Army Public Health Weekly Update

28 July 2017

Army Public Health

Army Public Health Center

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Army tick experts promote prevention tactics

Army Public Health Center tick-borne disease experts emphasize the importance of being aware of the different illnesses ticks can transmit and ways to prevent these illnesses.

While not every tick is infected, experts believe it is important to use protective measures against all ticks and the diseases they can carry.

These tick experts advise the use of an insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin and insect repellent containing permethrin on clothing. The Army treats their uniforms with permethrin repellent to further protect Soldiers while they are in uniform.

U.S. MILITARY

Army tries out new Soldier Readiness Test in pilot at installations

21 July - The Army has spent the better part of a decade on an update to the age-old PT test, one that better measures factors like the strength and agility to effective in combat. This month, they got one step closer with a Soldier Readiness Test pilot held around the country. Soldiers from four brigades are finishing up the first pilot of a six-event test developed by Army Forces Command. ... The gender-neutral assessment is meant to measure skills that mimic those needed on the battlefield, Kirkpatrick said. Army Times

Germ-killing robots fight drug-resistant pathogens at Army hospitals

24 July - ... For the Brian Allgood Army Community Hospital and all of medical beneficiaries within the Republic of Korea, the three new robots that recently arrived will only 'exterminate' germs. With the rising number of hospital-acquired infections across the globe, the BAACH has invested in a safer solution to address and combat infections giving patients peace of mind. Her nickname is “Trudi,” and she is a 5-foot-5 germ killing robot. Technically, Tru-D Smart UVCTM -- short for Total Room Ultraviolet Disinfector -- is a mobile, automated disinfection robot with patented Sensor 360 technology. She is designed to be deployed in hospital operating rooms after an environmental services member cleans the area with the traditional cleaning methods. Using chemical-free UVC energy, Tru-D operates from a single position and administers a single cycle of Ultraviolet light with minimal labor impact. Army.mil

Lab developed tests help keep military medicine on the leading edge of innovation

24 July - A program that keeps the Military Health System on the leading edge of medical innovation, and benefits more than 128,000 patients in the system, will continue. The Secretary of Defense has renewed the Non-FDA Approved Laboratory Developed Tests Demonstration Project begun in September 2014. ... Hospitals and labs, including those run by the military, can create and use these tests without seeking the FDA’s approval. The Military Health System uses the Laboratory Joint Working Group, a body of clinical and lab experts from all of the military services, to prioritize and review a test. ... The group then forwards its recommendation to the director of the Defense Health Agency for final approval for use. Health.mil
PTSD disability claims by vets tripled in the last decade

25 July - More than one in five veterans receiving federal disability payouts suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, a figure that has spiked in the last decade. Veterans Affairs officials told lawmakers Tuesday that the number of disability cases related to PTSD has nearly tripled in that time, from around 345,000 cases in fiscal 2008 to more than 940,000 cases today. Service-connected PTSD payouts now make up 22 percent of all veterans receiving compensation benefits from the department. That includes all age groups, not just veterans from the recent wars. But lawmakers still worry that current VA rules may still be excluding thousands more veterans eligible for the disability payouts, which are tied to injuries suffered during military service. Military Times


July 2017 - During the 4-year surveillance period, there were 282,571 incident cases of skin and soft tissue infection (SSTI) among active component U.S. military members diagnosed in inpatient or outpatient settings, corresponding to an overall incidence of 558.2 per 10,000 person-years (p-yrs). An additional 10,904 cases occurred in theater of operations (460.0 per 10,000 p-yrs). Approximately half (49.4%) were classified as “other SSTI” (e.g., folliculitis, impetigo); 45.9% were cellulitis/abscess; 4.6% were carbuncles/furuncles; and 0.1% were erysipelas. Annual incidence rates declined by 46.6% over the surveillance period. In general, higher rates of SSTIs were associated with younger age, recruit trainee status, and junior enlisted rank. Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

Suicide attempt risk in U.S. Army tied to unit’s past

26 July - One suicide attempt in an army unit may foreshadow attempts by other soldiers in the same unit, suggests a new study from the U.S. military. “Clusters do occur, and if there is a suicide attempt in an Army unit there is likely to be another attempt in the unit,” said lead author Dr. Robert Ursano, of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland. ... The researchers analyzed data from soldiers on active duty from 2004 through 2009. They identified 9,512 soldiers who attempted suicide during that time. Most were men, under age 29, white, educated, married and had entered the Army before age 21. The risk that soldiers would attempt suicide increased with the number of suicide attempts in the same unit over the past year. Compared to soldiers in units with no suicide attempts over the previous year, soldiers in units with a recent suicide attempt were 40 percent more likely to attempt suicide themselves, for example. In units with five or more suicide attempts during the past year, the risk of another attempt was more than twice as high as in units with no attempts during the past year. Reuters

Trump to ban transgender U.S. military personnel, reversing Obama

26 July - President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he would ban transgender people
World Hepatitis Day
June 28, 2017

July 28, 2017 is World Hepatitis Day, an annual day of observance established by the World Health Organization to promote awareness and understanding of viral hepatitis.

An estimated 325 million persons are infected with chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) or hepatitis C virus (HCV) worldwide, and an estimated 1.3 million persons die from related causes annually.

In June 2016, the World Health Assembly endorsed the Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis 2016–2021, which sets goals for the elimination of HBV and HCV as global health threats by 2030 and outlines the global actions needed to reach these goals.

What military recruiters aren't telling women: You'll face disproportionate health risks

25 July - ... The Department of Defense is committed to increasing numbers of women in the ranks without delay. ... In this push for more female recruits, it's not at all clear that young women... understand the unique, disproportionate health risks women face in combat roles. ... Extreme physical activity, irregular meals, inadequate intake of calcium and vitamin D, sleep deprivation and stress are common in close-combat units. These factors can trigger "conservation mode" in women, which results in a decrease in female hormones, cessation of menstruation, and osteoporosis with a heightened risk of stress fractures. ... Pelvic floor injuries are another gender-specific danger for female troops. Studies have found heavy load bearing and paratrooper training can contribute significantly to urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse among women. Many of the consequences of taking on additional combat roles won't be obvious until years later. Los Angeles Times

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GLOBAL

Could cows be the vaccine factories of the future?

20 July - ... Thanks to a quirk of how cows make antibodies, they are helping researchers understand human immunity. Someday, cows could serve as testing grounds for whether vaccines are well-designed. And it's possible that cow antibodies could treat everything from autoimmunity to infectious disease. A new study on HIV by scientists at Scripps Research Institute explores these possibilities. Cows don't get HIV, but, when injected with viral proteins, produce antibodies that block HIV infection. The results, which were reported Thursday in Nature, are part of a larger effort to make the first HIV vaccine. HIV mutates constantly, creating many strains. Broadly neutralizing antibodies are key to an HIV vaccine because they could protect against these various strains. But they've proven hard to make in people. STAT
Dengue detection: Google searches could quickly reveal outbreaks

24 July - ... [N]ew research published in *PLOS Computational Biology* shows that Google searches could help alert officials to dengue outbreaks in underdeveloped countries. ... [Researchers] investigated whether dengue-related Google searches could have helped health officials estimate dengue prevalence in real time during past outbreaks in Mexico, Brazil, Thailand, Singapore, and Taiwan—a diverse group of countries with varying levels of public health data availability. ... To gauge the quality of ARGO’s estimates, the researchers compared them with estimates made using five other methods that incorporate Google search data. For Mexico, Brazil, Thailand, and Singapore, ARGO’s estimates were the most accurate. However, ARGO’s dengue prevalence estimates for Taiwan were not so accurate. This may be because dengue infection patterns were less consistent from year to year in Taiwan than in the other countries. *PLOS Research News*

Ebola RNA detected in semen more than 2 years after symptom onset

24 July - In about 8% of men, Ebola virus RNA can be detected in semen samples more than 2 years after symptom onset, according to a new study. ... The longest time from EVD onset to detectable Ebola in semen was 965 days. The men who had Ebola RNA in their semen the longest were on average older and more likely to report vision problems than men who cleared the RNA earlier. Currently, the World Health Organization recommends that men who’ve been diagnosed as having EVD practice abstinence or use condoms for 12 months after recovery. The study authors suggest their work should prompt a revised discussion of the timeline for sexual transmission of Ebola. *CIDRAP News Scan* (second item)

Finding signs of life when it matters most

20 July - Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalography (EEG) may be able to identify ICU patients with severe traumatic brain injuries who have a level of consciousness not revealed by the standard bedside neurological examination. A report ... is the first to test such an approach in acutely ill patients for whom critical decisions may need to be made regarding the continuation of life-sustaining care. “Early detection of consciousness and brain function in the intensive care unit could allow families to make more informed decisions about the care of loved ones,” said [the] co-lead and corresponding author of the study. “Also, since early recovery of consciousness is associated with better long-term outcomes, these tests could help patients gain access to rehabilitative care once they are discharged from an ICU.” *Harvard Gazette*

Hinge Health closes $8M Series A led by Atomico to ‘digitize delivery of healthcare’

24 July - Hinge Health, a startup originally founded out of London but that has since moved...
its headquarters to San Francisco, is on mission to "digitize the delivery of healthcare". Beginning with musculoskeletal (MSK) disorders — that’s things like knee pain, shoulder pain, or back pain, to you and me — the company is combining wearable sensors, an app, health coaching and peer support to remotely deliver physical therapy and behavioural health for chronic conditions, and in what it claims is a data-driven and evidence-based way. TechCrunch

New class of antibiotics shows promise against MDR bacteria, plague

26 July - An experimental drug that belongs to a new class of antibiotics showed promise in lab tests against multidrug-resistant (MDR) gram-negative bacteria, and was protective against the bacterium that causes plague in mice, according to a study yesterday in mBio. Researchers ... demonstrated that LPC-069, a drug in the class called LpxC inhibitors for their ability to inhibit LpxC, a critical gram-negative bacterial enzyme, was effective in cell-culture tests against a dozen pathogenic bacterial taxa. The bacteria were isolated from hospitalized patients in Lille and included MDR strains such as extended-spectrum beta-lactamase–producing and carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae, Pseudomonas aeruginosa, and Acinetobacter baumannii. CIDRAP Stewardship/Resistance Scan (first item)

New report shows 64 of 195 countries aren't meeting a basic vaccination target

25 July - Vaccine progress is stalling. That's the message from a new report issued by the World Health Organization and UNICEF. The report focuses on the DTP vaccine — the essential vaccine that protects kids against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) and that was first licensed in 1949. The WHO goal is to vaccinate 90 percent of the world's children against DTP, delivered in a series of three shots over three to four months, starting at age 6 weeks. That 90 percent figure is important not only to protect kids from these life-threatening diseases but because the percent of children receiving DTP is a good indicator of how well countries are doing with other vaccinations. It's considered one of the most basic vaccinations recommended by WHO and it's the first one children get. Worldwide since 2010, 86 percent of children are receiving all three doses of this routine immunization. ... On the national level, it means that 64 countries out of 195 haven't been able to meet the 90 percent target. NPR

Sanofi: Yellow fever vaccine depleted until middle of 2018

25 July - The supply of Sanofi Pasteur’s yellow fever vaccine YF-Vax is depleted in the United States until the middle of next year, the company said in a press release yesterday. Sanofi said the vaccine would be available again once Sanofi moves production to new "state of the art" facilities. In the meantime, Sanofi said that Stamaril, the company's yellow
fever vaccine manufactured in France, will be made available to Americans through the Food & Drug Administration's Expanded Access Investigational New Drug Application. Stamaril is considered investigational in the United States and not licensed for use. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) travelers' health Web site, Americans may still be able to find YF-Vax at their local clinic. The CDC provides a map of YF-Vax and Stamaril supplies across the United States. CIDRAP News Scan (first item)

Scientists can see Zika coming by tracking the climate

24 July - ... Researchers are using the unprecedented outbreak to study the emerging disease in real time. And they’re uncovering lessons that could buy time for health officials to mobilize a response to mosquito-borne disease before another outbreak occurs. ... [Researchers] used climate data from afflicted regions to build a model for Aedes populations. That helped researchers highlight potential infection hot spots for mosquito-borne disease transmission one to three months in advance. “Both the mosquitos that transmit Zika and the virus itself are climate-sensitive,” said co-author Ángel Muñoz. ... “High temperatures, like the ones observed during the record-breaking years 2015 and 2016, generally increase the virus replication rates and also the speed of mosquito reproduction,” he explained. “The overall effect of high temperatures is an increase in the potential risk of transmission.” Scientific American

Scientists find sunscreen potential in Antarctic plants

27 July - Scientists in Chile have discovered molecules in two species of Antarctic flowers that protect the plants from solar radiation and could potentially be used in products such as sunscreen for humans and protection for vulnerable crops. Researchers at the University of Santiago investigating the properties of Antarctic plants grown under controlled conditions found that Colobanthus quitensis (pearlwort) and Deschampsia antarctica (hair grass) could tolerate high levels of ultraviolet radiation. Reuters

Should you finish a course of antibiotics?

27 July - It is time to reconsider the widespread advice that people should always complete an entire course of antibiotics, experts in the BMJ say. They argue there is not enough evidence to back the idea that stopping pills early encourages antibiotic resistance. ... The opinion piece, by a team of researchers from across England, argues that reducing the use of antibiotics is essential to help combat the growing problem of antibiotic resistance. Prof Martin Llewelyn, from the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, together with colleagues, argues that using antibiotics for longer than necessary can increase the risk of resistance. He suggests traditional long prescriptions for antibiotics were based on the outdated idea that resistance to an antibiotic could develop when a drug was not taken for a lengthy time and an infection was undertreated. BBC News

Sperm count drop 'may lead to human extinction'

25 July - Humans could become extinct if sperm counts in men from North America, Europe
and Australia continue to fall at current rates, a doctor has warned. Researchers assessing
the results of nearly 200 separate studies say sperm counts among men from these areas
seem to have halved in less than 40 years. Some experts are sceptical of the findings, in
Human Reproduction Update. ... The assessment brings together the results of 185 studies
between 1973 and 2011, one of the largest ever undertaken. Dr Levine, an epidemiologist,
told the BBC that if the trend continued humans would become extinct. BBC News

Study: CTE found in nearly all donated NFL player brains

25 July - ... An updated study published Tuesday by the Journal of the American Medical
Association on football players and the degenerative brain disease chronic traumatic
encephalopathy reveals a striking result among NFL players. The study examined the brains
of deceased former football players (CTE can only be diagnosed after death) and found that
110 out of 111 brains of those who played in the NFL had CTE. CTE has been linked to
repeated blows to the head — the 2015 movie Concussion chronicled the discovery of
CTE’s connection to football. In the study, researchers examined the brains of 202 deceased
former football players at all levels. Nearly 88 percent of all the brains, 177, had CTE. Three
of 14 who had played only in high school had CTE, 48 of 53 college players, 9 of 14
semiprofessional players, and 7 of 8 Canadian Football League players. CTE was not found
in the brains of two who played football before high school. NPR

Study places risk of contracting Lyme from tick bite at 2.6%

25 July - A modeling study yesterday from a team of Dutch scientists predicts that the
overall risk of contracting Lyme disease from a deer tick bite is 2.6%, and the risk increases
with tick engorgement, tick attachment time, and detection of Borrelia burgdorferi DNA in
ticks. ... Substantially engorged ticks carried a 5.5% risk of transmitting harmful bacteria,
contrast with a 1.4% risk associated with low-engorgement ticks. If patients estimated
that the tick was attached for less than 12 hours, there was a 2% risk of illness, as opposed
to a 5.2% risk when the tick was attached for 4 days or longer. According to the study, ticks
that tested positive for Borrelia DNA posed a five times higher hazard than Borrelia-
negative ticks. CIDRAP News Scan (second item)

Which metrics on hospital quality should patients pay attention to?

24 July - ... A recent study ... by health economists at M.I.T. and Vanderbilt, found that
hospitals that score better on certain metrics reduce mortality. Among the ones they
examined were patient satisfaction scores. "We found that hospitals’ patient satisfaction
scores are useful signals of quality, which surprised me to some extent," said Joseph Doyle,
an economist at M.I.T. and one of the study’s authors. "Hospitals with more satisfied
patients have lower mortality rates, as well as lower readmission rates." According to the
study, a hospital with a satisfaction score that is 10 percentage points higher — 70 percent of patients satisfied versus 60 percent, for example — has a mortality rate that is 2.8 percentage points lower and a 30-day readmission rate that is 1.9 percentage points lower. 

The New York Times

WHO: Hospital outbreaks underscore MERS challenges

25 July - Though surveillance for MERS-CoV and response to suspected clusters have improved, especially in hard-hit Saudi Arabia, early identification in the community and in healthcare facilities and compliance with infection prevention and control protocols still pose major challenges, the World Health Organization (WHO) said. ... WHO experts said the epidemiology, transmission patterns, clinical presentation, and viral characteristics haven’t changed since the agency's last risk assessment on Dec 5, 2016. CIDRAP

INFLUENZA

Beyond the nasty needle: Trying to make vaccines more comfy and convenient

23 July - News this summer of a flu vaccine patch sparked a lot of chatter. ... A flu vaccine patch is not yet available to the public. But one version developed by Georgia Tech's Laboratory for Drug Delivery showed promising results. ... The patch, about the size of a small square bandage, has tiny, dissolvable needles filled with a dose of flu vaccine. It's placed on the arm and activated through pressure. The microneedles dissolve into the skin, releasing the vaccine. ... People who received the flu patch had comparable immune responses to people who had gotten the flu shot. ... [T]he microneedle patch could be particularly helpful in developing countries because it uses a form of vaccines that doesn’t need to be kept as cold as regular vaccines. It can be stored at temperatures as high as 104 degrees Fahrenheit for up to a year. And the patch can be administered by people who aren’t trained health professionals. NPR

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

2016-2017 Influenza Season Week 28 ending July 15, 2017 - Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) Mortality Surveillance: Based on National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) mortality surveillance data available on July 20, 2017, 5.5% of the deaths occurring during the week ending July 1, 2017 (week 26) were due to P&I. This percentage is below the epidemic threshold of 6.2% for week 26. CDC
NHRC: Operational Infectious Diseases - Weekly Surveillance Report
6 July:
Febrile respiratory illness cases:
- Military Recruits - 28 positive of 48 tested
- CDC Border Infectious Disease Surveillance and Zika Surveillance - 4 positive of 15 tested
- DoD Beneficiaries – 5 positive of 17 tested.

A case of serotype B14 adenovirus was identified at MCRD Parris Island, collected 20 June.

Acute gastroenteritis (AGE) rates returned to low levels among recruits at MCRD Parris Island. Naval Health Research Center

WHO: Influenza Update
24 July - In the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere, high levels of influenza activity continued to be reported. A few countries in Central America, the Caribbean and South East Asia also reported increased influenza activity. Influenza activity in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere was reported at low levels. Worldwide, influenza A(H3N2) and B viruses co-circulated. WHO

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Bush’s Best recalls beans because can seams are compromised
24 July - Bush Brothers & Co. is recalling three flavors of canned baked beans from retailers nationwide after discovering defective side seams in some cans, which could allow the beans to spoil or become contaminated with pathogens. ... “This recall was initiated after our internal quality assurance checks identified the issue. ... The problem was corrected and no other product is affected,” according to the July 22 recall notice the company posted on its website. ... Even if cans do not appear to be compromised no one should eat any of the recalled beans because microscopic bacteria and toxins could be present. Food Safety News

Hundreds give tearful farewell to heroic war dog
27 July - Hundreds turned out to say goodbye to the hero dog whose Marine veteran partner put together a bucket list for him after he was diagnosed with bone cancer. Cena, a black lab who served three tours in Afghanistan as a bomb-sniffer with the Marines, lived his final years with Lance Cpl. Jeff DeYoung, as his
service dog. DeYoung and Cena were first paired in 2009 after a personality test, and later deployed to Afghanistan together. In 2014, the pair reunited when DeYoung adopted Cena as his service dog for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He said having Cena around made it easier for him to be in public. Fox News

Japan woman dies of tick disease after bitten by sick cat

25 July - A Japanese woman has died from a tick-borne virus after being bitten by a stray cat in what is possibly the world's first animal-to-human transmission of the disease. The woman in her 50s died some 10 days after being bitten by the cat last year after she took the animal to a veterinary hospital. Authorities have since confirmed that she developed SFTS [severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome], a disease transmitted by bites from a certain group of virus-carrying ticks. Human-to-human infections of the tick virus through blood contact have been reported, but ministry officials believe the Japanese woman's death could be the first case of a human dying from the bite of an infected animal. MSN

U.K. will not accept chlorinated chicken to secure U.S. trade deal: minister

26 July - Britain will not accept imports of chlorinated chicken in pursuit of a trade deal with the United States after Brexit, its environment minister said on Wednesday, days after a trade minister tried to play down public health concerns. The issue of chlorine-washed chicken, which is produced in the United States but not allowed in the European Union, is high-profile in Britain where many fear that a U.S. trade deal could lead to imports of food with lower safety standards. Reuters

U.S. CDC says *Salmonella* outbreak linked to papayas sickens 47

21 July - An outbreak of *Salmonella* food poisoning linked to a type of papaya has sicken 47 people from 12 states, including one person in New York City who died and 12 who were hospitalized, U.S. health officials said on Friday. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said interview data and laboratory evidence - from an illness cluster identified in Maryland - indicated that yellow Maradol papayas were the likely source of the outbreak. The CDC said it was working to learn where in the supply chain the contamination, with a strain known as *Salmonella* Kiambu, occurred. It warned consumers not to eat, restaurants not to serve, and retailers not to sell any yellow Maradol papayas until more information became available. Reuters
Coffee with Viagra-like ingredient recalled after FDA discovery

20 July - … [The U.S. Food and Drug Administration] announced last week that [Albert] Yee’s company, Grand Prairie, Tex.-based Bestherbs Coffee LLC, is voluntarily recalling all lots of the uniquely spelled “New of Kopi Jantan Tradisional Natural Herbs Coffee” due to undeclared ingredients, including desmethyl carbodenafil and milk, sold between July 2014 and June 2016. “Desmethyl carbodenafil is structurally similar to sildenafil, the active ingredient in Viagra, an FDA-approved prescription drug for erectile dysfunction,” the FDA said in a statement. The “undeclared ingredient may interact with nitrates found in some prescription drugs, such as nitroglycerin, and may lower blood pressure to dangerous levels,” the FDA noted. The Washington Post

Drugs cocktail 'cut HIV deaths by 27%

25 July - More than 10,000 lives a year could be saved with a simple change to HIV medication, doctors say. HIV is often diagnosed late, when it has already ravaged the immune system, leaving people vulnerable. To counter this, researchers tried prescribing a cocktail of drugs at the start of HIV therapy to treat “opportunistic” infections. The results, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, showed deaths fell by 27%. … So, the trial gave patients with a CD count - used to measure the health of the immune system - below 100 a mix of drugs, including antibiotics, alongside standard antiretroviral medication for HIV. BBC News

In adolescents, oral Truvada and vaginal ring for HIV prevention are safe, acceptable

25 July - A monthly vaginal ring and a daily oral tablet, both containing anti-HIV drugs, were safe and acceptable in studies of adolescents, two teams of investigators reported today. … The experimental ring is designed for HIV prevention and the oral tablet is already used for this purpose in adults. Adherence to the ring was high, while adherence to the tablet was moderate and diminished substantially when study visits became less frequent. … The findings pave the way for larger trials of the vaginal ring and oral PrEP in this vulnerable age group. NIH

La Bri’s body health supplements recalled for sibutramine

27 July - EZ Weight Loss TX is recalling all lots of La Bri’s Body Health Atomic and Xplode capsules because they contain sibutramine. That compound was banned from the U.S. in October 2010 because it increases blood pressure and/or pulse rate in some people. It can also interact in life-threatening ways with other medications. No adverse events have been
Poison hotline calls up nearly 50% for dietary supplements

24 July - Calls to poison control centers related to dietary supplements rose nearly 50% from 2005 to 2012, a new study found. ... [T]he study reported 70% of such calls were regarding exposure among children younger than 6 -- mostly unintentional exposures occurring at home. [T]he worst culprits for serious illnesses were energy products, cultural, and botanical medicines. In fact, more than one-quarter of such serious outcomes were tied to a single product -- the botanical supplement yohimbe, promoted for enhancing male sexual performance -- for which the authors urged FDA regulation. MedPage Today

South African child 'virtually cured' of HIV

24 July - A nine-year-old infected with HIV at birth has spent most of their life without needing any treatment, say doctors in South Africa. The child, whose identity is being protected, was given a burst of treatment shortly after birth. They have since been off drugs for eight-and-a-half years without symptoms or signs of active virus. ... Understanding how the child is protected could lead to new drugs or a vaccine for stopping HIV. The child caught the infection from their mother around the time of birth in 2007. ... Early antiretroviral therapy was not standard practice at the time, but was given to the child from nine weeks old as part of a clinical trial. Levels of the virus became undetectable, treatment was stopped after 40 weeks and unlike anybody else on the study - the virus has not returned. BBC News

Statins for the physically fit: Do they help or hurt?

24 July - Military health researchers studied active-duty military statin users and nonusers to determine the risk of cardiovascular adverse events based on treatment. Statins may not be the best choice for physically active people, even short term. A study by researchers from VA North Texas Health Care System in Dallas, University of Texas in Austin, and Joint Base Antonio-Fort Sam in Houston, Texas, found higher risks of diabetes and diabetic complications—“without any of the hoped-for cardiovascular benefits.” Federal Practitioner

Study links rising U.S. e-cigarette use to rise in smokers quitting

26 July - A rise in the use of electronic cigarettes among American adults is linked to a significant increase in the numbers of people quitting smoking, researchers said on Wednesday. In a study published in the BMJ British medical journal, scientists from California said their findings were based on the largest representative sample of e-cigarette users to date and provided a "strong case" that e-cigarettes have helped to increase rates of smoking cessation. ... The global scientific community is divided over e-cigarettes and whether they are a useful public health tool as a nicotine replacement therapy or a
potential "gateway" for young people to move on to start smoking tobacco. Reuters

Time, not material goods, 'raises happiness'

25 July - Using money to free-up time is linked to increased happiness, a study says. In an experiment, individuals reported greater happiness if they used £30 ($40) to save time - such as by paying for chores to be done - rather than spending the money on material goods. ... Psychologists in the US, Canada and the Netherlands set out to test whether money can increase happiness levels by freeing up time. More than 6,000 adults in the US, Canada, Denmark and the Netherlands, including 800 millionaires, were asked questions about how much money they spent on buying time. The researchers found that fewer than a third of individuals spent money to buy themselves time each month. BBC News

VRC01 antibody prolonged time to HIV viral rebound after treatment interruption

25 July - A new study has shown that infusion of a broadly neutralizing antibody (bNAb) in virally suppressed, early treated volunteers was associated with a modestly delayed rebound of HIV after interruption of antiretroviral therapy (ART). The study, the first randomized controlled trial to demonstrate this effect of VRC01, was led by the U.S. Military HIV Research Program (MHRP) of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) and the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre. ... The study, called RV397, is part of a portfolio of MHRP’s HIV remission research that seeks to find treatments to suppress the virus without a need for lifelong ART. Researchers evaluated the use of VRC01 in a small cohort of Thai men who were diagnosed and initiated ART within the first month of HIV infection, and who had been virally suppressed for about three years. Medical Xpress

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USAFRICOM

Kenya: WHO sees high risk from Kenya cholera outbreak

21 July - An outbreak of cholera in Kenya poses a high risk to the region and a moderate threat globally, the World Health Organization said on Friday, after delegates at two international conferences were hit. The spread of the disease has surged since April, affecting the capital Nairobi, a major hub for conferences in Africa, and the large refugee camps of Dadaab and Kakuma. The disease, which is spread by ingesting fecal matter, hit 146 at a conference in Nairobi on June 22, and a further 136 people at the China Trade Fair on July 10-12, one of whom died. In total, the disease ... registered 1,216 suspected cases and 14 deaths between the start of the year and July 17. Reuters
Nigeria: Deepening food crisis pushes Nigeria's northeast closer to famine

24 July - Famine could soon strike tens of thousands of people in northeast Nigeria as food stocks run low, prices soar and aid supplies dwindle due to the Boko Haram insurgency, a leading humanitarian agency said on Monday. The hunger crisis is set to worsen by late August as the lean season before harvest takes its toll, driving up the number of people in need of food aid by at least half a million to 5.2 million, according to the Norwegian Refugee Council. About 50,000 people are predicted by the United Nations' food agency to be at risk of famine, yet the situation could be far worse with many areas cut off from help due to the threat of Boko Haram, said Cheick Ba, the NRC country director in Nigeria.

USCENTCOM

Yemen: Filth spreads Yemen's deadly cholera outbreak

27 July - Yemen's cholera outbreak is so widespread that just drinking water can lead to death. Nearly 2,000 people have already succumbed to one of the worst recorded outbreaks of cholera in modern history, with over 400,000 having contracted the disease, according to the World Health Organization. Cholera, a diarrheal disease spread by ingestion of food or water tainted with human faeces, can kill within hours if untreated. It has been largely eradicated in developed countries equipped with sanitation systems and water treatment. But Yemen's devastating civil war ... and economic collapse has made it extremely difficult to deal with catastrophes such as cholera and mass hunger. With stinking green watery filth mingled with trash being a common sight in the capital Sanaa, the government is struggling to control the spread of the disease. Pumps to sanitize the water supply sit idle for lack of fuel, while maintenance agencies tasked with chlorinating aquifers go without salaries and supplies.

Yemen: Yemen cholera epidemic slowing after infecting 400,000

25 July - Yemen's cholera outbreak is set to hit 400,000 cases on Tuesday but there are signs the three-month-old epidemic is slowing, according to World Health Organization data analyzed by Reuters. A dramatic fall over the past month in the number of people dying from the disease each day -- from about 30 to single figures -- suggests the WHO's strategy of setting up a network of rehydration points to catch patients early is working. Cholera ... can kill within hours if untreated. The deaths figures indicate that 99.5 percent of
Europe: Growing concerns of hepatitis E in Europe

22 July - ... [A] surveillance report on the incidence of HEV infection in Europe, published by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) on July 11, shows cause for concern. The reported incidence in Europe over 10 years has grown by ten times: from 514 cases in 2005, to 5617 cases in 2015. Another cause for concern is that testing, case definitions, diagnosis, and surveillance for HEV infection vary extensively across Europe, with only 20 member states actively monitoring HEV infection. Most reported cases were in men older than 50 years, caused by genotype 3, and reported in the UK, France, and Germany, where surveillance is in place. Incidence also increased in countries without a surveillance system, indicating that reporting of the incidence might not be the only reason for the surge in infections. The Lancet

United Kingdom: England’s mental health experiment: No-cost talk therapy

24 July - England is in the midst of a unique national experiment, the world’s most ambitious effort to treat depression, anxiety and other common mental illnesses. The rapidly growing initiative ... offers virtually open-ended talk therapy free of charge at clinics throughout the country: in remote farming villages, industrial suburbs, isolated immigrant communities and high-end enclaves. The goal is to eventually create a system of primary care for mental health not just for England but for all of Britain. ... The demand in the first several years has been so strong it has strained the program’s resources. According to the latest figures, the program now screens nearly a million people a year, and the number of adults in England who have recently received some mental health treatment has jumped to one in three from one in four and is expected to continue to grow. Mental health professionals also say the program has gone a long way to shrink the stigma of psychotherapy in a nation culturally steeped in stoicism. The New York Times
U.S.: 43 Percent of Americans admit they're too tired to function at work

27 July - According to a new National Safety Council survey-based report, almost half of Americans do not get enough sleep to safely perform the duties assigned to them by their employer. The survey found that 43 percent of Americans say they do not get enough sleep to mitigate critical risks that can jeopardize safety at work and on the roads, including the ability to think clearly, make informed decisions, and be productive. Eighty-one percent of the probability-based survey respondents have jobs that are at high risk for fatigue – positions that require sustained attention or are physically or cognitively demanding, such as driving a vehicle or working at a construction site. Perhaps one of the most startling statistics found by the survey is that 97 percent of Americans say they have at least one of the leading nine risks factors for fatigue, which include working at night or early in the morning, working long shirts without regular work breaks, working more than 50 hours each week, and enduring long commutes. Occupational Health & Safety

U.S.: Case of Zika virus, likely spread by mosquito, is reported in Texas

26 July - For the first time since last fall, officials in Texas have reported what they believe is a case of mosquito transmission of the Zika virus within the state's borders. If correct, it would be the first known instance of local mosquito transmission within the continental United States this year. The single case, reported in Hidalgo County, on the Mexican border, "was probably transmitted by a mosquito bite in South Texas sometime in the last few months," the state's health department said on Wednesday. The affected person, who was not identified, is no longer capable of transmitting the disease, officials said. The New York Times

U.S.: It’s high time for ticks, which are spreading diseases farther

25 July - ... Like many towns across the country, Southampton [NY] is seeing a tick population that is growing both in numbers and variety — at a time when ticks are emerging as a significant public health danger. "Tick-borne diseases are a very serious problem, and they're on the rise," said Rebecca Eisen, a research biologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Even though you may live in an area where you didn’t have ticks in the past or your parents don’t remember having ticks, the distribution is changing," she added. “More and more people are at risk." With the expansion of the suburbs and a push to conserve wooded areas, deer and mice populations are thriving. They provide ample blood meals for ticks and help spread the pests to new regions. ... Dr. Eisen reported a nearly 45 percent increase since 1998 in the number of counties with
blacklegged ticks. The New York Times

U.S.: New C.D.C. chief saw Coca-Cola as ally in obesity fight

22 July - When she was health commissioner of Georgia, the state with one of the highest rates of child obesity, Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald faced two enormous challenges: How to get children to slim down and how to pay for it. Her answer to the first was Power Up for 30, a program pushing schools to give children 30 minutes more exercise each day, part of a statewide initiative called Georgia Shape. The answer to the second was Coca-Cola, the soft drink company and philanthropic powerhouse, which has paid for almost the entire Power Up program. Dr. Fitzgerald is now in the spotlight as the Trump administration’s newly appointed director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ... And she finds herself facing a backlash from public health advocates for having accepted $1 million to fight child obesity from a company experts say is a major cause of it. The New York Times

U.S.: New Zika testing recommendation issued for pregnant women

24 July - Federal health officials are changing their testing recommendations for pregnant women who may be exposed to the Zika virus through travel or sex or because of where they live. In updated guidance released Monday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is no longer recommending routine testing for pregnant women without any Zika symptoms but who may have been put at risk because they have traveled to a region where Zika is circulating. ... [T]he revised recommendations reflect the limitations of the most commonly used blood test for the virus. In recent months, CDC has seen a growing number of false-positive test results from states. The Washington Post

U.S.: Pruitt says EPA will create ‘top-10’ list for Superfund cleanup

25 July - Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt vowed Tuesday to cut through bureaucratic red tape that has slowed the cleanup of toxic Superfund sites and follow a task force’s recommendations to act more boldly in holding companies responsible for past contamination. Pruitt said the EPA is creating a “top-10 list” of key sites where nearby residents are in harm’s way so that the agency can aggressively address those locations. In recent memos to staff, he said that Superfund cleanup efforts would be “restored to their rightful place at the center of the agency’s core mission,” that his approach would target sites where decontamination is estimated to cost $50 million or more and that he would be personally involved in trying to fix the problem. The Washington Post

U.S.: The All of Us research program announces first community partner awards

25 July - The National Institutes of Health announced its first four community partner
awards to begin building a national network of trusted leaders to motivate diverse communities to join the All of Us Research Program... These awardees will raise awareness about the program among seniors, Hispanics and Latinos, African Americans and the LGBTQ community, to complement other outreach efforts of the program. ... All of Us is an ambitious effort to gather data over time from 1 million or more people living in the United States, with the ultimate goal of accelerating research and improving health. Unlike research studies that are focused on a specific disease or population, All of Us will serve as a national research resource to inform thousands of studies, covering a wide variety of health conditions. Researchers will use data from the program to learn more about how individual differences in lifestyle, environment and biological makeup can influence health and disease. NIH

U.S.: The unnecessary risk with over-the-counter drugs

24 July - ... [The Food and Drug Administration] does not have the same tools to protect consumers from safety issues in most nonprescription products that it has for prescription drugs. ... This month, as Congress considers legislation to reauthorize user fees at the FDA, lawmakers have a huge opportunity to end this dangerous double standard. ... The agency is hamstrung by its own law, which requires it to undertake a full regulatory process—including a legal review, public comments and economic analyses—to make simple changes for most nonprescription drugs, such as updating the label with a new warning. ... As a result, the rules governing over-the-counter drugs have not kept up with science, have not effectively addressed safety issues, and have impeded innovation. Compare that with how the agency reviews prescription drugs: The FDA can approve or reject prescription medications for marketing without issuing a separate regulation every time. The agency just needs to review the application and related data, and, when necessary, consider the advice of its public advisory committee. Politico

U.S.: U.S. data show increases in Campylobacter cases, outbreaks, resistance

24 July - The number of U.S. Campylobacter outbreaks has doubled in recent years, and isolates have proved increasingly antibiotic resistant, according to a study last week in Clinical Infectious Diseases. The researchers analyzed data on more than 300,000 Campylobacter infections from 2004 through 2012. The average annual incidence rate (IR) was 11.4 cases per 100,000 people. ... IRs among preschool children were double the overall rate. Overall IRs increased 21%—from 10.5/100,000 in 2004-06 to 12.7/100,000 in 2010-12. Over the study period, 347 Campylobacter outbreaks were reported. The annual median number of outbreaks doubled, from 28 in 2004-06 to 56 in 2010-12. Antimicrobial susceptibility testing of isolates from 4,793 domestic and 1,070 travel-associated cases revealed that ciprofloxacin resistance increased among domestic infections from 12.8% in 2004-09 to 16.1% in 2010-12. CIDRAP Stewardship/Resistance Scan (third item)
U.S.: U.S. senators seek ban on pesticide chlorpyrifos

25 July - A group of Democratic senators hopes to ban a pesticide the U.S. government has greenlighted for use, according to a bill unveiled on Tuesday in a challenge to Republican President Donald Trump’s push to loosen environmental regulations. The bill, introduced by Senator Tom Udall of New Mexico, would outlaw chlorpyrifos, an agricultural insect-killer that has been found to cause brain damage in children. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency denied a petition to ban the chemical on March 29, and a federal appeals court on July 18 denied a petition by green groups to force the agency to reverse its decision and enact the ban. ... Chlorpyrifos, produced by a variety of manufacturers, including a subsidiary of Dow Chemical, is listed as a neurotoxin by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. ... [A] Dow spokesman said on Tuesday, “Authorized uses of chlorpyrifos products, when used as directed, offer wide margins of protection for human health and safety.” Reuters

Bangladesh: Study links sudden deaths in Bangladeshi children to chemicals sprayed on fruit trees

24 July - Excessive and improper applications of insecticides and other agriculture chemicals in local fruit orchards may have triggered an outbreak of a deadly swelling of the brain known as acute encephalitis syndrome (AES) that killed 13 children in a rural Bangladesh community in 2012, according to a new study. Science Daily

China: China says no to "foreign garbage"

27 July - China's cabinet said Thursday “foreign garbage” will be entirely banned from entering the country as authorities plan stricter management on solid waste imports. By the end of 2017, the country will forbid imports of solid waste that cause great environmental damage and raise strong public concerns, according to a reform plan on solid waste import management released by the State Council. By the end of 2019, the country will phase out imports of solid waste that can be replaced by domestic resources, the plan said. The release of the plan came after China notified the World Trade Organization last week that it will ban imports of 24 types of solid waste, including waste plastics, unsorted scrap paper, discarded textiles and vanadium slag by the end of 2017. Xinhuanet

Sri Lanka: Unprecedented’ outbreak of dengue fever plagues Sri Lanka

25 July - Sri Lanka is facing an “unprecedented” outbreak of deadly dengue fever, with 296
deaths recorded and over 100,000 cases reported in 2017 alone, according to the Red Cross. ... As many as 103,000 cases have been reported in the island nation this year — almost twice as many as were reported in all of 2016 and more than 4.3 times higher than the average number of cases for the same period between 2010 and 2016. Hospitals across the country are at breaking point and have been forced to turn away patients suffering from the disease as they struggle with the intake. ... The spread of the deadly viral disease is attributed to heavy monsoon rains, piles of rain-soaked garbage, standing pools of water and other mosquito larvae breeding grounds. GantDaily

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Brazil: Brazil risks rodent-borne Hantavirus rise due to sugarcane, climate change

20 July - The risk of being infected by the potentially fatal, rodent-borne Hantavirus could jump in Brazil’s Sao Paulo state as climate change sends temperatures higher and farmers grow more sugarcane, said scientists. More effective health education and pest control could help cut the risk of the disease in the area, along with forest restoration and better land use, wrote Brazilian and U.S. researchers. Reuters

Venezuela: World Medical Association urges Venezuela to immediately address health situation

20 July - The World Medical Association has urged the Venezuelan Government to take immediate action to resolve the country’s serious health crisis, which it says has led to increased morbidity, mortality and malnutrition among infants. Venezuelan doctors have warned that a lack of medical supplies and basic food, plus the abandonment of prevention and treatment programs for vector control, have resulted in an increase in controllable diseases. Now the WMA has stepped up its support for the Venezuelan Medical Federation by calling on the Venezuelan Government to change Government policy and invest in health to prevent the situation from worsening and inflicting permanent damage on the country. MercoPress
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