

5 February 2016

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

The Army Public Health Update is a collection of articles taken verbatim from public sources to offer awareness of current health issues and the media coverage given to them. The articles do not necessarily represent US Army Medical Department opinions, views, policy, or guidance, and should not be construed or interpreted as being endorsed by the US Army Medical Command.

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## NOTICE:

Thanks to everyone who responded to the recent survey! We appreciated all the positive feedback. We've also noted your suggestions and we'll implement them where we can.

## Subscription or Comments

If you wish to be added to the APH Weekly Update mailing list, removed from the mailing list, or if you have comments or questions about the update, please [contact us](#). We welcome your comments. Please feel free to share this update with others who may be interested.



### Follow us!



## INFLUENZA

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- AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary
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- NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update
- Study: Flu vaccine coverage up in young kids but still below 50%
- USAFSAM: DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program

## VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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- Dog flu virus spreading across the United States
- USDA imposes stricter limit on *Salmonella* bacteria in poultry products

## WELLNESS

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- A diet and exercise plan to lose weight and gain muscle
- Breakthrough sunscreen claims to protect skin, boost health
- Loneliness grows from individual ache to public health hazard
- Recalled nutritional powder tied to 11 *Salmonella* cases in 9 states

## USAFRICOM

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- Benin: Benin reports nine Lassa fever deaths
- Uganda: Health workers sent to north Uganda as malaria epidemic kills over 650

## USCENTCOM

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- Pakistan: 139 children die in one month in drought-hit Pakistan district
- Saudi Arabia: Saudis report camel MERS outbreak; WHO details recent cases

## USEUCOM

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- France: Measles vaccination campaign launched in Calais and Grande-Synthe camps
- United Kingdom: Fixing the UK's mental health crisis will need both police and health
- United Kingdom: Rare illness 'clusters' in Wales spark EU-wide alert
- United Kingdom: Scientists get 'gene editing' go-ahead

## USNORTHCOM

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- U.S.: Dems introduce alternative to GOP's mental health bill
- U.S.: Hawaii reports 244 dengue cases, 1 potentially infectious
- U.S.: HPV, MenB vaccines added to kids' immunization schedule
- U.S.: Obama seeks more than \$1 billion to fight opioid abuse

## USPACOM

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- China: Getting into shape - exploring China's health supplements industry
- India: Smartphone app linked to increase in contraceptive use in India

## USSOUTHCOM

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- PAHO urges governments to implement public policies that can prevent more than one-third of cancers

### Zika Fact Sheet

APHC has just released a fact sheet that addresses the transmission, signs and symptoms of Zika virus as well as risk reduction.



### NY Times Video: Understanding Zika

The New York Times has produced a video with general information on the Zika virus.



## U.S. MILITARY

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### Female Marines may be allowed to bulk up as service opens infantry to women



3 February – As the Pentagon grapples with how to integrate women into all jobs in combat, the Marine Corps is considering something new: Boosting how heavy it allows women to be so that they are able to bulk up in the gym to carry heavy loads more easily. Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller, the service’s top officer, told the Senate Armed

Services Committee on Tuesday that female Marines have told him recently that they are lifting weights to boost their strength. Doing so, however, has pushed some of them outside the service’s limits for how much they are allowed to weigh, he said. ... Neller told reporters that he called for a review of male and female standards that will be completed by July 1 and assess a variety of related criteria, including the service’s height-and-weight standards and how it scores Marines on its two fitness tests. [The Washington Post](#)

### Lawmakers urge VA to reform medical marijuana rules

3 February – VA healthcare providers caught between a federal prohibition and more permissive state laws on medical marijuana. In a letter addressed to VA Secretary Robert McDonald, the group ... asked for the VA to reform its stance on medical marijuana, noting that this policy limits physicians' ability to effectively treat their patients. The law, VHA Directive 2011-004, expired on January 31. The law also discouraged veterans from having discussions on cannabis treatment with their physicians for fear of losing benefits. “When veterans walk into a VA facility and talk with their doctor, they can’t discuss all of the options available to them that they could discuss at a non-VA facility next door.” [Federal Practitioner](#)

### Military hospitals fill unique roles, commanders tell lawmakers

3 February - Wholesale changes to military health care could destroy a system that achieved a 98 percent survival rate for hospitalized troops in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, military hospital commanders told members of Congress on Wednesday. Addressing the House Armed Services personnel subcommittee on potential reforms to the Defense Department medical system, Army, Navy and Air Force hospital leaders admitted that their hospitals and clinics sometimes fall short in providing timely medical care but said they are seeking innovative ways to improve care and bring patients back into military treatment facilities.

[Military Times](#)

**WHO statement on Zika virus and observed increase in neurological disorders and neonatal malformations**

The Committee advised that the recent cluster of microcephaly cases and other neurologic disorders reported in Brazil, following a similar cluster in French Polynesia in 2014, constitutes a **Public Health Emergency of International Concern**.

The Committee provided the following advice:

Surveillance for microcephaly and GBS should be standardized and enhanced, particularly in areas of known Zika virus transmission and areas at risk of such transmission.

Research into the etiology of new clusters of microcephaly and neurologic disorders should be intensified to determine whether there is a causative link to Zika virus and/or other factors or co-factors.

See the [WHO statement](#) for additional recommendations.

## Military's new fertility benefit will let troops freeze their sperm and eggs

29 January - Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced Thursday that the Pentagon will start covering sperm and egg freezing for troops who want to preserve their gametes for future use. ... Carter said the Defense Department will launch the pilot preservation program and promised to explore widening the department's coverage of fertility services. ... He added that the egg- and sperm-freezing program not only will give troops who deploy "peace of mind," it also will provide "greater flexibility" for service members to decide when they want to start a family. [Army Times](#)

## Pentagon proposes medical benefits for transgender troops

1 February - The military healthcare system may soon cover the cost of hormone therapy and other non-surgical treatments sought by transgender service members. The proposed medical benefits for transgender troops are tucked into a notice published Monday in the Federal Register that lists a number of proposed changes to treatments covered by Tricare related to mental health and substance abuse. "It is no longer justifiable to categorically exclude and not cover currently accepted medically and psychologically necessary treatments for gender dysphoria (such as psychotherapy, pharmacotherapy and hormone replacement therapy) that are not otherwise excluded by statute," the notice reads. ... Under Monday's proposal, gender reassignment surgery would still be barred from being covered by Tricare. [The Hill](#)

## Senators want moratorium on dismissing Soldiers during investigation

3 February - Four U.S. senators are calling on the Army to stop kicking out soldiers who served in Iraq or Afghanistan and have been diagnosed with mental health problems or traumatic brain injuries — effective immediately. The senators say they're motivated by an investigation by NPR and Colorado Public Radio that revealed the Army has continued to discharge troubled troops for misconduct, even though the Army's then-Acting Secretary Eric Fanning promised late last year to investigate whether the practice is unfair. We found that since 2009, the Army has kicked out more than 22,000 mentally wounded combat troops on the grounds of misconduct, and taken away their benefits, instead of helping them. [NPR](#)

## The U.S. Army wants to 3D-print customized food for soldiers

1 February - The military wants to "customize nutrition" for each soldier in the next few decades, and it's betting on 3-d printers to do it. "Food could be printed with the exact requirement a warfighter needs," says Lauren Oleksyk, a food technologist at the US Army's

## CDC: Zika Travel Information

The CDC lists current Zika travel notices on its Travelers' Health, Zika Travel Information webpage.

## Army Industrial Hygiene News and Regulatory Summary

The latest issue of the Army Industrial Hygiene News and Regulatory Summary has special interest articles on cadmium, Zika virus, safety breaks, career stages and Blackboard certificates.



Natick Soldier Research, Development, and Engineering Center. Oleksyk and her fellow Natick researchers are in the early stages of a concept that could deliver food tailored for each soldier, possibly debuting on the battlefield within the next 10 to 15 years. ... By 2025, soldiers will likely be wearing a device to measure their physiological or nutritional status. ... Once the data reaches back to a base camp or field kitchen, it might show a soldier hasn't eaten enough protein today, or that they've been awake for quite a while and could use some extra caffeine. This is where the 3-d printer works its magic. Unlike the Army's ready-to-eat meals, a 3-d printer could create a chocolate bar or drink powder designed to help each individual soldier perform at their best. [Tech Insider](#)

## Update: Malaria, U.S. Armed Forces, 2015

January 2016 - ... The number of malaria cases among U.S. military service members in 2015 (n=30) was the lowest annual count in at least 20 years and follows 3 previous years of greatly reduced incidence. The relatively low numbers of cases during 2012–2015 mainly reflect decreases in cases acquired in Afghanistan as the number of troops who served in Afghanistan sharply diminished in those years. About 43% of the 2015 cases were caused by *Plasmodium falciparum* (n=13) and 13% by *Plasmodium vivax* (n=4); about one-third of cases (37%) were reported as "unspecified" malaria. Malaria was diagnosed at or reported from 21 different medical facilities in the U.S., Afghanistan, Germany, and Korea. Providers of health care to military members should be knowledgeable regarding, and vigilant for, clinical presentations of malaria outside of endemic areas. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

## U.S. Navy examining rise in health issues among F/A-18 pilots: lawmaker

4 February - The U.S. Navy is investigating a rise in health issues reported since 2009 by pilots of Boeing Co F/A-18 and EA-18G fighter jets, that may be related to insufficient oxygen or other factors, a key U.S. lawmaker said Thursday. Representative Michael Turner, chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, said pilots had to report any episodes in which they experienced "a loss in performance related to insufficient oxygen, depressurization or other factors present during flight." Turner said the Navy had set up a special team to investigate the incidents and determine the root cause, but it would be a complex process since symptoms related to depressurization, tissue hypoxia and contaminant intoxication often overlapped. [Reuters](#)

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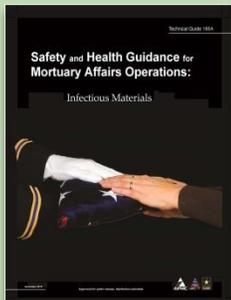
## GLOBAL

## Boosting life span by clearing out cellular clutter

3 February - Mice were much healthier and lived about 25 percent longer when scientists killed off a certain kind of cell that accumulates in the body with age. What's more, the mice

## TG 195a – Safety and Health Guidance for Mortuary Affairs Operations: Infectious Materials

This new technical guide is a quick reference handbook that explains the safety and health hazards related to the search, recovery, evacuation, tentative identification, and processing of human remains at Mortuary Affairs (MA) collection points, theater mortuary evacuation points, and MA contaminated remains mitigation sites. The technical guide also provides the control measures and safe work practices that will protect MA and support personnel from occupational exposure to these hazards.



didn't seem to suffer any ill effects from losing their so-called senescent cells. These are cells that have stopped dividing, though not necessarily because the cells themselves are old. ... Older creatures have a lot more of these cells than young 'uns. And even though the cells aren't dividing, they do keep busy — they secrete a mixture of chemicals that can trigger inflammation, which seems to be involved in just about every major age-related disease. [NPR](#)

## Chinese, Canadian teams report more MCR-1 detections

1 February - Two Chinese research teams reported more worrisome findings regarding the MCR-1 resistance gene alongside other resistance factors, hinting at the presence of bacteria strains that may resist all drugs, and Canadian researchers said they detected the MCR-1 gene in a British Columbia patient. ... The MCR-1 gene, first described by Chinese investigators in November, disables the last-line antibiotic colistin, an older drug that isn't often used in humans but is commonly used for raising food animals. [CIDRAP](#)

## International group dissects WHO failings, offers reform steps

3 February - ... [An] international group of leading public health experts last week in BMJ spelled out the [World Health Organization's] shortcomings. ... The group lays out six examples of what is wrong with the WHO, based on failed response to not only the 2014-15 Ebola epidemic but also eight other emergencies, from African unrest in 2005 and 2006 to the Syrian refugee crisis of recent years:

- Prioritizing political over technical considerations
- Failing to promote based on merit, and failing to emphasize crisis response competencies
- Being aloof from non-government groups
- Lacking internal and external accountability
- Undertaking restructure and reform with no observable leap in performance
- Not having sufficient flexible funding for crisis functions

The group offers a raft of suggested reforms that fall under six broad categories, from internal structuring and streamlining to a radical human resources review to enhanced transparency. [CIDRAP](#) (third item)

## Medical schools boost pain management education

4 February - Congress and health officials have criticized medical schools for failing to teach doctors about pain management, but medical schools and residency programs are moving quickly to address the issue. ... Students in veterinary schools spend five times as many education hours focused on pain management as students in medical schools, she said. ... The Boston University Scope of Pain Education Course is mandatory for anyone with active staff privileges at the health centers, not just residents. The course teaches clinicians how to

**Two New  
Fact Sheets:**

**Biological Safety  
Cabinets: Types**

The Biological Safety Cabinet (BSC) is a containment device used to minimize exposure of laboratory personnel to aerosols or droplets when working with biological materials or pharmaceutical products. This fact sheet explains the different classes of BSCs.

**Biological Safety  
Cabinets:  
Certification**

The Department of the Army Pamphlet 385-69, Biological Defense Safety Program requires all Class II BSCs to be National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) certified. The standard includes requirements for design, construction and performance in order to provide personnel, product and environmental protection, reliable operation, and durability as well as being easy to clean.

use the Opioid Risk Tool, which touches on personal substance abuse issues, family history of substance abuse, and items related to mental health diagnoses. [MedPage Today](#)

## Obesity, diabetes in mom increases risk of autism in child

29 January - Children born to obese women with diabetes are more than four times as likely to be diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder than children of healthy weight mothers without diabetes, new ... research suggests. The findings ... highlight what has become a leading theory about autism, that the risk likely develops before the child is even born.

[Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

## Routine amoxicillin for uncomplicated severe acute malnutrition in children

4 February - In a double-blind, placebo-controlled trial in Niger, we randomly assigned children who were 6 to 59 months of age and had uncomplicated severe acute malnutrition to receive amoxicillin or placebo for 7 days. The primary outcome was nutritional recovery at or before week 8. ... We found no benefit of routine antibiotic use with respect to nutritional recovery. ... In regions with adequate infrastructure for surveillance and management of complications, health care facilities could consider eliminating the routine use of antibiotics in protocols for the treatment of uncomplicated severe acute malnutrition.

[New England Journal of Medicine](#)

## Study: More breastfeeding is good for global health

30 January - All women, but especially those in lower and middle income countries, should be encouraged to breastfeed for as long as possible, due to the protective effects for both mother and infant, according to a comprehensive review on the global health benefits of breastfeeding. The highest prevalence of breastfeeding is in lower income countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and parts of Latin America. And, there is a higher rate of breastfeeding in poorer families as opposed to richer ones. Still, in low- and middle-income countries, almost two-thirds (63%) of infants <6 months are not exclusively breastfed, and a little over a third (37%) ages 6-23 months do not receive any breast milk. [MedPage Today](#)

## ZIKA VIRUS

### Brazil: Reported microcephaly numbers rising

4 February - The number of confirmed microcephaly cases in Brazil is still rising, the country's health ministry said. Some 4,783 suspected cases of microcephaly or other nervous system disorders had been reported by Jan. 30, the ministry said in a bulletin

## Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site:

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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posted late Tuesday on its website. Of those, 404 have been confirmed as involving microcephaly or other disorders of the nervous system, 709 have been ruled out, and the remaining 3,670 reports are still under investigation. A link to the Zika virus was seen in 17 of the confirmed cases, the ministry said. The bulletin added that there have been 76 reported stillbirths or miscarriages linked to microcephaly or other disorders of the nervous system. So far, 15 have been investigated and confirmed for microcephaly, including five with Zika virus found in fetal tissue, and five have been ruled out. The remaining 56 are still under investigation. [MedPage Today](#)

## Brazil researchers hope to test Zika virus treatment in a year

4 February - Leading researchers in Brazil are borrowing techniques used to accelerate the fight against Ebola in the hope of developing a Zika virus treatment that could be tested in humans in a year. Leading researchers in Brazil are borrowing techniques used to accelerate the fight against Ebola in the hope of developing a Zika virus treatment that could be tested in humans in a year. ... Kalil, an immunologist, said the institute was cultivating the virus in quantities sufficient to start tests in isolating antibodies in rodents. Researchers would then attempt to produce them in larger quantities in horses and purify the antibodies in the laboratory before starting tests on humans. [Reuters](#)

## CDC sees major challenges ahead in the fight against Zika

4 February - "If you are a woman who is pregnant living in the U.S., there's one really important thing you need to know: You shouldn't go to a place that has Zika spreading." That's the strongly worded advice from Dr. Tom Frieden, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. It's a marked contrast to the suggestion made by Dr. Margaret Chan, director of the World Health Organization, earlier this week: A pregnant woman could safely travel to affected countries, Chan said, if she wore long sleeves to ward off bugs and used mosquito repellent. ... Dr. Lyle Petersen, director of the division of vector borne disease and the head of the CDC's Zika response, worries that microcephaly might not be the only potentially serious health risk from what has typically been regarded as a mild virus. Zika may be causing other neurological problems as it spreads through Latin America, he says. [NPR](#)

## Companies announce new Zika vaccine initiatives

2 February - Two vaccine makers, Sanofi Pasteur and NewLink Genetics, today announced efforts to develop vaccines against Zika virus infection that will springboard off existing technologies. ... Sanofi officials emphasized the company's dengue vaccine, which was approved for use in Mexico and Brazil in December. ... Meanwhile, Ames, Iowa-based NewLink Genetics Corporation, which helped develop the leading Ebola vaccine candidate, said it is using experience gained with other flaviviruses to move rapidly on a Zika vaccine candidate, the company said in a press release. [CIDRAP](#)

## Florida Gov. declares state of emergency in counties with Zika virus

3 February - Florida Gov. Rick Scott declared a state of emergency today in the four counties where people have been diagnosed with the Zika virus. The four counties are Miami-Dade, Hillsborough, Lee and Santa Rosa. There have been nine people in total who have been diagnosed with the Zika virus in Florida, though health officials believe that all of them contracted the disease while outside of the U.S. Scott said he wanted the state to be prepared for the chance that the virus could start to be spread from mosquito to person within the state. The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that is the primary vector of Zika virus infections is present in the southeast portion of the country, including Florida.

[ABC News](#)

## Higher temperatures make Zika mosquito spread disease more

3 February - ... As the temperature rises, nearly everything about the biology of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito — the one that carries Zika, [dengue fever](#) and other diseases — speeds up when it comes to spreading disease, said entomologist Bill Reisen of the University of California Davis. "With higher temperatures you have more mosquitoes feeding more frequently and having a greater chance of acquiring infection. And then the virus replicates faster because it's hotter, therefore the mosquitoes can transmit earlier in their life," Reisen said. ... The hotspots for this Zika outbreak also have been temperature and drought hotspots recently. Recife, Brazil, the largest city in the Zika-struck region, saw its hottest September-October-November on record, about 1.2 degrees Celsius (2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) above normal, according to NASA data. The state of Pernambuco had its hottest and driest year since 1998, according to the state weather agency. [ABC News](#)

## Top airlines offer to re-assign crew from Zika-hit routes

4 February - Major U.S. airlines United (UAL.N), Delta (DAL.N) and American (AAL.O) and Europe's Lufthansa (LHAG.DE) and Air France (AIRF.PA) are offering to re-assign certain flight crew concerned about contracting the Zika virus from routes to affected countries. ... United said expectant flight attendants as well as those seeking to become pregnant could switch routes to avoid Zika-affected regions without repercussions. The airline has similar options available for pilots, Charles Hobart, spokesman for parent United Continental Holdings Inc, told Reuters on Wednesday. Delta Air Lines Inc has also let flight attendants and pilots switch assignments since Jan. 17, and American Airlines Group Inc has encouraged crew to tell their managers of concerns in order to opt out of flights to Zika-hit areas, spokesmen for the companies said. [Reuters](#)

## WHO declares global public health emergency, says causal link to brain defects ‘strongly suspected’

1 February – The World Health Organization on Monday designated the Zika virus a public health emergency of international concern, an action it has taken only three times before and which paves the way for the mobilization of more funding and manpower to fight the mosquito-borne pathogen spreading "explosively" through the Americas. Zika, which was first identified more than 50 years ago, has alarmed public health officials in recent months because of its possible association with thousands of cases of brain defects, known as microcephaly, in newborns. The WHO has estimated that the virus will reach most of the hemisphere and infect up to 4 million people by year's end. Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General, said at a press briefing that the primary reason for the decision was that members of an 18-member advisory panel agree that a causal relationship between Zika and microcephaly is "strongly suspected" although it hasn't been scientifically proven. She said that given the seriousness of the conditions being reported, the consequences of waiting were too great. [The Washington Post](#)

## Zika has been sexually transmitted in Texas, CDC confirms

3 February - Zika has been sexually transmitted in Texas, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Tuesday. It is the first known case of the virus being locally acquired in the continental United States in the current outbreak. The case, announced by Dallas County health officials, involved a patient who had sex with someone who had recently returned from Venezuela infected with the mosquito-borne virus. In a statement to CNN, the CDC said it confirmed the test results showing Zika present in the blood of a "nontraveler in the continental United States." They stressed that there was no risk to a developing fetus in this instance. [CNN](#)

## Zika outbreak alters Red Cross blood donor protocol

3 February - The American Red Cross today said it is closely monitoring the spread of Zika virus and as a precaution is implementing a self-deferral policy for blood donors who have traveled to Mexico, the Caribbean, or Central or South America within 28 days of donating. ... In its statement today, the American Red Cross also asks those who develop symptoms of Zika virus infection within 14 days of donation to immediately notify the Red Cross so it can quarantine the blood. The group said it and other blood collection agencies are working with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the CDC, and state health departments to track the virus and update donor eligibility criteria as needed. [CIDRAP](#)

## Zika virus: U.S. military offering to ship pregnant employees out of affected region

28 January - ... "Pregnant DoD employees and beneficiaries in Zika-affected areas will be offered voluntary relocation out of the affected areas," Army Col. Lisa Garcia, a SOUTHCOM

spokeswoman, told Breitbart News via email. "U.S. Southern Command has one person that is pregnant and she is scheduled to depart the area today on a permanent change of station. Her move was already scheduled before Zika." "Guidance for personal protective measures (insect repellent; treating clothes with Permethrin; minimizing exposed skin; removing areas of standing water; remaining indoors in air conditioned or screened buildings, if possible) was already in place for our DoD personnel as a result of [the diseases] dengue and Chikungunya," she also said. [Breitbart](#)

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## **INFLUENZA**

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### **AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary**

For Week 3:

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity was minimal to moderate for most states.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity was minimal with the exception of Italy which had low activity.
- PACOM: Influenza activity was minimal with the exception of Japan, which had low activity.
- CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Influenza activity was minimal to low in CENTCOM and AFRICOM.
- SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity in Honduras was minimal based on DMSS data.

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

### **APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report**

For the week ending 23 January 2016 (Week 3):

Army incident ILI outpatient visits continue to be lower than previous years. During week three, all regions except for RHC-P saw an increase in the percentage of specimens testing positive for influenza A.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 3 were 25% lower than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: No hospitalized influenza cases were reported to APHC(P) through DRSi in week 3. Four hospitalized cases have been reported to date this season.
- Viral specimens: During week 3, 129 of 708 (18%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-P reported 8 influenza A-positive specimens, RHC-A reported 5, RHC-C reported 4, and RHC-E reported 2. CENTCOM did not report any influenza A-positive specimens. [APHC](#)

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

During week 3 (January 17-23, 2016), influenza activity increased slightly in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories during week 3 was influenza A, with influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 viruses predominating. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories increased.
- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below their system-specific epidemic threshold in both the NCHS Mortality Surveillance System and the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System.

[CDC](#)

## CDC releases alert on seasonal flu, warns of severe cases

The CDC today issued a Health Alert Network (HAN) advisory that warns of severe flu cases and recommends how to prevent unnecessary outbreaks. Although the pneumonia and influenza mortality rate of week 3 (ending Jan 23, as the CDC noted on Jan 30) was below the epidemic thresholds in both the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System and the NCHS Mortality Surveillance System, the rate of flu reports is increasing, particularly those caused by 2009 H1N1. According to the CDC, 2009 H1N1, which is now a seasonal strain, has caused severe respiratory illness leading to hospitalization and some fatalities in patients.

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

## Flu News Europe

### **Week 03/2016 (18-24 January 2016)**

- Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 has been the predominant virus detected since the start of the season, accounting for 65% of sentinel surveillance detections of influenza-like illness (ILI) and acute respiratory infection (ARI) in the WHO European Region.
- The predominance of A(H1N1)pdm09 correlates with an increase in cases of severe disease, mainly in people aged 15–64.
- For week 03/2016, seven of 11 countries reporting data on severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) indicated increasing numbers of cases. The percentages of influenza-positive SARI specimens were greater than 50% in four of these countries: Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.
- Twenty-nine of the 45 countries and territories that reported epidemiological data from ILI and ARI surveillance indicated increasing rates, while 32 countries reported influenza virus detections in specimens from ILI and ARI surveillance for week 03/2016, indicating increased influenza activity in the WHO European Region as a whole.

### **Season**

- So far, the 2015–2016 influenza season has been characterized by a predominance of the influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus, which may cause more severe disease and death in younger adults than influenza A(H3N2).

- Since week 52/2015, several European countries have reported increasing numbers of SARI cases associated with A(H1N1)pdm09 infection, from SARI sentinel surveillance systems. Similarly, countries reporting laboratory-confirmed influenza cases in hospitals and intensive care units (ICUs) have detected influenza A in the majority of cases since the start of the season, with A(H1N1)pdm09 being the dominant subtype (92%).
- Most of the viruses characterized so far are genetically similar to the strains recommended for inclusion in this winter's trivalent or quadrivalent vaccines for the northern hemisphere. [European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

## H7N9 avian flu cases top 700 in China

5 February - With the release of 19 notifications of additional human cases of avian influenza A(H7N9) with onset of symptoms between December 21, 2015 and January 25 this year by the Chinese National Health and Family Planning Commission today, this brings the total human cases to 702 on the mainland since 2013. According to reports, the patients comprise 11 men and eight women aged from 42 to 91, four of whom (three men and one woman) have died. Eleven cases are from Zhejiang, five are from Jiangsu and three are from Fujian. [Outbreak News Today](#)

## NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 12 January 2015:

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

## Study: Flu vaccine coverage up in young kids but still below 50%

3 February - Although complete flu vaccine coverage increased dramatically from 2002-03 to 2011-12 in kids under 2 years old, it still falls well below 50% and is even lower in minority groups. ... Scientists from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Leidos Inc of Atlanta analyzed National Immunization Survey data on children 6 months to 23 months of age over 10 influenza seasons beginning in 2002-03. They found that complete flu vaccination in that age-group increased from 4.8% in 2002-03 to 44.7% in 2011-12. They also found that, in all the seasons, vaccination uptake was lower in African-American and Hispanic children compared with white kids.

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

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

During 17 - 30 January 2016 (Surveillance Weeks 3 & 4), a total of 223 specimens were collected and received from 46 locations. Results were finalized for 152 specimens from 40

locations. Eight influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and nine influenza B viruses were identified during Week 3. During Week 4, ten influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, three influenza A(H3N2) and three influenza B viruses were identified. [US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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## VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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### Dog flu virus spreading across the United States

1 February - ... [A] strain of dog flu that's relatively new to the U.S [is] [canine influenza H3N2](#). The virus arrived from Korea last spring and has since caused flu outbreaks among dogs in 26 states throughout the nation. No cases of human infections with the virus have ever been recorded, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And H3N2 causes no symptoms or only mild illness in most dogs. But it is triggering some severe cases of canine pneumonia. ... The virus seems to be spreading much more easily than H3N8, a canine flu strain that has been in the U.S. longer. One reason is that dogs infected with H3N2 remain contagious for about three weeks, even if they have no symptoms; that's about a week longer than usual. Also, Kinnarney says, because the strain is new to the continent, U.S. dogs lack immunity to it. [NPR](#)

### USDA imposes stricter limit on *Salmonella* bacteria in poultry products

4 February 2016 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced a new, stricter limit on salmonella bacteria in poultry products. It's a new attempt to make headway against one of the country's biggest, and most intractable, food safety problems. ... Even when companies wash chicken carcasses after slaughter, the USDA has found the bacteria on about a quarter of all cut-up chicken parts heading for supermarket shelves. ... Under the USDA's new standard, companies will be required to reduce the frequency of contaminated chicken parts to 15 percent or less. The new standard also sets limits for turkey and ground meat products. A separate standard covers another disease-causing type of bacterium, called *Campylobacter*. [NPR](#)

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## WELLNESS

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### A diet and exercise plan to lose weight and gain muscle

3 February - ... [Researchers] have long been looking for weight loss programs that produce hefty amounts of fat loss but diminish any decline in muscle. ... [Researchers] rounded up 40

overweight young men who were willing to commit to an intensive weight-loss program and divided them in half. ... [For] half of them, this consisted of about 15 percent protein, 35 percent fat and 50 percent carbohydrates. The other 20 volunteers began a diet that mimicked that of the first group, except that theirs swapped the protein and fat ratios. ... Over all, their protein intake was about three times the recommended dietary allowance for most people. ... All of the men also began a grueling workout routine. ... The diet and exercise routine continued for four weeks. ... The men in both groups weighed about 11 or 12 pounds less, on average. ... Unlike most people on low-calorie diets, the men on the high-protein regimen had actually gained muscle during the month, as much as three pounds of it. ... These results strongly suggest that extra protein is advisable during weight loss, Dr. Phillips said, to avoid stripping yourself of muscle. But exercise is also key. [The New York Times](#)

## Breakthrough sunscreen claims to protect skin, boost health



2 February - It's not on the market yet, but a new sunscreen called Solar-D could offer more health benefits than just protection from sunburns. ... [Dr. Michael F. Holick, a professor at the Boston University School of Medicine] said the number of people at risk for vitamin D deficiency is increasing because more people work indoors and many now use excellent sunscreen daily. ... Holick and a team of researchers designed Solar-D to be different. They adjusted the levels of certain ingredients so people can still block the burn, but not the benefits. "Most of the ingredients are the same," he said. "It's just that the ingredients have been changed in a clever way to take advantage of the ability for some of the ultraviolet light to make vitamin D in your skin." [WCV5](#)

## Loneliness grows from individual ache to public health hazard



31 January –... Loneliness, long a bane of humanity, is increasingly seen today as a serious public health hazard. Scientists [are] finding that social isolation changes the human genome in profound, long-lasting ways. Not only that, but the potential for damage caused by these genetic changes appears comparable to the injuries to health from smoking and, even worse, from diabetes and obesity. ... Psychologist Steve Cole, who studies how social environments affect gene expression, says researchers have known for years that lonely people are at greater risk for heart attacks, metastatic cancer, Alzheimer's and other ills. "But we haven't understood why," he said. Then last year, Cole and his colleagues ... uncovered complex immune system responses at work in lonely people. They

found that social isolation turned up the activity of genes responsible for inflammation and turned down the activity of genes that produce antibodies to fight infection. [The Washington Post](#)

## Recalled nutritional powder tied to 11 *Salmonella* cases in 9 states

2 February - Dovetailing with recent cases announced in Minnesota and a product recall, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said today that 11 *Salmonella* Virchow illnesses in 9 states have been linked to Garden of Life RAW Meal Organic Shake and Meal products. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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### USAFRICOM

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## Benin: Benin reports nine Lassa fever deaths

2 February - Health officials in the West African country of Benin are reporting nine fatalities due to Lassa fever. ... The nine deaths of the 20 Lassa cases were recorded in Borgou (7) and Hills (2) departments. One of the deaths were confirmed.

[Outbreak News Today](#)

## Uganda: Health workers sent to north Uganda as malaria epidemic kills over 650

1 February - Uganda dispatched a team of more than 370 health workers to the northern part of the country on Monday where a malaria epidemic ravaging the region since July has killed about 658 people. Uganda reported an unusual outbreak of malaria in the north of the country in July, which health officials say has affected one million people from a population of about 39 million. Uganda has one of the highest rates of malaria in Africa, with some 100,000 deaths, mostly pregnant women and children under five, and 16 million cases a year, according to the country's Ministry of Health. [Reuters](#)

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### USCENTCOM

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## Pakistan: 139 children die in one month in drought-hit Pakistan district

4 February - At least 139 children died of waterborne disease in January in Pakistan's impoverished desert district of Tharparkar, which has been devastated by drought since

2013. Civil society groups and opposition politicians say the Sindh provincial government's response to the crisis has been insufficient to prevent widespread hunger and disease. ... [Four] years into the crisis, farmers are still in need of seeds and fertiliser, according to preliminary data in an unpublished report being prepared by the Pakistan Food Security Cluster, which is led by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Food Programme. New irrigation systems also need to be built and old ones repaired. [IRIN](#)

## Saudi Arabia: Saudis report camel MERS outbreak; WHO details recent cases

2 February - Saudi Arabia's agriculture ministry recently filed a report on a MERS-CoV outbreak in camels, its first such report to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) since the virus first emerged in humans in 2012. The outbreak began on Dec 29, 2015, at a livestock market in Jeddah, in western Saudi Arabia. MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) was detected in 11 of 465 camels. Response measures included quarantine, screening, disinfection, and further surveillance in the zones around the market. The report didn't say what triggered testing, but a spate of human infections linked to camels has recently been reported in Saudi Arabia.

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

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### USEUCOM

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## France: Measles vaccination campaign launched in Calais and Grande-Synthe camps



29 January - After three people were confirmed with measles in the 'Jungle' camp in Calais, northern France, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is to take part in a vaccination campaign against the disease in camps in Calais and Dunkirk. In the Calais camp, two refugees (an adult and a nine-year-old child) and one volunteer have come down with measles,

while three other cases have been confirmed at Calais' central hospital. There are also reports of two children with measles symptoms in Grande-Synthe camp, near Dunkirk.

[Médecins Sans Frontières](#)

## United Kingdom: Fixing the UK's mental health crisis will need both police and health

3 February - ... Whether it's substance misuse or mental distress, the police – not health professionals – have become the first port of call for vulnerable people. ... UK police are

spending as much as 40% of their time dealing with incidents related to mental health problems. ... Between 2011 and 2014, there was a 33% rise in the number of mental health related incidents dealt with by police, despite a drop of 10% in reported incidents, with big rises in some parts of the country, including south Wales and Suffolk. December's report by the Revolving Doors Agency and the Transition to Adulthood Alliance ... explains the importance of intervening earlier with vulnerable adults, pointing out that an incredible 84% of all control room calls are related to non-crime incidents, often linked to issues of vulnerability, public protection and safeguarding. [The Guardian](#)

## United Kingdom: Rare illness 'clusters' in Wales spark EU-wide alert

28 January - Health officials in Wales have alerted European colleagues after an "unusual" spike in illnesses that leave patients with facial weakness or paralysis. Ten men in south Wales have been diagnosed with Guillain-Barré Syndrome, and four children with "acute flaccid paralysis". Public Health Wales said the conditions were "not contagious" and most people "recover well". ... The type of illness appears to be a strain normally associated with China, Japan, Central and South America. It has also been affecting more men than normally expected. However, scientists said they had ruled out Zika and West Nile Virus as a potential cause. Researchers say they are continuing to examine other possible infections which might be responsible, as seven of the men had respiratory illnesses before developing the neurological syndromes. Researchers say they are continuing to examine other possible infections which might be responsible, as seven of the men had respiratory illnesses before developing the neurological syndromes. [BBC News](#)

## United Kingdom: Scientists get 'gene editing' go-ahead

1 February - UK scientists have been given the go-ahead by the fertility regulator to genetically modify human embryos. It is the first time a country has considered the DNA-altering technique in embryos and approved it. ... It will be illegal for the scientists to implant the modified embryos into a woman. But the field is attracting controversy over concerns it is opening the door to designer - or GM - babies. [BBC News](#)

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### **USNORTHCOM**

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## U.S.: Disparities in consistent retention in HIV care — 11 states and the District of Columbia, 2011–2013

5 February - ... Among persons with HIV infection diagnosed in 2010 who were alive in December 2013, 38% of blacks with HIV infection were consistently retained in care during 2011–2013, compared with 50% of Hispanics/Latinos (Hispanics) and 49% of non-Hispanic whites (whites). Differences in consistent retention in care by race/ethnicity persisted when

groups were stratified by sex or transmission category. Among blacks, 35% of males were consistently retained in care compared with 44% of females. Differences in HIV care retention by race/ethnicity were established during the first year after diagnosis. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## U.S.: Dems introduce alternative to GOP's mental health bill

2 February - A group of House Democrats on Tuesday introduced their own mental health reform bill as they call for changes to a Republican-led measure working its way through the chamber. ... The Democratic bill ... does not include financial incentives to states to reward assisted outpatient treatment laws, which allow judges to mandate treatment for patients with serious mental illness. It also makes less drastic changes to a health privacy law known as HIPAA, which [Republicans] argues will help give caregivers needed information about the mentally ill but that Democrats have said would hurt patient privacy. Democrats have also argued that [the Republican] bill would in effect gut the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and could end up cutting funding for substance abuse. The Democratic bill, by contrast, includes a range of grants to help fight the epidemic of abuse of opioids. [The Hill](#)

## U.S.: Hawaii reports 244 dengue cases, 1 potentially infectious

2 February - Hawaii now has 244 cases of locally acquired dengue fever on its Big Island, up from 224 cases on Jan 20, the Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) said in an update yesterday. Only 1 of the 244 infected people is still considered potentially infectious. ... Of the confirmed cases, 220 involve Hawaii residents and 24 involve visitors. By age-group, 199 (82%) of the patients have been adults and 45 (18%) children. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

## U.S.: HPV, MenB vaccines added to kids' immunization schedule

1 February - The formal addition of the 9-valent human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, along with the serogroup B meningococcal (MenB) vaccine for certain adolescents, are just two of the updates to the 2016 recommended vaccine schedule for children and adolescents, which were released by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). [MedPage Today](#)

## U.S.: Obama seeks more than \$1 billion to fight opioid abuse

2 February - The Obama administration said on Tuesday that it would ask Congress to spend an additional \$1.1 billion next year to combat a growing epidemic of prescription painkiller and heroin abuse. Almost half of the new money would be used to expand treatment facilities, which are in short supply in much of the nation. ... The other half of the

money would go to programs intended to prevent prescription drug overdoses, crack down on illegal sales, and improve access to naloxone, a drug that can rescue those who have overdosed. [The New York Times](#)

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## **USPACOM**

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### **China: Getting into shape - exploring China's health supplements industry**

2 February - Dietary and health supplements are an industry with huge growth potential in China, in particular for overseas companies. The market has almost doubled since 2008, and was worth approximately RMB 102 billion by the end of 2014. Surveys show that very close to half of urban Chinese consumers regularly buy vitamins and dietary supplements. The size of the market is likely to grow over the foreseeable future due to a range of social and economic factors. ... Additionally, China has long promoted the proactive consumption of various products (herbs, liquids, tinctures, etc.) to maintain a healthy body. Specific health supplement products might be new to China, but the general concept behind them fits very well with existing Chinese culture.

[China Business Review](#)

### **India: Smartphone app linked to increase in contraceptive use in India**

28 January - A smartphone app containing motivational videos developed to help married rural women in India better understand contraceptive choices led to a dramatic increase in the number of women using modern family planning methods in just a few months, new ... research suggests. The researchers say that women who watched videos were 4.5 times more likely to use modern contraceptive methods than those who did not. The findings ... show that digital technology can be an effective tool to provide customized information and also address cultural and social barriers that may prevent women in low- and middle-income countries from adopting family planning behaviors. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

[Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

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## PAHO urges governments to implement public policies that can prevent more than one-third of cancers

29 January - With the slogan "We can, I can," the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is joining the international community to commemorate World Cancer Day (February 4) by urging the implementation of public policies that could prevent more than one-third of cancers. Cancer is the second-leading cause of death in the Americas, where an estimated 2.8 million people are newly diagnosed and 1.3 million people die from this group of diseases each year. The leading cancer types in the region in men are lung, prostate and colorectal cancer, and in women, breast, lung and cervical cancer. [PAHO](#)

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