

29 January 2016

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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U.S. MILITARY

Child abuse may play role in military suicides

27 January - Histories of child abuse are common among military members and may be important to consider when treating their mental health needs, according to a report from Canada. People who join the military are more likely to report being abused as children, and that trauma may be more closely linked to suicide risk than trauma experienced during deployment, researchers suggest. ... About 48 percent of people in Canada's regular forces and about 49 percent of reserved forces deployed to Afghanistan said they'd been abused as children, compared to about 33 percent of the general public. [Reuters](#)

From the army: wearable sensor technology

27 January - Working Soldiers to failure is a costly mistake, and until recently it's been anybody's guess at what temperature and exertion rate a given Soldier would max out. But now, wearable, chest-based sensors (far more accurate and informative than current wrist-worn models) can tell when a Soldier is nearing cardiac and temperature limits—protecting Soldiers, preventing heat casualties and generating data to help predict how Soldiers will perform under new environmental conditions. ... Applications of [real-time physiological status monitoring (RT-PSM)] technologies include dismounted route-planning decision support tools; performance and safety monitoring in high-risk chemical and biological threat environments requiring full protective gear; and performance and safety training for individuals and small-unit leaders. The use of RT-PSM to enhance Soldier performance and to avoid heat casualties is very different from medical management of casualties after they occur. [Scout](#)

No difference in death rates for veterans of secret Navy chem-bio tests

27 January - Secret biological and chemical warfare tests conducted on U.S. Navy ships in the 1960s do not appear to have affected the health of participating sailors and Marines, according to a report released earlier this month. The Institute of Medicine study found that troops who took part in Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense, or SHAD, which was part of a larger chem-bio program known as Project 112, had no significant difference in mortality rates or diseases than veterans of comparable age or time in service. However, the researchers noted, the study was limited by data availability. Much of the measurement readings and information on the concentrations of contaminants still remain classified, and

Fall-related Injuries

A new APHC Fact Sheet on fall-related injuries addresses common Army fall injuries and prevention.



National Action Plan for Combating Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) kills almost 30,000 people each week.

TB is curable, but inappropriate treatment can lead to multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB).

This year alone, more than 480,000 people will develop MDR-TB (including XDR-TB).

Fewer than 20 percent of individuals with MDR-TB access treatment; of that small fraction, fewer than half are cured, due to health systems that are unable to appropriately diagnose and treat the disease.

Action taken now, while it is still possible to reverse the development and transmission of MDR-TB, will improve health and prosperity around the world.



many Project SHAD veterans are in their 70s and 80s or have passed away. [Military Times](#)

Pentagon sets maternity leave at 12 weeks for all services

28 January - ... "Today I'm setting 12 weeks of fully paid maternity leave as the standard across the forces," [Secretary of Defense Ashton] Carter said during a press conference at the Pentagon. "I don't take lightly that 12 weeks of maternity leave represents a downshift from what the Navy pursued last summer ... I thought it was important that we have the same standard across the joint force." Currently pregnant sailors and Marines will still be able to take advantage of the 18-week policy, which went into effect last summer, Carter said. He said officials chose 12 weeks as the standard in attempt to balance personnel benefits with readiness. ... Carter said he will also seek the authority from Congress to increase paid paternity days for new fathers from 10 to 14. [Military.com](#)

Toxic exposures caused illness in Gulf War veterans, new report says

26 January - Twenty-five years after 700,000 U.S. troops fought and won the first Gulf War with remarkably low casualties, research "clearly and consistently" shows that exposure to pesticides and other toxins caused Gulf War Illness, a complex and debilitating disorder that affects as many as 250,000 of those deployed, according to a new report led by a Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) researcher. [Researchers reviewed] studies on Gulf War Illness (GWI), especially those since 2008. They conclude that exposure to pesticides and ingestion of pyridostigmine bromide (PB) -- prophylactic pills intended to protect troops against the effects of possible nerve gas -- are "causally associated with GWI and the neurological dysfunction in Gulf War veterans." The research team also cites multiple studies showing a link between veterans' neurological problems and exposure to the nerve-gas agents sarin and cyclosarin, as well as to oil well fire emissions. These "toxic wounds" resulted in damage to veterans' nervous systems and immune systems, including neuroendocrine and immune dysregulation, autonomic nervous system irregularities, and reduced white and gray matter in veterans' brains, the review says. [ScienceDaily](#)

Wounded Warrior Project accused of wasting donation money

26 January - A CBS News investigation into a charity for wounded veterans, the Wounded Warrior Project, looks into how the charity spends its donation money. ... In 2014 alone the group received more than \$300 million in donations. ... CBS News spoke to more than 40 former employees who described a charity where spending was out of control. ... According to the charity's tax forms, spending on conferences and meetings went from \$1.7 million in 2010, to \$26 million in 2014. That's about the same amount the group spends on combat stress recovery -- its top program. [CBS News](#)

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<http://phc.army.smil.mil>

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

GLOBAL

Antibody levels and protection after hepatitis B vaccine

21 January - ... In 1981, we immunized a cohort of 1578 Alaska Native adults and children from 15 Alaska communities aged ≥ 6 months using 3 doses of plasma-derived hepatitis B vaccine. Persons were tested for antibody to hepatitis B surface antigen (anti-HBs) levels 30 years after receiving the primary series. ... Among 243 persons (56%) who responded to the original primary series but received no subsequent doses during the 30-year period, 125 (51%) had an anti-HBs level ≥ 10 mIU/mL. Among participants with anti-HBs levels < 10 mIU/mL who were available for follow-up, 75 of 85 (88%) responded to a booster dose with an anti-HBs level ≥ 10 mIU/mL at 30 days. ... [We] estimate that $\geq 90\%$ of participants had evidence of protection 30 years later. Booster doses are not needed. [The Journal of Infectious Diseases](#)

Army researchers making critical advances in global health with development of Ebola vaccine

28 January - The Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) recently announced the initiation of a Phase 2 clinical trial to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of two potential Ebola vaccine candidates. The trial represents a significant step forward in the quest to curb future outbreaks of the disease. ... Researchers conducting the study will assess the viability of vaccine candidates developed by two private biotechnology firms, Crucell Holland B.V. and Bavarian Nordic. Some of the initial research was funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which, when taken together with the clinical trials being conducted by WRAIR, provides a prime example of the whole of government approach that the United States takes in addressing global health issues. [Health.mil](#)

Bill Gates, Britain announce plan to spend billions to eradicate malaria

25 January - Britain's finance minister and tech billionaire Bill Gates unveiled Monday a plan to spend billions to eradicate "the world's deadliest killer" malaria. Chancellor George Osborne and Gates announced £3 billion (US\$4.28 billion, 4 billion euros) in funding over the next five years for research and to support efforts to eliminate the mosquito-borne disease, in a joint article in The Times. ... "If new insecticides are not introduced by 2020, the situation will become critical and deaths could surge," Osborne and Gates wrote, adding that fighting diseases required collaboration between private companies, governments and charities. [CTV News](#)

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First responders 14 times more likely to be violently assaulted than firefighters: Study

23 January - ... According to research out of Drexel University's Dornsife School of Public Health, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) are 14 times more likely to be violently injured on the job than the firefighters they work with. Researchers compared statistics from the Federal Emergency Management Agency-funded Firefighter Injury Research and Safety Trends (FIRST) project with the verbal accounts of paramedics who had been injured by patients. The first thing they noticed was that assault-related injuries are often not reported or, in the case of paramedics, acknowledged by administration. Instead, injuries are internalized as "part of the job." ... When Taylor did one-on-one interviews to gain a deeper understanding of these findings, she found a reoccurring issue paramedics had was with the little information they were given before being dispatched. [Medical Daily](#)

Massive funnel-web's spider venom to be milked in Australia

25 January - A deadly funnel-web spider with a leg span of 10cm (4in) is the largest specimen ever handed in to Australia's only venom-milking programme. The spider, which has been named Big Boy, was caught in bushland in Newcastle, NSW, last week and handed over to the Australia Reptile Park. The park encourages the public to catch and send in spiders so it can use them to produce anti-venom. Spiders are milked using a pipette which sucks up their venom. This is done once every week as the spiders can get exhausted from too many milkings. The park needs between 200 and 300 spiders to milk every year, and needs 3,000 milkings to produce enough venom for the antidote. [BBC News](#)

Potential diabetes treatment advances

25 January - Researchers ... have developed an implantable device that in mice shielded insulin-producing beta cells from immune system attack for six months — a substantial proportion of life span. This bioengineering work ... brings the promise of a possible cure for type 1 diabetes within striking distance of phase 1 clinical trials, providing a way to implant in diabetics insulin-producing beta cells developed from stem cells in the laboratory of HSCI co-director Doug Melton. [Harvard Gazette](#)

Preventable ills cause nearly 8 million childhood deaths globally

25 January - Most of the nearly 8 million deaths of children and teens around the world in 2013 were avoidable, a new report says. More than 6 million children younger than 5 lost their lives because of treatable conditions like malaria, diarrhea and respiratory tract infections, according to pediatric researchers who've analyzed results of the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013. "The vast majority of deaths in children and adolescents are preventable," said the authors from the Global Burden of Disease Pediatrics Collaboration.

"Proven interventions exist to prevent diarrheal and respiratory diseases, neonatal conditions, iron deficiency anemia and road injuries, which result in some of the highest burdens of unnecessary death and disability among children and adolescents." [MedlinePlus](#)

Thailand reports imported MERS case; Saudi Arabia notes 2

25 January - Thailand's health ministry yesterday confirmed a MERS-CoV infection in a man who had traveled from Oman, the second such case in the past 7 months, while Saudi Arabian health officials announced a pair of new cases, both in men who had direct contact with camels. Though most MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) cases have been reported from Saudi Arabia, the dribble of exported cases is worrisome, given that unsuspected and undetected cases have the potential to trigger large outbreaks, as occurred in South Korea last summer. [CIDRAP](#)

What sweat can tell you about your health

27 January - Scientists have devised a wearable sweat monitor that keeps tabs on your health by monitoring the chemical composition of your perspiration. The new device, described Wednesday in *Nature*, is flexible enough to move with the body and has Bluetooth capabilities so it can send information in real time to a smartphone. Someday it could alert sweat drenched users to risks of dehydration, fatigue, stress and other physical ailments, making activity monitors like Fitbit look awfully basic.

[Los Angeles Times](#)

ZIKA VIRUS

Advice to delay pregnancy due to Zika virus is naive, activists say



25 January - Women in El Salvador and Colombia are being cautioned to avoid pregnancy due to the potentially dangerous Zika virus, but little access to contraception or abortion and pregnancies from rape leave many women unable to heed that advice, campaigners say. ... Women in El Salvador and Colombia are being cautioned to avoid

pregnancy due to the potentially dangerous Zika virus, but little access to contraception or abortion and pregnancies from rape leave many women unable to heed that advice, campaigners say. ... As in Colombia, little or no sex education in schools in El Salvador means girls lack information they need to avoid unwanted pregnancies, activists say. El Salvador has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Latin America, with girls aged 10 to 19 accounting for about a third of all pregnancies. [Reuters](#)

Interim guidelines for the evaluation and testing of infants with possible congenital Zika virus infection — United States, 2016

26 January - CDC has developed interim guidelines for health care providers in the United States who are caring for infants born to mothers who traveled to or resided in an area with Zika virus transmission during pregnancy. These guidelines include recommendations for the testing and management of these infants. Guidance is subject to change as more information becomes available. ... Zika virus testing is recommended for 1) infants with microcephaly or intracranial calcifications born to women who traveled to or resided in an area with Zika virus transmission while pregnant; or 2) infants born to mothers with positive or inconclusive test results for Zika virus infection. For infants with laboratory evidence of a possible congenital Zika virus infection, additional clinical evaluation and follow-up is recommended. Health care providers should contact their state or territorial health department to facilitate testing. As an arboviral disease, Zika virus disease is a nationally notifiable condition.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Possible association between Zika virus infection and microcephaly — Brazil, 2015

22 January - ... Among a cohort of 35 infants with microcephaly born during August–October 2015 in eight of Brazil's 26 states and reported to the registry, the mothers of all 35 had lived in or visited Zika virus-affected areas during pregnancy, 25 (71%) infants had severe microcephaly (head circumference >3 SD below the mean for sex and gestational age), 17 (49%) had at least one neurologic abnormality, and among 27 infants who had neuroimaging studies, all had abnormalities. ... Further studies are needed to confirm the association of microcephaly with Zika virus infection during pregnancy and to understand any other adverse pregnancy outcomes associated with Zika virus infection. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

WHO expects Zika virus to spread to all but 2 countries in the Americas

25 January - The World Health Organization anticipates that the Zika virus will spread to all but two countries in South, Central and North America. The mosquito-borne disease has raged in South America and other regions for several months. Twenty-one countries and territories of the Americas have reported cases of the virus since Brazil reported the first cases of local transmission in May 2015, WHO's regional office for the Americas said in a statement. "Aedes mosquitoes -- the main vector for Zika transmission -- are present in all the region's countries except Canada and continental Chile," the statement said. [CNN](#)

Zika virus spreads to new areas – Region of the Americas, May 2015–January 2016

22 January- ... In May 2015, the World Health Organization reported the first local transmission of Zika virus in the Region of the Americas, with autochthonous cases identified in Brazil. In December, the Ministry of Health estimated that 440,000–1,300,000 suspected cases of Zika virus disease had occurred in Brazil in 2015. By January 20, 2016, locally-transmitted cases had been reported to the Pan American Health Organization from Puerto Rico and 19 other countries or territories in the Americas. Further spread to other countries in the region is being monitored closely. ... In addition to mosquito-to-human transmission, Zika virus infections have been documented through intrauterine transmission resulting in congenital infection, intrapartum transmission from a viremic mother to her newborn, sexual transmission, blood transfusion, and laboratory exposure. ... Until more is known, and out of an abundance of caution, pregnant women should consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Zika virus: Two cases suggest it could be spread through sex

25 January - Zika virus has already been linked to brain damage in babies and paralysis in adults. Now scientists are facing another ominous possibility: that on rare occasions, the virus might be transmitted through sex. The evidence is very slim; only a couple of cases have been described in medical literature. But a few experts feel the prospect is disturbing enough that federal health officials should inform all travelers, not just pregnant women, of the potential danger. Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, however, say the evidence is insufficient to warrant such a warning. While the two instances suggest a “theoretical risk” of sexual transmission, they note the primary vector is clearly mosquitoes. [The New York Times](#)

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INFLUENZA

AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 3:

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity was minimal to moderate for most states.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity was minimal with the exception of Italy which had low activity.
- PACOM: Influenza activity was minimal with the exception of Japan, which had low

activity.

- CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Influenza activity was minimal to low in CENTCOM and AFRICOM.
- SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity in Honduras was minimal based on DMSS data.

[DHA -Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch](#)

APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 16 January 2016 (Week 02):

During week two, the number of specimens testing positive for influenza A increased in all regions except for CENTCOM.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 2 were 19% lower than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: One hospitalized influenza case was reported to APHC(P) through DRSI in week 2; the case was an ANG Service Member who was unvaccinated.
- Viral specimens: During week 2, 128 of 726 (18%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-C reported 12 influenza A-positive specimens, RHC-P reported 7, RHC-A reported 6, and RHC-E reported 2. CENTCOM did not report any influenza A-positive specimens. [APHC](#)

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

During week 2 (January 10-16, 2016), influenza activity increased slightly in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories during week 2 was influenza A, with influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 viruses predominating. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories increased.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the system-specific epidemic threshold in the NCHS Mortality Surveillance System and above the system-specific epidemic threshold in the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System. [CDC](#)

China: Human infection with avian influenza A(H5N6) virus

26 January - On 18 January 2016, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of 1 additional laboratory-confirmed case of human infection with avian influenza A(H5N6) virus. The case is a 31-year-old female from Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province who developed symptoms on 8 January. The patient was admitted to a local hospital and is now in critical condition. [WHO](#)

ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 02/2016 (11-17 January 2016)

- Thirty-two countries reported influenza viruses in specimens from sentinel influenza-like illness (ILI) and acute respiratory infection (ARI) surveillance this week, suggesting that influenza activity is increasing in the WHO European Region.
- Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 continues to be the predominant virus detected since the start of the season, accounting for 59% of detections in the current week.
- The predominance of A(H1N1)pdm09 corresponds with an increase in cases of severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) in eastern European countries, predominantly in people aged 15–64.

Season

- So far, the 2015–2016 influenza season is characterized by a predominance of the influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus, which is known to cause more severe disease and death in younger, otherwise healthy, adults than influenza A(H3N2).
- Three quarters (77%) of the detected viruses were type A, and 23% were type B. The vast majority of the subtyped A viruses were A(H1N1)pdm09, and B viruses ascribed to a lineage were B/Victoria.
- Since week 52/2015, several eastern European countries have reported from sentinel systems increasing numbers of cases of severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) associated with A(H1N1)pdm09. Similarly, in western European countries reporting laboratory-confirmed influenza in hospitals and intensive care units (ICUs), influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 has been detected in 158 of 385 cases since the start of the season.

[European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 23 January 2016:

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among U.S. military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated Fort Leonard Wood and CGTC Cape May.

[Naval Health Research Center](#)

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

For 10 - 23 January 2016 (Surveillance Weeks 2 & 3)

During 10 - 23 January, a total of 152 specimens were collected and received from 44 locations. Results were finalized for 133 specimens from 38 locations. Ten influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, one influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 co-infection, and five influenza B viruses were identified during Week 2. During Week 3, seven influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and two influenza B viruses were identified. [US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

WHO: Influenza Update

25 January - High levels of influenza activity continued in some countries in western Asia. And increasing influenza activity was reported in northern America, northern and eastern Europe and northern/temperate Asia. Most detected influenza viruses were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09.

- Influenza activity was slowly increasing but still below seasonal expected levels in northern America. In northern and eastern Europe increasing influenza activity was reported, with still low activity in Western and Southern Europe. An increase in severe acute respiratory infections due to influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 was reported from some eastern European countries.
- In northern/temperate Asia, influenza activity was ongoing in Mongolia and was increasing in the Republic of Korea.
- In central and western Asia, influenza activity remained at high levels where Israel, Jordan and Oman reported increased influenza activity, predominantly due to influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and influenza B viruses. Pakistan reported also elevated influenza activity, predominantly due to influenza A(H1N1)pdm09.
- Few influenza virus detections were reported by countries in tropical Africa.
- In tropical countries of the Americas, Central America and the Caribbean, respiratory virus activity was at low levels.
- In tropical Asia, countries in southern and south east Asia overall reported ongoing low influenza activity.
- In temperate countries of the Southern Hemisphere respiratory virus activity remained low. [WHO](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Food testing start-up looks to stand out with a new wrinkle

27 January - ... Invisible Sentinel, has developed a patented technology called Veriflow that uses a hand-held device to detect the DNA of micro-organisms like E. coli, salmonella and listeria quickly and at a relatively affordable price. The technology has been approved by AOAC International, an association that sets standards for microbial food testing. "It's like a pregnancy test — one line negative and two lines positive — except that it's amplified DNA that you're reading," said Benjamin Pascal, a co-founder of Invisible Sentinel. Today, according to Invisible Sentinel, 114 companies in the United States and more than 50 internationally use the technology at more than 250 different sites in 18 countries. [The New York Times](#)

Listeria outbreak linked to Dole's packaged salads

22 January - A listeria outbreak has been linked to packaged salads made by Dole at a processing facility in Ohio, health officials announced on Friday. Twelve people have been hospitalized with Listeriosis, an infection caused by exposure to the listeria bacteria, and one person in Michigan died in connection with the outbreak, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported. On Thursday, Dole told the CDC that it had stopped production at its processing facility in Springfield, Ohio, because of the issue. ... "The company also reported that it is withdrawing all packaged salads currently on the market that were produced at this facility," the CDC says in an online statement. [Time](#)

Mondelez settles with California over lead in Nabisco Ginger Snaps

22 January - Mondelez International Inc has agreed to pay \$750,000, improve its product sourcing and testing, and hire a food quality auditor after failing to warn California shoppers that its Nabisco Ginger Snaps contained excessive levels of lead. In announcing the settlement with the maker of Oreo and Chips Ahoy cookies, California Attorney General Kamala Harris on Friday said testing revealed that a serving of the ginger snaps contained lead levels up to nine times the threshold requiring a warning under California's Proposition 65. [Reuters](#)

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WELLNESS

4 technologies innovating mental health in 2016

25 January - ... The unique nature of mental health services can make it difficult to develop technology that successfully intervenes in human behavior and actually creates measurable, positive outcomes. However, with advancing research and awareness geared towards mental health issues, more companies are innovating in this space than ever before. ...

Pacifica: ...Pacifica incorporates principles of cognitive behavioral therapy, relaxation and wellness to break the cycle of anxiety. **Pala-linq:** [A] mobile app with wearable and Web components that provide support to those recovering from alcohol and/or drug addiction. By tracking mind, body and spiritual activity levels, Pala-linq's technology will keep users close to their support network and on track with recovery goals to prevent relapse. **Spire:** Spire is the wearable technology that can detect emotions, breathing patterns and other physiological signs that signal how users are feeling. Once emotion is detected, this device will send a notification to your phone with suggestions on how to relax or other wellness tips needed to improve your mood. **Fisher Wallace Stimulator:** [An] FDA-approved neurostimulation device to help treat depression, anxiety and insomnia. ... By gently

stimulating the brain, the headband-like device that you place over your temples stimulates the brain to release serotonin and dopamine. [Forbes](#)

Caffeine unlikely to make hearts jittery

27 January - That extra morning espresso, chai tea, or plain old cup of joe may give you a buzz, but it probably will not make your heart take extra beats, according to findings from a study examining the impact of food and drink consumption on cardiac ectopy. Based on data gathered in ... the Cardiovascular Health Study, there was no evidence that frequent consumption of caffeine-containing foods, including coffee, tea, or chocolate, had any impact on premature atrial contractions (PACs) and premature ventricular contractions (PVCs), reported Shalini Dixit, BA, of the University of California San Francisco, and colleagues. [MedPage Today](#)

Children prescribed with antidepressants likely to become suicidal: study

28 January - ... Findings of a new study have added yet another evidence of the dangers associated with use of antidepressants by young patients. The study ... found a link between certain antidepressants and increased risk for aggression as well as suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts in young people who use them. ... [Researchers] ... looked at clinical study reports of 70 trials involving more than 18,000 patients and found that while there was no significant link between use of antidepressants and aggressive behaviors and suicidal tendencies among adults, children and adolescents who take serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) ... have double the risk for these potentially harmful behaviors. The researchers likewise discovered that reports on clinical trials by pharmaceutical companies often downplayed the most serious side effects of these drugs. [Tech Times](#)

Gun violence not a mental health issue, experts say, pointing to 'anger,' suicides

25 January - ... [The] need to keep firearms out of the hands of people with serious mental illness ... is not the same as saying gun violence is a mental health issue. ... People with serious mental illness are three times more likely than those who are not mentally ill to commit violent acts against themselves or others, but that is still a very small number of people, about 2.9% of people with serious mental illness within a year. ... When talking about gun deaths from suicide, however, epidemiologists say mental illness legitimately becomes an area of concern. Suicides accounted for 61% of all firearm fatalities in the United States in 2014. ... The American Psychological Association ... has called for the development and testing of better methods to identify high-risk individuals who should be denied gun access, implying that current criteria under federal law related to mental illness are inadequate to serve as a basis for gun disqualification. [CNN](#)

HIV can persist in body despite drug therapy

27 January - Even when blood tests of HIV patients on antiretroviral drugs show no sign of the AIDS-causing virus, it can still be replicating in lymphoid tissue, researchers report. The study offers important new insight into how HIV persists in the body despite treatment with the powerful drugs. ... To reach their finding, they examined viral sequences in samples of lymph node and blood cells from three HIV-infected patients who had no detectable virus in their blood. And what they found was that a viral reservoir in lymphoid tissue, which scientists believed held long-lived infected cells in a resting state, was being constantly replenished with infected cells. ... The study ... highlights the importance of delivering high concentrations of antiretroviral drugs to all areas in the body where HIV can grow. Developing drugs that can reach this newly identified HIV "sanctuary" in lymphoid tissue may be the first step towards a cure, the researchers suggested. [MedlinePlus](#)

Improving the state of mental health care in 2016

24 January - Inequity between mental health care and physical health care is cause for concern. ... Last year politicians pushed through numerous legal motions that will advance the treatment of mental health in the United States.

- Arizona passed housing legislation that created a trust fund offering rental assistance for individuals with serious mental illnesses.
- Minnesota passed a bill allowing the state to supplement federal dollars to support evidence-based First-Episode Psychosis (FEP) programs.
- Utah passed a bill requiring collaboration between state departments of corrections and mental health, leading to better services offered within the criminal justice system.
- Virginia passed legislation requiring both public and private health facilities to report psychiatric inpatient beds at least once per day, which will help patients in crisis find care faster.
- Washington passed legislation to combat the shortage of mental health professionals through leveraging telehealth services. [Forbes](#)

Insomnia treatment with cognitive behavior therapy can ease depression symptoms

28 January - Not being able to sleep adequately is linked to a depressed state and vice-versa. A new study found that the same link is also applicable to management because insomnia treatment with cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) can ease depression symptoms. Researchers from the Black Dog Institute tested an online CBT-based insomnia measure called Sleep Healthy Using The Internet (SHUTi) to see if it can alleviate depressive manifestations and prevent progress to major depression. The study found that the intervention can treat both insomnia and depression. [Tech Times](#)

Smoking cessation pill no better than nicotine patches or lozenges

26 January - Smoking cessation pills aren't any better than nicotine patches or lozenges at helping people successfully quit, a U.S. study suggests. Researchers gave more than 1,000 smokers counseling to help them quit and randomly assigned them to receive three months of treatment with either lozenges plus patches, patches alone or varenicline, a cessation drug sold as Chantix in the U.S. ... After a year, roughly one in five smokers successfully kicked the habit regardless of which treatment they used, the researchers report in JAMA, though there were more side effects such as insomnia, nausea, and constipation with varenicline. [Reuters](#)

Suicide risk rises among family, friends of suicide victims: study

26 January - Family and friends of people who commit suicide are at high risk for attempted suicide themselves, a new British study finds. ... The study included more than 3,400 university staff and students, aged 18 to 40, who experienced the sudden death of a relative or friend from natural causes or suicide. Those whose relative or friend died of suicide were 65 percent more likely to attempt suicide than if the person died from natural causes. The absolute risk of attempted suicide was one in 10 if the relative or friend died of suicide. Those whose relative or friend died of suicide were also 80 percent more likely to leave school or work. Overall, 8 percent of those bereaved by suicide dropped out of school or their job, according to the researchers at University College London. [MedlinePlus](#)

Universal depression screening urged

26 January - All adults, including pregnant and postpartum women, should be screened for depression, said the U.S. Preventative Service Task Force (USPSTF) after finalizing their ... recommendation ... for depression screening in all adults. Moreover, there should be adequate systems in place to ensure "accurate diagnosis, effective treatment and appropriate follow-up" of patients with depression, reported Albert L. Siu, MD, and the USPSTF. ... The USPSTF found "convincing evidence" that screening helps accurately identify adult patients, as well as pregnant and postpartum patients, with depression in primary care settings. While the benefits and harms of treating adult patients had already been established, the USPSTF found adequate evidence that treatment of pregnant and postpartum women with cognitive behavioral therapy improved clinical outcomes, and there was adequate evidence that the magnitude of harms of this treatment was small to none. [MedPage Today](#)

Why do people put on differing amounts of weight?

26 January - Foods that make some of us put on weight can have little effect on others, according to research being carried out in Israel. It might be time to rethink the way we diet. ... [A] team at the Weizmann Institute of Science [is] in the process of monitoring 1,000

people in absolutely minute detail to see exactly how their bodies react to food - and their first results are rewriting the textbooks on our relationship with food. ... By comparing the gut microbes of the hundreds of study volunteers with their blood sugar responses, Segal and Elinav have been able to discover that our microbes might be the key to why our blood sugar spikes with different foods are so individual. The chemicals they produce, it seems, control our bodies to this extent. What is particularly exciting about that fact is that - unlike our gene - we can actually change our microbes. And that is very good news indeed for any of us who find that our favourite foods turn out to be "bad" for our blood sugar levels. [BBC News](#)

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USAFRICOM

Tanzania: Thousands infected in Tanzania cholera outbreak

22 January - Tanzania is struggling to contain a deadly outbreak of cholera that has claimed at least 222 lives since August, the United Nations has said. In a statement released to Al Jazeera on Thursday, the World Health Organisation and UNICEF, the United Nations' children's fund, said that the outbreak was straining local capacities and resources, and posed "a high risk to lives and the economy". According to the UN, the number of reported cases of cholera has climbed to 14,303 across 27 districts in the country since the outbreak began last August. [Al Jazeera](#)

Typhoid in Africa: Zimbabwe and South Africa



28 January – ... [The] typhoid fever "non-outbreak" in South Africa has grown in Gauteng province and now cases are being reported from Western Cape. Gauteng Health officials reported two additional typhoid cases, bringing the number of infected people to six. The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) expects the case count to grow: "We would not be surprised to pick up a few more cases over the next few weeks." One patient died from the bacterial disease. In addition, two children and one adult have been diagnosed with typhoid fever in Western Cape. The first case was identified on 10 January and the latest one on 20 January and some cases have a travel history to Zimbabwe where the capital of Harare is also experiencing an increase in cases. Harare City Health Director, Dr Prosper Chonzi, revealed that six cases of the disease had been reported in the last week. The cases have been linked to contaminated food. [Outbreak News Today](#)

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Saudi Arabia: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

26 January - Between 27 December 2015 and 13 January 2016, the National IHR Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia notified WHO of 4 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection. [WHO](#)

Syria: Deprivation in Syria deepens as U.N. talks loom

27 January - Two top United Nations relief officials expressed growing frustration on Wednesday over the organization's inability to deliver aid to destitute Syrians trapped by war, saying that the number of besieged areas has risen to 18 from 15 in the past few weeks and that nearly half a million people may be at risk of starving to death. ... Mr. O'Brien, the United Nations emergency relief coordinator, told Council members that roughly 4.6 million people lived in besieged or hard-to-reach areas, and that combatants had ignored the Council's resolutions requiring aid convoys be given safe passage. Ms. Cousin, the executive director of the World Food Program, echoed Mr. O'Brien's admonitions and said that "close to half a million" Syrians were completely cut off from all assistance. [The New York Times](#)

United Arab Emirates: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

26 January - Between 11 and 14 January 2016, the National IHR Focal Point of the United Arab Emirates notified WHO of 2 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, including 1 death. ... Globally, since September 2012, WHO has been notified of 1,630 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 587 related deaths. [WHO](#)

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Russia: HIV cases in Russia pass the one million mark

22 January - ... Russia registered its millionth HIV-positive patient - a 26-year-old woman in the south of the country - on Wednesday, Vadim Pokrovsky, the head of the federal AIDS centre, told the Reuters news agency on Thursday. But he said the real number of HIV-positive Russians could be as high as 1.5 million, or 1 percent of the population, based on

his and other expert estimates. ... He warned that Russia was "on the threshold" of moving from a concentrated epidemic, where HIV is highly prevalent in one subset of the population, to a generalised epidemic, where HIV rates among the general population are sufficient for sexual networking to drive new infections. [Al Jazeera](#)

United Kingdom: Is scurvy making a comeback?

22 January - ... The numbers are very small, but scurvy is on the rise in England, according to official figures from the Health and Social Care Information Centre. In the year up to April 2014, it was the primary diagnosis behind 16 hospital admissions and the primary or secondary cause of 94 admissions. Between 2009 and 2014, admissions related to scurvy went up by 27%. That's in line with percentage increases in hospital admissions for malnutrition and gout - a common Victorian complaint traditionally associated with too much port and an unhealthy lifestyle - over the same period. The most recent research, conducted in 2014, suggests that gout currently affects one in 40 people in the UK. [BBC News](#)

United Kingdom: Mild weather in Britain means giant rat population could soar up to 200 million

28 January – The warm winter could see Britain's giant rat population soar to up to 200 million, experts warn. The mild weather will see an increase in numbers of super rats up to 2ft long. ... The British Pest Control Association said the spread of super rats has sped up in recent years because many shop-bought poisons are ineffective. Some rats have developed such an immunity they are feeding on supposedly toxic pellets. The BPCA's Simon Forrester said "Reports of poison-resistant rats have been increasing and it seems likely that there'll be a further surge in numbers. [News.com.au](#)

United Kingdom: Report cites multiple failings in UK response to Ebola outbreak

25 January - The UK response to the Ebola outbreak met with delays and confusion on many fronts, including government steps, public health response, research priorities, and airport screening decisions, according to a parliamentary report today from the Science & Technology Committee. ... Systemic delays included a lag in acting on Public Health England's disease surveillance data and a failure to convene a UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) until October 2014, 3 months after the government's emergency response committee met. The MPs recommended that in the future the country's chief scientist trigger the formation of a SAGE.

[CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

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U.S.: 241 cases of dengue fever reported on Hawaii Island

27 January - The state Dept. of Health confirmed on Wednesday, Jan. 27, four new cases of dengue fever on Hawaii Island since Monday, Jan. 25, bringing the total to 241. Five cases were potentially infectious to mosquitoes (illness onset 1/17/16 to 1/21/16) while 236 cases were no longer infectious (illness onset 9/11/15 to 1/16/16). Of the confirmed cases, 217 are Hawaii Island residents and 24 are visitors. [KHON2](#)

U.S.: At least 42 killed in snowstorm-related deaths

25 January - At least 42 people have died as a result of the mammoth snowstorm that pounded the eastern U.S. The deaths occurred in car accidents, from carbon monoxide poisoning, and from heart attacks while shoveling snow. [AP](#)

U.S.: CDC urging dialysis providers and facilities to assess and improve infection control practices

27 January - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has received an increased number of reports of newly acquired hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection among patients undergoing hemodialysis. Infection control lapses in dialysis care could expose patients to HCV. Any case of new HCV infection in a patient undergoing hemodialysis should prompt immediate action. CDC is urging dialysis providers and facilities to:

- 1) Assess current infection control practices and environmental cleaning and disinfection practices within the facility to ensure adherence to infection control standards;
- 2) Address any gaps identified by the assessments;
- 3) Screen patients for HCV, following CDC guidelines, to detect infections, determine treatment potential, and halt secondary transmission; and
- 4) Promptly report all acute HCV infections to the state or local health department. [CDC](#)

U.S.: Fight to lower drug prices forces some to switch medication

25 January - Steve Miller has some customers on offer. Millions of them in fact. The chief medical officer at Express Scripts, the largest pharmacy benefit manager in the U.S., has been essentially auctioning off his 80 million customers to the drug companies that will give him the best deal. ... Express Scripts and its rivals including CVS/Caremark and OptumRX manage prescription drug coverage for insurers and employers. They're trying to spark price wars among drugmakers by refusing to pay for some brand-name medications unless they get a big discount. The result is that average costs for many drugs are falling. At the same time, consumers are being forced to change medications, sometimes to brands

that don't work as well for them. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Increases in acute hepatitis B virus infections — Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia, 2006–2013

29 January - The national incidence of hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection has remained stable during 2006–2013 at 1 case per 100,000 persons. Currently, as many as 2.2 million persons are chronically infected with HBV. Injection drug use is a risk factor for HBV transmission. Since 2009, three states in the Appalachian region have reported an increase in cases of acute HBV infection, among non-Hispanic whites, persons aged 30–39 years, and injection drug users. Compared with cases that occurred during 2006–2009, a significant increase in the proportion of cases in which injection drug use was reported during 2010–2013. The increase in incident HBV-infections has the potential to impede the nation's hepatitis B elimination strategy. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: When the water turned brown



23 January - Standing at a microphone in September holding up a baby bottle, Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, a local pediatrician, said she was deeply worried about the water. The number of Flint children with elevated levels of lead in their blood had risen alarmingly since the city changed its water supply the previous year, her analysis showed. Within hours of Dr. Hanna-Attisha's news conference, Michigan state officials pushed back — hard. A Department of Health and Human Services official said that the state had not seen similar results and that it was working with a much larger set of data. ... Nearly a year and a half after the city started using water from the long-polluted Flint River ... the authorities reversed course, acknowledging that the number of children with high lead levels in this struggling, industrial city had jumped, and no one should be drinking unfiltered tap water. ... Already this month, federal and state investigations have been announced, National Guard troops were distributing thousands of bottles of water and filters, and Mr. Snyder was calling for millions in state dollars to fix a situation he acknowledged was a "catastrophe." Yet interviews, documents and emails show that as every major decision was made over more than a year, officials at all levels of government acted in ways that contributed to the public health emergency and allowed it to persist for months. [The New York Times](#)

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India: India drinks and smokes less now

24 January - The preliminary findings from National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) ... found that across the board, people — both men and women — in India are smoking less than they were a decade ago. Not just tobacco, even alcohol consumption among Indians has fallen. According to the NFHS-4 data, in the 13 States surveyed, tobacco use among men has fallen from 50 per cent in 2005-06 to 47 per cent in 2015. Similarly, alcohol consumption among men has fallen from 38 per cent to 34 per cent. ... [Despite] an increase in women smokers, the overall consumption of cigarettes has fallen in India. As per the health ministry statistics, 93.2 billion sticks were consumed in 2014-15, nearly 10 billion less than in 2012-13. [The Hindu](#)

Laos: The cost of America's "secret war" in Laos

26 January - The United States may increase the \$15 million a year it spends on dealing with the legacy of its "secret" bombing of Laos, said Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday in the capital, Vientiane. ... Funding is already at record levels, up from \$5 million per year when I visited the country in 2010. At the time, one person a day was being killed or injured by the unexploded ordnance (UXO) that litters Laos. "We're now down to about 50 a year, and 50 a year is still too many," said Kerry. The decrease in casualty rates has been helped by the increase in funding for programmes aimed at clearing UXO, as well as mapping contaminated areas and paying for rehabilitation for victims. [IRIN](#)

Myanmar: Malnutrition spikes in Myanmar's Rakhine state after floods

28 January - The number of severely malnourished children has spiked in northern Rakhine state in Myanmar, a European Union agency said, after floods six months ago dealt a new blow to an area home to a persecuted population with little access to basic services. ... [Many] Rohingya are excluded from healthcare, education and employment. Widespread floods across Myanmar six months ago - caused by torrential rains and Cyclone Komen - destroyed crops, damaged rice paddies and contaminated water sources, worsening food insecurity. The number of severely malnourished children under the age of five newly admitted to a European Commission-backed feeding program in Maungdaw district shot up after the floods to more than 1,500 in October, from 1,200 new admittances in August and 500 in July, a regional official of an EU agency said. [Reuters](#)

Rare cold snap hits east Asia, blamed for more than 65 deaths

25 January - Unusually cold weather in eastern Asia has been blamed for more than 65 deaths, disrupted transportation and brought the first snow to a subtropical city in southern

China in almost 50 years. **TAIWAN:** Temperatures in Taiwan's capital of Taipei plunged to a 16-year low of 4 degrees Celsius (39 Fahrenheit), killing 57 mostly elderly people, according to government officials. ... **MAINLAND CHINA:** Most parts of mainland China experienced their coldest weather in decades over the weekend. The southern city of Guangzhou, which has a humid subtropical climate, saw snow for the first time since 1967 on Sunday. The cold led to the deaths of four strawberry farmers who died of carbon monoxide poisoning when they turned up the heat in a greenhouse in Anhui province in the east. **JAPAN:** Heavy snow in western and central Japan left five people dead over the weekend and possibly a sixth on Monday. ... **SOUTH KOREA:** Temperatures in the capital, Seoul, fell to minus 18 degrees Celsius on Sunday, the lowest since 2001. On Saturday, Jeju Island received 12 centimetres (4.7 inches) of snow, the heaviest since 1984. [CTV News](#)

Thailand quarantines 32 people after second MERS case confirmed

25 January - Thailand has quarantined 32 people as it seeks to prevent the spread of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) after a second case of the virus was detected on Friday, a health ministry official said on Monday. The virus was found in a 71-year-old Omani man traveling to Bangkok. His son, taxi drivers, hotel staff and passengers on the same plane are among those quarantined for two weeks. [Reuters](#)

Vietnam: The mental scars of Vietnam's war veterans

22 January - ... There are at least 2.6 million war veterans in Vietnam, but mental health experts say it is impossible to know how many of them suffer from mental disorders because the country lacks comprehensive epidemiological data on mental illnesses. But if the general population is any guide, the experts say, many veterans likely suffer from undiagnosed mood disorders that do not qualify as severe psychiatric problems. ... The last official survey, completed in 2003 by the National Psychiatric Hospital, estimated that 12 million people, or 14.9 percent of Vietnam's population, suffered from 10 common mental disorders - about the same rate as in other low- and middle-income countries. ... But the survey omitted thousands of other disorders, and the results are now a decade old. [Al Jazeera](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Brazil: Zika virus adding to long list of Brazil Olympics woes

24 January - ... Brazil is suffering from an outbreak of Zika virus, which health officials here say may be behind a spike in cases of microcephaly [and] the paralysis-causing Guillain-

Barre syndrome. ... The Rio 2016 local organizing committee stressed that because the Aug. 5-21 games are during the southern hemisphere winter, Brazil's dry season, the mosquito population will be smaller. In any case, teams will scour Rio's Olympic and Paralympic sites daily, looking for stagnant waters that are the breeding grounds for the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that transmits Zika, as well as dengue and chikungunya.... [Venues] for sailing, canoeing and rowing are rife with high virus levels linked to Rio's outdated sewage treatment system. [CBS News](#)

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