27 July 2018

Army Public Health
Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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• Laos: Laos dam collapse raises questions as officials search for 131 missing
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• U.S.: Hawaii’s Kilauea volcano might be experiencing hydrovolcanic explosions, USGS says

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• U.S.: CDC reports uptick in *Candida auris* cases
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The next Epi-Tech Training via DCS will be held Tuesday, 31 July at 0900 EDT, 1500 EDT and 1700 EDT.

Contact the Disease Epidemiology Division for more information and registration instructions.

DOD must do more to protect students from sexual assaults, lawmakers say

25 July - U.S. lawmakers are demanding that Defense Department schools do a better job of protecting students from sexual harassment and assault, calling for a centralized database to track cases that critics say are frequently ignored. Provisions in a final version of the National Defense Authorization Act, agreed to by lawmakers on Monday, require Department of Defense Education Activity to develop policies and procedures to protect students by March 2019. The demands from lawmakers come as the inspector general’s office conducts an investigation into allegations that the Pentagon’s schools lack a clear policy on how to deal with student-on-student sexual assaults. Stars and Stripes

Dozens of lawmakers warn Defense Department: Don’t whitewash climate change report

25 July - A Department of Defense report on how vulnerable military installations are to floods, rising sea levels, drought and catastrophic storms only mentions “climate change” once — a fact that has irked more than 40 Democratic and Republican lawmakers who have warned the department to keep the term intact. ... In the report, DoD said 782 installations reported impact from drought; 763 reported impact from wind; 706 from non-storm surge flooding and 225 from storm-generated flooding; 351 reported impact from extreme temperatures and 210 from wildfires. In its 2018 defense bill, Congress has also required each service to report their top 10 most vulnerable bases and it has instructed each combatant commander to incorporate climate change into their strategic plans.

Military Times


July 2018 - ... This report describes the incidence, trends, types, causes, and dispositions of acute injuries among active component service members by anatomic region. From 2008 through 2017, there were more than 3.6 million acute incident injuries among more than 1.6 million individuals. The highest rates were for injuries to the foot/ankle, head/neck, and hand/wrist. Injury incidence decreased during the surveillance period for all anatomic sites except for the leg and knee. ... Overall, service members in the Army and service members in motor transport and/or combat-related occupations tended to have higher incidence rates than their respective counterparts. “Sprains and strains” was the most common type of injury (48.5%), and most injuries were due to undocumented or undetermined causes (69.7%). The most common disposition was “returned to duty with no limitations” (69.8%).
Findings suggest that injury prevention strategies should be tailored to different populations with different risk factors. Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

Iraq and Afghan war vets exposed to toxic air struggle for breath — and a diagnosis

20 July - Among the more than 2.5 million men and women who have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there are many veterans -- exposed to sandstorms, burn pits and other hazards -- who suffer from a mysterious pulmonary illness, as well as the confusion and doubt that surrounds their condition. Sandstorms ... were routine, not only in Kuwait, but theater-wide, in Iraq and Afghanistan. So were thick black clouds of smoke. ... The military used burn pits to dispose of pretty much everything, from tires to batteries to styrofoam, all burned near where soldiers lived and where soldiers worked. The horror of car bombs produced combat dust and debris. Soldiers inhaled all that dust, all that smoke, and it may have afflicted them with higher-than-average rates of asthma, bronchitis, and other pulmonary disorders. PBS News Hour

Marines who fired rocket launchers now worry about their brains

25 July - ... Studies show that troops who repeatedly fire powerful, shoulder-launched weapons can experience short-term problems with memory and thinking. They may also feel nauseated, fatigued and dizzy. In short, they have symptoms like those of a concussion. It's still not clear whether firing these weapons can lead to long-term brain damage. ... The U.S. military limits the number of times troops can fire heavy weapons like the SMAW in a single day. But the limits are based on concern about hearing loss, not brain damage. ... [S]ince 2007, [Tracie] Lattimore says, the Department of Defense has spent about a billion dollars studying traumatic brain injuries, including those caused by blast exposure. ... "If you talk to us in a year from now, I think we’re going to have exponential growth in our knowledge coming out of these current studies and our future studies,” Lattimore says. Eventually, that could help the hundreds of thousands of veterans who have fired these weapons in the past couple of decades. NPR

Senate confirms Robert Wilkie to be the next VA secretary

23 July - The Senate on Monday confirmed Robert Wilkie to be the next secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Wilkie, previously an undersecretary at the Pentagon, is the fourth VA secretary in five years and has a lot of work ahead of him to modernize the agency and deliver on President Donald Trump's campaign promises to provide better, more timely care and services to veterans. The VA, the second largest federal agency behind
2018 Navy Personal and Professional Choices Survey Summary

The biggest issue with military OB/GYN care is access, with only half (48%) of women reporting easy access to OB/GYN care regardless of duty station. An additional 22% report easy access but only while on shore duty. While over half (56%) of Sailors report that Navy provides enough information on how to access birth control, they are less likely to believe the Navy provides enough information on potential birth control side effects (44%) and emergency contraception access (36%).

Of the 48% of women who requested birth control before their most recent deployment, 89% received enough to last the entire deployment, a slight increase from 2016. Most women (58%) have used or considered using birth control for menstrual suppression.

Which military base has the highest risk of sexual assault? The Pentagon isn’t saying yet.

21 July - The military is holding up the release of a report that ranks the risk of sexual assault for troops by military installation, USA Today has reported. At the Pentagon’s request, RAND Corp. has compiled a report that uses military sexual assault data from 2014 to evaluate the risk or frequency of sexual assault. It was supposed to have been released months ago, according to USA Today. But for now, military officials are not releasing that report publicly, citing concerns about methodology and accuracy. ... Rand says it defends the report and conclusions, USA Today said. No date has been offered for when the report will be released. Military Times

Winter is coming: Army gets closer to being able to produce ice on the battlefield

21 July - The Army is quickly approaching the clearing of another battlefield hurdle: It will soon have the capability of producing ice on the battlefield for soldiers. Ice can fill a number of roles in combat, including keeping food and liquid cold, in addition to mortuary and medical assistance, according to the Army. The ability to make ice on the battlefield will come courtesy of the Containerized Ice Making System, also known as CIMS. It is a container that can generate ice on demand — up to 3,600 pounds a day, provided the machine is supplied with the appropriate water and power. Army Times

GLOBAL

Dengue in pregnancy may increase risk of congenital brain malformations

24 July - Prenatal dengue infection may increase the risk of any neurologic congenital anomaly in an infant by roughly 50%, according to new research published yesterday in Emerging Infectious Diseases. The population-based study was conducted in Brazil from 2006 to 2012, involving more than 16 million live births. Dengue-infected pregnant women were matched with controls, and the study was conducted before Zika virus was introduced into the country. Half of the women with confirmed dengue reported symptoms in the first trimester of pregnancy. Researchers found that confirmed dengue during pregnancy...
Assessing the Needs of Soldiers and Their Families at the Garrison Level

The RAND Arroyo Center conducted a 2014 formal needs assessment survey of active component soldiers at 40 installations. The original study described a broad landscape of needs in such areas as quality of life support services provided to help families cope with a variety of challenges. In this report, new analysis of those survey data explores differences at the garrison level and includes additional focus group data. The analysis suggests that resources providing one-on-one, personalized help should be given priority and it is possible that emphasizing trust between soldiers and their leaders could help fulfill this need.

For the first time, a female Ebola survivor infects others

23 July - For the first time, scientists have found evidence that a woman can harbor the Ebola virus for more than a year and then infect others. The discovery involved transmission within a Liberian family in the closing days of the West African epidemic that lasted from December 2014 to mid-2016. More than 28,600 people were infected and 11,325 died. The episode raises new medical questions: Scientists do not know how the virus hid inside the woman for 13 months before re-emerging in lethal form. However, because she fell ill soon after giving birth, experts believe the immune suppression that normally occurs in pregnancy may have triggered a relapse. The New York Times

Global “worming”: Climate change and its projected general impact on human helminth infections

19 July - Projected climate changes in the coming decades are expected to affect the prevalence and incidence of some human helminth infections. Nearly one-fifth of the way through the 21st century, humanity is confronted by the realities of a quickly changing climate: warmer temperatures, alterations in rainfall patterns and distributions, floods and droughts, and other extreme weather events. All of these changes are expected to intensify in the coming decades. In concert with other global trends ... climate change will play a significant role in determining the future viability of helminth species and the emergence or decline of human helminthiases. Still another factor will be ongoing global efforts to control or eliminate human helminthiases through mass drug administration (MDA), vector control, and the delivery of new-generation biotechnologies. Because worms exist in dynamic relationships with their environments and, for some, with snail intermediate hosts or insect vectors, the effects of climate change will vary by species and could be multidimensional in nature. PLOS

Hospitals gear up for new diagnosis: Human trafficking

24 July - ... As part of the intake process [at Huntington Hospital on New York’s Long Island] the emergency staff asked the 36-year-old woman a series of questions about whether she’d ever had sex for money, or whether she had to give someone else part of what she earns, among other things. The screening questions were part of a new program ... to train staff and provide them with tools to identify and support victims of human trafficking. There are few hard figures for how many people are harmed by human trafficking. ... Polaris, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that advocates for these people and runs help lines for
them, says calls and texts to its national hotlines have steadily ticked up in recent years. ... But health care providers frequently fail to recognize these patients’ situation. According to a 2014 survey of about 100 survivors of sex trafficking, 88 percent said that while they were being trafficked they had contact with a health care provider, typically someone in an emergency department. NPR

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New diagnostic blood test helps rule out need for CT scans in patients with possible TBI

25 July - Research conducted at the Wayne State University School of Medicine has helped confirm the effectiveness of a blood biomarker that can indicate if patients with a head injury can avoid a costly CT scan because the blood test results indicate no traumatic brain injury (TBI). The findings ... validated the use of a diagnostic blood test developed by Banyan Biomarkers Inc. to rule out the need for a head CT scan in patients 18 years and older with suspected TBI. The results support the potential clinical role of the biomarker test to dramatically reduce the need to order CT scans of the head, cutting patient exposure to radiation and health care costs for unnecessary scans. The multi-site study ... indicated that the Banyan Brain Trauma Indicator, or Banyan BTI™, correctly identified 99.6 percent of patients who did not have a TBI on head CT scans in more than 1,900 adults presenting to emergency departments in the United States and Europe. EurekAlert

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New drug wipes out malaria in a single dose – but there's one hitch

26 July - The world now has a potent, new weapon against malaria — one that can wipe out the parasite from a person’s body with a single dose. But before many people around the world can use it, scientists have to overcome a big obstacle. ... The drug — called tafenoquine (branded in the U.S. as Krintafel) — prevents malaria relapses by about 70 percent, clinical studies have shown. ... But there's just one big hitch: To use tafenoquine, doctors and nurses need a sophisticated test that's not available in many poor places. In certain people, tafenoquine can cause red blood cells to burst open and die. As a result, people can became anemic, and in some instances, this can be lethal. Here in the U.S., there is a lab test available to see which people will respond poorly to Krintafel. It's called a "G6PD" test. The FDA and the World Health Organization require a health care worker to give this test before prescribing tafenoquine or other similar drugs. NPR

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NIH clinical center releases dataset of 32,000 CT images

20 July - The National Institutes of Health's Clinical Center has made a large-scale dataset of CT images publicly available to help the scientific community improve detection accuracy of lesions. While most publicly available medical image datasets have less than a thousand lesions, this dataset, named DeepLesion, has over 32,000 annotated lesions identified on CT
images. The images, which have been thoroughly anonymized, represent 4,400 unique patients, who are partners in research at the NIH. Once a patient steps out of a CT scanner, the corresponding images are sent to a radiologist to interpret. Radiologists at the Clinical Center then measure and mark clinically meaningful findings with an electronic bookmark tool. ... The bookmarks, abundant with retrospective medical data, are what scientists used to develop the DeepLesion dataset. NIH

Scientists find 'unprecedented' reversal of wrinkles and hair loss

22 July – A new study found a way to undo wrinkles and hair loss from aging—at least in mice. At the University of Alabama at Birmingham, scientists researched a way to reverse the visible aging process. ... [T]he team revealed its process to turn off the mutation that causes symptoms of aging in mice. In cells, 90 percent of the chemical energy cells use to survive is created by the mitochondria. As humans age, their mitochondrial function declines. This can cause many symptoms of growing older, like wrinkles and hair loss. When mitochondrial DNA is lost, scientists think it can cause diseases like cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and neurological disorders that stem from age. ... The scientists activated a mutation in the mice that caused their mitochondrial function to decline. ... When the scientists turned off the mutation, the wrinkled skin and hair loss reversed. The mice returned back to their original appearance and mitochondrial function returned. Newsweek

Study suggests smaller window for Zika sexual transmission

24 July - Since 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other agencies have recommended a 6-month period of abstinence or barrier use to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted Zika infection upon return from an endemic country. Now, a study today in PLoS Medicine suggests that period may be unnecessarily long. ... [Nicola] Low and her colleagues conducted the systematic review of evidence published through Apr 15 concerning the sexual transmission of Zika and other arthropod-borne flaviviruses in humans and other animals. ... The investigators analyzed 128 studies, of which 77 were based on humans and 51 on animals. Sexual transmission between people was documented in 36 couples (34 male-to-female). The median serial symptom onset interval in 15 couples was 12 days (interquartile range, 10 to 14.5); the maximum was 44 days. Zika RNA was present in semen for a median duration of 40 days (95% confidence interval [CI], 30-49 days) and a maximum duration of 370 days; in vaginal fluid, Zika RNA was found for a median duration of 14 days (95% CI, 7-20 days), with a maximum duration of 37 days (very low certainty). Infectious virus in human semen was detected for a median of 12 days (95% CI, 1-21 days) and a maximum of 69 days. CIDRAP News
Tickborne diseases are likely to increase, say NIH officials

25 July - The incidence of tickborne infections in the United States has risen significantly within the past decade. It is imperative, therefore, that public health officials and scientists build a robust understanding of pathogenesis, design improved diagnostics, and develop preventive vaccines. ... Bacteria cause most tickborne diseases in the United States, with Lyme disease representing the majority (82 percent) of reported cases. ... Although there are likely many factors contributing to increased Lyme disease incidence in the U.S., greater tick densities and their expanding geographical range have played a key role, the authors write. ... Tickborne virus infections are also increasing and could cause serious illness and death. For example, Powassan virus (POWV), recognized in 1958, causes a febrile illness that can be followed by progressive and severe neurologic conditions. ... The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports approximately 30,000 cases of Lyme disease annually in the U.S. but estimates that the true incidence is 10 times that number. According to the authors, this is due in part to the limitations of current tickborne disease surveillance, as well as current diagnostics. ... Future protective measures could include vaccines specifically designed to create an immune response to a pathogen, or to target pathogens inside the ticks that carry them. NIH

Ticks and Lyme disease: 3 factors determine risk of infection

24 July - ... As it turns out, the chance of catching Lyme disease from an individual tick ranges from zero to roughly 50 percent, according to Mather. The exact probability depends on three factors: the tick species, where it came from and how long the tick was feeding. ... Only two species of tick transmit Lyme disease, both from the genus *Ixodes*. The blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), often referred to as the deer tick, is found throughout the U.S. east of the Rocky Mountains. The Western blacklegged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*) is found west of the Rockies. ... A recent study found that in the Northeast and Upper Midwest, up to 50 percent of blacklegged ticks are infected. But in the South and West, infection rates are usually less than 10 percent. ... "The probability that it [Lyme disease] is transmitted to you ... depends on the length of feeding," Ostfeld says. "It looks like something on the order of 24 hours is required before transmission occurs." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gives a longer time frame for transmission. "In most cases, the tick must be attached for 36 to 48 hours or more before the Lyme disease bacterium can be transmitted," the CDC website says. NPR

Violent crime is like infectious disease – and we know how to stop it spreading

24 July - ... In 2005, the United Nations published a report declaring Scotland the most
violent country in the developed world. ... More than 1,000 people a year required treatment for facial trauma alone, many of them as the result of violence. ... [T]hey looked around the world to find and learn from pioneering programmes working to prevent violence. This was the foundation of the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). ... It took elements of those programmes and focused on garnering support from a range of Scottish agencies – the health service, addiction support, job centres and a host of others. Since the VRU was launched in 2005, the murder rate in Glasgow has dropped by 60 per cent. The number of facial trauma patients passing through Glasgow’s hospitals has halved. ... The VRU’s strategy is described as a “public health” approach to preventing violence. This refers to a whole school of thought that suggests that beyond the obvious health problems that result from violence – the psychological trauma and physical injuries – the violent behaviour itself is an epidemic that spreads from person to person. Mosaic

What the mystery of the tick-borne meat allergy could reveal

24 July - ... Meat allergy was first observed in the 1990s and formally described in 2009, which makes it a relatively recent arrival to the compendium of allergic conditions. Its most curious quality may be that it is seemingly triggered by a tick bite. In America, the culprit, called the lone-star tick ... is common in the warm and humid Southeast, where most cases of meat allergy have been diagnosed. ... [Meat allergy's] existence suggests that other allergies could be initiated by arthropod bites or unexpected exposures. It also raises the possibility that other symptoms often reported by patients that clinicians might dismiss because they don’t fit into established frameworks — gluten intolerance, for example, or mucus production after drinking milk — could, similarly, be conditions that scientists simply don’t understand yet. The New York Times

INFLUENZA

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

2017-2018 Influenza Season Week 28 ending July 14, 2018

- Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) Mortality Surveillance: Based on National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) mortality surveillance data available on July 19, 2018, 5.4% of the deaths occurring during the week ending June 30, 2018 (week 26) were due to P&I. This percentage is below the epidemic threshold of 6.1% for week 26.
- Influenza-Associated Pediatric Mortality: One influenza-associated pediatric death was reported to CDC during week 28. This death was associated with an influenza A virus for which subtyping was not performed and occurred during week 16 (the week ending April 21, 2018). CDC
NHRC: Operational Infectious Diseases - Weekly Surveillance Report

19 July

Febrile respiratory illness cases:

- Military Recruits - 26 positive of 46 tested
- CDC Border Infectious Disease Surveillance and Zika Surveillance - 3 positive of 10 tested
- DoD Beneficiaries – 9 positive of 33 tested.

NHRC initiated surveillance at four new sites - NHRC recently launched febrile respiratory illness surveillance in DoD beneficiary populations at the following sites:

- Naval Branch Health Clinic, Naval Training Center San Diego, CA (7/18/18)
- Boone Health Clinic Portsmouth, VA (6/1/18)
- Naval Branch Health Clinic, Naval Training Center San Diego, CA (7/18/18)
- Naval Health Clinic Lemoore, CA (7/19/18) Naval Health Research Center

WHO: Influenza Update

23 July - In the temperate zones of southern hemisphere, influenza activity continued to increase in South America and may have peaked in Southern Africa. However, influenza activity remained below seasonal threshold in Australia and New Zealand. In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere influenza activity returned to inter-seasonal levels. Increased influenza activity was reported in some countries of tropical America. Worldwide, seasonal influenza subtype A viruses accounted for the majority of detections. WHO

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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Army looking into food poisoning outbreak at Kuwait base

25 July - Five soldiers came down with Salmonella at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, in recent weeks, but authorities aren’t sure where the bacterial infection started. A handful of personnel at the base, home to roughly 14,700 military, civilian and contract personnel, reported to medical with food poisoning symptoms between July 15 and 19, according to an Army Central Command spokeswoman, “but only five tested positive for Salmonella,” she said. “As a proactive safety measure, the command ordered all dining and medical facilities to be inspected and personnel given refresher training for public sanitation requirements and food handling and preparation procedures between July 17-23, 2018,” Col. Angela Funaro told Army Times. Army Times
Bulgaria to build wild boar fence on Romanian border

24 July - Bulgaria is building a fence along its border with Romania to keep out wild boars that could carry the deadly infection African swine fever to farm pigs and threaten the country’s pork industry, the agriculture minister said on Tuesday. While no case has yet been detected in Bulgaria, the spread of the disease in eastern Europe is causing concern in the Black Sea state. ... The virus which causes African swine fever is harmless to humans and other animals. But for wild boar and farm pigs, the disease is deadly in almost all cases within 10 days. ... Earlier this month Romania reported a massive outbreak at a breeding farm for pigs in the southern county of Tulcea. All 44,580 animals were culled. Reuters

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Here’s what you need to know about the recent whey powder-related *Salmonella* recalls

24 July - The recent cautionary recalls caused by a whey powder supplier's *Salmonella* issues sparked enough unrest that FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb issued a remain-calm-all-is-well statement Tuesday afternoon. And in that statement, Gottlieb admitted there might be more recalls coming. Still, here’s why this situation should be, at most, an annoyance as opposed to a health threat to the average consumer. ... Nobody’s gotten sick from Goldfish, Ritz crackers, Swiss rolls or Hungry Man TV dinners pulled because there might be a *Salmonella* problem with the whey powder. "There is no evidence at this time that anyone was sickened from one of these products, or that these products are contaminated," Gottlieb’s statement said. "These recalls are being initiated because of a potential risk, and out of an abundance of caution." Miami Herald

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Kraft Heinz recalling cheese dip on botulism risk

24 July - Kraft Heinz Co (KHC.O) said on Tuesday it was voluntarily recalling about 7,000 cases of its Taco Bell Cheese Dip as the product showed signs that it could allow for the growth of the bacteria that causes botulism. The company said it was recalling 15-ounce cases of it Taco Bell Salsa Con Queso Mild Cheese Dip that had “best when used by” dates ranging from Oct. 31, 2018 to Jan. 23, 2019. Reuters

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Some food additives raise safety concerns for child health; AAP offers guidance

23 July - Rapidly accumulating scientific evidence suggests that certain chemicals added during the processing of foods and those that may come into contact with food as part of packaging or processing may contribute to disease and disability. More than 10,000 chemicals are allowed to be added to food in the U.S., but the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is unable to ensure all of those chemicals are safe. Many chemicals are used under a Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) designation without FDA approval or
notification. They’re designated as safe by company employees or hired consultants. Of the nearly 4,000 food additives listed on the FDA’s Substances Added to Food website, data for effects on reproductive organs are available for less than 300, and only two have information about effects on development. A new AAP policy statement and technical report, *Food Additives and Child Health*, suggest simple steps to reduce exposure to these substances. AAP News and Journals

**WELLNESS**

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**Childhood abuse linked to endometriosis risk**

25 July - Women who were abused as children may be more likely to develop endometriosis in adulthood, separate studies suggest. The authors of a European report in the journal *Human Reproduction* found a 20 percent to 50 percent increased risk of developing endometriosis with a history of sexual or emotional abuse, while the authors of a large U.S. study in the same journal found similar increase in risk with sexual or physical abuse.

Reuters

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**Experts advise athletes on dietary supplement use**

24 July - Athletes and dietary supplement users can use a new infographic from the International Olympic Committee to help them decide whether to take or avoid a supplement. The committee’s Medical and Scientific Commission developed the infographic and a consensus statement around dietary supplements for high-performance athletes. [The Commission] concluded that dietary supplements are a legitimate part of a high-performance athlete’s preparation, especially when used appropriately. The infographic, published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, walks users through a decision tree of questions to understand whether they should take a specific supplement or not. ... If the supplement passes all the requirements laid out in the infographic, the commission recommends using it on a trial basis and then practicing vigilant use of the supplement.

Reuters

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**Global warming linked to higher suicide rates across North America**

23 July - Suicide rates and temperatures are both on the rise, but are these two occurrences connected? A new study suggests maybe so. The research revealed hotter-than-average months corresponded to more deaths by suicide—and the effect isn’t limited to the summer, even warmer winters show the trend. In the study, published in *Nature Climate Change*, the investigators looked at all of the suicides that occurred in the U.S. and Mexico over several decades (1968 to 2004 for the U.S. and 1990 to 2010 for Mexico), comprising
851,088 and 611,366 deaths, respectively. They then observed how monthly temperature fluctuations over these periods in every county or municipality in both countries correlated to the suicide rates for that region. They discovered that for every 1-degree Celsius (1.8-degree Fahrenheit) rise in temperature, there was a 0.7 percent increase in suicide rates in the U.S. and a 2.1 percent increase in Mexico, averaging a 1.4 percent increment across both countries. Scientific American

He said, she said: The battle over maternity leave at this Army leadership school

21 July - It all started back in 2016, when the secretary of defense extended maternity leave for female service members from six to 12 weeks. It was a relief for women in the Army, especially those trying to find a way to advance in the ranks while raising a family. But for some mid-grade officers, it turned into a road block — a disqualification from attending an in-residence course that would prepare them to take battalion command or work as battalion, brigade or division staff officers, in addition to earning a master's degree. ... Policy dictates a limit on the number of absences a student can have, and allows the administration to disenroll students who are likely to need multiple weeks off. Before 2016, the six-week maternity policy was good-to-go. Afterward, it threw a wrench in the works. Army Times

Sales of Essure birth control implant to be halted by Bayer; U.S. last to sell controversial device

20 July - Pharmaceutical giant Bayer said Friday that it will halt sales of its controversial Essure birth-control device in the United States at the end of the year, bringing to a close a protracted battle over an implant that thousands of women blame for serious health problems, including persistent pain and perforations of the uterus and fallopian tubes. ... The United States is the last country where Essure is being sold. Last September, citing "commercial reasons," Bayer announced it was ending sales outside the United States. The Washington Post

Sharp increase in gun suicides signals growing public health crisis

26 July - ... The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's best data, from 2006 through 2016, show that roughly 218,000 Americans ended their lives using a firearm over that period. "I believe we have a major public health crisis that we're not doing nearly enough about," said Jennifer Stuber, policy director of Forefront Suicide Prevention at the University of Washington. ... "The public is really misinformed about this issue," she said. "They think it's homicide. But 60 to 80 percent of gun deaths are suicides, depending on what state you're in." ... Paul Nestadt, a psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins who studies suicide at the School
of Public Health, agreed. "As I looked into suicide more and more it became very clear that access to lethal means, specifically guns, was one of the most important risk factors that we could address," he said. ... Nestadt's research and other studies shows that the people most at risk of gun suicide tend to be white men in America's small towns. That means they're the people most deeply attached to gun culture. NPR

When we eat, or don’t eat, may be critical for health

24 July - ... A growing body of research suggests that our bodies function optimally when we align our eating patterns with our circadian rhythms, the innate 24-hour cycles that tell our bodies when to wake up, when to eat and when to fall asleep. Studies show that chronically disrupting this rhythm — by eating late meals or nibbling on midnight snacks, for example — could be a recipe for weight gain and metabolic trouble. That is the premise of a new book, "The Circadian Code," by Satchin Panda, a professor at the Salk Institute and an expert on circadian rhythms research. Dr. Panda argues that people improve their metabolic health when they eat their meals in a daily 8- to 10-hour window, taking their first bite of food in the morning and their last bite early in the evening. This approach, known as early time-restricted feeding, stems from the idea that human metabolism follows a daily rhythm, with our hormones, enzymes and digestive systems primed for food intake in the morning and afternoon. The New York Times

USAFRICOM

Democratic Republic of the Congo: DR Congo declares Ebola outbreak over

24 July - With the help of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Doctors Without Borders, the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has achieved something that, not long ago, hardly anyone would have thought possible. Less than three months after the first case of Ebola was recorded in the north-west of the country, the health ministry on Tuesday declared the outbreak over. The authorities are following the WHO definition, which decrees that 42 days – double the incubation time – must pass after the last Ebola patient is discharged. If there are no new instances of infection in this time, the outbreak can officially be declared over. The DRC's health minister, Oly Illungo, has described it as a remarkable success. ... The authorities recorded 53 confirmed and possible cases of Ebola starting in April this year, 29 of which were fatal. DW
South Sudan: 3 new Guinea worm cases found in setback for South Sudan

24 July - Three new cases of Guinea worm have been discovered in South Sudan, setting the country back in its efforts to eradicate the debilitating disease. The World Health Organization says the cases were found among cattle-keepers in Rumbek. South Sudan's health minister, Dr. Riek Gai Kok, says teams have been sent to carry out community-based surveillance. South Sudan had no reported cases in 2017, a rare success in the young nation deep in a five-year civil war. AP

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USCENTCOM

Syria: 'Heartbroken' White Helmets say they fled Syria fearing Assad reprisals

23 July - The White Helmets, the collective of Syrian volunteers who rescue civilians from under the rubble of destroyed buildings, has said hundreds of its members and their families fled Syria on Saturday due to fears of reprisals by the government of Bashar al-Assad. In its first statement since the dramatic rescue operation, the group said it had suffered systematic attacks by regime forces, and that surrender deals negotiated with local rebels did not allow for the evacuation of humanitarian workers. A total of 422 people – 98 rescue workers plus their families – were taken to Jordan through the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights as Syrian regime forces closed in during the final hours of an offensive that reclaimed most of the provinces of Deraa and Quneitra. The Guardian

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USEUCOM

Greece: Greece wildfires - Scores killed near Athens, officials say

24 July - At least 74 people have died and scores more injured as wildfires tore through woodland and villages around the Greek capital, Athens, local officials said. The death toll rose sharply on Tuesday after 26 bodies were found near the harbour town of Rafina. ... According to officials, at least 187 people, including 23 children, were injured in the fires, which damaged structures, disrupted major transport links and sent people fleeing their homes. Greece's fire brigade said the intensity and spread of the wildfire in the coastal village of Mati, about 29km east of Athens, had slowed on Tuesday as
winds died down, but it was still not fully under control. Mati is located in the Rafina region. 

United Kingdom: Britain to legalize medicinal use of cannabis

26 July - Britain is to allow doctors to prescribe medicinal cannabis, following a relaxation of the law governing drugs derived from the banned plant. Interior minister Sajid Javid said on Thursday that specialist physicians would be able to prescribe cannabis-derived medicinal products from the autumn. Recreational use will remain prohibited. The decision follows the high-profile case of a 12-year-old boy with severe epilepsy who was denied access to cannabis oil, which prompted a national debate and reviews by experts. ... Scientists say evidence is growing that cannabis can ease epilepsy and other conditions - such as chronic pain, multiple sclerosis and chemotherapy-induced nausea - prompting renewed interest in the field. ... Scientists say evidence is growing that cannabis can ease epilepsy and other conditions - such as chronic pain, multiple sclerosis and chemotherapy-induced nausea - prompting renewed interest in the field.

China: Chinese Premier Li Keqiang calls for crackdown on vaccine industry

23 July - Authorities in China have ordered an investigation into a vaccination scandal as panic grows over product safety. Last week vaccine maker Changsheng Biotechnology Co was found to have falsified production data for its rabies vaccine. The firm has been ordered to halt production and recall rabies vaccines. There has been no evidence of harm from the vaccine, but the scandal has sparked a huge outcry in China. ... On Sunday, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang urged severe punishment for the people involved, saying the incident had "crossed a moral line". ... Jilin province authorities announced a 2017 batch of the firm's diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine - or DTaP - was also substandard. According to state media outlet CGTN, more than 250,000 doses of DTaP in the batch had already been sold to disease control and prevention centres in eastern China.

China: Chinese researchers describe rare thrombocytopenia syndrome

25 July - A study yesterday in The Lancet Infectious Diseases details the clinical and epidemiologic features of severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome (SFTS), an
emerging infectious disease. The study describes a 16.2% case-fatality rate for the tick-borne infection. Researchers conducted the prospective observational study at a hospital in Henan province, China, among lab-confirmed SFTS cases. From Apr 1, 2011, to Oct 31, 2017, a total of 2,096 cases were diagnosed. The mean age of patients was 61.4 years, and 59% of patients were female. The median time from symptom onset to hospital admission was 5 days, and the median duration of hospitalization was 8 days. The case-fatality rate was 16.2%, and death was associated with males, older age, delay in diagnosis, and diarrhea.

CIDRAP News Scan (third item)

Japan: Japan heat wave deaths climb to 80 as authorities weigh preventive measures

24 July - Two weeks into Japan’s blistering heat wave, at least 80 people have died and thousands have been rushed to emergency rooms, as officials on Tuesday urged citizens to stay indoors to avoid temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius (104°F) in some areas. ... More people are dying from the heat, figures from the Fire and Defence Management Agency (FDMA) show. In the week to July 22, 65 people died, versus 12 the previous week and only three in the seven days prior, the FDMA said. At least 13 more people died on Monday, the Kyodo newswire said. “The elderly make up the vast majority of deaths,” said Fumiaki Fujibe, a researcher in the geography department of Tokyo Metropolitan University.

Reuters

Laos: Laos dam collapse raises questions as officials search for 131 missing

26 July - After a dam collapse in southeastern Laos killed at least 27 and left 131 others missing earlier this week, officials in the country ordered closer monitoring of hydroelectric facilities as an investigation continues. Floodwaters, covering some homes up to their rooftops, slowly receded Thursday and evacuees slowly returned to their mud-covered villages. ... [T]housands of people stranded on rooftops and in trees had been rescued by Wednesday. Lao Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith described the disaster as the worst in years in the impoverished country, with more than 6,000 people displaced after the auxiliary dam of a joint venture hydroelectric project gave way after days of torrential rains.

The Weather Channel

New Zealand: Domestic violence victims able to take out special paid leave in New Zealand

26 July - In New Zealand, domestic victims can now take out a special type of leave, thanks to legislation that has been passed. The Domestic Violence—Victims’ Protection Bill allows people to request up to 10 days of leave a year if they are affected by domestic violence, on top of regular sick and vacation entitlements. It also protects domestic violence victims from
being dismissed from their jobs or have their employment conditions downgraded. Green Party MP Jan Logie worked on the bill for 7 years, and pushed it through parliament in its third reading on Wednesday. Mashable

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U.S.: Hawaii's Kilauea volcano might be experiencing hydrovolcanic explosions, USGS says

23 July - The explosion that sent solid and semi-solid volcanic rock through the roof of a tour boat and injured 23 people who were on a cruise in Hawaii might have occurred underwater as a hydrovolcanic reaction. ... Hydrovolcanic explosions are caused by the interaction between the hot magma and water—in the case of Kilauea, ocean water. “The detailed cause of the explosion is uncertain, but we are fairly certain that it resulted from the heating of seawater by molten lava,” said a blog post from the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Newsweek

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: CDC launches Vision and Eye Health Surveillance System

26 July - CDC has launched the nation’s first Vision and Eye Health Surveillance System (VEHSS). Launched in collaboration with the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, the system is designed to help health care professionals, researchers, policymakers, and state health departments better understand the scope of vision loss, eye disorders, and eye care services in the United States. VEHSS leverages new and existing data sources across multiple years; it is intended to grow and improve over time, based on input and the needs of the vision health community.

Occupational Health and Safety

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U.S.: CDC reports uptick in Candida auris cases

25 July - The United States now has 340 confirmed cases of Candida auris, according to an updated case count from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While the total case count remains fairly low, it’s risen by 29 since May and nearly doubled since November 2017. As of Jun 30, infections by the multidrug-resistant fungus have been identified in healthcare facilities in 11 states, with most cases reported in New York (196), New Jersey (79), and Illinois (46). ... All cases represent laboratory-confirmed C auris
infections, with an additional 29 cases are listed as probable, 22 of them in New Jersey.

CIDRAP Stewardship/Resistance Scan (second item)

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**U.S.: Mumps outbreaks at four universities — Indiana, 2016**

27 July - Recently, mumps outbreaks among vaccinated persons in university settings have increased. In 2016, large mumps outbreaks occurred at four Indiana universities. At some universities documentation of receipt of 2 doses of measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR) was not available and required substantial personnel time to verify. Implementation of policies for excluding susceptible persons from classes and other group settings was also difficult. Outbreak-specific laboratory testing guidance to partners, standardized vaccination documentation, and evaluation of exclusion policies could aid outbreak management. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices currently recommends a third dose of MMR for persons at increased risk during a mumps outbreak.

**Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report**

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**U.S.: Nearly 100 people sickened with norovirus on Maine beach, state CDC says**

22 July - Maine state scientists say the highly contagious norovirus sickened nearly 100 people who swam at Woods Pond Beach or had contact with someone who did. The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday said it found 97 people associated with the outbreak, according to Bridgton Town Manager Bob Peabody. ... Water from the pond and sinks in a public bathroom on the beach were tested on July 9 for E. coli. Results showed the swimming water levels to be within an acceptable limit. However, water from the sink taps was not found to be at an acceptable limit, according to Peabody. **NBC News**

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**U.S.: Scientists analyzing smoke of western wildfires**

23 July - A comprehensive effort to analyze smoke from western U.S. wildfires is getting under way. The Western Wildfire Experiment for Cloud Chemistry, Aerosol Absorption and Nitrogen, or WE-CAN, is supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and will be the largest attempt to date. From late July through August, a four-engine cargo plane based in Boise, Idaho, and carrying scientists and sophisticated equipment will make 15-20 flights straight into hazy smoke from those wildfires. ... "These researchers are following the transport and transformation of the plume of gases and aerosols emitted by wildfires to understand the chemical changes they undergo over time, how their properties might vary, and their impacts on human health and the environment," said Sylvia Edgerton.

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U.S.: This infant disease was eradicated. Now it's back. Why?

20 July - ... [V]itamin K -- an intramuscular injection -- has been recommended for newborns by the American Academy of Pediatrics since 1961. Newborns have low reserves of vitamin K. Without this shot, they are prone to a condition called Vitamin K deficiency bleeding or VKDB, which can cause intracranial hemorrhage and lifelong disability or death. VKDB had been, essentially, eradicated. ... Why are we seeing a resurgence in this totally preventable disease? Because parents have started to refuse to allow their newborns to receive vitamin K injections. ... [R]esearchers examined the birth records of nearly 103,000 newborns. ... Of those, 638, 0.6%, had parents who refused vitamin K injections. ... [T]hat's less than 1 in 100. You're right -- it's not too bad. But the refusal behavior is associated with a variety of other dangerous behaviors. For example, 82% of the vitamin K refusers also refused ocular prophylaxis for gonococcal ophthalmia neonatorum, which can result in permanent blindness. And 74% of the vitamin K refusers also refused hepatitis B vaccination. MedPage Today

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US SOUTHCOM

Brazil: Brazil's health catastrophe in the making

20 July - Brazil's political and economic crises are diverting attention from the resumption of a neoliberal model of health care by its government. ... Firstly, the country's Government introduced one of the harshest set of austerity measures in modern history. The constitutional amendment passed in December 2016, called PEC-55, freezes the federal budget, including health spending, at its 2016 level for 20 years. ... Furthermore, in 2017, for the first time in nearly 30 years, the government undershot the minimum health budget guaranteed by the Constitution by R$692 million (approximately US$210 million). ... Secondly, the Government plans to introduce commercial health plans (Planos Populares), meant to replace functions previously performed, free of charge, by the National Health System. ... Thirdly, states and municipalities have so far been obliged to invest federal resources, via so-called financial blocks, in strategic areas of health care, including primary health care and sanitation. New regulations free the regional administrations from adhering to such spending discipline. The Lancet

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The Americas: PAHO identifies Venezuela, Brazil as measles hot spots

23 July - In its latest epidemiologic update, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported late last week that 2,472 cases of measles had been confirmed in 11 countries in the Americas in 2018. PAHO said Venezuela and Brazil recorded the most activity, with more
than 2,200 confirmed cases between them. Most countries have only a handful of cases, including Antigua and Barbuda (1 case), Argentina (5 cases), Ecuador (17), Guatemala (1), Mexico (5), and Peru (3). Canada has 19 cases, and Colombia and the United States have had 40 and 91 cases, respectively. Authorities in Brazil have tracked 677 cases in six states since January, with almost two thirds (65.6%) of the outbreak in Amazonas state. Almost all cases in Amazonas are genetically identical to those found in the Venezuelan outbreak.

CIDRAP News Scan (first item)

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