cases) who will be vaccinated against the hemorrhagic virus. CIDRAP News

Somalia: Storm in Somaliland kills dozens, wipes out farms, livestock

24 May - More than 50 people have died in Somaliland, livestock has been wiped out and hundreds of farms destroyed by heavy rains and floods caused by a tropical cyclone that hit the Horn of Africa, officials and aid agencies in the breakaway Somali region said. "The death toll from the cyclone is so far over 50 people," vice president Abdirahman Abdullahi Ismail told reporters late on Tuesday in Somaliland's capital Hargeisa. "(The) death toll may rise because there are other people who are still missing." Reuters

USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: Worsening security in Afghanistan threatens health gains, minister says

17 May - Deteriorating security is forcing Afghanistan to spend more money on trauma care, rather than investing in women and children's health, its health minister said on Thursday. ... Afghanistan's health system is rudimentary, battered by decades of war and conflict. About 60 percent of the population has access to health services - defined as being within one hour's walking distance, Feroz said. Feroz, who is a trained doctor and has advised other countries on health system reform, aims to increase this to 75 percent by the end of 2018. Afghanistan has made gains in maternal health, with 400 deaths per 100,000 live births, up from 1,600 per 100,000 in 2002, according to the United Nations Population Fund - but it is still one of the worst rates in the world. Thomson Reuters Foundation News

USEUCOM

Europe: Drug-resistant bacteria found in 25% of migrants to Europe

18 May - A new review of research on migrant populations in Europe has found that more than a quarter are infected or colonized with antibiotic-resistant bacteria, with evidence
suggesting that the pathogens are being acquired along the migration route or in host countries. The findings are from a review and meta-analysis of observational studies on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in migrants conducted by researchers from Imperial College London and published yesterday in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. The researchers also found that the prevalence of AMR carriage or infection was even higher among refugees and asylum seekers and in high-migrant community settings. But they did not find high rates of AMR transmission from migrants to host populations. *CIDRAP News*

**Europe: Measles in Europe: Significant outbreaks continue**

18 May - The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) reported Friday that Romania and France lead EU/EEA countries this year in measles. The highest number of cases to date in 2018 were in Romania (2,712), France (2,173), Greece (1,948) and Italy (805) respectively. Twenty two deaths have also been reported by these countries in 2018. Additionally, there is an ongoing outbreak in England, UK with 440 confirmed measles cases reported this year. *Outbreak News Today*

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**U.S.: A healthy renewal for Puerto Rico**

22 May - Amid the still-not-fixed physical damage to Puerto Rico after two powerful hurricanes hit late last year, the island is in a health care crisis. After Hurricane Maria made landfall Sept. 20, clinics and hospitals were unable to function, and some are still at partial capacity because of structural and water damage. Physicians are leaving the island for the U.S. mainland. Suicides have surged, and post-traumatic symptoms are afflicting children as well as adults. Months after a power outage classified as the biggest in U.S. history and likely the second-largest in world history, there are still people in mountain areas that have not had power since Hurricane Irma, which hit two weeks before Maria. That makes it even harder for residents of those areas to get medical care. All of it creates a daunting task for Puerto Rico’s health secretary, Dr. Rafael Rodríguez Mercado, as he endeavors to heal an island after storms that not only injured Puerto Ricans physically, but damaged the island’s ability to take care of its people as well. *U.S. News and World Report*

**U.S.: Annual Report to the Nation - Overall cancer mortality continues to decline, prostate cancer mortality has stabilized**

22 May - The latest Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer finds that overall
cancer death rates continue to decline in men, women, and children in the United States in all major racial and ethnic groups. Overall cancer incidence, or rates of new cancers, decreased in men and were stable in women from 1999 to 2014. In a companion study, researchers reported that there has been an increase in incidence of late-stage prostate cancer and that after decades of decline, prostate cancer mortality has stabilized. NIH

U.S.: House passes 'right-to-try' bill for experimental drugs

22 May - Legislation that would allow terminally ill patients to get access to experimental drugs is headed to the president's desk. The House on Tuesday passed a "right-to-try" bill that was approved by the Senate in 2017. "People who are terminally ill should not have to go from country to country to find a cure," said Rep. Michael Burgess, R-Texas, on the House floor Tuesday. The bill, which President Trump is expected to sign, has patient advocates divided. Patient groups including the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network and the American Lung Association opposed the bill. They say it could do more harm than good by giving patients access to drugs that may, in the end, shorten their lives. Advocates say the bill would make it easier for patients to get access to experimental drugs that have completed the first phase of clinical trials. NPR

U.S.: New restrictions on Title X clinics announced

23 May - The Trump administration on Tuesday formally issued its proposed regulation barring health clinics who accept federal Title X funding from referring patients for abortions, as well as mandating complete physical and financial separation of abortion-related activities from other services funded through Title X. Similar restrictions had been promulgated during the Reagan administration, which also prevented clinics from even mentioning abortion to clients. The new rule does not go that far. ... "If asked, a medical doctor may provide a list of licensed, qualified, comprehensive health service providers (some, but not all, of which also provide abortion, in addition to comprehensive prenatal care), but only if a woman who is currently pregnant clearly states that she has already decided to have an abortion," the rule continues. MedPage Today

U.S.: New studies confirm a surge in coal miners' disease

22 May - More coal miners in central Appalachia have suffered the advanced stages of the deadly disease black lung than previous government research has found, and more miners working in the region today have earlier stages of the disease. Those are two of the findings in a bundle of studies released Tuesday and expected to be released soon, which focus on the epidemic of black lung disease first reported by NPR in 2016. ... [Kirsten] Almberg and colleague Robert Cohen combed through black lung benefit claims filed with the federal government since 1970 and identified, for the first time, more than 4,600 cases of severe
black lung, also known as progressive massive fibrosis or PMF. More than half the cases they found occurred in the last 16 years. They also found sharp increases in disease year after year in central Appalachian coal mining states, including 30 percent in West Virginia and 16 percent each in Kentucky and Virginia. NPR

U.S.: Pruitt promises action on rising threat from contaminants

22 May - Soaring numbers of water systems around the country are testing positive for a dangerous class of chemicals widely used in items that include non-stick pans and firefighting foam, regulators and scientists said Tuesday. The warnings, and promises by Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt of official action to confront the related health risks, came in a summit with small-town and state officials increasingly confronting water systems contaminated by the toxic substances. ... “It’s clear this issue is a national priority,” Pruitt said. ... Emails made public under the Freedom of Information Act ... included an unidentified White House official calling a still-pending federal study on the chemicals a “public-relations nightmare” and EPA officials intervening in the publication of the report. The threat comes from thousands of chemicals in a family known as perfluoroalkyls and polyfluoroalkyls, or PFOA and PFAS. AP

U.S.: Report - Most guns not stored safely at home

19 May - A recent survey from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health offers a shocking statistic: More than half of U.S. gun owners do not safely store their firearms. The survey, believed to be the first nationwide in 15 years, found that just 46 percent of gun owners report safely storing all of their firearms. The Internet-based survey defined safe storage as placing all guns owned in a locked gun safe, cabinet or case, locked into a gun rack or stored with a trigger lock or other lock. ... The survey found that children younger than 18 were present in about one-third, or 34 percent, of the homes. Gun owners were 44 percent more likely to report safely storing all of their firearms if they had a child under 18 in the home. Slightly more than half, or 55 percent, of gun owners with children under 18 reported storing all of their guns safely. Miami News-Record

U.S.: Where you live affects your happiness and health, but how exactly?

23 May - Every year, Gallup ranks U.S. cities for well-being, based on how residents feel about living in their communities, and their health, finances, social ties and sense of purpose. ... A study published Wednesday takes a step toward teasing out which attributes might contribute to well-being in communities around the country. A Yale-led team of researchers has
identified 12 community factors independently related to well-being. The factors included some obvious ones, such as higher levels of education and income, as well as some surprises, including a higher percentage of black residents, a higher percentage of bicycle commuters, and better access to preventive care, such as mammograms. ... To the researchers’ surprise, they discovered that just 12 factors related to demographics, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment explained over 90 percent of the variation in well-being across the country. NPR

China: China considers scrapping birth limits by 2019 – Bloomberg

21 May - China is considering ending the limits it sets on the number of children a family can have, Bloomberg reported on Monday, citing people familiar with the matter. China’s population is aging rapidly, with the number of births falling by 3.5 percent to 17.23 million last year despite the country’s decision in late 2015 to relax the controversial “one-child” policy and allow couples to have a second child. The State Council, or cabinet, has commissioned research on ending the country’s birth limits on a nationwide basis, the Bloomberg report said. A decision could be made in the last quarter of this year or in 2019, the report said. Reuters

China: Pompeo says China incident 'entirely consistent' with Cuba 'sonic attacks'

24 May - US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Wednesday that an incident involving a US government employee stationed in China who reported "abnormal sensations of sound and pressure" suggesting a mild brain injury has medical indications that are "very similar" and "entirely consistent" to those experienced by American diplomats posted in Havana. The official who fell ill was assigned to the city of Guangzhou in southern China and reported a range of physical symptoms from late 2017 through to April 2018, the State Department said. The employee was sent back to the United States for assessment. The US Embassy in Beijing learned on May 18 that the clinical findings of the evaluation matched that of a "mild traumatic brain injury," an embassy spokeswoman told CNN. CNN
India: Ten die in India outbreak of brain-damaging virus, spurring rush to hospitals

22 May - A rare virus spread by fruit bats, which can cause flu-like symptoms and brain damage, has killed 10 people in southern India, health officials said on Tuesday, with at least nine more being treated. Infectious disease outbreaks can be a challenge in India, the world’s second most populous country, where infection control and surveillance systems are weak. ... There is no vaccine for the Nipah virus, which is spread through body fluids and can cause encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain, the World Health Organization (WHO) says. The usual treatment is to provide supportive care. The first death in the outbreak in Kerala took place on Friday, the state’s health minister, K.K. Shailaja, said. ... Of 18 people screened for the virus, 12 proved positive, Shailaja told a news conference, adding that 10 of the sufferers had died and the other two were being closely monitored. Reuters

India: Second Indian state reports suspected cases of rare virus, fanning fears of spread

23 May - Indian health officials were checking on Wednesday if a rare, brain-damaging virus had spread to a second state after two suspected cases reported in southern Karnataka, as the death toll in adjacent Kerala, where the outbreak began, rose to 11. Reuters

India: The 14 most polluted cities in the world are all in one country

21 May - The 14 most polluted cities in the world are all in India, according to a recent report from the World Health Organization. The northern town of Kanpur topped the list, which measured cities by their level of fine particulate matter in the air, known as PM 2.5. Over the period from 2010 to 2016, Kanpur registered 173 micrograms per cubic meter of PM 2.5 — dangerously higher than the 10 micrograms considered safe for humans. Other cities on the list included Delhi, Lucknow, Agra, Jaipur, and Jodhpur. Unfortunately for many Indians, living with air pollution is a harsh reality of everyday life. Many people have resorted to wearing surgical masks in the street, and cases of respiratory problems have increased in some towns. Business Insider

Philippines: Exclusion of condom promotion in HIV-AIDS Policy Act puts ideology over public safety — HRW

23 May - The approval of the Senate Bill No. 1390 or the Philippine HIV-AIDS Policy Act of 2018 on its third and final reading was seen as a landmark victory by health advocates fighting to reduce the cases of infections in the country. ... While the proposed law will make resources more accessible to the Philippine National AIDS Council as well as make
testing more accessible by lowering the age of testing without parental consent from 18 to 15 years old among other things, HRW insists that spreading the message that condoms are scientifically proven to be one of that best methods to prevent HIV transmission must be integrated into the law. GMA News

U.S.: Toxic cloud caused by Hawaii volcano lava emerges over ocean

21 May - White plumes of acid and extremely fine shards of glass billowed into the sky over Hawaii as molten rock from Kilauea volcano poured into the ocean, creating yet another hazard from an eruption that began more than two weeks ago: A toxic steam cloud. Authorities on Sunday warned the public to stay away the cloud that formed by a chemical reaction when lava touched seawater. Further upslope, lava continued gushing out of large cracks in the ground in residential neighborhoods in a rural part of the Big Island. The molten rock made rivers that bisected forests and farms as it meandered toward the coast. The rate of sulfur dioxide gas shooting from the ground fissures tripled, leading Hawaii County to repeat warnings about air quality. At the volcano’s summit, two explosive eruptions unleashed clouds of ash. Winds carried much of it toward the southwest. AP

USSOUTHCOM

Brazil: Overweight and obesity make up for more than 15,000 cancer cases per year in Brazil

23 May - Some 15,000 new cancer cases are diagnosed in Brazil each year, and researchers have found that approximately 4% of these cases could be avoided by reducing overweight and obesity. The epidemiological study was conducted by scientists at the Preventive Medicine Department of the University of São Paulo's Medical School (FM-USP) in Brazil in collaboration with colleagues at Harvard University in the United States. It predicts that the number of new cancer cases attributable to overweight and obesity will double by 2025, reaching 29,000 cases or 4.6% of all new cancer cases in Brazil. EurekAlert!
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The Army Public Health Weekly Update is published by the Public Health Information Directorate, Army Public Health Center.