

2 October 2015

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center



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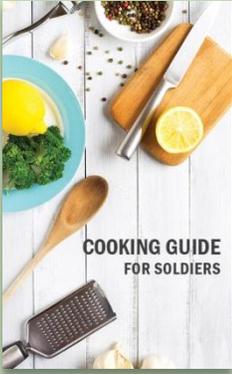
U.S. MILITARY

Army releases servicewide breastfeeding policy

30 September - The Army on Tuesday became the final military branch to issue a servicewide breastfeeding policy, with a seven-point memo from Army Secretary John

**Performance Triad:
A Cooking Guide for
Soldiers**

Guidance on food shopping, menus, cooking devices, preparing meals and nutritional facts is available from the [APHC Health Information Products eCatalog](#).



McHugh offering basic guidelines on facility requirements, supplies and related concerns. Among the directives, which apply to active, Guard and Reserve members: Breastfeeding soldiers will be provided with a designated "private space with locking capabilities, an electrical outlet and access to a safe water source." ... Breastfeeding soldiers remain eligible for field training and other exercises, but must be given "private space ... to express milk" during such activities. [Army Times](#)

Assessment of ICD-9-based case definitions for influenza-like illness surveillance

September 2015 - Population-based surveillance of influenza routinely relies on administrative medical encounter databases and ICD-9 codes. ... As coding practices may have changed over time, this analysis was done to determine the sensitivity, specificity, and positive predictive value (PPV) of the current ILI case definition and three alternative case definitions for the 2014–2015 influenza season. Influenza laboratory tests conducted on specimens from DoD beneficiaries during the 2014–2015 season were matched to ambulatory and inpatient medical encounters. The current DoD ILI case definition had high sensitivity (92%) but low specificity (30%) and moderate PPV (63%). A more specific ILI case definition utilizing only codes with greater than 75% influenza positivity for the matched laboratory test had high specificity (96%) and PPV (96%) and moderate sensitivity (62%). The current ILI case definition is sufficient for broad, sensitive population-based surveillance; however, an alternative case definition may be more appropriate when there is a need to maximize specificity. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Despite concussions, boxing is still required for military cadets

29 September - ... For more than a century, boxing for male freshmen [at West Point] has been a rite of passage and an academic requirement — one they share with male cadets at the Air Force Academy, and cadets of both sexes at the Naval Academy. Officials say there is no better way to teach the grit needed for combat. "We want to expose them to fear and stress and teach them a confidence to respond," Lt. Col. Nicholas Gist, the director of physical education at West Point, said as he watched the cadets fight. "We'd rather teach that at the academy than in Iraq or Afghanistan." But data obtained by The New York Times shows that the lesson comes at considerable cost. Boxing accounts for nearly one out of every five concussions at West Point, and one out of four at the Air Force Academy. So far this school year, boxing has caused a quarter of all concussions at the Naval Academy — more than twice as many as football. [New York Times](#)

DoD releases 2nd quarter suicide figures

1 October - Suicides among active-duty service members rose by 20 percent in the second quarter of this year to 71, according to a new report released Wednesday by the Defense Department. The Marine Corps had the highest percentage increase, 12 suicides, up from three the previous quarter. The Army had 28 active-duty suicides, the Air Force, 17, and the

Low-Nicotine Cigarettes

In this 6-week study, reduced-nicotine cigarettes versus standard-nicotine cigarettes reduced nicotine exposure and dependence and the number of cigarettes smoked.



Navy, 14, according to the report. Over the first six months of 2015, 130 active-duty troops took their own lives, along with 89 reserve members and 56 National Guardsmen. In the second quarter, the reserve component experienced 47 suicides and the National Guard, 27. [Military Times](#)

Global warming: Army health readiness concern?



22 September - Climate change might be the most significant threat facing the Army's health readiness in the future, one Army science advisor said. Dr. Steven Cersovsky spoke during the Association of the U.S. Army's "Hot Topics" forum on health readiness in Arlington, Virginia, Sept. 22. ...

More heat-related injuries will be among the most obvious problems coming with global warming, Cersovsky said. ... Air quality will worsen with climate change, he said, including an increase in particulate matter such as dust and pollen, and the ozone layer may be affected. This will cause an increase in respiratory problems. ... Behavioral health problems will also increase, he said, caused by the high levels of stress associated with any disaster - both catastrophic disasters and "slow-moving" ones like drought. Cersovsky said that climate change will cause an increase in diseases such as malaria, and that water-borne diseases may become more prevalent in regions that see an increase in precipitation. [Army.mil](#)

Solid waste characterization study conducted at Natick

28 September - A team of three from the Army Public Health Center, or APHC, were recently at the Natick Soldier Systems Center, or NSSC, conducting a solid waste characterization study to assess the amount of trash the installation is producing. "[The study] will help the installation save money in the long run when we determine how much of the solid waste that goes out in our trash cans is recyclable, how much is organic material, [and] how much of it is truly solid waste," said Rich Valcourt, an environmental engineer with U.S. Army Garrison Natick. ... The APHC's mission included receiving trash from each building, sorting through each bag, and weighing the trash by each of 30 categories. The main categories were paper, plastic, metal, glass, organics, construction and demolition waste, and special waste. [Army.mil](#)

Survival rate of combat casualties improves following implementation of golden hour policy

30 September - A mandate in 2009 that prehospital helicopter transport of critically injured combat casualties occur in 60 minutes or less (golden hour policy) has resulted in a reduction in time between critical injury and definitive care for combat casualties in Afghanistan and an improvement in survival. ... In 2009, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates mandated a standard of 60 minutes or less, from call to arrival at the treatment facility, for prehospital helicopter transport of U.S. military casualties with critical injuries,

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Domestic violence goes against the Army Values and has negative effects on both Soldier and Family readiness. The Army makes it clear in word and deed that domestic violence is unacceptable and not tolerated, and resources are available for those who need help. The Army is committed to fully supporting its Families and assisting in the development of their resiliency, health and well-being.

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THE OFFICIAL FOCUS OF THE U.S. ARMY

cutting in half the previous goal of 2 hours. ... For the total casualty population, the percentage killed in action (16 percent [386 of 2,411] vs 9.9 percent [964 of 9,755]) and the case fatality rate ([CFR] 13.7 (469 of 3,429) vs 7.6 (1,344 of 17,660) were higher before vs. after the mandate, while the percentage died of wounds (4.1 percent vs 4.3 percent) remained unchanged. [EurekAlert!](#)

VA urged to favor veterans on toxic exposure claims

30 September - The Veterans Affairs Department must learn to favor veterans when deciding whether to approve claims for illnesses related to environmental exposures and contaminants, senators said during a Tuesday hearing on Capitol Hill. From the South China Sea to the Arabian Desert, from Iraq to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and elsewhere, service members have been exposed to pollutants that have harmed their health, yet the VA continues to engage in "passive-aggressive rebuttal of scientific findings" to deny them health care and compensation, charged Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C. ... Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., and Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., have co-sponsored a bill that would require VA to establish a center for researching the health conditions of descendants of troops who may have been exposed to toxic chemicals. Blumenthal urged the VA to speed up the process for recognizing the health consequences of exposure to toxic chemicals.

[Military Times](#)

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GLOBAL

Airports' backscatter scanners met radiation standards, panel says

29 September - Before they were removed following an outcry over privacy, backscatter X-ray security scanners at airports also raised worries among some travelers and scientists about exposure to potentially harmful radiation. ... The machines, pulled in 2013, expose travelers and airport workers to a dose of radiation well within acceptable limits — a factor of 10 below recommended safety standards — concludes the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, a private nonprofit organization chartered by Congress to provide expert technical advice. ... The airport scanners currently in use rely on radio waves — rather than ionizing radiation — to produce images, which are displayed on standard outlines of human bodies, instead of depictions of a person's actual physique, as was the case with backscatters. [Reuters](#)

Blanket immigrant TB screening inefficient, study says

29 September - Blanket screening of all immigrants for tuberculosis (TB)—as is done in Canada, the United States, Australia, and some European countries—wastes resources and

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with articles classified up to
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clearance and a SIPRNet
account.

should instead focus on only those arriving from high-risk countries. ... The investigators linked pre-immigration medical records for 944,375 immigrants who settled in Ontario from 2002 to 2011 to active TB reporting data in Ontario in the same period. They found that immigrants from 6 countries accounted for 87.3% of active TB cases detected through pre-immigration screening, and 10 countries accounted for 80.4% of cases detected. Although immigrants hailed from 214 countries, all cases of active TB were detected in people from just 35 nations. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Children with H.I.V. more likely to die of malaria

28 September - Children infected with H.I.V. appear much more likely than those who are not to die with severe malaria, a new study has found. It may make sense to give these children malaria drugs protectively, the authors said. The research, which looked at 3,000 Malawian children who went into comas with cerebral malaria and included autopsies on more than 100 who had died, partly resolves a question that has long puzzled H.I.V. specialists. Does H.I.V. make malaria more lethal? ... Dr. Kim and her colleagues found that about 20 percent of the children autopsied after malaria deaths were also infected with H.I.V., a far higher rate than that seen in Malawian children over all. Small blood vessels in their brains were more thickly clogged with platelets and white blood cells than the brain capillaries of children who had malaria alone, the researchers also found. [New York Times](#)

Dormant viral genes may awaken to cause ALS

30 September - Scientists at the National Institutes of Health discovered that reactivation of ancient viral genes embedded in the human genome may cause the destruction of neurons in some forms of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). The results, published in *Science Translational Medicine*, suggest a link between human endogenous retroviral genes (HERVs) and ALS. The findings also raise the question of whether antiretroviral drugs, similar to those used for suppressing HIV, may help some ALS patients. [NIH](#)

Human reproduction, health broadly damaged by toxic chemicals: report

1 October - Exposure to toxic chemicals in food, water and air is linked to millions of deaths, and costs billions of dollars every year, according to a report published Thursday by an international organization of medical professionals. Among the poor health outcomes linked to pesticides, air pollutants, plastics and other chemicals, according to the report from the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), an organization representing obstetrical and gynecological associations from 125 countries, are miscarriage and still births, an increase in cancer, attention problems and hyperactivity. [Reuters](#)

Millions more need H.I.V. treatment, W.H.O. says

30 September - Everyone who has H.I.V. should immediately be put on antiretroviral triple therapy and everyone at risk of becoming infected should be offered protective doses of similar drugs, the World Health Organization said on Wednesday as it issued new H.I.V.

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treatment and prevention guidelines. The guidelines increase by nine million the number of people who should get treatment and by untold millions the number who should get protective doses. Previous guidelines recommended them for gay men, prostitutes, people with infected partners and others; the new guidelines effectively bring in millions of women and girls in Africa. [New York Times](#)

New method reveals real-time death risk of Korean MERS outbreak

30 September - University of Tokyo researchers have developed a real-time statistical method to estimate death risk (i.e., the probability of death given infection) and identify risk factors of death during an infectious disease outbreak. Using this method, the researchers revealed that the death risk of the 2015 Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) epidemic in the Republic of Korea for patients with an illness prior to MERS infection was as high as 48.2 percent for those over 60 years while it was below 15 percent for younger patients. This method will be useful when the death risk of a novel infectious disease has to be quantified using data from small numbers of patients during the course of an outbreak, providing information on which age groups to minimize exposure in hospitals, nursing homes and daycare facilities. [Infection Control Today](#)

New test detects all viruses that infect people, animals

29 September – A new test detects virtually any virus that infects people and animals, according to research at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, where the technology was developed. Many thousands of viruses are known to cause illness in people and animals, and making a diagnosis can be an exhaustive exercise, at times requiring a battery of different tests. That's because current tests aren't sensitive enough to detect low levels of viral bugs or are limited to detecting only those viruses suspected of being responsible for a patient's illness. ... To develop the test, the researchers targeted unique stretches of DNA or RNA from every known group of viruses that infects humans and animals. In all, the research team included 2 million unique stretches of genetic material from viruses in the test. These stretches of material are used as probes to pluck out viruses in patient samples that are a genetic match. The matched viral material then is analyzed using high-throughput genetic sequencing. [EurekAlert!](#)

Rare Q fever outbreak reported in American medical tourists

30 September - Five Americans came down with an unusual illness after traveling to Germany for a controversial treatment involving injections with sheep cells, health officials reported Wednesday. The treatment is not permitted in the U.S. The New York residents received the "live cell therapy" in May last year. About a week later, they developed fever, fatigue and other symptoms of a dangerous bacterial illness called Q fever. Two told investigators that they were part of a group that, for the last five years, had traveled to Germany twice a year for the injections. They said they get them to improve their health and

vitality. There is no published clinical proof the treatments work, health officials say. [Modern Healthcare](#)

Scientists to bypass brain damage by re-encoding memories

29 September - Researchers ... have developed a brain prosthesis that is designed to help individuals suffering from memory loss. The prosthesis, which includes a small array of electrodes implanted into the brain, has performed well in laboratory testing in animals and is currently being evaluated in human patients. ... With the permission of patients who had electrodes implanted in their hippocampi to treat chronic seizures, Hampson and Deadwyler read the electrical signals created during memory formation at two regions of the hippocampus, then sent that information to Song and Berger to construct the model. The team then fed those signals into the model and read how the signals generated from the first region of the hippocampus were translated into signals generated by the second region of the hippocampus. In hundreds of trials conducted with nine patients, the algorithm accurately predicted how the signals would be translated with about 90 percent accuracy. [EurekAlert!](#)

Text reminders help people lower cholesterol, blood pressure

22 September - ... Getting texts with motivating and informative messages led patients with coronary heart disease to make behavior changes like exercising more and smoking less, according to a study published Tuesday in JAMA. ... By the end of the six-month study, patients who had received the text messages had reduced their cholesterol, blood pressure and body mass index. ... In a randomized clinical trial, more than 700 patients with coronary heart disease were split into two groups: half received four text messages per week for six months plus usual care, while the other half received just usual care. ... "Mobile health – and text messaging, maybe, in particular – represents both a scalable and affordable approach." [NPR](#)

Trying to add the 'M' word (menstruation) to the U.N.'s new goals

25 September - ... [When] a village solves the open defecation issue, women benefit too. That's what is happening in Madagascar. ... Villagers once defecated in the open; now they have constructed 14 closed-pit latrines and hand-washing facilities for the 119 residents. That's a boon for everyone, but especially the women. "It has been better to have a period since the village became open defecation free," says Razananirina Ziliarimanana, a village elder and community health worker. "We need to go to the bathroom more during [our] periods and now we can take our time in the latrine, wash our hands afterwards, have more privacy." ... The Water Council is advocating for an "indicator" under Goal 6.2 [of the U.N.'s 17 Sustainable Development Goals] that will explicitly address menstruation by measuring

the percentage of women and girls who have access to information and facilities that allow them to handle their monthly period in a hygienic way. [NPR](#)

Venom experts say global snake bite death tolls "grossly underestimated"

30 September - Venom specialists said on Wednesday disease and disability caused by snake bites is far higher than official global health estimates suggest and antivenom stocks are running dangerously low. In a joint statement after a five-day conference in Britain, the international experts said snake bites kill more people than all other so-called Neglected Tropical Diseases combined, yet get little attention or funding from the World Health Organisation (WHO) or from governments. Citing new evidence from a study in India and Bangladesh, the experts said around 46,000 people died annually of snake bites in India, plus another 6,000 in Bangladesh. The WHO estimates the annual death toll in India from snake bites is 10,000. ... The specialists also warned that antivenom stocks are running "dangerously low" in many risk areas and said there is a "real crisis in the quantity and quality of antivenoms in rural areas, where they are needed most". [Reuters](#)

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INFLUENZA

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

For 2014-2015 Influenza Season Week 37 ending September 19, 2015:

- Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) Mortality Surveillance: During week 37, 5.3% of all deaths reported through the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to P&I. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 5.8% for week 37.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: Nationwide during week 37, 1.0% of patient visits reported through the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) were due to influenza-like illness (ILI). This percentage is below the national baseline of 2.0%. [CDC](#)

NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2015 Week 38 (through 26 September 2015):

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at Fort Benning and CGTC Cape May. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

WHO: Influenza Update

21 September - Globally, influenza activity continued in the Southern hemisphere, with overall slightly decreased activity in Oceania, further decreases in temperate South America and low activity in South Africa.

- In the Northern hemisphere countries, respiratory virus activity remained low in general and influenza activity continued at low, inter-seasonal levels. Influenza type A predominated in sporadic detections. A number of countries have ceased or reduced surveillance activity during the inter-seasonal period.
- Few influenza detections were reported from Africa. In Eastern Africa, in countries with reported influenza activity, influenza type A predominated. In Western Africa, influenza activity decreased overall.
- In tropical countries of the Americas, Central America and the Caribbean, influenza activity remained at low levels, with the exception of Cuba, where still high although decreasing levels of influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) were reported, associated with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) detections.
- In tropical Asia, countries in Southern Asia and South East Asia reported overall low influenza activity although India reported a minor increase in activity predominantly with A(H1N1)pdm09. Influenza activity showed a decline but was still at mid-levels in southern China with influenza A(H3N2) predominating.
- In temperate South America, influenza activity remained low in general. However, ILI activity sharply increased in Chile with increasing influenza detections. Influenza A remained the most detected influenza virus while RSV detections decreased in the region.
- In South Africa, influenza activity remained at low levels with influenza type B viruses predominating in recent weeks.
- In Australia, influenza activity seemed to be past the peak except in South Australia where it continued to rise with predominantly influenza B viruses followed by influenza A(H3N2) virus detections. In New Zealand, influenza activity may have peaked in the second week of August with influenza A(H3N2) and B viruses predominating during the season. ILI activity was still above the seasonal threshold but below the alert threshold.

[WHO](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Deadly piglet virus may have entered U.S. on 'reusable' feed bags: USDA

1 October - The deadly piglet virus that killed millions of U.S. pigs over the past two years may have entered the country on large bags typically used to transport feed and other bulk

products, the Agriculture Department said. The report, released on Wednesday and dated Sept. 24, said the agency does not have definitive proof of how Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv) initially arrived in the United States. The virus was first identified in the country in the spring of 2013. [Reuters](#)

More than 670 illnesses in Salmonella outbreak

29 September - A salmonella outbreak that has been linked to contaminated cucumbers imported from Mexico has now caused 671 illnesses in 34 states, U.S. health officials said Tuesday. ... Three deaths have been reported in the outbreak: one in Arizona, one in California and one in Texas. So far, 131 people have been hospitalized, CDC officials said Tuesday. Fifty-one percent of the illnesses reported have been in children under the age of 18, agency officials added. [WebMD](#)

Peanut exec gets 28 years in prison for deadly Salmonella outbreak

21 September - A former corporate CEO has been sentenced to 28 years in prison for selling food that made people sick. Two other executives face jail time as well. These jail terms are by far the harshest sentences the U.S. authorities have handed down in connection with an outbreak of foodborne illness. The outbreak, in this case, happened seven years ago. More than 700 cases of salmonella poisoning were linked to contaminated peanut products. Nine people died. Investigators traced the contaminated food to a factory in Georgia operated by the Peanut Corporation of America. The outbreak, by itself, was not unprecedented. There have been bigger, and deadlier, outbreaks of foodborne illness. But the emails that investigators found at the Peanut Corporation of America set this case apart. Some of the emails came from the company's CEO, Stewart Parnell. "Stewart Parnell absolutely knew that they were shipping salmonella-tainted peanut butter. They knew it, and they covered it up," says Bill Marler, a food safety lawyer who represented some of the victims. [NPR](#)

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WELLNESS

Calcium from supplements or dairy doesn't strengthen bones, study finds

29 September - A new study should put the final nail in the coffin for any lingering beliefs that calcium supplements are good for you. The new study finds that people over 50 don't get stronger bones either by taking supplements or from eating calcium-rich foods such as dairy products. The findings, reported in the British Medical Journal's online publication

BMJ.com, support what U.S. health officials have been telling Americans for a few years now — taking calcium supplements is not just a waste of time, but it could be harmful. The extra calcium doesn't go to strengthen bones but instead can build up in the arteries, causing heart disease, or in the kidneys, causing kidney stones. [NBC News](#)

Club drug ketamine gains traction as a treatment for depression

28 September - ... Encouraged by research showing that ketamine can relieve even the worst depression in a matter of hours, these doctors are giving the drug to some of their toughest patients. And they're doing this even though ketamine lacks approval from the Food and Drug Administration for treating depression. ... Ketamine was developed as an anesthetic and received FDA approval for this use in 1970. Decades later, it became popular as a psychedelic club drug. And in 2006, a team from the National Institute of Mental Health published a landmark study showing that a single intravenous dose of ketamine produced "robust and rapid antidepressant effects" within a couple of hours. Since then, thousands of depressed patients have received "off-label" treatment with ketamine. ... So in 2010, [Dr. David] Feifel decided he wanted to offer low doses of the drug to some patients. The decision put him at odds with some prominent psychiatrists, including Tom Insel, director of the National Institute of Mental Health. "While the science is promising, ketamine is not ready for broad use in the clinic," Insel wrote in his blog a few months ago. [NPR](#)

Cooling down suicide 'hotspots'

30 September - Blocking access to "suicide hotspots" or otherwise installing safety guards such as nets under high bridges and cliffs can reduce the incidence of suicides by more than 90%, according to a study published in *The Lancet Psychiatry*. [Researchers] conducted a meta-analysis of 23 articles representing 18 unique studies examining the suicide rates of various so-called suicide hotspots. These are usually cliffs, bridges, or train tracks that are identified with suicide due to the frequency of events at those locations. The studies included in the meta-analysis assessed the effectiveness of suicide prevention strategies including those that restricted access to the location itself, strategies that employed help-seeking by posting information to suicide helplines, and those that increased the likelihood of intervention by a third party through installation of a closed-circuit TV camera, for instance. ... Pirkis and her team found that the number of deaths decreased from an average of 5.8 suicides each year (863 suicides over 150 study years) before the interventions were introduced to an average of 2.4 deaths per year after the interventions. [MedPage Today](#)

Effectiveness of talk therapy is overstated, a study says

30 September - Medical literature has overstated the benefits of talk therapy for depression, in part because studies with poor results have rarely made it into journals, researchers reported Wednesday. Their analysis is the first effort to account for unpublished tests of such therapies. Treatments like cognitive behavior therapy and interpersonal therapy are indeed effective, the analysis found, but about 25 percent less so than previously thought.

Doctors have long known that journal articles exaggerate the benefits of antidepressant drugs by about the same amount, and partly for the same reason — a publication bias in favor of encouraging findings. [New York Times](#)

F.D.A. panel weighs complaints on Essure contraceptive implant

24 September - A panel of experts convened by the Food and Drug Administration excoriated the manufacturer of a contraceptive device for not collecting data that they say could have helped predict risks for women. The device has received thousands of complaints from women who say they were harmed by it. The device, called Essure, is a small metal and polyester coil implanted into a woman's fallopian tubes to make her permanently sterile. The F.D.A. approved Essure 13 years ago after a fast-track review process that prioritized the device because it offered the first alternative to surgical sterilization and promised a quick recovery. But since then, allegations that the device has caused severe pain, perforations of fallopian tubes and possibly even death, have accumulated, and the agency decided to hold a daylong public meeting on Thursday to talk about them. [New York Times](#)

For weight control, fruit and vegetable choice may matter

28 September - Eating more fruits and vegetables can help control weight, but a new study suggests that it depends on which fruits and vegetables you eat. Researchers recorded diet information for 117,918 men and women in their 30s and 40s at the start of a study and followed them for 24 years, with interviews at four-year intervals. An overall increase in a daily serving of vegetable or fruit over a four-year period led to less weight gained — 0.25 pounds less for vegetables, and 0.53 pounds for fruit. Increased intake of berries was linked to a 1.11-pound lower weight gain, and of citrus fruits a 0.27-pound lower gain. Adding a daily serving of tofu or soy was tied to 2.47 pounds less weight gained, and of apples or pears 1.24 pounds less. Carrots and peppers were also linked to smaller gains, but potatoes, peas and corn were not. [New York Times](#)

Low-nicotine cigarettes may reduce smoking, encourage quitting

30 September - A large test of cigarettes with reduced nicotine finds that they help smokers cut down on the number of smokes they consume each day, at least in the short term, and that cigarettes with the lowest nicotine levels may even encourage smokers to quit. ... In their study, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Donny and his colleagues found that an 85 percent to 97 percent reduction in nicotine produced a 23 percent reduction in the number of cigarettes smoked. And participants who spent six weeks smoking the cigarettes with the lowest nicotine content were twice as likely to report trying to quit smoking within 30 days after the end of the study. [Reuters](#)

Voices: Are e-cigs bad for you? I'm not sure

29 September - Are e-cigarettes a savior for smokers, a lurking global danger ... or both? You might think I'd know. After all, I'm director of the Institute for Global Tobacco Control at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. ... Yet I can't — with any degree of certainty — say e-cigarettes are good or bad. ... Those of us in the research community understand that neither policymakers nor the general public have the luxury of waiting until the verdict is in. ... The FDA could start by curbing e-cigarette advertising and promotion directed toward young people. Child-resistant caps could help prevent accidental poisoning of children, which has spiked as these devices proliferate. Standards for manufacturing would give us a clearer sense of what people are putting into their bodies. And the bans on smoking tobacco cigarettes in certain places should be extended to e-cigarettes. [USA Today](#)

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USAFRICOM

Guinea reports 4 Ebola cases; WHO details response reforms

30 September - Ebola cases in West Africa's outbreak region stayed in the single digits last week, with four cases reported, all from a known transmission chain in Guinea, the World Health Organization (WHO) said in its weekly update today. In related developments, the WHO released a road map detailing its emergency response reforms that have taken shape in the epidemic's wake, and the US government announced more funding support for a rapid test for the disease. [CIDRAP](#)

Nigeria reaches polio 'milestone'

25 September - Nigeria has been removed from the list of polio endemic countries in what is being regarded as a "milestone" on the quest to eradicate the disease. The announcement by the World Health Organization (WHO), was made at a meeting of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) in New York. It follows Nigeria going more than a year without a case of wild - naturally occurring - polio. Three years without cases are required before it can be declared polio free. The decision means there are just two endemic countries - Pakistan and Afghanistan - where transmission of the paralyzing virus has never been interrupted. [BBC News](#)

Sierra Leone begins Ebola-free countdown

28 September - Sierra Leone's last two Ebola patients were released from treatment yesterday, starting the 42-day countdown toward Ebola-free status, Xinhua, China's state news agency, reported today. The patients were both released from a treatment center in

Makeni, in the northern part of the country. The countdown to being declared free of Ebola, typically achieved when two incubation periods have passed with no new cases, is Sierra Leone's second. Its first countdown began Aug 24, only to end about a week later when a 67-year-old woman died from the disease. Her infection sparked a cluster of cases, followed by an unrelated case in Bombali district, that of a 16-year-old girl who was believed to have been exposed to the virus by an Ebola survivor. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: Doctors overwhelmed in Afghan city taken by Taliban

30 September - With the government hospital shut down, a facility run by Médecins Sans Frontières is now the only place for people needing urgent trauma care to be treated in Kunduz, which was taken by the Taliban on Monday. Afghan forces have been battling the insurgents to regain control of the northern city of about 300,000 people, and residents are caught in the middle. Doctors are already struggling to treat an influx of wounded civilians while casualties are expected to rise as fighting continues ... "The MSF hospital is completely overwhelmed and wounded continue to arrive," said the charity's operational coordinator, Renzo Fricke. "With the hospital reaching its limit and fighting continuing, we are worried about being able to cope with any new influxes of wounded." [IRIN](#)

Iraq: Cholera

28 September - On 15 September 2015, WHO received a notification from the IHR National Focal Point of Iraq of laboratory-confirmation of cholera in at least five governorates. As of 23 September 2015, a total of 120 stool samples have been tested positive at the Central Public Health Laboratory of Baghdad for *Vibrio cholerae* 01 Inaba. Laboratory-confirmed cases have so far been reported from at-least five Governorates of the country- Baghdad Babylon, Najaf, Qadisiyyah, and Muthanna. The preliminary investigation revealed contaminated water source as the cause of this current outbreak. [WHO](#)

Jordan, Saudi Arabia report more MERS cases

1 October – Jordanian health officials reported four more MERS-CoV cases to the World Health Organization (WHO) today, two of them involving healthcare workers and all of which appear to be linked to a hospital outbreak in Amman. Two of the cases appear to have been sketchily reported last week by the local media. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia reported a new MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) illness, its first in 5 days. With hospital outbreaks reported in the capital cities of both countries, it's becoming increasingly clear healthcare settings play an important role in amplifying the

disease, though many questions still remain about how and why it spreads in those facilities. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Saudi Arabia: Hajj stampede - Saudi officials clarify toll after questions

29 September - Saudi officials have denied reports that more than 1,000 people were killed in a stampede near Mecca last week while undertaking the Hajj pilgrimage. A Nigerian official told the BBC the bodies of 1,075 victims had been taken to mortuaries in the city of Jeddah - higher than the official toll of 769. Other countries also said they had been sent the photos of some 1,090 bodies. But the Saudi officials said the photos included unidentified people who died at the Hajj - not just in the stampede. Spokesman Maj Gen Mansour al-Turki told the Associated Press that some were foreign nationals who lived in Saudi Arabia and carried out the Hajj without the required permits. Others were among the 109 people who were killed when a crane collapsed at the Grand Mosque in Mecca on 11 September, he said. ... As well as the fatalities, 934 people were injured. [BBC News](#)

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Greece urges health precautions after suspect cholera case on Kos

2 October - Greek health authorities urged the public to take health precautions on Friday after a suspected cholera case was discovered on Kos island, a tourist destination and entry point for migrants from the Middle East and Asia. An official for the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention told Reuters a 79-year-old Dutch tourist was transferred from Kos for tests and treatment in an Athens hospital with symptoms of cholera, including bad diarrhea and high fever, but the diagnosis was not yet confirmed. "We are proceeding with more examinations to avoid the danger of a contagious disease," the center said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

United Kingdom: Concern over hidden diesel pollutant

25 September - Atmospheric levels of a little known by-product from diesel engines are up 70 times higher than expected according to a study. Researchers found that long-chain hydrocarbons are significantly under-reported in car manufacturers' data. These hydrocarbons are a key component of two of the worst air pollutants, ozone and particulate matter. The authors believe these "hidden" emissions are having a large impact on air quality in cities like London. ... The researchers found that close to 50% of the ozone production potential in London in winter was due to these diesel elements. In summertime,

it was around 25%. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: EPA announces new rules to protect farmworkers from pesticides

28 September - The Environmental Protection Agency has released a final version of updated rules intended to keep farmworkers from being poisoned by pesticides. The previous "worker protection standard" for farms has been in effect since 1992. The new rules require farms to make a host of changes. Employers will have to train workers on the risks of pesticides every year, rather than every five years. Workers will have to stay farther away from contaminated fields. Farmers will have to keep more records on exactly when and where they used specific pesticides. And no children under the age of 18 will be allowed to handle the chemicals. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Frequency of tobacco use among middle and high school students — United States, 2014

2 October - ... In 2014, an estimated 4.6 million middle and high school students were current users of any tobacco product, of whom an estimated 2.2 million were current users of two or more types of tobacco products. ... Among current users (≥ 1 day during the preceding 30 days) in high school, frequent use (≥ 20 days during the preceding 30 days) was most prevalent among smokeless tobacco users (42.0%), followed by cigarette smokers (31.6%), e-cigarette users (15.5%), and cigar smokers (13.1%); a similar pattern was observed for those who used during all 30 days. Among current users in middle school, frequent use was greatest among smokeless tobacco users (29.2%), followed by cigarette smokers (20.0%), cigar smokers (13.2%) and e-cigarette users (11.8%). Current use of two or more types of tobacco products was common, even among students who used tobacco products 1–5 days during the preceding 30 days: 77.3% for cigar smokers, 76.9% for cigarette smokers, 63.4% for smokeless tobacco users, and 54.8% for e-cigarettes users. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: HHS launches resources system to improve disaster preparedness

30 September - Health and emergency preparedness professionals now have access to the nation's first and most comprehensive system of resources designed specifically to help communities better prepare for and manage the health impacts of disasters. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for

Preparedness and Response (ASPR), the Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange (TRACIE) features resource materials, a help line, just-in-time suggestions and tools to share information gleaned from real-life experiences in preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters. [EIN News](#)

U.S.: It's official - Every state in America is too fat

24 September - The geography of obesity in the United States has taken an alarming turn for the worse in just a generation. In 1990, the country would have been considered relatively healthy when it comes to weight. Sure, there were plenty of people who were overweight and obese. But the problem was relatively limited with not a single one of our 50 states having a prevalence equal to or greater than 15 percent. Today, all of them do. ... Back in 2011, one state -- Mississippi -- was in the top tier of obesity with a staggering 35 percent or higher prevalence and 17 states were in the second tier with 30-33 percent. ... By 2014, that number had grown to four states in the top tier and 19 in the second tier. ... The rapid change is highlighted in this [set of remarkable slides](#) put together by the CDC which is in charge of analyzing the data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, which involves telephone surveys. As of 2014, none of the U.S. states meet the nation's "healthy people" goals of obesity prevalence under 20 percent. [Washington Post](#)

U.S. rule to cut toxic emissions at refineries



29 September - U.S. oil refineries will face tighter standards in coming years on toxic emissions that cause lung problems and increase cancer risks, environmental regulators said on Tuesday. The Environmental Protection Agency finalized a rule, to be fully implemented in 2018, that aims to reduce emissions of benzene and other toxic emissions. The EPA said the capital cost to refiners will be about \$283 million, with an annualized cost of \$63 million, but that the standards will have a "negligible impact on the costs of petroleum products," like gasoline and diesel fuel. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Seven new Legionnaire's cases confirmed in Bronx

20 September - New York City health officials are investigating 7 new cases of legionellosis in the Bronx that are not related to a 128-case outbreak in the borough over the summer that killed 12, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health) said in a news release yesterday. ... The source of the current cluster, located farther northeast, near the Bronx Zoo, has not been identified, but scientists have sampled area cooling towers in hopes of identifying a cause. The newly confirmed patients range in age from 45 to 75, and all are hospitalized. Their cases were reported to NYC Health from Sep 21 to Sep 27. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

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China, Taiwan: Deadly typhoon Dujuan sweeps across east China, Taiwan

30 September - Typhoon Dujuan has flooded cities, caused landslides and trapped residents in Zhejiang Province since its landfall in east China on Tuesday morning. Eastern coastal regions in China ordered boats to shore and evacuated people on land to prepare for Typhoon Dujuan after it made landfall in Fujian province on Tuesday morning. The typhoon had already left three dead and more than 300 injured in Taiwan. Strong winds brought by the typhoon kicked up three-to-four-story high waves that washed out roads and damaged houses near the shore. The huge waves knocked roller shutters of many local shops out of shape and knocked down a 100-meter section of the sea wall. [CCTV America](#)

Myanmar: Dengue fever outbreak sweeps the region, sets local record

1 October - Dengue fever cases have spiked throughout the country this year, surpassing previous record highs as another epidemic outbreak grips the region. The Ministry of Health recorded 35,993 cases from January to September 27, almost three times as high as last year, and 78 percent higher than the previous outbreak – deemed record-breaking – in 2013. The ministry said the year-to-date infections are the highest since the government began counting in 1965. Though the number of people struck by the mosquito-borne disease has escalated, it has not been as fatal as in past years – 120 people have died this year, according to the ministry’s account, compared to the country’s most fatal outbreak in 1994 when an epidemic claimed 444 lives. The virus has been particularly prevalent in flood-struck regions. [Myanmar Times](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

PAHO notes 12,000 new chikungunya cases

28 September - The chikungunya outbreak in the Caribbean and the Americas grew by 12,694 cases, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said in an update late last week. The increase could be a sign of increased disease activity, as the three previous weekly updates included 7,156, 4,857, and 3,085 new cases, respectively. The overall outbreak total now stands at 1,734,882 cases, PAHO said in a Sep 25 update. The total includes 588,113 cases in 2015. The number of outbreak-related deaths stayed the same, at 62 for the year. Nicaragua, reporting on 6 weeks of data, had the largest increase, with 6,778

new cases, for a total of 46,912 so far this year. El Salvador was second, with 3,565 new cases and 39,721 total. That country hadn't reported cases for 2 weeks. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Venezuela: Cancer in a time of crisis

25 September - ... According to the Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation, the country is suffering from a 70 percent shortfall in medicines this year. Between 40 percent and 60 percent of its drugs and medical supplies are imported – and those made in Venezuela require raw materials that can only be found overseas. But the country's exchange controls mean companies must get permission from the government in order to obtain US dollars to import goods. And the Federation's figures suggest Venezuelan pharmaceutical companies are owed as much as \$3.5m from the government. The resulting shortages affect everything from basic medication, such as ibuprofen, and gauze, to specialised medical equipment and supplies. [Al Jazeera](#)

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The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* is published by the Public Health Information Directorate, Army Public Health Center.

