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Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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**Increases in
Fentanyl Drug
Confiscations and
Fentanyl-related
Overdose Fatalities**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) are investigating recent increases in fentanyl-related unintentional overdose fatalities in multiple states across the U.S.

The purpose of this HAN advisory is to: (1) alert public health departments, health care providers, first responders, and medical examiners and coroners to the possibility of additional increases in other jurisdictions, (2) provide recommendations for improving detection of fentanyl-related overdose outbreaks and (3) encourage states to expand access to naloxone and training for administering naloxone to reduce opioid overdose deaths.



U.S. MILITARY

Chikungunya infection in DoD healthcare beneficiaries following the 2013 introduction of the virus into the Western Hemisphere

October 2015 - The introduction and rapid spread of chikungunya virus (CHIKV) into the Western Hemisphere after December 2013 pose a potentially significant risk to Department of Defense (DoD) personnel, operations, and the military healthcare system. This report describes the DoD experience with CHIKV between January 2014 and February 2015. ... Case finding identified 157 confirmed cases; of these, 118 (75.2%) were either active or reserve component service members and 39 (24.8%) were other beneficiaries. Exposure locations were known for 117 (74.5%) of all cases, and of these, 113 (96.6%) reported likely exposures in the Western Hemisphere; 85 (75.2%) of those cases occurred in Puerto Rico. Although historical data on CHIKV in DoD populations are scant, introduction of CHIKV into the Western Hemisphere with ongoing transmission appears to have resulted in a significant increase in the number of cases among DoD healthcare beneficiary populations. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Foreign military role in Ebola crucial, questions over future use-experts

26 October - Foreign military personnel played a crucial role in stemming the Ebola outbreak in Liberia and Sierra Leone, researchers said on Monday, but warned against treating their intervention as a blueprint for future humanitarian crises. Military help was required as health systems in Liberia and Sierra Leone were ill-equipped and many aid agencies withdrew staff and halted operations when the outbreak began, University of Sydney researchers said. More than 5,000 troops from the United States, United Kingdom, China, Canada, France and Germany were deployed in 2014, mainly training local health workers and building Ebola treatment units, according to the Saving Lives report. Yet poor coordination between governments, aid agencies and armed forces and a lack of understanding of their roles may have hindered the Ebola response, researcher Adam Kamradt-Scott said. [Reuters](#)

Increasing soldiers' physical performance: Researchers share updates

28 October - Researchers from around the world are working to improve soldiers' health and physical performance and health—with the goal of increasing military readiness and effectiveness, according to the November special issue of *The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, official research journal of the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA). Drawn from presentations at the Third International Congress on Soldiers' Physical Performance (ICSPP), the special issue provides an update on efforts to

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optimize human performance in the military through "the science and applications of physical fitness and injury prevention research." [Medical Xpress](#)

Making a difference in warrior care: Army Surgeon General reflects on career that almost wasn't

19 October - Lt. Gen. Patricia D. Horoho is the first female and first nurse to be nominated and confirmed by Congress as the surgeon general of the Army and commanding general of U.S. Army Medical Command. She was also the first married woman with children to become chief of the Army Nurse Corps. She has other "firsts" on her resume as well as a long list of honors and awards compiled in her 33-year career, but she never intended to be a trailblazer. Her career is more the result of mentorship and serendipity than strategy, she says, and in fact, she almost separated from the Army after completing her first duty assignment. "My entire career has surprised me," Horoho said, laughing. [Army Magazine](#)

Thousands of soldiers with mental health disorders kicked out for 'misconduct'

2 October - The U.S. Army has kicked out more than 22,000 soldiers since 2009 for "misconduct," after they returned from Iraq and Afghanistan and were diagnosed with mental health disorders and traumatic brain injuries. That means many of those soldiers are not receiving the crucial treatment or retirement and health care benefits they would have received with an honorable discharge. The Army has taken these actions despite a 2009 federal law designed to ensure that troops whose mental illness might be linked to the wars aren't cast aside. That's the finding of a joint investigation by NPR and Colorado Public Radio that listened to hours of secret recordings, looked at hundreds of pages of confidential military documents and interviewed dozens of sources both inside and outside the base. [NPR](#)

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GLOBAL

Drug enforcement vs. AIDS treatment issue hits U.N.

26 October - ... The spread of the [HIV] virus through needles may be the least-talked-about but most intractable aspect of the AIDS epidemic. In North America and Western Europe, H.I.V. is mostly transmitted through gay sex. In Africa, the focus of most Western aid, it is spread through heterosexual sex. But in many countries — notably Russia and Eastern Europe, and across swaths of Asia where the opium poppy flourishes, the greatest H.I.V. risk is injected heroin. "Our position is very clear," said Michel Sidibé, the executive director of Unaid, the U.N. agency fighting AIDS. "Of the 12 million people who inject drugs, 1.7

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million are infected. We need to take these people out of the shadows and into services, or we will never control the epidemic." [The New York Times](#)

Motavizumab prevents RSV-related hospitalizations in infants

26 October - Administering the monoclonal antibody motavizumab to healthy infants led to a decrease in hospitalization for acute lower respiratory tract infections caused by respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), according to findings yesterday in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. ... Of the 1,417 infants who received five monthly doses of motavizumab from October to December each year, 21 (2%) were hospitalized with RSV, compared with 80 (11%) of 710 infants in the placebo group. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

Scientists urge national initiative on microbiomes

28 October - Scores of leading scientists on Wednesday urged the creation of a major initiative to better understand the microbial communities critical to both human health and every ecosystem. In two papers published simultaneously in the journals *Science* and *Nature*, the scientists called for a government-led effort akin to the Brain Initiative, a monumental multiyear project intended to develop new technologies to understand the human brain. ... Microbiomes have become the focus of intense study and public interest. The trillions of microbes that live inside the human body, for example, play important roles in health, from fighting diseases to maintaining a balanced immune system. [The New York Times](#)

Story-sharing kiosk for hospital patients coping with illness set to launch

29 October - If you were really sick, with cancer, let's say, or a debilitating eating disorder or heart condition that put you in the hospital, would you want to hear from other patients like you? Would you feel better sharing your story? A growing body of research suggests you would. That's the idea behind the SharingClinic, a kiosk stocked with a collection of audio clips from patients facing a range of illnesses. It's set to launch as an interactive exhibit at the Massachusetts General Hospital Paul S. Russell Museum in January. The project was born out of frustration with a medical system that no longer has the time to really listen to patients, says Dr. Annie Brewster. [WBUR](#)

Tuberculosis now rivals AIDS as leading cause of death: WHO

28 October - For the first time, tuberculosis infections rivaled HIV/AIDS as a leading cause of death from infectious diseases, the World Health Organization said in a report released on Wednesday. It found that during 2014, 1.1 million people died of TB in 2014. During the same period, HIV/AIDS killed 1.2 million people globally, including 400,000 who were infected with both HIV and TB. Dr. Mario Raviglione, director of the WHO TB program, said

the report reflects the dramatic gains in access to HIV/AIDS treatment in the past decade, which has helped many people survive their infections. But it also reflects disparities in funding for the two global killers. [Reuters](#)

WHO says two thirds of those under 50 have herpes simplex 1

28 October - In its first global estimates of herpes simplex 1 (HSV-1), World Health Organization (WHO) researchers today estimated that 3.7 billion people younger than 50 are infected, about 67% of that population. The team published its estimates in PLoS One. Aside from documenting the scope of the virus, the report also shows that HSV-1 is an important cause of genital herpes, generally thought to be mainly caused by HSV-2. Researchers found that about 140 million people ages 15 to 49 years are infected with genital HSV-1 infection, mainly in the Americas, Europe, and Western Pacific. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

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INFLUENZA

AFHSC: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 41:

NORTHCOM: Influenza activity was minimal.

EUCOM: There was minimal influenza activity.

PACOM: Influenza activity was minimal.

CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Both show minimal influenza activity.

SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity remains low. [Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center](#)

APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 17 October 2015 (Week 41):

Influenza-like illness (ILI) is low in both Army and civilian populations. All beneficiaries aged 6 months and older should receive this year's influenza vaccine, unless medically exempted.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 41 were 19% lower than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: One hospitalized influenza case was reported to APHC through DRSi in week 41. No other cases have been reported during this influenza season.
- Viral specimens: During week 41, 47 of 527 (9%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-P reported the most influenza A positive specimens (43%), followed by RHC-C (29%), and RHC-A and RHC-E which both accounted for 14%. WRMC and CENTCOM reported zero cases. [APHC](#)

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

During week 41 (October 11-17, 2015), influenza activity was low in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories in week 41 was influenza A viruses, with influenza A (H3) viruses predominating. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories is low.
- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below their system-specific epidemic threshold in both the NCHS Mortality Surveillance System and the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System. [CDC](#)

ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 42/2015 (12 October – 18 October 2015)

- Influenza activity in the WHO European Region is at low levels in all the 32 countries which reported data this week.
- In line with the low influenza activity across the Region, influenza viruses were detected in 23 patients, three from sentinel ILI sources, 17 from non-sentinel sources and three from laboratory-confirmed hospitalized influenza cases.
- All three seasonal influenza viruses (influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2) and influenza B) were detected.

Season - As is usual for this time of year, influenza activity in the European Region is low, with few influenza viruses detected.

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

Flu vaccine weakened by statin use?

29 October - Two new studies published in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases* offer preliminary evidence that the flu vaccine may not work as well in people taking statins. But there is widespread agreement among experts that the association, much less a demonstration of cause and effect, has not been proven, and that current clinical practice should not be changed because of the findings. [MedPage Today](#)

NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For Week 42 (through 24 October 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 at or below expected values. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

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

For 11-24 October 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 41 & 42):

During 11-24 October 2015, a total of 106 specimens were collected and received from 39 locations. Results were finalized for 43 specimens from 26 locations. One influenza A(H3N2) virus was identified in a dependent at NH Bremerton, WA during Week 42.

[US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Modern outbreak detection challenges produce food safety

27 October - DNA fingerprinting and other scientific methods — as well as social media — are changing the face of food illness outbreaks. Panelists participating in an Oct. 23 food safety workshop at the Produce Marketing Association's Fresh Summit learned that and as scientific methods which can link foodborne illness cases in Oregon to one in the middle of the country, social media can link rare and sporadic spoilage issues. Before 1997, investigators usually detected one listeria outbreak every three years; from 1997-2013, they detected up to three outbreaks a year. With the advent of genome sequencing, up to eight outbreaks a year are now detected. [The Packer](#)

Nearly 200 sickened by Shigella outbreak in San Francisco area: officials

26 October - Nearly 200 people in the San Francisco area have been sickened by an intestinal disease caused by the highly contagious Shigella bacteria since an outbreak began at a Mexican seafood restaurant 10 days ago, health officials said on Monday. The outbreak, which began on Oct. 16 at the Mariscos San Juan No. 3 restaurant in San Jose, had spread across six counties and infected 182 people as of last Friday, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department said in a statement. Many of those sickened have required hospitalization and at least a dozen were admitted to intensive care units, health officials said. [Yahoo! News](#)

Plastic contaminates table salt in China

29 October - Diners in China who season their meals with sea salt may be unwittingly consuming microscopic pieces of plastic pollution. When researchers analyzed fifteen brands of common table salt bought at supermarkets across China, they found among the

grains of seasoning micro-sized particles of the common water bottle plastic polyethylene terephthalate, as well as polyethylene, cellophane, and a wide variety of other plastics. ... The highest level of plastic contamination was found in salt sourced from the ocean: The researchers measured more than 1,200 particles of plastic per lb of sea salt. [Scientific American](#)

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WELLNESS

Are you hungry? Pediatricians add a new question during checkups

23 October - An estimated 7.9 million kids in the U.S. live in "food-insecure" households. This means there's not always enough to eat at home. But when these kids go to the doctor for a checkup, or a well-child visit, the signs of malnutrition are not always apparent. So pediatricians say it's time to start asking about it. Kids and parents often shy away from talking about their struggles. ... To get families talking, the American Academy of Pediatrics is now recommending that pediatricians screen all children for food insecurity by asking questions like this: Within the past 12 months, the food we bought didn't last, and we didn't have money to get more. Yes or No? [NPR](#)

Black women's breast cancer risk rises to equal white women's

29 October - For decades, African-American women have been less likely to get breast cancer than white women, but that health advantage has now all but disappeared. "For a while we've seen the increase in black women and stable rates in white women," says Carol DeSantis, an epidemiologist with the American Cancer Society who led the study. "Even though we'd seen the trend," she says, "it's sort of shocking." African-American women's risk increased by 0.4 percent a year from 2008 through 2012, a much sharper increase than in earlier years. Overall, 124.3 black women per 100,000 were diagnosed with breast cancer in those years, compared to 128.1 for white women. Black women have the highest death rates from breast cancer, at 31.0 per 100,000 compared to 21.9 per 100,000. They tend to be diagnosed later, when cancers are more likely to have spread. [NPR](#)

Could depression be caused by an infection?

25 October - ... Late last year, Turhan Canli, an associate professor of psychology and radiology at Stony Brook University, published a paper in the journal *Biology of Mood and Anxiety Disorders* asserting that depression should be thought of as an infectious disease. "Depressed patients act physically sick," says Canli. "They're tired, they lose their appetite,

they don't want to get out of bed." He notes that while Western medicine practitioners tend to focus on the psychological symptoms of depression, in many non-Western cultures, patients who would qualify for a depression diagnosis report primarily physical symptoms, in part because of the stigmatization of mental illness. "The idea that depression is caused simply by changes in serotonin is not panning out. We need to think about other possible causes and treatments for psychiatric disorders," says Canli. [NPR](#)

Does exercise slow the aging process?



28 October - ... [Researchers] gathered the data [from the ongoing National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey] for about 6,500 of the participants, ranging in age from 20 to 84, and then categorized them into four groups, based on how they had responded to questions about exercise. Those questions in this survey tended to be broad, asking people only if, at any time during the past month, they had engaged in weight training, moderate exercise like walking, more vigorous exercise like running, or have walked or ridden a bike to work or school. If a participant answered yes to any of those four questions, he or she earned a point from the researchers. So, someone who reported walking received a point. If he also ran, he earned another, and so on, for a maximum of four points. The researchers then compared those tallies to each person's telomere length. And there were clear associations. For every point someone gained from any type of exercise, his or her risks of having unusually short telomeres declined significantly. [The New York Times](#)

Is the CDC right on pneumococcal vax recs?

26 October - Last year, the CDC made a substantial change in its pneumococcal vaccine recommendations for older adults: rather than recommending a single dose of the pneumococcal polysaccharide 23 (PPSV23), they began recommending both the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13) followed 12 months later by PPSV23. ... PPSV23, although proven to be effective in younger patients, is less well tested in the elderly. ... [The] benefits that were demonstrated in the only randomized controlled trial of PCV13, called the CAPiTA trial are likely not applicable in the U.S. ...[The] study compared PCV13 not against the existing standard of care -- the old PPSV23 vaccine -- but rather against placebo. As a result, we have no way to know whether PCV13 is better than PPSV23, or whether the addition of PCV13 to the vaccination schedule -- as is recommended by the new guidelines -- actually adds value. [MedPage Today](#)

IUDs and hormonal implants remain underused contraceptives

26 October - ... Nearly half the pregnancies among American women are unintended — unwanted now or within the next two years. And among sexually active teenagers and young adults, the rate of unplanned pregnancy is even higher. Fully 43 percent of these pregnancies follow incorrect or inconsistent uses of contraception. Of course, some couples

fail to use any contraception, but others rely on contraceptive methods that have significant failure rates even when properly used. These facts prompted a committee of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists this month to urge its members to introduce women of all ages to the most effective and underused methods of reversible contraception: IUDs and hormonal implants. Once inserted, these long-acting methods remove the risk of patient error when a sexually active woman wishes to avoid pregnancy. Their effectiveness rivals that of sterilization.

[The New York Times](#)

Low-fat diets no better than others for weight loss

29 October - Low-fat diets did not lead to long-term weight loss in a large meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. Researchers looked at 53 studies with more than 68,000 participants, each study lasting at least 1 year. They found that low-carbohydrate diets led to small but significantly greater weight loss than did low-fat interventions in 18 of the comparisons. ... In addition, low-fat diets didn't outperform higher-fat diets when it came to weight loss, but they did lead to greater weight loss when compared with usual diets in eight comparisons. [MedPage Today](#)

Meat is linked to higher cancer risk, W.H.O. report finds

26 October - An international panel of experts convened by the World Health Organization concluded Monday that eating processed meat like hot dogs, ham and bacon raises the risk of colon cancer and that consuming other red meats "probably" raises the risk as well. But the increase in risk is so slight that experts said most people should not be overly worried about it. The panel did not offer specific guidelines on red meat consumption. But its conclusions add support to recommendations made by other scientific groups like the federal government's dietary guidelines advisory committee, which has long discouraged the consumption of red and processed meat. And the report could also influence health agencies such as the European Food and Safety Commission. [The New York Times](#)

Nearly 4 percent of U.S. adults regularly use e-cigarettes, survey says

28 October - Nearly 13 percent of adults in the United States have tried an e-cigarette, according to research to be published Wednesday from the National Center for Health Statistics. The data, drawn from a 2014 survey of 36,000 adults, also found that 3.7 percent of respondents were regular users. Public health officials are trying to determine the long-term health effects of electronic cigarettes, which use battery power, not combustion, to deliver bursts of nicotine. ... The data does not address whether e-cigarettes are being used by current smokers to quit tobacco use or whether smokers are using both products. However, it does show that 48 percent of current smokers have tried an e-cigarette while 55 percent of recent former smokers have tried one.

[The New York Times](#)

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Guinea: Ebola sickens 3 family members in Guinea

28 October - For the second week in a row, Guinea reported three new Ebola cases, with this week's patients all from the same family and one a pregnant mom, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today in its weekly update on the outbreak. Meanwhile, Sierra Leone passed the 6-week mark without a new case as it draws closer to the date that it will be declared free of the disease, Nov 7. Liberia has been free of the disease since Sep 3 and is in a period of heightened surveillance. ... The WHO noted that the number of weekly cases has remained below six for 13 consecutive weeks. [CIDRAP](#)

Nigeria: WHO removes Nigeria from list of polio-endemic countries

26 October - The U.N. World Health Organization is formally removing Nigeria from the list of polio-endemic countries, meaning the entire African continent is free of the crippling disease. A WHO statement said Monday's move comes after Nigeria reported no new cases for 15 months — after overcoming obstacles ranging from Islamic extremists who assassinated vaccinators to rumors the vaccine was a plot to sterilize Muslims. Just 20 years ago Nigeria was recording 1,000 polio cases a year — the highest in the world. [Yahoo! News](#)

Study: Funerals were prime places for Ebola spread

29 October - About one-fourth of patients with the Ebola virus in West Africa recalled attending the funeral of an Ebola victim before they fell ill themselves, researchers reported here. Of the 19,000-plus people who have become infected with Ebola in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, information was gathered from 6,403 patients who reported 9,711 exposures to sick or dying individuals. Among those exposures, 2,382 (24.5%) were linked to attendance at a funeral of someone who died from the virus, reported Heather Mills, PhD, of Imperial College London, and colleagues, who were part of the World Health Organization (WHO) Ebola Response Team. [MedPage Today](#)

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Afghanistan/Pakistan: Earthquake strikes Afghanistan and Pakistan, multiplying war's woes

26 October - A deadly earthquake hit northern Afghanistan and Pakistan on Monday afternoon, causing heavy damage and sowing panic across one of the world's most

impoverished and war-torn regions. At least 208 were reported killed, 131 or more of them in Pakistan, and that figure seemed likely to rise significantly, officials in both countries said. Buildings broke down in the shaking, sending people pouring into city streets in Peshawar and Islamabad in Pakistan, and in Kabul, the Afghan capital. ... The quake, which struck at 1:39 p.m. and registered a preliminary magnitude of 7.5, was centered in the Hindu Kush mountain range, about 160 miles northeast of Kabul. The quake's depth was reported at 132 miles, the United States Geological Survey said, and its effects were felt as far away as New Delhi. [The New York Times](#)

Afghanistan/Pakistan: WHO voices concern over health ramifications of Afghanistan, Pakistan quake

27 October - The World Health Organization (WHO) on Tuesday voiced concern on increasing health needs after the massive earthquake struck the mountainous border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan. ... WHO spokesperson Christian Lindmeier told reporters in Geneva that some 866,000 people live in a circle of around 100 km around the epicenter in Jurm district, 65 km south of Faizabad. The hardest-hit areas were those also most affected by militant violence, including an intense Taliban offensive that had stretched for weeks in remote parts of the north. ... Apart from immediate trauma and injuries, WHO expects to see a number of health risks such as water borne diseases, diarrhea, dysentery, hepatitis, acute respiration infections, and other vaccines preventable diseases such as measles, pertussis and tetanus.

[Shanghai Daily](#)

Afghanistan: Taliban offer informal cease-fire in areas hit by earthquake

28 October - The Taliban said they wouldn't interfere with Afghan government efforts to deliver assistance to earthquake victims, raising the prospect of an informal cease-fire while relief efforts are under way. "We don't want to fight in areas hit by the earthquake," Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said by phone Wednesday, two days after a 7.5-magnitude temblor struck the remote Hindu Kush region in northeast Afghanistan. ... Government officials said no security problems have interfered with rescue-and-relief efforts in areas worst-hit by Monday's quake, which killed nearly 400 people—at least 115 in Afghanistan and 267 in neighboring Pakistan—and destroyed thousands of homes in both countries. ... More than 34,000 people have been displaced in Afghanistan, according to the International Organization for Migration, a United Nations affiliate. [The Wall Street Journal](#)

Iraq/Syria: Cholera spreading in Iraq, suspected case reported in Syria – UN health agency

27 October - The World Health Organization (WHO) announced today that it would start vaccine treatments for cholera beginning this weekend to prevent further outbreaks in Iraq, where the disease has now been confirmed in 15 out of 18 governorates, while the agency

also reported a suspected case was also found in northern Syria. WHO spokesperson Christian Lindmeier told the regular press briefing in Geneva, Switzerland, that the latest laboratory tests had confirmed 1,942 cases and two deaths in 15 out of 18 governorates in Iraq. [US News Centre](#)

Persian Gulf: It may become too hot for humans to survive, study warns

28 October – We frequently hear of the future dangers that human-caused climate change could bring, but few paint as bleak a picture as the one laid in a new study released this week. The study ... offers a harsh assessment: Climate change could leave major cities in a key part of the Middle East, the oil-rich Persian Gulf region, unfit for humans to survive. They'd literally be unlivable. And not because far off glaciers are melting and raising the sea level or because storms are becoming stronger or more frequent. They'd be unlivable simply because it is becoming too dang hot during the summer. [CNN](#)

Saudi Arabia: Saudi health ministry details 7-case hospital MERS cluster in Hofuf

28 October - Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health (MOH) has confirmed that a seven-case MERS-CoV cluster in Hofuf involves Almanah General Hospital and includes a nurse, according to a machine-translated statement posted today by Avian Flu Diary, a leading infectious disease blog. The cases involve a patient who was seen in the hospital's emergency department, five patients who contracted MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) in the hospital, and another patient who did not contract the disease at the hospital. One of the seven patients is a nurse, the MOH said. All patients have been transferred to King Fahad Hospital in the city for more specialized care, the statement said. Close contacts of the patients are being monitored.
[CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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USEUCOM

EU introduces more efficient monitoring of drinking water for better protection of public health

28 October - New EU rules to improve the monitoring of drinking water across Europe come into force, improving access to wholesome and clean drinking water in Europe. As a first step following the European Citizens' Initiative Right2Water, new rules adopted by the Commission today provide flexibility to Member States as to how drinking water quality is monitored in around 100 000 water supply zones in Europe. This will allow for more

focused, risk-based monitoring, while ensuring full protection of public health.... [The new rule] removes unnecessary burdens. Member States can now decide, on the basis of a risk assessment, which parameter to monitor given that some drinking water supply zones do not pose any risk for finding hazardous substances. They can also choose to increase or reduce the frequency of sampling in water supply zones, as well as to extend the list of substances to monitor in case of public health concerns.

[European Commission](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Active Bacterial Core surveillance for legionellosis — United States, 2011–2013

30 October - During 2000–2011, passive surveillance for legionellosis in the United States demonstrated a 249% increase in crude incidence, although little was known about the clinical course and method of diagnosis. In 2011, a system of active, population-based surveillance for legionellosis was instituted through CDC's Active Bacterial Core surveillance (ABCs) program. Overall disease rates were similar in both the passive and active systems, but more complete demographic information and additional clinical and laboratory data were only available from ABCs. ABCs data during 2011–2013 showed that approximately 44% of patients with legionellosis required intensive care, and 9% died. Disease incidence was higher among blacks than whites and was 10 times higher in New York than California.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Benign rickettsiosis likely misdiagnosed as Rocky Mountain spotted fever

26 October - Increasing reports of Rocky Mountain spotted fever unassociated with high hospitalization and death rates are likely due to fairly benign spotted fevers carried by the lone star tick. ... Researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) evaluated reports of Rocky Mountain spotted fever in the United States from 1981 to 2013, associated hospitalization and case-fatality rates, and expansion of *Amblyomma americanum*'s (the lone star tick's) geographic range. Reports of Rocky Mountain spotted fever (*Rickettsia rickettsii*) increased from 1.7 to 14.3 cases per million from 2000 to 2012, while the associated death rate decreased from around 2% in the 1990s to less than 1% for 12 consecutive years after the turn of the millennium.

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

U.S.: Death rates, declining for decades, have flattened, study finds

27 October - Gains in the American life span have slowed in recent years, according to a new report, with average annual death rates flattening for the first time since researchers started measuring them in the late 1960s. Researchers from the American Cancer Society used federal mortality data to analyze trends in longevity from 1969 to 2013. Death rates (measured as the number of deaths per 100,000 people in a given year) in the United States have been declining for decades, an effect of improvements in health care, disease management and medical technology — and the researchers had expected to find more of the same. Instead, they stumbled upon a disturbing development. The declines in death rates flattened in the most recent period, from 2010 to 2013, dropping by an average of just 0.4 percent annually, a rate so slight that it was not statistically significant. The rate had slowed in previous periods but never this substantially, researchers said. ... [They] offered one potential theory for what was driving the slowdown — a delayed effect of the obesity epidemic, which has plagued Americans of all ages since the 1980s. [The New York Times](#)

U.S.: Medication errors found in 1 out of 2 surgeries

25 October - The first study to measure the incidence of medication errors and adverse drug events during the perioperative period — immediately before, during and right after a surgical procedure — has found that some sort of mistake or adverse event occurred in every second operation and in 5 percent of observed drug administrations. The study of more than 275 operations at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) ... also found that a third of the errors resulted in adverse drug events or harm to patients. [Harvard Gazette](#)

U.S.: Mental health in the spotlight Thursday on Capitol Hill

29 October - The federal government's top mental health researcher told lawmakers Thursday that the country needs to do much more to apply research to improve treatments, as a Senate committee heard testimony to address comprehensive mental health legislation. ... The American Psychiatric Association is hosting an afternoon briefing in the House on decriminalizing people with mental illness. According to the most recent federal statistics, about 20 percent of prison inmates have a serious mental illness and 30 percent to 60 percent have substance abuse problems. [The Washington Post](#)

U.S. study shows low HPV vaccine uptake in teen boys

27 October - Only about a third of US teen boys have received even one dose of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, and only about one in seven has received the recommended three doses, with uptake a bit higher in some minority groups, according to a study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) yesterday in Pediatrics. Researchers

used 2013 National Immunization Survey-Teen data to assess HPV vaccine uptake in 13- to 17-year-old boys. The CDC recommended in 2011 that all teen boys receive the vaccine. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

U.S.: White House issues report on improving biosafety at federal labs

29 October - The White House issued a 187-page report on Thursday designed to improve biosafety following a series of safety breaches at federal laboratories charged with handling dangerous pathogens such as anthrax, bird flu and smallpox. The report follows a sweeping review of the government's biosafety and biosecurity practices, and includes specific recommendations and deadlines for laboratories to improve their practices. It was addressed to top officials at 16 federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Defense, which this past July was criticized for repeated mishandling of anthrax at a U.S. Army laboratory in Utah. ... Recommendations in the report ... stressed the need for transparency, swift reporting of incidents, accountability to the public and strong inventory control measures. [Reuters](#)

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USPACOM

China: Breaking the habit - China's deadly smoking addiction

26 October - ... China is the world's largest consumer of tobacco; one-in-three of the planet's cigarettes are smoked here. Research released recently suggests that unless smoking rates drop, roughly two million Chinese people - mostly men - will die every year starting in 2030, and one-in-three young Chinese men will eventually die from the habit. But despite such alarming statistics, efforts to curb and banish smoking from public places have been weakly enforced - until now. ... "The Beijing law makes all indoor and many outdoor public places 100-percent smoke-free, with no loopholes and no exceptions, which sets a powerful precedent for other cities to follow. It also paves the way for a strong national law." [Al Jazeera](#)

China: China making dramatic public health gains

27 October - China's robust economic growth in recent decades has ushered in monumental health improvements—but wide regional disparities remain, a pair of studies published in *The Lancet* this week shows. ... Wealthy urban centers such as Shanghai enjoy a health status comparable to that of developed Western European nations, but the situation in the rest of the country is complex and potentially challenging for public health

improvement efforts. One key finding is that mortality rates for children under 5 dropped 78% nationwide between 1990 and 2013. Children in richer urban areas fared far better than those in the poorer countryside. In 2012, Shanghai's wealthy Huangpu district had the lowest rate, 3.3 deaths among children under 5 per 1000 live births. By contrast, that same year the rate across the Tibetan plateau ranged as high as 104.4. [Science Magazine](#)

China: China to end one-child policy and allow two

29 October - China has decided to end its decades-long one-child policy, the state-run Xinhua news agency reports. Couples will now be allowed to have two children, it said, citing a statement from the Communist Party. The controversial policy was introduced nationally in 1979, to slow the population growth rate. It is estimated to have prevented about 400 million births. However concerns at China's ageing population led to pressure for change. [BBC News](#)

Korea highlights MERS super-spreaders, reports death

26 October - South Korean health officials said yesterday that five super-spreaders caused 83% of cases in its MERS-CoV outbreak this year, and they confirmed a new death from the disease in a patient who had earlier tested negative. The five super-spreaders, all of whom had pneumonia, transmitted the virus to 153 people all told out of the 186 MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) cases confirmed this year in South Korea after a traveler brought the virus from the Middle East. [CIDRAP](#)

Malaysia: Halting HIV and drug use with compassion

27 October - Outreach workers armed with sterile needles, condoms, and screw caps patrol the narrow river that marks Malaysia's northern border with Thailand, looking for men from both countries who gather there to take drugs. Even though punishments for drug use in the Southeast Asian nation are severe, none of the users they meet are likely to be arrested. The police know what's going on but stay away. The workers are the front line in Malaysia's 10-year-old harm reduction programme that has helped curb a disturbing rise in HIV infections among injecting drug users. Cooperation between health officials, civil society groups, and the police has also eased widespread scepticism about needle exchanges and the provision of methadone treatment for people addicted to drugs. [Al Jazeera](#)

Malaysia: Typhoid outbreak in Malaysia leads health ministry to advise 'eat hot and freshly cooked food'

26 October - The Health Ministry has advised the public to eat only hot and freshly-cooked food in clean eateries, as the number of typhoid fever cases has risen to 52. Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said three new cases in Kuala Lumpur and one in Selangor, had raised the total number of typhoid fever cases to 37 and 15 respectively. He said nine patients were still warded at government hospitals, including one in Kelantan and another in Kedah. Stressing that the cases were so far traced only to eateries in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. [Asia One](#)

Philippines dengue cases up 32 percent in 2015, Thailand's case count nears 100,000

28 October - During the first nine months of 2014, health officials in the Philippines saw 82,000 cases of the mosquito borne viral disease, dengue fever, nationwide. With the massive surge in cases in recent months, Philippine officials now put the case tally so far in 2015 to over 100,000. From 1 January to 3 October 2015, there were 108,263 suspected cases of dengue, including 317 deaths, reported in Philippines. This is 31.9% higher compared with the same reporting period in 2014 (n=82,049). During the most recent week ending Oct. 3, more than 800 cases were reported. All four dengue virus (DENV) serotypes have been detected in 2015. Since the beginning of the year, Thailand health officials have reported a total of 98,403 cases from all 77 provinces. As of Oct. 25, 98 dengue related fatalities have been reported. [Outbreak News Today](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Chikungunya outbreak in Americas tops 600,000 cases this year

26 October - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on Oct 23 reported 2,095 new cases of chikungunya in the Caribbean and Americas. This brings the overall total this year to 600,553, including 575,281 suspected, 24,388 confirmed locally acquired, and 884 imported cases. ... Colombia continues to report high case numbers, with 1,207 new cases last week; its 2015 outbreak total now stands at 340,988.

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

Cuba: In Cuba, an abundance of love but a lack of babies

27 October - ... By almost any metric, Cuba's demographics are in dire straits. Since the 1970s, the birthrate has been in free fall, tilting population figures into decline, a problem much more common in rich, industrialized nations, not poor ones. Cuba already has the oldest population in all of Latin America. Experts predict that 50 years from now, Cuba's population will have fallen by a third. More than 40 percent of the country will be older than 60. ... Recognizing the problem, the government has begun to circulate pro-pregnancy pamphlets and fliers to encourage young couples to keep their children.

[The New York Times](#)

Jamaica: 19th baby dies

28 October - Health Minister Dr Fenton Ferguson confirmed in Parliament yesterday that the number of baby deaths related to the current bacterial infection crisis has risen to 19. In

a statement to the House of Representatives, Dr Ferguson said that 483 babies have been admitted to hospitals' special care nurseries since the crisis started in June. He said that 45 or 9.3 per cent have had their illnesses attributed to sepsis cases and total deaths have risen to 19, which is 42.2 per cent of the total. He said that most of the babies who died as a result of Klebsiella and Serratia bacterial infections were less than seven months old, and weighed less than two pounds. The Ministry of Health last week called on health authorities outside of Jamaica for help in the wake of the outbreak of bacterial infections. [Jamaica Observer](#)

Martinique: What's poisoning Martinique's men?

27 October - ... According to the World Cancer Research Fund International, in Martinique for every 100,000 men, 227 have prostate cancer. That number is almost twice the rate of the second country on the list: Norway (129). The United States, by comparison, comes in at No. 14, with 98 incidents per 100,000. And Martinique's is an outlier result that looks even more eyebrow-raising when you run comparisons to figure out why. ... The high cancer rate in Martinique is being linked to pesticides, primarily used in banana plantations to combat weevils. According to the 2009 paper, researchers found that the islanders' connective tissue was being contaminated by "extremely high levels" of a nasty cocktail of "DDT, DDE, alpha, beta and gamma HCH, aldrin and dieldrin." The paper concludes that environmental factors such as the "intensive and prolonged exposure to carcinogenic, mutagenic and reproductive toxin pesticides" may be the culprit. [OZY](#)

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