

31 July 2015

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Contents

U.S. MILITARY

- 20,000 soldiers tapped for Army fitness program's 2nd trial
- Ailing veterans sue, say toxic burn pits cost them their health
- Army investigating fault for accidental anthrax shipments
- CDC: DoD anthrax errors involved 575 shipments
- Epidemiology, microbiology, and antibiotic susceptibility patterns of skin and soft tissue infections
- House panel OKs shift of money to cover military health care system shortfall
- U.S. Navy investigates report of cancer cluster at Guantanamo

GLOBAL

- Bicycle-related hospitalizations at a Taiwanese level I trauma center
- Dengue vaccine candidate shows uneven efficacy
- Experimental MERS vaccine shows promise in animal studies
- FedEx no longer to transport bioterror germs in wake of anthrax lab mishaps
- Fight against tropical diseases is framed as efficient
- How drones can improve medical care access
- Study finds favorable response to 6-strain vaccine in infants
- Telemedicine can widen access to depression therapy for seniors
- World's first malaria vaccine, from GlaxoSmithKline, wins approval from EU

INFLUENZA

- CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Influenza virus characterisation, Summary Europe, June 2015
- WHO Influenza Update

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- A common hospital infection may be coming to us from food
- 'Leaky vaccines' could spur more dangerous disease
- With global warming, expect more deadly *Vibrio* cases

Performance Triad:
Healthy Sleep
Habits

This is a self-paced presentation designed to provide insight and positive action steps for improving your quality of sleep. Sleep, along with physical activity and nutrition are key aspects of health living. Practicing quality sleep habits will help you maintain optimal performance, resiliency, and overall health.



WELLNESS

- A way to get fit and also have fun
- AMA task force recommends prescription drug monitoring programs to curb opioid misuse
- FDA revises proposed Nutrition Facts label rule to include a daily value for added sugars
- Inadequate hydration can lead to impaired cognitive, emotional function
- The association between state bans on soda only and adolescent substitution with other sugar-sweetened beverages: a cross-sectional study
- The evidence supports artificial sweeteners over sugar

USAFRICOM

- Africa risks large meningitis outbreak
- Ebola numbers drop sharply in Guinea, Sierra Leone
- Kenya joins HIV DREAMS project
- Report: Ebola fueled by distrust

USCENTCOM

- Kyrgyzstan: Anthrax outbreak sickens 8
- Pakistan: Health department fears outbreak of diseases in flood-hit areas
- Saudi Arabia: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

USEUCOM

- Spain wildfires: Firefighters battle huge blaze in Catalonia
- Turkey/Syria: Infectious diseases on the rise in Turkey due to Syrian refugees

USNORTHCOM

- Canada: Rings of fire
- Mexico/U.S.: Mexican cilantro again blamed for Texas cyclospora outbreak
- U.S.: \$1 of every \$5 spent in US will be on health care
- U.S.: Americans report improved health, better healthcare – study
- U.S.: 'Brain-eating' amoeba reappears in New Orleans water supply
- U.S.: Geospatial mapping confirms the stress of urban blight and other public health problems
- U.S.: Happy 50th birthday, Medicare. Your patients are getting healthier
- U.S.: Mumps outbreak centered at University of Illinois
- U.S.: National, regional, state, and selected local area vaccination coverage among adolescents aged 13–17 years — United States, 2014
- U.S.: Two dead in Legionnaires' disease outbreak in New York
- U.S.: USPSTF - screen all adults for depression – period

USPACOM

- India: Health Minister holds review meeting on JE outbreak in Assam
- Malaysia: Ministry to investigate claims of measles, chickenpox outbreak
- South Korea: Government declares end to MERS outbreak
- Thailand: More than 100 suspects face Thai human trafficking charges

USSOUTHCOM

- Brazil: Testing by AP finds water at 2016 Olympic sites 'rife with human sewage'
- PAHO reports 20,000 new chikungunya cases

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Links

[A-Z Index](#)

[About USAPHC](#)

[Army Public Health and Health Information Weekly Update Archives](#)

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

[Medical Threat Briefings \(AKO\)](#)

[Request USAPHC Services](#)

[USAPHC Resource Materials](#)

[USAPHC Homepage](#)

[USAPHC Training](#)

[Contact USAPHC](#)

U.S. MILITARY

20,000 soldiers tapped for Army fitness program's 2nd trial



27 July - ... Most soldiers already understand the importance of healthy living, and there are multiple nutrition and fitness resources available to them beyond the ever-present unit PT. But officials behind the Performance Triad, an Army program that began with trial runs in three battalions in 2013, want more of them to appreciate the benefits they can realize by making healthier choices — benefits that would help improve overall Army readiness and can keep them in top shape long after leaving uniform. ... The program's second trial will feature about 20,000 soldiers at five locations, as well as spouses and Guard and Reserve personnel. ... It will roll out in September and last until spring 2016. [Army Times](#)

Ailing veterans sue, say toxic burn pits cost them their health

26 July - Hundreds of soldiers who've come home from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan now are battling the very companies that helped operate their base camps, claiming constant exposure to toxins from open-air burn pits has wrecked their health. ... Montoya filed his lawsuit last week in state District Court in Santa Fe against Halliburton Co., KBR Inc. and Kellogg, Brown & Root Services LLC. In doing so, he joined almost 250 other former and active military personnel who are suing the companies, which provided water treatment and waste disposal services in Iraq and Afghanistan. ... One company summed up its position in an email last week: "KBR provided a critical service to the Army under dangerous conditions, and to the exacting standards of the Army's guidelines and contract for waste disposal."

[Stars and Stripes](#)

Army investigating fault for accidental anthrax shipments

24 July - Pentagon officials announced Thursday the results of an internal review into how an Army lab in Utah accidentally shipped live samples of anthrax to more than 80 labs in the U.S. and seven countries. ... [Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work] said part of the problem was that there was no national standard on killing anthrax spores. "The procedures were the primary culprit," he said. ... Work said that the lab at Dugway produced a very high volume of spores but tested a low number to verify they were dead. ... Work said when those conducting the review asked the lab what percentage of spores had been found alive when they ran verification tests to see if they were killed, the lab said 2 percent. However, upon checking the data, investigators found it was actually 20 percent. [The Hill](#)

CDC: DoD anthrax errors involved 575 shipments

28 July - The inadvertent transfer of potentially live *Bacillus anthracis* (BA) samples by a US Army lab in Utah over the past decade involved a total of 575 separate shipments to other labs, including those that received the materials indirectly, a federal health official testified today. Daniel M. Sosin, MD, MPH, of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reported the number of shipments in testimony prepared for a US House subcommittee hearing today on the recent revelation that the Army lab sent potentially live BA samples to 86 other labs over a period of 10 years. Another 106 labs received the material secondarily, according to recent reports. ... In other prepared testimony, a Department of Defense (DoD) official said a total of 31 US lab workers were put on prophylactic antibiotic treatment because of possible exposure to the live samples, which is 10 more than reported by the DoD yesterday. The DoD official also promised that the Army would conduct an "accountability assessment" of institutions and personnel at Dugway Proving Ground, the Army lab that shipped the BA samples. [CIDRAP](#)

Epidemiology, microbiology, and antibiotic susceptibility patterns of skin and soft tissue infections

July 2015 - Skin and soft tissue infections (SSTIs), including those caused by methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), are common in military training environments. In 2014, the healthcare providers for trainees at Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA)–Lackland, TX, notified the surveillance unit of increased antibiotic resistance reported on wound cultures of purulent SSTIs. To provide updated clinical guidance to local providers, the surveillance unit conducted a review of all SSTIs diagnosed among trainees at JBSA–Lackland between 1 October 2012 and 31 December 2014. SSTI cumulative incidence during the surveillance period was 0.81%, with similar rates between males (0.80%) and females (0.84%) and between basic (0.82%) and technical (0.79%) trainees. Of 772 total cases, 254 were cultured; 196 resulted in growth of one or more pathogens. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

House panel OKs shift of money to cover military health care system shortfall

29 July - A House panel said Wednesday that the Defense Department can shift \$886 million to the military health care system, a first step toward ensuring it does not run out of money this month for costly prescription drugs and outside treatment for troops, families and retirees. The House Appropriations committee agreed to the move after the DOD warned it could "run the real risk of exhausting funds needed to pay private sector care costs in late July 2015." But the money crunch is still far from resolved – the DOD budget transfer must be approved by three other committees on Capitol Hill, which have yet to decide with just days until a month-long August recess. [Stars and Stripes](#)

U.S. Navy investigates report of cancer cluster at Guantanamo

28 July - The U.S. Navy is investigating a complaint that seeks the evacuation of civilian and military lawyers from parts of the U.S. base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, following reports of cancer cases among personnel working on the trials of detainees there. At least seven civilians and military members who worked on detainee trials at Guantanamo Bay have been diagnosed with cancer, according to the complaint, which was filed with the U.S. Defense Department's Office of the Inspector General. The complaint calls on American military officials to remove personnel from court facilities on the base and test them and the base itself for carcinogens. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

GLOBAL

Bicycle-related hospitalizations at a Taiwanese level I trauma center

29 July - This study aimed to investigate differences in injury severity and mortality between patients who met with bicycle or motorcycle accidents and were hospitalized at a Level I trauma center in Taiwan. ... The bicyclists sustained significantly higher rates of injuries to the extremities, while motorcyclists sustained significantly higher rates of injuries to the head and neck, face, and thorax. Compared to motorcyclists, the bicyclists had significantly lower [Injury Severity Scores (ISSs)] and New Injury Severity Scores, shorter length hospital stays, and a smaller proportion of admittance into the ICU. However, the bicyclists had higher [adjusted odds ratios] for in-hospital mortality. In terms of critical injury severity, the bicyclists had 4.4 times the odds of mortality than motorcyclists with the same ISSs. ... [Given] that only 9 % of bicyclists reported wearing helmets and considering the high mortality associated with head injury, it is possible that some bicycle riders underestimated the gravity of cycling accidents. [BMC Public Health](#)

Dengue vaccine candidate shows uneven efficacy

29 July - A tetravalent dengue vaccine candidate (CYD-TDV) may decrease the risk for infection among children aged 2 to 16 years, according to results of an interim analysis of three pediatric clinical trials. A higher incidence of hospitalization for dengue among children younger than 9 years underscores the need for further review, however. ... When evaluated according to age group, one trial demonstrated "a clear trend toward a higher relative risk for hospitalization for virologically confirmed dengue among younger children," citing a relative risk of 7.45 among children 2 to 5 years of age compared with 0.63 among those aged 6 to 11 years and 0.25 among those aged 12 to 14 years. [Medscape](#)

Experimental MERS vaccine shows promise in animal studies

28 July - Researchers in the United States trying to develop a vaccine against the deadly Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) virus say they have had early signs of success in animal experiments. Using a two-step approach in mice and rhesus macaques, scientists at the vaccine research center of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) said they had managed to provoke an immune response in the animals. In results published in the journal *Nature Communications*, vaccinated mice produced antibodies against multiple strains of MERS, they said, and vaccinated macaques were protected from severe lung damage when exposed to the virus. [Fox News](#)

FedEx no longer to transport bioterror germs in wake of anthrax lab mishaps

29 July - Shipping giant FedEx no longer is willing to transport packages containing research specimens of potential bioterror pathogens in the wake of high-profile safety mistakes by an Army lab that unknowingly shipped live anthrax for years, according to a letter the company sent to federal regulators and obtained by USA TODAY. FedEx's refusal to transport these kinds of specimens is drawing concern among officials at major laboratories, who say it was the primary way they sent and received critical samples used to diagnose diseases and for the development of vaccines, treatments, tests and detection equipment. Neither UPS nor the U.S. Postal Service will transport the specimens. [USA Today](#)

Fight against tropical diseases is framed as efficient

28 July - In the battle for the billions of dollars spent fighting global diseases, doctors who tackle neglected tropical diseases have labeled their struggle a "best buy." In a report issued in June, a consortium called United to Combat N.T.D.s argued that every \$1 invested in fighting tropical diseases would generate \$50 to almost \$200 in productivity gains by 2030. The consortium's targets include sleeping sickness, guinea worm, Chagas, river blindness, trachoma, elephantiasis, leprosy, leishmaniasis, bilharzia and intestinal worms picked up in food or from the soil. ... So many patients lose so many work and school days, the report's authors argued, that the total economic burden may be as great as that caused by better-known killers like AIDS and malaria. Also, most of these diseases can be fought relatively cheaply with simple measures like window screens, insecticide spray, water wells, deworming drugs, antibiotics — even, in the case of trachoma, with soap and water. [New York Times](#)

How drones can improve medical care access

30 July - Drones seem perfect for quick and fast delivery of all sorts of cargo. ... [Researchers] with the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine wanted to know whether an actual drone flight, including a shaky takeoff and bumpy landing, would affect [biomedical] specimens. ... [They] discovered that the process of flying in a drone didn't

significantly impact blood samples. ... There wasn't really a difference between those samples that had been flown on the drones and those that stayed on the ground, according to the study. Only one test, for total carbon dioxide, had results that "were all over the place," and researchers don't know why. [Washington Post](#)

Study finds favorable response to 6-strain vaccine in infants

28 July - A liquid hexavalent vaccine directed toward six diseases produced a good immune response and few side effects in infants. ... Researchers ... studied more than 1,400 children in the phase 3 trial. The vaccine, DTaP5-IPV-Hib-HepB, covers diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b, and hepatitis B. The team placed 981 infants in group 1; they received the hexavalent vaccine plus a 13-strain pneumococcal vaccine (PCV-13) and a five-strain rotavirus vaccine (RV-5) at 2, 4, and 6 months of age followed by DTaP5, a Hib vaccine called Hib-OMP, and PCV-13 at 15 months of age. Group 2 comprised 484 infants who received the same regimen, except Hib-OMP was replaced by a different Hib vaccine, called Hib-TT, at the 15-month vaccination. Both groups had adequate immune responses and safety profiles. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fifth item)

Telemedicine can widen access to depression therapy for seniors

29 July - Talk therapy delivered by two-way video call helped older veterans with depression as much as in-person therapy sessions, a U.S. study found. Many seniors face obstacles to getting help for depression, including mobility issues and fear of social stigma, researchers say, so telemedicine might expand their access to treatment. ... Depression is a particular problem among veterans, whose risk is two to five times that of the general population, the researchers note. Another barrier for this group is disability, with many veterans home-bound and unable to go to a clinic for care, Egede said. [Reuters](#)

World's first malaria vaccine, from GlaxoSmithKline, wins approval from EU

24 July - ... The world's first-ever malaria vaccine, developed by GlaxoSmithKline, has won backing from European regulators, marking a critical step in the fight against a disease that kills nearly half a million people each year. The vaccine, called Mosquirix, was approved by the European Medicines Agency, Glaxo GSK-1.60% said Friday. Mosquirix, also known as RTS,S, has been in development for 30 years. It initially started as a concept within Glaxo; over the years, the Walter Reed Army Institute [of Research] joined in on clinical development, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation contributed more than \$200 million in financing. [Fortune](#)

[top of page...](#)

INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

For week 28 ending July 18, 2015:

During week 28, 5.5% of all deaths reported through the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia and influenza. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 5.9% for week 28.

Nationwide during week 28, 0.8% 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%. [FluView](#)

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Influenza virus characterisation, Summary Europe, June 2015

29 July - Over the course of the 2014–15 influenza season influenza A(H3N2), A(H1N1)pdm09 and type B viruses have co-circulated in EU/EEA countries. To date, 23 EU/EEA countries have shared 878 influenza-positive specimens with the WHO Collaborating Centre in London for detailed characterisation. Since the May 2015 report, 73 viruses have been characterised antigenically and 53 genetically. The 16 A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses characterised antigenically were similar to the vaccine virus A/California/07/2009; all 11 characterised genetically had HA genes belonging to genetic subgroup 6B, as observed worldwide. [ECDC](#)

WHO Influenza Update

27 July - Globally, the Southern hemisphere had increased influenza activity whereas influenza activity was at low levels in the Northern hemisphere.

- In North America, Europe and temperate countries of Asia, influenza activity continued at low, inter-seasonal levels with influenza B predominating in sporadic detections.
- In northern, middle, eastern and western Africa, only a few countries reported low levels of influenza activity with influenza type B predominating with low levels of co-circulation of influenza type A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2).
- In tropical countries of the Americas/Central America and the Caribbean, overall influenza activity was reported to be at low, inter-seasonal levels with only Cuba reporting a slight increase in detections of influenza type A(H1N1)pdm09.
- In western and temperate countries of Asia, low levels of influenza activity were reported with influenza B predominating with co-circulation of influenza type A(H1N1)pdm09 in western Asia in recent weeks. Northern China reported a slight increase in detections of influenza type A(H3N2).
- In tropical Asia, countries in Southern Asia reported elevated but decreasing influenza activity with influenza type A(H3N2) predominating. South East Asia reported low levels

of activity with influenza type A(H3N2) predominating with co-circulation of influenza type A(H3N2) and B.

- In temperate South America, influenza activity increased with influenza type A(H1N1)pdm09 and type A(H3N2) predominating in recent weeks. Overall, influenza activity is following seasonal trends although at lower levels than in previous years. There was a sharp increase in influenza activity in Paraguay.
- Influenza activity decreased in South Africa with influenza type A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) predominating in recent weeks.
- In Australia and New Zealand, influenza activity continued to increase with both influenza type A(H3N2) and type B in circulation. [WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

A common hospital infection may be coming to us from food

25 July - One of the most common and troubling infections that occur in healthcare may come from an unexpected source, according to a new paper: from food. Yet because it is not one of the bacteria that we think of as disease-causing foodborne organisms, the size of the threat it poses, and the way it reaches us, may not be well understood. The infection is *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, a stubborn gut-dwelling organism that can cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections and meningitis. The finding that it is present in food—and in some cases, practically genetically identical in food and in hospitals—comes from a multi-institute project that for several years has been closely analyzing pathogens found on supermarket meat and in hospital patients in Flagstaff, Ariz. ... [The] team ... looked for the bacterium in 508 packages of chicken, turkey and pork bought in Flagstaff supermarkets over 10 months, and in 1,728 samples of blood or urine taken from Flagstaff hospital patients during the same time span. They found that 10 percent of the patients, and 47 percent of the meat, carried *Klebsiella*. Moreover, 22 percent of the *Klebsiella*—32 percent of those found on meat and 8 percent of those found in patients—were multi-drug resistant. [National Geographic](#)

'Leaky vaccines' could spur more dangerous disease

29 July – A new study reports experiments with a poultry virus that suggest leaky vaccines can allow the spread of strains that would otherwise be too lethal to persist. Many vaccines - such as the childhood vaccines against smallpox, polio, measles, mumps and rubella - are perfect. Because they mimic the way the immune system works, they not only stop vaccinated individuals from getting the disease, they also stop it spreading to others. But some vaccines are "imperfect" or "leaky" in that while they protect the vaccinated individual

from getting sick, they do not prevent the transmission of the pathogen, which is able to survive and spread throughout a population. This ironically gives pathogens a chance to evolve that is denied them in a vaccine-free world. In the vaccine-free world, really "hot" pathogens die out because they kill their hosts. [Medical News Today](#)

With global warming, expect more deadly *Vibrio* cases

30 July – [As] waters warm globally, we can expect to see far more cases of the deadly *Vibrio* bacterium. There are three major species of *Vibrio*, each causing a different pattern of disease. *V. cholera*, ... *V. parahaemolyticus*, ... [and] *V. vulnificus* is the really scary one in the family, being the most lethal. ... Infection with this species can kill within hours. ... Dr. Rita Colwell, an expert microbiologist and oceanographer, has studied cholera in India, and has shown that blooms of phytoplankton, the *Vibrio*'s primary food source, precede cholera outbreaks. She and Antarpreet Jutla of West Virginia University have found a pattern of unusually hot summers followed by heavy fall rains to be predictive of larger epidemics.

[Forbes](#)

[top of page...](#)

WELLNESS

A way to get fit and also have fun

29 July - Can exercise that is intense also be fun? Researchers in Denmark recently began delving into that issue and in the process developed a new approach to intense interval training that could appeal even to those of us who, until now, have been disinclined to push ourselves during exercise. High-intensity exercise, usually in the form of short bursts of very arduous intervals interspersed with rest, has much to recommend it. Many studies have shown that even a few minutes of these intervals can substantially improve health and cardiovascular fitness. But high-intensity interval workouts have a drawback that is seldom acknowledged. Many people don't like them and soon abandon the program. [New York Times](#)

[Times](#)

AMA task force recommends prescription drug monitoring programs to curb opioid misuse

30 July - The American Medical Association Task Force to Reduce Opioid Abuse is recommending that physicians register for and use prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs). Well-run, state-based PDMPs can help physicians access a patient's history of prescription opioids and indicate whether a patient has received prescriptions from other providers and dispensers, even those from out-of-state. The task force recommends that physicians collaborate with their state medical societies to make sure that their state's PDMP is fully funded and contains the components necessary to reduce prescription drug misuse,

including the following:

- Alerts when a patient reaches limits for prescriptions, doses, or quantity.
- Prompts when a prescription for naloxone is indicated.
- Up-to-date information on a patient's history of opioid prescriptions. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

FDA revises proposed Nutrition Facts label rule to include a daily value for added sugars

24 July - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today proposed including the percent daily value (%DV) for added sugars on the Nutrition Facts label of packaged foods, giving consumers additional information for added sugars similar to information they have seen for decades with respect to nutrients such as sodium and certain fats. The percent daily value indicates how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet and would help consumers make informed choices for themselves and their families. The percent daily value would be based on the recommendation that the daily intake of calories from added sugars not exceed 10 percent of total calories. [FDA](#)

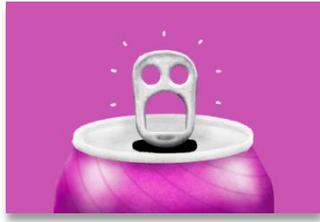
Inadequate hydration can lead to impaired cognitive, emotional function

29 July - More than half of all children and adolescents in the United States are under-hydrated — probably because they're not drinking enough water — and that could have significant repercussions for their physical health and cognitive and emotional functioning, according to the first national study of its kind from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The study also found racial/ethnic and gender gaps in hydration status. Black children and adolescents were at higher risk of inadequate hydration than whites; boys were at higher risk than girls. [Harvard Gazette](#)

The association between state bans on soda only and adolescent substitution with other sugar-sweetened beverages: a cross-sectional study

27 July - Across the United States, many states have actively banned the sale of soda in high schools, and evidence suggests that students' in-school access to soda has declined as a result. However, schools may be substituting soda with other sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), and national trends indicate that adolescents are consuming more sports drinks and energy drinks. This study examined whether students consumed more non-soda SSBs in states that banned the sale of soda in school. ... Students consumed more servings of sports drinks, energy drinks, coffee/tea, and other SSBs if they resided in a state that banned soda in school but attended a school with vending machines that sold other SSBs. Similar results were observed where schools did not have vending machines but the state allowed soda to be sold in school. Intake was generally not elevated where both states and schools limited SSB availability — i.e., states banned soda and schools did not have SSB vending machines. [International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity](#)

The evidence supports artificial sweeteners over sugar



27 July - ... The available evidence points to the fact that there appears to be a correlation between sugar consumption and health problems; none can be detected with artificial sweeteners. ... Studies in humans in Britain, Denmark, Canada and in the United States could find no association between saccharin consumption and bladder cancer once they accounted for cigarette smoking (which does cause it). Based on these newer studies, saccharin was removed from the carcinogen list in 2000. ... A safety review from 2007, published in *Critical Reviews in Toxicology*, found that aspartame had been studied extensively and that the evidence showed that it was safe. ... Epidemiologic studies have found that even after controlling for other factors, a population's intake of added sugars is associated with the development of type 2 diabetes, with a 1.1 percent increase in prevalence for each can of sugar-sweetened soda consumed on average per day. [New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

USAFRICOM

Africa risks large meningitis outbreak

28 July - With Africa at risk of a large meningitis outbreak, an acute shortage of meningitis C-containing vaccine threatens to severely limit the world's ability to minimize the number of people affected, 4 international public health organizations warned today. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the WHO (the 4 organizations, which together constitute the International Coordinating Group for Vaccine Provision for Epidemic Meningitis Control - ICG) are therefore calling today on vaccine manufacturers to step up meningitis C-containing vaccine production by 5 million doses before the 2016 meningitis season starts in January. [WHO](#)

Ebola numbers drop sharply in Guinea, Sierra Leone

29 July - Noting its lowest weekly total in more than a year, West Africa's Ebola-hit region reported only seven cases last week, a steep drop compared with a several-week plateau, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported today in its weekly update. Four of the new lab-confirmed cases were in Guinea and three were in Sierra Leone. No new cases were reported in Liberia, which had recently experienced a cluster of cases in Monrovia. ... [Clinicians] at Emory University Hospital's special isolation unit yesterday reported on institutional lessons they learned in treating the first four patients who were airlifted out of

Africa to the United States for treatment. The team published its findings in [Public Library of Science \(PLoS\) Medicine](#). [CIDRAP](#)

Kenya joins HIV DREAMS project

27 July - Kenya will be getting new support to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS among adolescent girls. President Obama announced Sunday that Kenya would be included in the DREAMS project. It's funded by the U.S., the Nike Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Adolescent girls are hard hit by HIV AIDS. It's estimated seven thousand die every year from the disease. They also account for about 74 percent of new infections among adolescents. The \$210 million DREAMS project falls under PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. [VOA](#)

Report: Ebola fueled by distrust

29 July - As health officials in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone struggle to eliminate the final cases of Ebola, a new report said some hard lessons have been learned. The group International Alert says a lack of trust between the Liberian people and their government made the outbreak worse. The report's author, Ashoka Mukpo, said that "many people mistrust official institutions and even feel threatened by them." ... "On one hand, Liberia has quite a history of tension between citizens and government. It had a civil war about 15 years ago. But I think right now what people felt is that there is this tremendous sense of hope. ... Mukpo said Liberians had expected more from the healthcare system when the Ebola outbreak took hold. ... I really expected that the levels of trust in the international community would have been equally as low as the government. ... But actually the levels of trust that were given to the international community were much higher than the government. ... He said that "one of the critical and under reported narratives" of Liberia's Ebola crisis involved community leaders. ... [Once] the government actually got to community leaders and said, look, what can we do to assist you in fighting this outbreak? What do you need from us and what can you do to help? Then once that kind of collaborative effort started, then that's really when you started to see cases reduce," he said. [VOA](#)

[top of page...](#)

USCENTCOM

Kyrgyzstan: Anthrax outbreak sickens 8

26 July - Officials in Kyrgyzstan are reporting eight suspected anthrax cases in the Jalal-Abad region. The individuals (7 men) and a child (a 12-year-old girl), have been hospitalized. The Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan said in a statement: "Eight villagers from Gian Talap, Tobo-Korgon, Ak-Tobo were hospitalized to the infectious

department of Aksy district hospital with signs of anthrax.” Based on the early investigation, the victims participated in the slaughter of animals. ... Experts from ProMed say this region of western Kyrgyzstan is under constant threat of anthrax from uncontrolled livestock anthrax in the Furgana valley stretching west in Uzbekistan. [Outbreak News Today](#)

Pakistan: Health department fears outbreak of diseases in flood-hit areas

30 July - The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department has asked for immediate assistance from the UN agencies and donor organisations to provide timely treatment to the flood-stricken people in Chitral. ... “We fear epidemics of gastroenteritis, diarrhoea, malaria, typhoid, dengue fever, scabies and other diseases in Chitral where we face problems to reach the stranded population and give them treatment facilities,” said senior health officials. “We need four electricity generators to maintain cold chain of vaccines because over 50 cases of measles have been recorded from the affected areas,” they said. The officials said that during the past four days doctors had examined about 5,000 patients in the flood-hit villages, but there were no arrangements to register diseases’ outbreak and put brakes on epidemics. [Dawn](#)

Saudi Arabia: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

29 July - Between 16 and 25 July 2015, the National IHR Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia notified WHO of 8 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, including 1 death. ... Contact tracing of household and healthcare contacts is ongoing for these cases. The National IHR Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also notified WHO of the death of 2 MERS-CoV cases that were reported in previous DONs on 2 July (case n. 4) and on 23 June (case n. 2). Globally, since September 2012, WHO has been notified of 1,382 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 493 related deaths. [WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

USEUCOM

Spain wildfires: Firefighters battle huge blaze in Catalonia



27 July - The Catalonia region of Spain has seen its biggest forest fire this year, with more than 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres) burned in less than 24 hours. Helicopters have been used to contain the fire, which broke out on Sunday. Some 400 people were forced to

leave their homes, but authorities said there had been no reports of injuries. [BBC](#)

Turkey/Syria: Infectious diseases on the rise in Turkey due to Syrian refugees

29 July - The millions of Syrian refugees who are being hosted in Turkey have led to a resurgence in a number of diseases, public health experts have said, with the country witnessing the first serious outbreak of measles for years. Professor Savan Günay, a pediatrician, told Today's Zaman that measles has become a widespread problem for the first time in 30 years. ... Syrian infants living in refugee camps, which are mostly located in border towns near Turkey's Syrian border, are vaccinated, but the thousands of Syrian children living outside these camps are not. The vaccination program implemented by the Turkish health authorities is compulsory and consists of a series of periodic vaccinations against contagious diseases, including measles. [Today's Zaman](#)

[top of page...](#)

USNORTHCOM

Canada: Rings of fire



29 July - In the far north of Canada's Ontario province, where opiate addiction afflicts the First Nation population, nurse practitioner Mae Katt runs a mobile drug treatment programme. Her urgent mission is to set up effective programmes to treat this devastated population in the hopes that they will be able to shape their future, on their territory, and become the employment workforce backbone of the coming "Ring of Fire" mining operations. It is a mammoth challenge, especially as up to 80 percent of the adult population of some communities negotiating the mining developments are addicted to opiates. ... Historic injustice explains much of the predicament many First Nations communities are in, but there are also continuous indignities that the people in these areas experience daily as a consequence of living in poverty and neglect. [Al Jazeera](#)

Mexico/U.S.: Mexican cilantro again blamed for Texas cyclospora outbreak

27 July - Cilantro from Mexico has again been identified as the cause of an outbreak of cyclosporiasis in Texas, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. ... On Monday, the DSHS said there were 205 cases reported, including 17 in Dallas County, eight in Denton County, nine in Collin County and nine in Tarrant County. ... In an FDA statement the CDC is quoted, "there is currently (in July

2015) another ongoing outbreak of cyclosporiasis in the United States in which both the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection have identified cilantro from the Mexican state of Puebla as a suspect vehicle with respect to separate illness clusters." [NBC DFW](#)

U.S.: \$1 of every \$5 spent in US will be on health care

28 July - Nearly \$1 in every \$5 spent in the United States by 2024 will be on health care, according to a government projection released Tuesday, forecasting a quickening of the health inflation rate. Nonetheless, that rate still falls well short of the sharply upward trend seen prior to the Great Recession. Annual health spending is expected to grow an average of 5.8 percent during the period of 2014 through 2024, mainly because of the expansion in the number of people with health insurance due to Obamacare, stronger economic growth and an older population transitioning into the Medicare system, the Office of the Actuary at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said. [CNBC](#)

U.S.: Americans report improved health, better healthcare – study

28 July - Americans are reporting improved health and better healthcare two years after health insurance became available under the Affordable Care Act ... The study of more than 500,000 Americans found improvements in insurance coverage, access to primary care and prescription medicine, affordable healthcare and overall health since late 2013. ... Based on the study results, approximately 15.8 million adults gained coverage under the law. ... About 7 million adults obtained a personal physician, about 4.8 million more adults can afford medicine, about 11 million more adults say healthcare is affordable and about 6.8 million more people consider themselves in excellent or very good health, he said. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: 'Brain-eating' amoeba reappears in New Orleans water supply

24 July - A potentially deadly amoeba has been found in the New Orleans water supply for at least the second time in two years. Water from the St. Bernard Parish neighborhood in New Orleans has tested positive for *Naegleria fowleri* and the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals ordered a 60-day chlorine "burn" starting Thursday to ensure the pathogen would be eradicated from the water supply, officials said. ... The lowered population post-Katrina and increased use of eco-friendly devices have led to less water being treated for the same water system, Groby said. As a result, water is standing in the pipes for longer and possibly losing some of its chlorination, he said. [ABC News](#)

U.S.: Geospatial mapping confirms the stress of urban blight and other public health problems

30 July - ... A recent article in the American Journal of Public Health found in a randomized

study conducted by doctors at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania that African-American pedestrians in Philadelphia who walked by a dilapidated urban lot filled with trash and overgrown vegetation had an elevated heart rate attributed to stress, as compared with those who sauntered past a newly green lot in the same vicinity. The authors noted that this was the first so-called "neighborhood walking trial" in which a physiological marker was measured in real time for those in their regular environment, and the lowered heart rates measured suggests a biological link between vacant lot greening and a reduction in the acute stress of inner city living. [Forbes](#)

U.S.: Happy 50th birthday, Medicare. Your patients are getting healthier

28 July - Here's a bit of good news for Medicare, the popular government program that's turning 50 this week. Older Americans on Medicare are spending less time in the hospital; they're living longer; and the cost of a typical hospital stay has actually come down over the past 15 years, according to a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. ... "People who were being hospitalized were having much better outcomes after the hospitalization," he says. "They had a much better chance of survival." [NPR](#)

U.S.: Mumps outbreak centered at University of Illinois



28 July - More than two-thirds of the state's 73 known cases of mumps are in Champaign County, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health. The number of cases in the Champaign area currently is at 50 and could continue to climb, state and local health officials said. Most of the cases are linked to the University of

Illinois campus, where thousands of students who were away for the summer are expected to return to campus in the next few weeks for fall classes. ... Dr. Robert Palinkas is director of the McKinley Health Center. Smaller mumps outbreaks happen periodically on campus, he said, but the current outbreak is the largest in more than a decade. [Chicago Tribune](#)

U.S.: National, regional, state, and selected local area vaccination coverage among adolescents aged 13–17 years — United States, 2014

31 July - ... From 2013 to 2014, coverage among adolescents aged 13–17 years increased for all routinely recommended vaccines: from 84.7% to 87.6% for ≥ 1 tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine dose, from 76.6% to 79.3% for ≥ 1 meningococcal conjugate (MenACWY) vaccine dose, from 56.7% to 60.0% and from 33.6% to 41.7% for ≥ 1 HPV vaccine dose among females and males, respectively. Coverage differed by state and local area. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Two dead in Legionnaires' disease outbreak in New York

30 July - Two people have died in a Legionnaires' disease outbreak in New York. Thirty-one cases of the flu-like disease have been reported since mid-July in the South Bronx, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene said. Legionnaires' disease is a respiratory bacterial infection usually spread through mist that comes from a water source, such as cooling towers, air conditioning or showers. ... "We are conducting a swift investigation to determine the source of the outbreak and prevent future cases. I urge anyone with symptoms to seek medical attention right away," said Dr. Mary Bassett, commissioner of the New York City health department. [CNN](#)

U.S.: USPSTF - screen all adults for depression – period

28 July - All adults should be screened for depression at routine clinic visits, irrespective of whether the healthcare provider is able to provide depression care or support, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) plans to recommend. The draft recommendation, which carries a "B" grade indicating "high certainty that the net benefit is moderate or there is moderate certainty that the net benefit is moderate to substantial," broadens the USPSTF's 2009 statement. ... In addition, the draft calls out pregnant and postpartum women for screening. They were not excluded from the 2009 recommendations, but task force members evidently believed that the special risks for depression in these subpopulations warranted a specific mention in the new statement. [MedPage Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

USPACOM

India: Health Minister holds review meeting on JE outbreak in Assam

26 July - Shri J P Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare held a review meeting with senior officials of Health Ministry in the backdrop of recent outbreak of Japanese Encephalitis (JE) in Assam. He stated that the Director General of Health Services has been directed to immediately rush a team of experts to Assam to assist and advise the State health authorities in clinical management of the cases. ... 365 JE positive cases and 66 deaths due to JE have been reported from the State so far. More number of deaths has been reported from the upper Assam districts namely Sivasagar (9), Dibrugarh (7), Jorhat (7) and Golaghat (4). ... [The] majority of the victims are adults. [Odisha Diary](#)

Malaysia: Ministry to investigate claims of measles, chickenpox outbreak

26 July - The Health Ministry will investigate claims of a measles and chickenpox outbreak in Kuala Lumpur, said Director General of Health. ... Claims of the outbreak surfaced when a team of health officials conducted an inspection on the vaccine cold chain at a clinic in the capital city. Vaccine cold chain refers to a system of handling vaccines within a particular temperature range to ensure its effectiveness when administered to patients. Concerns over the measles and chickenpox outbreak were raised by a medical officer, who declined to be identified, whose clinic had been visited by health officials two weeks ago. [Astro AWANI](#)

South Korea: Government declares end to MERS outbreak

27 July - South Korea on Tuesday declared a de facto end to an outbreak of Middle East respiratory syndrome that has infected 186 people, killing 36 as well as scaring away foreign tourists and temporarily shutting down thousands of schools. ... Since the first South Korean patient tested positive on May 20, the quick spread of the disease has exposed loopholes in the country's infection-control abilities: overcrowded emergency rooms, frequent visits to hospitalized patients by relatives and friends, and the government's failure to share information with doctors and the public. ... The country has reported no new cases in the past two weeks, the maximum incubation period for the virus. [New York Times](#)

Thailand: More than 100 suspects face Thai human trafficking charges

24 July - Thailand's state prosecutors recommended charges against more than 100 people, including a Thai army general, in a multinational human trafficking scandal that came to light after dozens of bodies were discovered in the country's south earlier this year, a spokesman said Friday. Ninety-one Thais, nine Myanmar nationals and four Bangladeshis face 16 charges, including human trafficking, partaking in a transnational crime network and assisting or bringing in aliens into the kingdom illegally, Office of the Attorney General spokesman Wanchai Roujanavong told reporters. "The investigation showed it is a big syndicate. There were networks that brought them [the migrants] from overseas into the country systematically," he said. "There were a lot of damages. Bodies were found. Senior officials were accused, as well as influential figures. The Office of the Attorney General, therefore, treats it as a very important case." [Al Jazeera](#)

[top of page...](#)

Brazil: Testing by AP finds water at 2016 Olympic sites 'rife with human sewage'



30 July - It's no secret that the water at some of the 2016 Olympic venues in Rio de Janeiro has some problems. ... But The Associated Press has just put some science into it by commissioning tests over a five-month period. What the wire service found is pretty gross. In short, the water is "rife with human sewage," teeming with high levels of viruses and bacteria. Not a single Olympic venue, the AP testing found, is fit for swimming or boating. ... 'It's all the water from the toilets and the showers and whatever people put down their sinks, all mixed up, and it's going out into the beach waters.' "In the U.S., Griffith said, areas with such levels of contamination 'would be shut down immediately.' " [NPR](#)

PAHO reports 20,000 new chikungunya cases

27 July - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) late last week reported 20,269 new chikungunya cases, raising the epidemic total in the Americas to 1,614,318 cases. Ecuador, reporting 5 weeks' worth of data, had the most new cases, 13,561, for a total of 30,045, according to a Jul 24 PAHO update. Colombia, which has for months reported thousands of new cases each week, was next highest, with 6,427 new infections, for a total of 302,171. ... The total so far this year is 477,371 cases. As has been the case for quite some time, however, many countries have not reported data for weeks. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

[top of page...](#)

[U.S. Military](#) | [Global](#) | [Influenza](#) | [Veterinary/Food Safety](#) | [Wellness](#) | [Contact Us](#)

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