Army Public Health Weekly Update

3 August 2018

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U.S. MILITARY

A contractor knowingly sold U.S. troops defective earplugs for years. Now they’re paying for it

30 July - A defense contractor has agreed to pay $9.1 million to settle claims that it furnished U.S. service members with earplugs that it knew were defective, the Department of Justice announced on Thursday. ... The Minnesota-based 3M Company and its predecessor company Aearo Technologies sold dual-ended Combat Arms Earplugs, Version 2 (CAEv2) to the Department of Defense, despite allegedly knowing that the plugs were “too short for proper insertion into users’ ears and that the earplugs could loosen imperceptibly,” according to the DoJ statement. The defects effectively rendered the earplugs useless. According to Stars and Stripes, the Combat Arms Earplugs were fielded to thousands of service members who deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq between 2003 and 2015. Task and Purpose

could firefighters health research help understand burn pits risks?

28 July - When it comes to conducting research, the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs could have a resource previously untapped — firefighters. Firefighting organizations — such as the Illinois Fire Service Institute at the University of Illinois — have been studying the long-term health effects of exposure to toxic smoke on firefighters for decades. Yet, for military personnel exposed to toxic smoke from open burn pits while deployed to Southwest Asia, DoD and the VA say there is not yet enough evidence to presume exposure to be the cause of certain illnesses and cancers afflicting them. ... Many sick veterans firmly believe the toxins in the smoke from those burn pits are the cause of their illnesses. ... Yet DoD and the VA are still hesitant to link those illnesses to exposure, saying it could take decades of research to provide that link. Killeen Daily Herald
DoD exempts wounded warriors from ‘deploy or get out’ policy

1 August - Service members wounded in combat will be exempt from the Defense Department’s new policy to be deployable in 12 months or face separation from the military, the Pentagon announced this week. The policy tweak came after criticism that DoD was going to remove personnel who were only in non-deployable status because of their combat injuries, when the overall goal of the program was to target the thousands of military personnel who for fitness, health or other administrative reasons have not been deployable. The initiative is part of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis’ effort to improve the lethality and readiness of the services. “Service members whose injuries were the result of hostile action, meet the criteria for awarding of the Purple Heart, and whose injuries were not the result of their own misconduct” are approved for retention, DoD said in its July 30 policy. Military Times

Global lung cancer deaths expected to rise 43% among women by 2030

1 August - A projected modest global decline in breast cancer deaths among women over the next decade or so will be accompanied by a much larger increase in deaths from lung cancer, according to a European study. Between 2015 and 2030, a 9% worldwide decline in breast cancer mortality and a 43% increase in lung cancer mortality among women are projected, according to an analysis of World Health Organization cancer mortality data from 52 countries. Mortality rates for lung cancer among women are projected to be higher in high-income countries than in middle-income countries ... with the highest death rates from lung cancer among women projected to occur in Europe and the Pacific Ocean region, which includes Polynesia and Malaysia. MedPage Today

Here’s an early draft of the Army’s new fitness test standards

1 August - A year-long field test of the Army’s new fitness test kicks off in October, and on Tuesday, a copy of the preliminary scoring system leaked online. For now, Training and Doctrine Command is working on a gender- and age-neutral, 100-point system for each of the six events, with a 60-point minimum that will be familiar to anyone who’s ever taken the current Army Physical Fitness Test. “The chart represents the standards we intend to use for the Army Combat Fitness Test during the Initial Operational Capability field testing phase,” Lt. Col. Jeffrey Pray, a spokesman for the Center for Initial Military Training, told Army Times on Wednesday. To start, standards will be divided by “heavy,” “significant” and “moderate” physical demand, similar to the Occupational Physical Assessment Test. One of the goals of the field study is to decide whether the final test will be scored according to military occupational specialty or unit type — so, for example, an infantryman would fall into the
“heavy” category, but so might everyone who serves in an infantry brigade combat team as well. Elsewhere, jobs like combat engineer, field artillery and pilots fall into the heavy category, while military police, firefighters and helicopter mechanics are in the significant category. Army Times

**Intensive outpatient therapy shows rapid reduction of veterans’ PTSD symptoms**

1 August - Military veterans who participated in a three week, intensive outpatient treatment program for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) saw rapid and clinically meaningful changes in PTSD and depression symptoms, according to results of a study by researchers at Rush University Medical Center. This paper adds to the growing body evidence that shows that providing several hours of therapy over several consecutive days could be an important step in addressing the unmet mental health needs of tens of thousands of military veterans. Medical Xpress

**Leaders come together to rehearse military healthcare transition**

26 July - ... On Oct. 1, DHA will assume policy oversight of all military treatment facilities. ... The rehearsal of concept ... drill’s topics covered numerous scenarios giving Fort Bragg leaders the opportunity to consider and prepare for potential budget, readiness, infrastructure, legal and most importantly, healthcare delivery issues. ... The transfer of authority is part of a Congressional mandate under the National Defense Authorization Act to centralize the administration of all military treatment facilities to better focus on readiness, create a common high-quality experience for patients and eliminate redundancies. While DHA will manage healthcare delivery at the military treatment facilities, the individual service medical commands will still maintain responsibility and authority over readiness functions to include deployment-related functions, embedded behavioral health, medical logistics, dental, public health, veterinary services and installation emergency response. Army.mil

**Major deployment-related amputations of lower and upper limbs, active and reserve components, U.S. Armed Forces, 2001–2017**

July 2018 - Major amputations of the lower and upper limbs are among the most life-altering and debilitating combat injuries. From 1 January 2001 through 31 October 2017, a total of 1,705 service members sustained major deployment-related lower and upper limb amputations. Lower limb amputations were far more common than upper limb amputations, with a total of 1,914 lower limb amputations, compared to 302 upper limb...
amputations. The greatest single year number of amputations occurred in 2011, with a reported total of 273 service members who sustained 403 major limb amputations. The injured cohort mostly comprised non-Hispanic white male service members aged 21–29 years. Furthermore, the majority of the injured cohort included active component, mid-level or junior enlisted members of the Army or Marine Corps, in combat-specific occupations.

New V.A. Secretary faces a department in turmoil

30 July - The Department of Veterans Affairs has experienced five months of tumult. Its previous secretary got into a political brawl with his staff and was fired by Twitter message. His first proposed replacement was scuttled by allegations of drunkenness. Then the acting secretary who took charge was accused of making false statements to Congress. In the department's headquarters a block from the White House, political appointees who worked in the Trump campaign forced career officials out of key positions; inexperienced newcomers published an erroneous report about thousands of military suicides that never happened; and the department's top technology official fended off calls from Congress to resign over his ties to Cambridge Analytica, the voter-profiling company. Enter Robert L. Wilkie, who was sworn in Monday as the new secretary of Veterans Affairs. In addition to the dizzying task of managing more than 350,000 employees and 1,700 facilities — the second-largest federal bureaucracy after the Defense Department — Mr. Wilkie must now try to quell the infighting and scandal roiling the department's headquarters.

The Army is tightening waiver authority for recruits with issues like self-mutilation, misconduct and substance abuse

31 July - The Army will once again require headquarters approval for some more serious waivers, a reversal of a policy released last August that pushed those decisions down to U.S. Army Recruiting Command. The memo, which went public in November, caused an uproar after USA Today reported that it effectively lowered standards for recruiting. Army Secretary Mark Esper took back control of those waiver decisions in a memo signed on Monday. ... As of Monday, potential recruits seeking waivers for psychiatric or behavioral health conditions, previous medical discharge and misconduct will need to have their packets approved by the Army's deputy chief of staff for personnel, according to the memo. Army Times

Transgender and cisgender U.S. veterans have few health differences

July 2018 - Transgender people have been able to serve openly in the military since June 2016. However, the administration of President Donald Trump has signaled its interest in
This study used population-level data for 2014–16 from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System to compare the health of transgender and cisgender veterans and civilians. An estimated 0.5 percent of veterans in the sample identified themselves as transgender. While transgender civilians had worse health than cisgender civilians across most indicators, very few differences existed among veterans. However, transgender veterans had higher odds of having at least one disability compared to cisgender veterans, despite similar levels of access to health care. These findings largely suggest that transgender veterans do not have worse health than cisgender veterans. Health Affairs

**GLOBAL**

A campaign to end AIDS by 2030 is faltering worldwide

31 July - The ambitious campaign to “end AIDS” by 2030 is badly off track, officials said at the International AIDS Conference here last week. Funding for efforts to slow the spread of HIV by treating all infected people has flatlined, and many countries, for a host of reasons, can’t or won’t mount aggressive responses. “We will not be able to meet the prevention goal,” said Michel Sidibé, director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in Geneva, Switzerland. “We have a prevention crisis.” The news is especially poignant given that other studies presented at the meeting underscored the power of testing and treating entire communities to dramatically slow HIV’s spread. Science

Ba-boom! There goes your hearing

August 2018 - [H]earing loss and tinnitus—ringing in the ear—top the list of service-related disabilities for veterans. ... The inner ear, which processes sound, is ... difficult to visualize ... with conventional imaging. But a ... laser-based technology called optical coherence tomography (OCT) [can be used] to get the picture. ... [Researchers] were able to see for the first time what happens when the ear is exposed to an explosive blast. ... First, the shock wave overwhelms the tiny hair cells that line the snail-shaped cochlea [and breaks them.] In the wake of the destruction, potassium ions build up in the inner ear fluid called endolymph, pulling in more liquid by osmosis. The resulting swelling begins to damage the synapses linking surviving hair cells to auditory neurons. ... In his mouse studies, Oghalai saw a chance to intervene in the window between the instant harm to hair cells and the delayed destruction of nerve synapses. His team was able to protect the latter by injecting a very salty solution through the eardrum, which reversed the buildup of fluid in the cochlea. Could this approach lead to a battlefield intervention? A lot more research is needed, but saving neural connections, even if some hair cells are lost, could potentially make a functional difference in hearing. Scientific American
Dengue fever outbreak halted by release of special mosquitoes

1 August - The first large-scale deployment of mosquitoes infected with Wolbachia bacteria, which makes them unable to transmit viruses, has stopped all outbreaks of dengue fever in a city in northern Australia for the last four years. The success of the project in Townsville, Queensland, will encourage hopes that Wolbachia can provide a knockout blow against the Zika virus in Brazil as well, where the mosquitoes have been introduced into the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Until now, the technology has looked promising but has only been tried in small pilot projects around the world of 1 to 1.5 square km. Townsville, however, with 187,000 inhabitants, is on a much larger scale. Mosquitoes specially bred to carry Wolbachia, which occurs naturally in up to 60% of insects, were let loose over 66 square kilometres of the city in places where they could naturally breed. In four rainy seasons since the mosquitoes were introduced, dengue has ceased to be a problem in Townsville, which has had no cases of a disease that used to be troublesome. The Guardian

Discovery of a new potential treatment for visceral leishmaniasis

26 July - A new preclinical candidate drug with the potential to treat visceral leishmaniasis, one of the world's major neglected diseases, has been discovered through a close collaboration between the University of Dundee, GSK and Wellcome. ... The current available drugs have limitations and are not ideal for use in resource-poor settings. ... Professor Paul Wyatt, Head of the Drug Discovery Unit (DDU) at the University of Dundee, said, "We have established that this compound works through a novel mode of action, principally through inhibition of an enzyme called CRK12. This is a significant step forward in our goal to develop new, oral and safer drugs. Science Daily

Flexible electronics are the key to a human ‘check engine’ light

27 July - ... We’re reaching a point today where at-home clinical-grade data and a personal baseline of data for better diagnoses and maintaining better health overall are not only possible, but on the horizon. Flexible electronics are the key to “cutting the cord” and to establishing a usable set of values to bring diagnoses and health monitoring to the next level. ... Providing health data quicker and more consistently than ever can help flag potential issues before they turn serious. A medical scanner ... for example, can diagnose heart diseases in 90 seconds. At this year's Consumer Electronics Show, wearables beyond step track counters proliferated, including a long-touted UV sensor from L'Oréal that can be attached to a fingernail and Lenovo’s attachment
that turns a smartphone into a monitor of blood pressure, heart rate, and other conditions. The U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency and Johns Hopkins University teamed up to learn whether as-yet-undetected cases of the flu could be detected by combining continuous measurements of temperature and heart rate. It spotted signs of the flu within half a day, compared to one day by tracking just heart rate and 4.5 days by tracking just temperature. STAT

Hidden studies from decades ago could have curbed PFAS problem: Scientist

31 July - An editorial published in *Environmental Health* today suggests that research on perfluorinated alkylate substances (PFAS) and their dangerous health effects was not revealed until several decades after it was conducted. The lack of publicly available research has prevented proper guidelines for levels of the chemical compounds, including in drinking water, Philippe Grandjean, a professor at University of Southern Denmark and Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health, argued in his piece. In the editorial, Grandjean said studies conducted up to four decades ago found health effects, including on the immune system, from PFAS chemicals, but those studies were hidden by production companies, like 3M Co. ... According to Grandjean’s editorial, health effects from PFASs have been known since 1978 when two internal reports from the International Research and Development Corporation prepared for 3M about monkey studies were released. One of the studies was halted due to monkey mortality from doses of PFOS, according to the editorial.

Measles outbreaks come with serious consequences

31 July - Measles outbreaks can be very costly to communities, a new report suggests. For example, the 2013 measles outbreak in New York City cost the city’s health department nearly $395,000 and more than 10,000 personnel hours, according to a report in *JAMA Pediatrics*. And there were other non-monetary costs, including the loss of a pregnancy, researchers reported. The New York City outbreak started when an unvaccinated teen returned home from the UK on March 13, 2013 infected with the measles virus. By June 9, the city’s health department had identified 58 people as having measles, most of whom had been unvaccinated because of parental refusal or intentional delay. Half of those infected with the virus were under age three, including 45 children who were at least a year old and 12 babies who were less than a year old, which meant they were too young to have been vaccinated. Reuters
New Ebola species identified in Sierra Leone

27 July - Sierra Leone's health ministry yesterday said a new species of Ebola virus has been detected in bats in the north of the country, which would bring the number of known species to six and be the first new one identified in more than a decade. The new virus is named Bombali for the district it was found, and a health ministry official said it's not known if the virus can be transmitted to people, though lab tests suggest that it has the potential to enter human cells, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported yesterday. CIDRAP News

Sequencing a malaria mosquito's motherline

30 July - A team led by scientists from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health has sequenced and annotated the first complete mitochondrial genome of Anopheles funestus, one of the main vectors of malaria in sub-Saharan Africa. This milestone offers a glimpse inside this insect’s genetic diversity, ancestral history, and evolution -- information that researchers might eventually exploit to develop new ways to prevent this deadly disease. Science Daily

Study sees dramatic rise in heatwave deaths by 2080

31 July - The number of people dying from heatwaves is likely to rise sharply in some regions by 2080 if policymakers fail to take mitigating steps in climate and health policies, according to the results of a study on Tuesday. Deaths caused by heatwaves could increase dramatically in tropical and subtropical regions, the study found, followed closely by Australia, Europe and the United States. Published in the journal PLOS Medicine, the study’s results suggest stricter mitigation policies should be applied to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, because lower greenhouse gas emissions are linked with fewer deaths due to heatwaves. Reuters

Superbugs now also becoming resistant to alcohol disinfectants

1 August - Multidrug-resistant “superbugs” that can cause dangerous infections in hospitals are becoming increasingly resistant to alcohol-based hand sanitizers and disinfectants designed to hold them at bay, scientists said. In a study of what the researchers described as a “new wave of superbugs”, the team also found specific genetic changes over 20 years in vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus, or VRE - and were able to track and show its growing resistance. Reuters
Winning the infectious disease marathon

1 August - More children are immunized today than ever before, and the number of new vaccines that children in poor countries have access to is also at its highest. This means that globally children have never been better protected against infectious disease in history. But while this is true in terms of absolute numbers, the latest data reveal some worrying new trends when you look at the proportion of children protected. The first trend confirms our fears that the global percentage of children receiving routine immunization—as measured by three doses of a diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine, or DTP3—has stagnated, levelling off at 85 percent. The second, perhaps even more alarming, is that despite falling from 28 million in 2000 to around 16 million today, the number of children in the world’s 68 poorest countries that are missing out on DTP3 has now started to rise. Scientific American

INFLUENZA

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

2017-2018 Influenza Season Week 29 ending July 21, 2018

- Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) Mortality Surveillance: Based on National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) mortality surveillance data available on July 26, 2018, 5.3% of the deaths occurring during the week ending July 7, 2018 (week 27) were due to P&I. This percentage is below the epidemic threshold of 6.0% for week 27.

- Influenza-Associated Pediatric Mortality: No influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported to CDC during week 29. CDC

Third case of H9N2 reported in China

1 August - A woman from Shenzhen is the third human case of H9N2 avian influenza recorded in China this year, according to Avian Flu Diary (AFD), an infectious disease news blog. The blog published a translated notice of the case from Macao’s Government Information Bureau. Officials in Guangdong Province confirmed the case in a 24-year-old woman who was hospitalized on Jul 23 after symptoms began 2 days earlier. CIDRAP News Scan (second item)
Bahamas: *Vibrio* cases linked to conch in the dozens

29 July - In a follow-up on the *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* outbreak linked to conch meat in the Bahamas, Health Minister Dr. Duane Sands says the number of confirmed cases has risen to 27, according to local media. In addition, there are 22 cases awaiting lab results. Among those now suffering from the illness are tourists. Outbreak News Today

Congresswoman questions USDA equivalency of China’s poultry processing plants

30 July - Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) recently wrote a letter to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, questioning the USDA’s process approving China’s poultry processing plants. These plants are now able to export processed chicken to the United States. ... Her letter states that she opposed the equivalency designation because “it irresponsibly granted equivalency to the entire country’s poultry processing system despite FSIS having only audited a limited number of China’s poultry processing plants.” She also states that the recent release of internal emails shows that “FSIS is taking a stunningly passive approach in approving three new Chinese poultry processing as eligible to export to the United States.” Food Poisoning Bulletin

Don’t use dog DNA tests to make life-or-death decisions for your pet, experts warn

30 July - The claims that dog DNA-testing companies make can seem all but definitive: One quick cheek swab can not only tell you about the breeds that make up your pooch but also offer it a lifetime of health. ... But three canine genetics experts have hurled cold water on those claims, saying the business of consumer-marketed canine genetics testing is an "untamed wilderness" of weak science, unvalidated outcomes and conflicts of interest. Their opinion piece, published last week in the journal Nature, says some dog owners are making decisions about euthanasia and serious veterinary treatments based on DNA tests that come with minimal warnings, vague details about tests and no government oversight. The paper calls for standards and guidelines that, the authors say, may need to become law to resolve the problems. The Washington Post
FDA: New testing method turns up *Cyclospora* in salad mix distributed to McDonald's

1 August - The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced yesterday that tests involving a newly validated method to detect *Cyclospora* in fresh produce have confirmed the parasite in an unused package of expired salad mix processed by Fresh Express in Streamwood, Ill., that had been distributed to McDonald's. A multistate *Cyclospora* outbreak linked to McDonald's salads as of Jul 26 has sickened 286 people from 15 states. ... The company said romaine from the same lot was not packaged for direct retail sale and had already expired and that it would use recall procedures to inform companies that received potentially contaminated products. It said the carrots in the sampled salad mix only went to McDonald's. **CIDRAP Foodborne Disease Scan** (first item)

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FDA previews veterinary stewardship plan

31 July - The head of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced today that the agency will soon be implementing a 5-year blueprint to advance antimicrobial stewardship in veterinary settings. While few details of the forthcoming plan were provided, FDA commissioner Scott Gottlieb, MD, said the blueprint will include goals, objectives, and actions the agency will focus on during fiscal years 2019-2023. The three main goals are aligning antimicrobial use in animals with stewardship principles, fostering better stewardship in veterinary settings, and enhancing the monitoring of antimicrobial use and resistance in animals. **CIDRAP News**

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Former Marine recruit infected with *E.coli* sues boot camp food vendor

31 July - In a lawsuit filed Monday, a former Marine recruit says Sodexo — the food vendor at the Marine Corps boot camp in San Diego — was negligent in its food safety practices and is therefore liable for the *E.coli*-linked medical condition that ended his military career. The San Diego Union-Tribune reported in October that more than 300 Marine recruits were treated for symptoms associated with exposure to *E.coli* bacteria at Marine Corps Recruit Depot and Camp Pendleton. An investigation by the Centers for Disease Control confirmed 62 cases of *E.coli* infections and listed another 62 as probable. An additional 120 cases are suspected. Thirty Marines required hospitalization. The CDC suggested under-cooked ground beef was the source of the outbreak, noting inconsistent cooking temperatures and poor recruit hygiene habits as contributing conditions. **San Diego Union-Tribune**

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Rat lungworm infection associated with central nervous system disease — eight U.S. states, January 2011–January 2017

3 August - Ingestion of snails or slugs containing *Angiostrongylus cantonensis* larvae can result in angiostrongyliasis, characterized by eosinophilic meningitis. Angiostrongyliasis typically occurs in Asia and the Pacific Islands. CDC identified 12 angiostrongyliasis cases in the continental United States occurring from January 2011 through January 2017. Consumption of raw vegetables was reported in the majority of cases (55%). Six were likely autochthonous cases occurring in the southern United States. Health care providers, especially those in the southern United States, need to consider angiostrongyliasis in patients with eosinophilic meningitis, particularly those with a history of ingestion of gastropods or raw vegetables contaminated with larvae.

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report

Salads and wraps sold at Kroger and Trader Joe's may have been contaminated by a parasite

1 August - Salads and wraps sold at major grocery chains may have been contaminated by an infectious parasite, according to a public health alert. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) warned consumers on Monday to stay away from certain beef, pork and poultry salads and wraps sold at stores including Kroger, Trader Joe’s, Gordon Food Service and Walgreen’s. Romaine lettuce used in these products may have been tainted by *Cyclospora*, a parasite that can cause gastrointestinal illness, according to FSIS. The salads and wraps in question were produced by Indianapolis-based Caito Foods LLC between July 15 and 18, and labeled for consumption by dates between July 18 and 23. Time

WELLNESS

Association of electronic cigarette use with smoking habits, demographic factors, and respiratory symptoms

20 July - ... In a random sample of more than 30,000 Swedish adults, e-cigarette use was most common among current smokers, and the prevalence of respiratory symptoms was highest among the current smokers who also used e-cigarettes. Longitudinal studies will be essential to further determine the long-term health effects of e-cigarette use and whether in dual users it increases the burden of respiratory conditions or encourages sustainable smoking cessation. ... Use of e-cigarettes was most common among smokers, and dual users had the highest prevalence of respiratory symptoms. On a population level, this study
indicates that the present use of e-cigarettes does not adequately serve as a smoking cessation tool. JAMA Network

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**FDA warns companies about 'deceptive' vaginal rejuvenation claims**

30 July - Procedures marketed to improve a woman's "intimate health" using lasers or ultrasound are not only unapproved, but are also causing burns and other painful damage, the Food and Drug Administration said Monday. The FDA has warned seven companies that are promoting their devices for these procedures, and issued a general alert for patients and doctors. The laser and ultrasound equipment used in these unapproved procedures has FDA approval for removing genital warts, other growths and in operations such as hysterectomies. But they have not been shown to tighten up muscles, increase sexual pleasure or relieve pain during intercourse, the FDA said. The FDA says it's received complaints about burns and other damage. In some cases, the procedures are causing the very pain during intercourse that they are being promoted to relieve. NBC News

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**Federal health care data trends: Sleep disorders**

July 2018 - In 2017, the VA had more than 1 million health care visits related to sleep disorders. 1 Although predominantly sleep apnea, other sleep disorders such as insomnia, hypersomnia, narcolepsy, sleep-related bruxism, nightmares, and poor sleep quality present significant health care burdens for both the VA and Military Health Systems. By far, sleep apnea is the most prevalent sleep disorder. As many as 1 in 5 veterans has been diagnosed for sleep apnea. In the Military Health System, incidence of obstructive sleep apnea more than tripled between 2004 and 2015. 2 Although the appropriate treatment for sleep apnea is clear, maintaining adherence to continuous positive airway pressure therapy remains a challenge. Importantly, sleep problems also may contribute to comorbid mental health disorders. Anxiety and depression may contribute to the total burden of sleep disorders. Evidence also suggests that having posttraumatic stress disorder or nightmares may decrease the quality of sleep for patients. Federal Practitioner

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**Frequent sauna bathing has many health benefits**

1 August - A new report found that sauna bathing is associated with a reduction in the risk of vascular diseases, such as high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease, neurocognitive diseases, nonvascular conditions, such as pulmonary diseases, mental health disorders, and mortality. Furthermore, sauna bathing alleviated conditions such as skin diseases, arthritis, headache, and flu. The evidence also suggests that regular sauna baths are associated with a better health-related quality of life. Science Daily

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Health groups call on FDA to speed up regulation of e-cig, cigars

27 July - Close to a dozen major health groups are lending support to a lawsuit charging the FDA with harming the health of children, teens, and young adults by delaying regulation of non-cigarette tobacco products. The lawsuit, filed in March by the American Academy of Pediatrics and others, challenges the FDA’s decision to delay regulation of the products indefinitely. In an amicus brief filed last week, the American Thoracic Society and 10 other health organizations argued that the FDA’s inaction on premarket review required by the 2016 rule regulating the e-cigarettes, cigars, and hookah tobacco products is causing harm and will continue to cause harm to the nation’s youth. MedPage Today

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Pros and cons of telemental health care

24 July - When telemental health care (TMH) works, it works well, the research agrees. For rural patients who often do not have easy access to health care TMH can be a lifesaver. The VA uses TMH to deliver care to veterans in rural VA medical centers, community-based outpatient clinics, and residential areas. However, TMH is still relatively new in many rural communities, say researchers from University of Mississippi in Oxford and Augusta University in Georgia, and few studies have examined the delivery tool from an administrative standpoint. The literature suggests TMH will save money—the exploratory study, however, suggests otherwise. Federal Practitioner

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Report: One service leads all others in number of sex partners

31 July - A recently released report by the RAND Corporation shined a light on one service’s propensity for sexual promiscuity. The Health Related Behaviors Survey, which collected data over parts of 2015 and 2016, found that Marines are significantly more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior than members of any other branch. ... Of the nearly 17,000 responses received from service members in the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy and Coast Guard, Marines led nearly every category of sexual risk behaviors and outcomes over the past year. More than 24 percent of Marines reported having sex with more than one partner over the course of the data collection process, compared to 16.6 percent in the Army, 18.8 percent in the Air Force and 22.1 percent in the Navy. Devil dogs were also tops when it came to having sex with a new partner without using a condom, with more than 40 percent of Marine respondents reporting having done so. Furthermore, 22 percent of Marines reported that their most recent vaginal sex encounter was done without the woman being on any form of birth control, also the highest number compared to the other services. Marine Corps Times

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Scientists may have figured out how to use genetically modified rice to prevent HIV

31 July - New research suggests that genetically modified rice could provide a way to prevent HIV. ... The rice produces two types of proteins and one kind of antibody that can bind to HIV viruses. This stops the HIV virus from interacting with human cells. The rice can be made into a topical cream that can be applied to the skin where these special proteins can enter the body, protecting that person from HIV. The rice is a good option for those in developing countries, because people could grow the rice and make the paste to apply. This removes the need to travel to a clinic to receive medications. Newsweek

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Take a vacation from exercise? Your body may not thank you

1 August - ... [T]he metabolic consequences of not moving much for a few weeks can be pervasive and persistent, lingering to some extent even after people start moving around normally again. ... During the [first] study, the volunteers simply stopped moving much, cutting their daily steps to below 2,000 and sitting for more than three and a half additional hours each day, a routine that they continued for two weeks. ... The volunteers almost all had developed what the scientists called "metabolic derangements" during their two weeks of being still. Their blood sugar levels had risen, insulin sensitivity declined, cholesterol profiles become less healthy, and they had lost a little muscle mass in their legs while gaining fat around their abdomens. Thankfully, most of these derangements were reversed once the men and women became active again. But for unknown reasons, a few of the volunteers did not return to quite the same level of exercise they had engaged in before. The New York Times

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Central African Republic: 29 cases of monkeypox detected since March

30 July - Twenty-nine cases of monkeypox have been detected in the Central African Republic (CAR) since the outbreak was confirmed in March. The WHO said since the beginning of 2018, recurrent monkeypox outbreaks have been reported in three health districts in the centre, the east and the south-west of the country. “Eleven cases have been laboratory confirmed out of 23 samples tested. Among the confirmed cases, 63% are female and 45% are aged between 20 and 30 years. Two confirmed cases are age five and below,” the WHO stated. Outbreak News Today

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Democratic Republic of Congo: Congo declares new Ebola outbreak in eastern province

1 August - Four people have tested positive for Ebola in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo just days after another outbreak that killed 33 people in the northwest was declared over, the health ministry said on Wednesday. Twenty people have already died from hemorrhagic fevers in and around Mangina, a densely populated town about 30 km (18 miles) southwest of the city of Beni and 100 km from the Ugandan border, the ministry said in its statement, without saying when the deaths occurred. A team of 12 experts from Congo’s health ministry will arrive in Beni on Thursday to set up a mobile lab, the ministry said. The World Health Organization has started moving staff and supplies to the area, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a tweet. They head to a region where deep security problems could complicate efforts to contain the virus. About 1,000 civilians have been killed since 2014 in fighting between rival militia groups around Beni, and the wider region of North Kivu holds over 1 million displaced people. Reuters

South Sudan: Guinea worm disease resurfaces in South Sudan

2 August - Just four months after Guinea worm disease in South Sudan was declared “transmission interrupted”, three people in the town of Rumbek have been diagnosed with the disease, the first cases in South Sudan for more than 18 months, according to a UK Telegraph report. Until these reported cases, the last diagnosis of the disease in South Sudan had been in December 2016. Outbreak News Today

Uganda: Rift Valley, Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever outbreaks in Uganda refugee settlement

30 July - The World Health Organization (WHO) says 42 suspected cases of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever have been detected in the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in northern Uganda. In its latest epidemiological analysis, WHO said the first case, involving a female who came from Rwanda through the Democratic Republic of Congo, was confirmed by the Uganda Virus Research Institute on July 18. ... [T]he WHO has says at least 3 out of 8 suspected cases of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) have died since the outbreak was confirmed at a farm in the Nakivale Refugee Camp on June 28. Outbreak News Today
Uganda: Ugandan hospitals hit by shortages of drugs, other supplies

1 August - Public hospitals in Uganda have been hit by shortages of essential medicines and supplies needed for emergency care, a health workers’ association said, further hurting services at facilities already struggling from years of neglect. The shortages are affecting the East African country’s main Mulago Hospital, which handles serious cases referred to it from other facilities, Uganda Medical Association (UMA) said. Most patients in Uganda seek care at public health facilities although private hospitals whose services are beyond the reach of many are common. UMA President Ekwaro Obuku, speaking to Reuters, said government hospitals were experiencing serious shortages of basic medicines for emergency care such as vaccines and other drugs, syringes, gloves, catheters, gauze and others. Reuters

Iran: Crimean–Congo Fever outbreak kills 7 in Iran - health official

30 July - The outbreak of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) has killed seven people in Iran so far, a senior official at the Iran Veterinary Organization announced on Monday. Karim Amiri said CCHF has become a permanent disease in Iran, adding that according to the latest data received by the organization, 56 cases of the disease have been reported so far, seven of which have been led to the death of the victims. He went on to say that during the current Iranian year (which began on March 21), the number of deaths due to Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever has increased compared to last year. Tasnim News Agency

United Arab Emirates: UAE patients have the best access to healthcare in the Middle East, BMI says

28 July - Patients in the UAE have the best access to healthcare in the Middle East as the country rolls out mandatory medical insurance and harnesses new technology for disease treatment. The UAE earned the highest regional score on the Middle East Healthcare Access Index compiled by BMI Research, a unit of Fitch group, according to a report released on Friday. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman followed while Iraq trailed the list with the lowest score. The National
Europe: More drugmakers build Brexit stockpiles as EU agency faces exodus

1 August - Sanofi (SASY.PA) and Novartis (NOVN.S) said on Wednesday they planned to increase stockpiles of medicines in Britain in preparation for potential disruption if the UK crashes out of the European Union without a deal. At the same time the European Medicines Agency, which oversees drug safety across the bloc, warned of bigger than expected staff losses and cuts in some activities as a result of having to move from London to Amsterdam due to Brexit. Europe's equivalent of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration now expects to lose around 30 percent of its workforce as it prepares to relocate by March 2019. The announcements show how the highly regulated pharmaceuticals sector is feeling the impact of Britain's looming departure from the EU. Reuters

United Kingdom: Why did more people die in depths of last winter?

1 August - Every year, more people die in the winter than the summer. Excess winter deaths, largely linked to the cold weather and flu, are expected. But they were even higher this past winter in England and Wales than in previous years, and experts are concerned. The government is launching an investigation. One academic in the field says it raises big questions about life expectancy, which in past years has been going up. ... The Office for National Statistics data for England shows a "statistically significant increase" in the death rate in the first quarter of 2018 and the highest for that period since 2009. There were 1,187 deaths per 100,000 of population in England between January and March, up 5% on the same months of 2017. Crucially these figures are "age-standardised" which takes out the effect of ageing each year on the population as a whole. That way the figures can be directly compared with previous years. ... ONS notes that "influenza activity remained at medium levels throughout the whole of January and February 2018". BBC News

China: China widens vaccine scandal probe, vows tough penalties

30 July - SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China's drug watchdog published details on Tuesday of an investigation into a second firm found to have made inferior vaccines, after cabinet vowed tough penalties and fines over a vaccine safety scandal that has sparked widespread anger. Public confidence in domestic-made drugs and medical products has been shaken by such
scandals in recent weeks and the prices of healthcare shares in China have dropped. China has already ordered the arrest of 18 people at Changsheng Bio-technology Co Ltd, the vaccine maker at the heart of the scandal, including its chairwoman Gao Junfang. The firm was found to have falsified data and sold ineffective vaccines. It also fabricated production and inspection records relating to a rabies vaccine used for infants. Changsheng has apologized publicly for the incidents. Reuters

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U.S.: U.S. release of 3D-printed gun software blocked

1 August - A U.S. federal judge in Seattle has blocked the release of software that allows consumers to 3D-print firearms. Gun access advocacy group Defense Distributed published downloadable gun blueprints five days early on Friday. The firm had reached a settlement with the Trump administration in June to allow it to legally publish the plans. But eight states and the District of Columbia sued the government on Monday to block the settlement, arguing the untraceable guns were a safety risk. US District Judge Robert Lasnik issued a temporary restraining order halting the release hours before the 1 August deadline, saying the blueprints could fall into the wrong hands. "There are 3D printers in public colleges and public spaces and there is the likelihood of potential irreparable harm," he said. BBC News

U.S.: Allergy clinic analysis finds tick bite meat allergy leads anaphylaxis culprits

30 July - Researchers who studied the causes of anaphylaxis at an allergy and immunology clinic in Tennessee found that the highest percentage were from alpha gal allergy, a reaction to red meat that can develop following a bite from the Lone Star tick. Of 281 patients who were seen for anaphylaxis between 2006 and 2016, 33% were from alpha gal. The authors said that with increased awareness of red meat allergy and more testing, alpha gal allergy has evolved from an unknown entity to the center's most identified cause of anaphylaxis. Food allergies were the second leading cause of anaphylaxis, accounting for 24%, followed by insect venom (18%), exercise (6%), systemic mastocystosis (6%), medications (4%), and other (3%). CIDRAP News Scan (second item)
U.S.: At least 8 dead as wildfires continue to rage across California

30 July - Authorities on Monday were hoping that a slight break in the heat this week could help them gain control of a number of wildfires that have so far scorched more than 200,000 acres and killed eight people across California. The Carr fire, which erupted in Shasta County a week ago and spread into the city of Redding, grew to 98,724 acres and was 20% contained as of Monday morning. The fire has destroyed close to 1,000 structures and claimed six lives, including a fire inspector, a bulldozer operator, a great-grandmother and her two great-grandchildren. Two other deaths have been attributed to the Ferguson fire near Yosemite. “The terrain is just awful and difficult to access, it’s just inaccessible in a lot of areas,” Dominic Polito, a spokesman for fire authorities, said of the Carr fire. "If you were to walk up it, you’d be looking at your knee on every step." The focus Monday will be to prevent the fire from spreading farther into Trinity County, Polito said. Los Angeles Times

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U.S.: Bernie Sanders' 'Medicare for all' bill estimated at $32.6T, study says

30 July - Sen. Bernie Sanders' "Medicare for all" plan would increase government health care spending by $32.6 trillion over 10 years, according to a study by a university-based libertarian policy center. That's trillion with a "T." The latest plan from the Vermont independent would require historic tax increases as government replaces what employers and consumers now pay for health care, according to the analysis being released Monday by the Mercatus Center at George Mason University in Virginia. It would deliver significant savings on administration and drug costs, but increased demand for care would drive up spending, the analysis found. Sanders' plan builds on Medicare, the popular insurance program for seniors. All U.S. residents would be covered with no copays and deductibles for medical services. The insurance industry would be relegated to a minor role. ... Responding to the study, Sanders took aim at the Mercatus Center, which receives funding from the conservative Koch brothers. Koch Industries CEO Charles Koch is on the center's board. Fox News

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U.S.: Characteristics of tianeptine exposures reported to the National Poison Data System — United States, 2000–2017

3 August - Tianeptine is an antidepressant drug that is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Clinical effects of tianeptine abuse and withdrawal can mimic opioid toxicity and withdrawal. Tianeptine exposure calls to U.S. poison control centers increased during 2014–2017, suggesting a possible emerging public health risk. The associated health effects included neurologic, cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal signs and symptoms, with some effects mimicking opioid toxicity and withdrawal. Health care provider and public
education about adverse effects associated with tianeptine use is warranted. Health care providers and public health officials need to report adverse effects to the FDA MedWatch reporting system and contact poison control centers for clinical guidance.

**Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report**

**U.S.: Deaths related to Hurricane Irma — Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina, September 4–October 10, 2017**

3 August - Collecting and analyzing mortality data is important for understanding the main circumstances of deaths related to a disaster such as Hurricane Irma. Among deaths attributed to Hurricane Irma, the most common circumstance-of-death categories were exacerbation of existing medical conditions and power outage. Further analysis revealed two unique subcategories of heat-related and oxygen-dependent deaths in which power outage contributed to exacerbation of an existing medical condition. Understanding the need for subcategorization of disaster-related circumstances of death can help public health practitioners develop more effective public health interventions to prevent deaths in future disasters. **Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report**

**U.S.: Hurricane Harvey samples saddled with antibiotic-resistant genes**

26 July – Rice University scientists have released the first results of extensive water sampling in Houston after the epic flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey. They found widespread contamination by E. coli, likely the result of overflow from flooded wastewater treatment plants. The microbial survey showed high levels of E. coli, a fecal indicator organism, trapped in homes that still contained stagnant water weeks after the storm, as well as high levels of key genes that indicate antibiotic resistance. Early samples from each location carried elevated levels of E. coli. But most striking was the fact that sampled water and, later, sediment showed abundant levels of two indicator genes, sul1 and intI1, that mark the presence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, even weeks after the flood. In particular, samples from floodwaters inside closed homes showed concentrations of sul1 were 250 times greater and intI1 60 times greater in than in bayou samples. **Science Daily**

**U.S.: New York City launches initiative to eliminate racial disparities in maternal death**

30 July - In response to alarming racial disparities, New York City announced a new initiative last week to reduce maternal deaths and complications among women of color. Under the
new plan, the city will improve the data collection on maternal deaths and complications, fund implicit bias training for medical staff at private and public hospitals, and launch a public awareness campaign. Over the next three years, the city will spend $12.8 million on the initiative, with the goal of eliminating the black-white racial disparity in deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth and cutting the number of complications in half within five years.

ProPublica

U.S.: Under new rules, cheaper 'short-term' health care plans now last up to 3 years

1 August - People who don't get insurance through their jobs will now be able to buy short-term policies that may be cheaper than Affordable Care Act coverage. These plans won't have to cover as many medical services and are exempt from covering people with pre-existing conditions. The departments of Health and Human Services, Labor and Treasury announced new rules Wednesday that make it easier for consumers to replace ACA insurance with these short-term policies. The policies were originally limited to three months, but they can now last up to a year, and be renewed to last as long as three years. The plans have been a priority of President Trump, who says he wants consumers to have access to cheaper health insurance. Short-term plans don't have to meet the Affordable Care Act's consumer protection and coverage requirements, so many will not cover services such as mental health care or prescription drugs.

NPR

Brazil: Measles infects more than 1,000 in Brazil; 5 reported deaths

2 August - Brazil’s Health Ministry says more than 1,000 people have been infected and five have died in a measles outbreak linked to cases imported from neighboring Venezuela. The ministry says on its website that 1,053 cases of the disease have been reported so far this year. All but 31 of these cases have been registered in the northern jungle states of Amazonas and Roraima that share borders with Venezuela, where health services have collapsed amid political and economic turmoil. Four died in Roraima and one in Amazonas.

U.S. News and World Report

El Salvador: Typhoid cases up in El Salvador in 2018

29 July - In a follow-up on the typhoid fever situation in El Salvador this year, health officials continue to see a rise in cases significantly higher than what was reported in 2017. According to a La Prensa Grafica report (computer translated), the total cases of 2017 was
675, while the total between January and June of this year rose to 937. All the departments of the country experienced significant increases in typhoid fever in the first six months of the year, with the exception of Cabañas, in comparison with the figures for the first six months of 2017. Outbreak News Today