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- United Kingdom: Blood scandal inquiry ‘will find any cover-up’
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**USINDOPACOM**
- Australia: Mental health of children in Australian detention center reaches ‘crisis point’
- China: Brain injury, sound-attack fears spread in China as more Americans evacuated
- China: Gigantic study of Chinese babies yields slew of health data
- China: The growing threat of China’s HIV epidemic
- Philippines: DOH declares leptospirosis outbreak in parts of Metro Manila

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- U.S.: Americans are having fewer babies. They told us why.
- U.S.: Bipartisan bill proposes new ‘pull’ incentives for priority antibiotics
- U.S.: Chagas disease surveillance activities — seven states, 2017
- U.S.: Emergency rooms run out of vital drugs, and patients are feeling it
- U.S.: Flight attendants have higher rates of breast, uterine, other cancers
- U.S.: Giant hogweed - A plant that can burn and blind you. But don’t panic.
- U.S.: Gun injuries twice as common for city kids
- U.S.: New ATSDR study, released amid controversy, calls current EPA recommendations into question
- U.S.: NIH-funded scientists put socioeconomic data on the map
- U.S.: U.S. coal industry needs ‘fundamental shift’ to fight black lung – report
- U.S.: White House wants to cut this public health service corps by nearly 40 percent
- U.S.: Wildfire in Yolo County grows to 86,000 acres with containment at 27%

**USSOUTHCOM**
- Brazil: Leprosy - 62% of the Amazonian armadillos carry the bacteria
The Army Public Health Course will be held Aug. 6-10 at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

This year’s theme is “Public Health: Our Role in Improving Readiness, Modernizing the Force, and Taking Care of the DOD Family.”

Course participants will have the opportunity to participate in workshops such as Defense Occupational Environmental Health Readiness System-Industrial Hygiene training, Entomological Surveillance, Health Risk Communication training, Deployment Environmental Public Health and much more.

This course is open to the following Army Medical Department officer, warrant officer & enlisted specialties: 60C/D, 64A-Z, 640A, 68 Series, 66B, 71B, & 72A-D. The course is also open to Air Force, Navy and DOD Civilians serving in Public Health positions at all staff & command levels.

Register by July 10, 2018

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**U.S. MILITARY**

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**Gryphon releases biosecurity and defense roadmap**

29 June - Gryphon Scientific, a life sciences policy analysis group based in Maryland, published a new roadmap for implementing US biosecurity and biodefense policy. The Air Force and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency commissioned the work under their Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction. The roadmap explains that the last decade has brought major changes to the biotechnology landscape, including the globalization of biotechnology companies and the influence of venture capital firms and private industry in the form of funding streams for research and development. The US must simultaneously engage in biosecurity work, which means preventing the malicious use of biological sciences knowledge, and biodefense, which encompasses detection and response to such biological threats.

**CIDRAP News Scan (third item)**

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**Polypharmacy involving opioid, psychotropic, and central nervous system depressant medications, period prevalence and association with suicidal ideation, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2016**

June 2018 - This report uses routinely collected data in the Defense Medical Surveillance System (DMSS) to explore the period prevalence of polypharmacy among the active component U.S. military in 2016. The period prevalence across the Department of Defense was 10.8% and was highest for the Army (14.5%) and lowest for the Marine Corps (7.4%). Furthermore, a case control study was conducted to explore the potential association between polypharmacy and incident suicidal ideation (SI). There was an increased adjusted odds of incident SI within 12 months following polypharmacy exposure ... depending on the number of qualifying polypharmacy criteria. Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

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**GLOBAL**

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**Air pollution contributes significantly to diabetes globally**

29 June - New research links outdoor air pollution — even at levels deemed safe — to an increased risk of diabetes globally, according to a study from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis and the Veterans Affairs (VA) St. Louis Health Care System. The
Community Resource Guides

The Community Resource Guide is a comprehensive inventory of programs and services available to a military community. It is a one-stop shop for information on health and wellness resources tailored for each military installation. Community resource guides help leaders and community members identify programs that promote health and strengthen resilience in their local military community.

findings raise the possibility that reducing pollution may lead to a drop in diabetes cases in heavily polluted countries such as India and less polluted ones such as the United States. ... To evaluate outdoor air pollution, the researchers looked at particulate matter, airborne microscopic pieces of dust, dirt, smoke, soot and liquid droplets. ... In diabetes, pollution is thought to reduce insulin production and trigger inflammation, preventing the body from converting blood glucose into energy that the body needs to maintain health. Overall, the researchers estimated that pollution contributed to 3.2 million new diabetes cases globally in 2016, which represents about 14 percent of all new diabetes cases globally that year. They also estimated that 8.2 million years of healthy life were lost in 2016 due to pollution-linked diabetes, representing about 14 percent of all years of healthy life lost due to diabetes from any cause. Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis

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Long work hours tied to higher diabetes risk in women

2 July - Women who work long hours may be at a heightened risk for diabetes, a new study found. Specifically, those who worked ≥45 hours in 1 week reported a significantly higher risk for developing incident diabetes compared with women who worked 35-40 hours each week, according to Mahée Gilbert-Ouimet, PhD candidate, of Centre de recherche FRQS in Quebec, and colleagues. However, this link was not seen in men who worked long hours. ... Instead, men who worked more hours tended to have a slightly lower risk of incident diabetes, although this wasn't statistically significant. MedPage Today

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Monkey studies suggest Zika role in miscarriage may be higher than thought

2 July - Zika-related miscarriage or stillbirth may be much higher than previously thought in women infected early in their pregnancies, according to a report today from scientists at six different primate research centers. All of the teams were monitoring experimentally infected pregnant monkeys to gauge impact on pregnancies and explore damage to different tissues. They were able to control timing and infection method in a way that’s not possible in humans. ... Overall, they found that 26% of pregnancies in monkeys infected with Zika virus during the first trimester ended in miscarriage of stillbirth, about four-fold higher than in unexposed monkeys at the centers. The level they saw is much higher than the 8% rate reported earlier this year in women infected with Zika during the early months of pregnancy. Three more of the baby monkeys died soon after birth. CIDRAP News

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Zapping the brain appears to decrease aggressive intentions, new study says

2 July - The possibility of using brain stimulation to help prevent future violence just passed a proof of concept stage, according to new research published Monday. ... In a double-blind, randomized controlled study, a group of volunteers who received a charge to their
Army entomology experts promote vector-borne disease prevention tactics

The Army Public Health Center, Laboratory Sciences Directorate/TBDL offers a program to military personnel, their dependents and Department of Defense civilians called the DOD Human Tick Test Kit Program, where ticks which have bitten individuals can be sent for identification and disease testing. The program is meant to serve as a ‘first alert’ for tick-bite patients and their healthcare providers. In addition, Army public health personnel routinely conduct surveillance to monitor mosquito and tick populations and provide needed data to vector control personnel.

INFLUENZA

A flu drug — shown to reduce the duration of symptoms — could upend treatment in U.S.

28 June - Next winter, there may be a new drug for people who contract influenza—one that appears to be able to shut down infection quickly and, unlike anything else on the market, can be taken as a single dose. The Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday said that it would give the drug, baloxavir marboxil, a priority review, and approval has the potential to upend the way influenza is treated. ... The FDA has told Genentech that it will issue a decision on baloxavir marboxil within six months—in other words, before Christmas. The drug has been shown to reduce the duration of flu symptoms by a little more than a day—most uncomplicated flu infections only last a few days—and reduce the duration of fever by nearly a day. It also substantially cut the length of time people sick with influenza were coughing and sneezing out viruses— a potential benefit for the people around those sick individuals. Scientific American

A stubborn medical mystery: Was pandemic flu vaccine tied to an increase in narcolepsy cases?

5 July - Nearly a decade on from the 2009 influenza pandemic, scientists are still trying to solve what is proving to be an intractable medical mystery: Did some of the vaccines used to protect against the new flu virus trigger an increase in narcolepsy cases? A major attempt to unravel the mystery — a study that’s still in the publication pipeline — did not find evidence that vaccines containing a boosting compound called an adjuvant sparked a rise in cases of narcolepsy, a serious but rare sleep disorder. But absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, as scientists are quick to point out. ... Dr. Steven Black believes that the SOMNIA study, for a variety of reasons, was unable to crack the puzzle. And he thinks it’s critical to keep looking for the answer, because the use of adjuvants will likely be necessary the next time a severe flu pandemic hits — both to make the vaccine more potent and to stretch limited supplies. STAT
A Guide to Mosquito Repellents, from DEET to ... Gin and Tonic?

A 2015 study tested eight commercial mosquito repellents, two fragrances and a vitamin B patch by releasing mosquitoes into a sealed chamber with a treated hand. The study found that after four hours, the most effective were products containing DEET, as well as one “natural” DEET-free spray.

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

2017-2018 Influenza Season Week 25 ending June 23, 2018
Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) Mortality Surveillance: Based on National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) mortality surveillance data available on June 28, 2018, 5.5% of the deaths occurring during the week ending June 9, 2018 (week 23) were due to P&I. This percentage is below the epidemic threshold of 6.4% for week 23. CDC

ECDC: Flu News Europe

Weeks 21-25/2018 (21 May–24 June 2018)

- Influenza activity was at inter-season levels.
- 1% of the individuals sampled from primary health care settings tested positive for influenza viruses. European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO

NHRC: Operational Infectious Diseases - Weekly Surveillance Report

28 June – Zero influenza among specimens tested during the past 2 weeks. The most recent influenza positive case was collected 8 May.

Febrile respiratory illness cases:

- Military Recruits - 12 positive of 33 tested
- CDC Border Infectious Disease Surveillance and Zika Surveillance - 2 positive of 17 tested
- DoD Beneficiaries – 9 positive of 23 tested. Naval Health Research Center

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Del Monte Cyclospora Kwik Trip outbreak grows to 185 sick; lawsuits filed

2 July - The Del Monte Cyclospora Kwik Trip outbreak has grown to include 185 people sick, according to the FDA. That number is current as of June 28, 2018; all cases are lab-confirmed. The ill persons live in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Seven people have been hospitalized. These illnesses are associated with recalled Del Monte 6 ounce and 12 ounce vegetable trays containing broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, and dill dip sold by Kwik Trip/Kwik Star locations in Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Del Monte is
also recalling "small veggie trays" that are 28 ounces and include broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, celery, and dill dip and were sold in Illinois and Indiana. Food Poisoning Bulletin top of page...

Irish health agency warns of sharp rise in *E. coli* infections

5 July - An Irish health agency has issued a warning after the number of *E. coli* cases in the past 10 days reached three times as many compared to the same period in 2017. The HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre in Ireland said there had been 96 Verocytotoxigenic *E. coli* (VTEC) cases reported. VTEC are also known as Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC). Investigators so far have not identified a specific reason for the increase in cases. HSE advised consumers to wash hands before and after handling food, wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly before eating them and ensure ground meats are cooked all the way through. Food Safety News top of page...

It was the water, FDA says of romaine *E. coli* outbreak that killed five

29 June - An *E. coli* outbreak that sickened people in 36 states and triggered warnings not to eat romaine lettuce this spring has been traced to water in a canal in the Yuma, Ariz., region – and the outbreak is now officially over, federal officials say. “Suspect product is no longer being harvested or distributed from this area and is no longer available in stores or restaurants, due to its 21-day shelf life,” the Food and Drug Administration says. Five people have died because of the outbreak and 96 were sent to hospitals, the FDA says in its latest update. Overall, the agency says, 210 people were made ill by the *E. coli* outbreak. Alarm over the outbreak was relaxed somewhat in late May, after regulators confirmed that the harvesting season for romaine in Yuma had passed, and that the main U.S. source for romaine had shifted to California’s Salinas Valley. NPR top of page...

*Listeria* deaths in five EU countries linked to frozen vegetables

5 July - An outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* in five European countries has infected at least 47 people, killing nine of them. Eighteen of the cases have been reported this year, with the most recent person becoming sick in May. The outbreak is believed to have begun in 2015. Frozen corn and other frozen vegetables are the likely source of the outbreak that has hit Finland with 23 cases, the United Kingdom with 11, Sweden with seven, Denmark with four and Austria with two. For the 16 patients for whom the information is available, all were hospitalized. Food Safety News top of page...
Nonprofit group warns of resistant bacteria in meat, offers consumer tips

29 June - The Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit group that works to protect health and the environment, issued a report yesterday warning that resistant bacteria are common in retail meat and poultry samples and offered consumer tips on avoiding such contamination. Based on its own analysis of 2015 data from the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS), the EWG said that bacteria with resistance to at least one antibiotic were found in 79% of retail turkey samples, 71% of pork chops, 62% of ground beef, and 36% of chicken breasts, wings, and thighs. The percentages refer to *Enterococcus faecalis*, a common gut bacterium that can indicate the presence of fecal contamination. ... “Consumers need to know about potential contamination of the meat they eat, so they can be vigilant about food safety, especially when cooking for children, pregnant women, older adults or the immune-compromised,” Dawn Undurraga, MS, RD, EWG’s nutritionist and author of the report, said.

Texas health officials warn of parasitic outbreak

3 July - Texas health officials are investigating a parasitic outbreak after dozens have fallen ill since May. According to the Texas Department of Health and Human Services, 56 people have confirmed cases of infections from *Cyclospora* parasites. ... This is the sixth consecutive year that the Texas health department has recorded a large number of illnesses from *Cyclospora*. Every year the concentration of cases has been from late spring through the end of summer. Investigations showed contaminated fresh cilantro from Mexico as the source of the parasites several times in the past, however the cause of this current outbreak has not yet been identified.

The batty, explosive history of bats in the military — and why this new idea just might work

2 July - ... Today, the U.S. military is again interested in bats not as front-line attackers but as defenders against a potentially devastating threat: Russian bioweapons. Fruit bats have an almost supernatural ability to harbor some of the planet’s most deadly viruses without getting sick themselves. ... These bats’ extraordinary super-immunity has long fascinated virologists. ... Unpacking the mystery involved some cunning detective work from a coalition of scientists at Boston University and the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases. ... [Thomas] Kepler’s team jump-started its work by examining the whole genome of the Egyptian fruit bat ... They found significantly large interferon genes. ... The other supersize set of genes in the fruit bat controlled the receptors on “natural killer,” or NK, cells. ... [T]he bat immune system may respond in a unique way to viral infection, offering what he calls “soft protection.” Instead of attacking and killing an infected cell, which leads
to a cascade of inflammatory responses in the host, their NK cells might have a more nuanced response. They might, for instance, effectively starve the virus by turning down the host’s cellular metabolism. The Washington Post

WELLNESS

A study of half a million people found more evidence that drinking coffee is associated with a longer life

3 July - ... Yet another study has found that drinking coffee is associated with a longer life and lower risk of an early death. This adds to a significant body of research indicating that coffee has positive effects on the heart, liver, brain, and more. The latest study, published in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine, reveals that people who drink more coffee have a lower risk of death even if they drink eight or more cups per day, and even if their genetics make them slow to process caffeine. The study looked at 500,000 people in the UK, of whom 387,494 were coffee drinkers. The results suggested that people who drank two to five cups of coffee in a day were about 12% less likely to die than non-coffee-drinkers over the 10-year time period in the study. People who drank six to seven cups were 16% less likely to die, and people who drank eight or more cups were about 14% less likely to die. Business Insider

Could psychedelics transform mental health?

1 July - ... Increasingly, scientists are looking at whether [psychedelic] drugs - which also include mescaline and DMT among others - might also have the potential to be mind-healing. A number of small studies have found psychedelics to show promise in treating mental health disorders like depression, addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder, often where other treatments have failed. Now UK researchers are about to take part in the first major trials into whether one of these hallucinogenic drugs could be more effective than a leading antidepressant in the treatment of depression. Researchers at Imperial College London are to compare the magic mushroom compound psilocybin with a leading SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) antidepressant, escitalopram, in a large trial expected to take at least two years. BBC News

Exercise may aid in weight loss. Provided you do enough.

4 July - Can working out help us to drop pounds after all? A provocative new study involving overweight men and women suggests that it probably can, undercutting a widespread notion that exercise, by itself, is worthless for weight loss. But the findings also indicate that, to benefit, we may need to exercise quite a bit. ... [Scientists invited] 31
overweight, sedentary men and women to a lab for measurements of their resting metabolic rate and body composition. ... Over the course of the week, [one group of] volunteers burned 1,500 extra calories with their exercise program. The other group began working out for twice as long, burning 600 calories per session, or about 3,000 calories per week. ... [After 12 weeks] men and women who had burned about 1,500 calories a week with exercise turned out to have lost little if any body fat, the tests showed. Some were heavier. But most of those who had walked twice as much were thinner now. Twelve of them had shed at least 5 percent of their body fat during the study. The New York Times

Five habits that make for a fit family

Children and adolescents whose mothers follow five healthy habits — eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, keeping a healthy body weight, drinking alcohol in moderation, and not smoking — are 75 percent less likely to become obese than children of mothers who do not follow any such habits, according to a new study led by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. When both mother and child adhered to these habits, the risk of obesity was 82 percent lower compared with mothers and children who did not. ... “Our study was the first to demonstrate that an overall healthy lifestyle really outweighs any individual healthy lifestyle factors followed by mothers when it comes to lowering the risk of obesity in their children,” said Qi Sun, assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition and senior author of the study. Harvard Gazette

How many teenage girls deliberately harm themselves?
Nearly 1 in 4, survey finds.

2 July - Up to 30 percent of teenage girls in some parts of the United States say they have intentionally injured themselves without aiming to commit suicide, researchers have found. About one in four adolescent girls deliberately harmed herself in the previous year, often by cutting or burning, compared to about one in 10 boys. The overall prevalence of self-harm was almost 18 percent. ... [The report] included almost 65,000 public high school students in 11 states. ... Adolescents of both sexes reported injuring themselves at rates above 20 percent in Idaho, Kentucky, Nevada and New Mexico. Girls reported self-injury at twice the rate of boys in all but two states. The results varied by race. More than 20 percent of Native American students reported self-harm, followed by Hispanic, white and Asian students. Only 12 percent of black students reported self-injury. The New York Times

HPV test is better than Pap smear at detecting precancerous cervical changes, study says

3 July - A test for HPV detects precancerous changes of the cervix earlier and more
accurately than the Pap smear, according to a large clinical trial published Tuesday. The randomized, controlled study — the kind of trial considered the “gold standard” of research — showed that the human papillomavirus test is more sensitive than the Pap smear, a widely used test that has been a standard part of women’s preventive health care for decades but has drawbacks. Several experts predicted the results would spur efforts to entirely replace the Pap test with the HPV test. The Washington Post

Rising cost of PrEP to prevent HIV infection pushes it out of reach for many

30 June - Public health officials are expanding efforts to get the HIV prevention pill into the hands of those at risk, in a nationwide effort to curb infections. But the officials are hitting roadblocks — the drug’s price tag, which has surged in recent years, and changes in insurance coverage that put a heftier financial burden on patients. Since brand-name Truvada was approved for HIV prevention six years ago, its average wholesale price has increased by about 45 percent. Now, the drug — which rakes in billions of dollars in annual global revenue for its manufacturer, Gilead Sciences — carries a list price of close to $2,000 for a 30-day supply. Most insurers cover treatment with the pill, also known as pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP. … But patients can get stuck with out-of-pocket costs that make the medicine unaffordable. NPR

Sleep disturbances common in National Guard soldiers after deployment

29 June - National Guard soldiers may be plagued with sleep problems when they return home from the battlefield, according to a small study. For the new analysis, published online in Sleep Health, researchers first surveyed 928 veterans on National Guard bases in Hawaii and New Mexico who had been deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia or other war zones. More than 90 percent were male. More than half of them reported some degree of sleep problems after returning home, including trouble falling or staying asleep followed by feeling irritable or having angry outbursts. Researchers then identified a subset of 101 veterans who had symptoms associated with posttraumatic stress disorder or substance use disorders and interviewed them face-to-face. In this group, the rate of sleep problems after deployment was 81 percent. … The researchers asked 78 of these individuals to discuss their strategies for managing their sleep problems. Twenty-three resisted treating their insomnia with prescription drugs because they feared becoming dependent or worried it would impair their thinking or stigmatize them. They used over-the-counter-medicines, including cold medicine, to help them fall asleep. Sixteen soldiers used alcohol to help them get to sleep and to control their nightmares, while 18 used prescription sleep aids. Other approaches included making adjustments to sleeping arrangements or schedule, watching television or playing video games, and exercising. Reuters
Central Africa: Ebola outbreak in Central Africa is ‘largely contained’

28 June - After a rapid response by health agencies and the rollout of a new vaccine, an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been declared “largely contained” by the World Health Organization. The outbreak was the first in which health authorities deployed a Merck vaccine field-tested in the waning days of the huge 2014 epidemic in West Africa. More than 3,200 people were vaccinated in Congo; they included front-line health care workers, as well as family members and friends who had been in contact with known Ebola victims. None of those vaccinated became ill, the Congolese health ministry said. As of Tuesday, 53 cases that were laboratory-confirmed or considered “probable” had been detected, and 29 patients had died, according to the ministry. Although suspected cases continue to be reported, none have been confirmed by a laboratory since June 6. 

The New York Times

Democratic Republic of Congo: MSF announces handover of Ebola activities to DRC and its partners

2 July - Doctors Without Borders (MSF) announced today that after a 2-month response in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), its teams have started handing its activities to the country’s health ministry and other nongovernmental organizations in Mbandaka, Bikoro, Itipo, and Iboko. Henry Gray, MSF’s emergency coordinator in Equateur Province, said in a press release, “This Ebola outbreak is not officially over, but we are very pleased with the progress that has been made.” He said with the low volume of cases and increased local expertise, the health ministry is well positioned to finish the work.

CIDRAP News Scan (second item)

Democratic Republic of Congo/Somalia: More polio cases found in DRC, Somalia

29 June - Two countries reported circulating vaccine-derived polio cases this week, according to the latest update from the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). In addition to new cases from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Somalia, the GPEI confirmed an outbreak of circulating vaccine derived polio in Papua New Guinea. The DRC recorded three new cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) in the past week. Patients reported symptom onset on Apr 26 (Mongala province), May 5 (Ituri province), and May 14 (Haut Katanga). The new cases raise the country’s totals for 2018 to seven. 

CIDRAP News Scan (first item)
Kenya: Drug use in Kenya's coast communities up as West-bound heroin flows through

3 July - Heroin use is increasing in Kenya's coastal communities as international traffickers use them as a transit point for drugs bound from Afghanistan to the West, creating health and social problems, a European Union-funded report said on Tuesday. The port cities of Mombasa, Malindi and Lamu have been particularly hard hit in recent years, it said. Health risks include contracting HIV and Hepatitis C, according to a senior analyst on the research team, Simone Haysom. Drug users were also becoming marginalized in their communities. In Mombasa, some people accused of drug use had been stoned, burned or murdered in mob attacks, he said. Reuters

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Kenya: Illnesses climb to 90 in Kenya's Rift Valley fever outbreak

3 July - Kenya has reported 36 more illnesses in its Rift Valley fever outbreak, lifting the total to 90, the World Health Organization (WHO) African regional office said in its latest weekly health emergencies update. No new deaths have been reported, keeping the fatality count at 10. The epidemiological investigation has found that the index case-patient became ill on May 11, marking the beginning of the outbreak. So far, 18 of the cases have been confirmed by polymerase chain reaction testing. The hardest hit group is men ages 21 to 30 years old. ... The WHO said cases have rapidly increased in the last week, and that the event is occurring among seminomadic and remote communities that depend on livestock for their income and food source. CIDRAP News Scan (first item)

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USCENTCOM

Qatar: Qatar blockade case to appear before UN's highest court

27 June - Qatar is set to present its case against the United Arab Emirates in front of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, over a now year-long blockade against the Gulf nation. The UAE and three other countries imposed a blockade against Qatar in June 2017, which Doha argues violates human rights of both Qatari and Emirati citizens. On Wednesday, lawyers for Qatar get to present their cases in front of the ICJ, while representatives of the UAE will present their arguments on Thursday. "Qatar is accusing the UAE of discrimination against Qatar and its citizens and for violating the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination of which the UAE is a signatory," Al Jazeera's Neave Barker said from The Hague. ... The case will focus mostly on the UAE decision to expel Qatari nationals from the country and the closing of UAE airspace
Yemen: Aid agencies warn cholera and catastrophe loom in Yemen

27 June - With fighting continuing in and around the key port city of Hodeidah, aid agencies warned this week that disruption caused by the battle could trigger another cholera epidemic in Yemen – and spell disaster for the millions in the country now dependent on imported aid. "If the harbour is closed, it will be devastating," CARE International Country Director for Yemen Johan Mooij told Asia Times from Aden. "We have eight to 10 million people in the country relying on imported food aid." … "Hospitals are reliant on fuel brought in through these ports to power their generators," said Kristine Beckerle, Yemen and UAE researcher for Human Rights Watch. "No fuel means no incubators, no life support systems, no power for anything. Half the country’s health care facilities are already non-functional." In addition, without fuel, water pumps also grind to a halt, with many Yemenis reliant on deep wells for their supplies, now that warfare has destroyed much of the mains system. Asia Times

Europe: ECDC report shows rising resistance in gram-negative bacteria

3 July - A new European surveillance report shows rising resistance to key antibiotics, and increasing trends in multidrug resistance, in invasive gram-negative bacteria. The report from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), based on data for 2014 from the European Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance Network (EARS-Net), shows that the European Union/European Economic Area (EU/EEA) population-weighted mean percentages of invasive Klebsiella pneumoniae isolates resistant to fluoroquinolones, third-generation cephalosporins, and aminoglycosides increased significantly from 2011 through 2014, and combined resistance to all three drugs rose from 16.7% in 2011 to 19.6% in 2014. In addition, the population-weighted mean percentage of K pneumoniae isolates resistant to carbapenems rose from 6.0% in 2011 to 7.3% in 2014. Resistance to carbapenems was more frequently reported in bloodstream infections in southern and southeastern Europe. CIDRAP Stewardship/Resistance Scan (first item)

Europe: U.S. shortage of EpiPens leads to extension of pharmacy expiration date at Europe bases

28 June - The U.S. Army health command in Europe recently authorized a six-month
extension on the pharmacy label expiration date of EpiPens, due to a shortage of the lifesaving epinephrine drug for children at overseas military bases. Army military treatment facilities must use U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved EpiPens, so Defense Department schools are unable to purchase European EpiPens, Regional Health Command Europe said in a statement. ... The extension applies only to the pharmacy label expiration date, not the manufacturer’s expiration date of the emergency allergy medicine, [Matthew] Nguyen said. Stars and Stripes

Ukraine: Ukraine reports 53 botulism cases this year, 4 deaths

2 July - The Ministry of Health of Ukraine reported today (computer translated) on an additional botulism case in the Kherson region from late June. The patient was treated with Botulism Antitoxin and is currently stable. This brings the total botulism cases since the beginning of the year to 53, including four fatalities. As of July 1, 2018, antitoxin (serum against botulism) is available in a specialized warehouse of the State Enterprise “Ukrvaksina Ministry of Health of Ukraine.” Outbreak News Today

United Kingdom: Amesbury Novichok poisoning: Couple exposed to nerve agent

5 July - A man and woman found unconscious in Wiltshire were exposed to Novichok - the same nerve agent that poisoned ex-Russian spy Sergei Skripal, police say. The couple, believed to be Charlie Rowley, 45, and Dawn Sturgess, 44, fell ill at a house in Amesbury on Saturday and remain in a critical condition. Police say no-one else has presented with the same symptoms. There was "nothing in their background" to suggest the pair were targeted, the Met Police said. Home Secretary Sajid Javid has chaired a meeting of the government’s emergency Cobra committee to discuss the developments. BBC News

United Kingdom: Blood scandal inquiry 'will find any cover-up'

2 July - A UK-wide inquiry into a contaminated blood scandal that left at least 2,400 people dead will look at whether there was a cover-up by the authorities and if documents were destroyed. Treatments including blood transfusions infected thousands of patients with HIV and hepatitis C in the 1970s and 1980s. It has been called the worst treatment disaster in the history of the NHS. The terms of reference have now been published by the judge chairing the public inquiry, Sir Brian Langstaff. In a letter to the Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington, Sir Brian said it would consider what had happened and why and the response of government and others. ... It was revealed on Monday that the process of gathering evidence would begin this week and the inquiry would take between two and
United Kingdom: NHS has started planning for Brexit no deal

1 July - Britain’s public health service has started “significant planning” to ensure medicines are still supplied to patients if the government fails to negotiate a Brexit deal with the European Union, its head said on Sunday. Simon Stevens, chief executive of the National Health Service (NHS), said Britain’s health department was working with pharmaceutical companies to make sure there will be no breakdown in supply if there is no deal with the EU. ... The EU warned Britain again last week that time was running out for Prime Minister Theresa May to negotiate a deal and stop the country from crashing out of the bloc. Reuters

United Kingdom: Viruses most commonly identified cause of meningitis in UK

2 July - Most cases of meningitis diagnosed in the United Kingdom are viral in origin, according to a major study looking at the causes of meningitis. ... A team of researchers from the University of Liverpool Institute of Infection and Global Health looked at the diagnoses and treatment of 1,126 patients diagnosed as having meningitis in the UK from 2011 to 2014. Only 16% percent of those cases were bacterial, 26% were viral, 42% had an unknown cause, and 6% of cases had other causes for their illnesses. The authors estimate the annual incidence of confirmed viral meningitis in UK adults to be 2.73 per 100,000 people. Enteroviruses accounted for just above 50% of all confirmed viral meningitis cases, and herpesviruses accounted for 44% of viral cases. Moreover, although viral meningitis was once thought of as benign, the authors said a majority of patients complained of mental health problems in the months following a diagnosis. CIDRAP News Scan (third item)

Australia: Mental health of children in Australian detention center reaches ‘crisis point’

5 July - The Australian government will allow a young girl to leave an offshore detention center on the Pacific island nation of Nauru and seek medical care in Australia, the latest in a series of refugee children who have asked to be let into the country for treatment. The decision came just before a federal court hearing on Wednesday at which lawyers for the girl’s family planned to argue that she be brought to Australia immediately. She has serious mental health issues and is likely to leave for Australia on Friday, according to The Guardian Australia. The girl, whose name and age have not been disclosed, is at least the seventh
seriously ill child to be brought to Australia under legal pressure since the Nauru center reopened in 2012, according to the National Justice Project, a nonprofit legal service that has represented most of them, including the girl on Wednesday. The New York Times

China: Brain injury, sound-attack fears spread in China as more Americans evacuated

2 July - The U.S. State Department evacuated at least 11 more Americans from China amid reports of bizarre sounds and sensations that have been associated with mild traumatic brain injury, according to The New York Times. And cases of sound attacks appear to be spreading to additional diplomatic stations throughout the country. Meanwhile, officials reported two additional “medically confirmed” cases of similar mysterious health incidents in Cuba at the end of last month, according to a series of reports by the Associated Press. The new cases in Cuba bring the total number of Americans affected there to 26. ... As for the personnel in China, doctors in the U.S. have so far only confirmed that one American evacuated from the country has a mild traumatic brain injury. The rest are undergoing further medical evaluation in the U.S. Ars Technica

China: Gigantic study of Chinese babies yields slew of health data

2 July - An ambitious Chinese study tracking tens of thousands of babies and their mothers has begun to bear fruit — just six years after the study’s leaders recruited their first sets of mothers and babies. Researchers have already published results based on the cohort study, which collects biological, environmental and social data, some with important public-health implications. ... The Born in Guangzhou Cohort Study has recruited about 33,000 babies and their mothers since 2012. The study’s leaders are hoping to reach 50,000 baby–mother sets by 2020. And this year, investigators started recruiting 5,000 maternal grandmothers to the project, enabling studies across multiple generations. ... The Guangzhou project aims to set itself apart from previous large birth cohort studies in Norway and Denmark by enabling detailed investigations of the links between the microbiome and disease. Nature

China: The growing threat of China's HIV epidemic

July 2018 - China's political leadership has strongly pledged to strengthen HIV prevention and treatment, with Premier Li Keqiang recognising it as an important aspect of consolidating public health at 2017’s National Health Assembly. Starting with the Four Frees and One Care policy implemented in 2003, China's health-care policies have continued to commit to providing universal access to HIV medication. Since 2014, 99% of China's HIV responses have been domestically funded. Earlier this year, the first low-cost, single-pill HIV treatment, Triumeq (GlaxoSmithKline), gained approval from the China Drug and Food Administration for prescription. Despite these advances, the incidence of HIV in China has
increased from 0.23 per 100 000 in 2004 to 4.2 per 100 000 individuals in 2017. The epidemiological pattern of HIV incidence has shifted from high-risk intravenous drug users in the southwestern province of Yunnan to the country's general population. In 2014, 92% of new diagnoses resulted from sexual transmission. The biggest increase in HIV transmission has been among men who have sex with men (MSM), growing from 2.5% of new reported cases in 2006 to 26% in 2014. The Lancet Public Health

Philippines: DOH declares leptospirosis outbreak in parts of Metro Manila

5 July - A leptospirosis outbreak has hit parts of Metro Manila, Health Secretary Francisco Duque said on CNN Philippines' The Source on Thursday. There have been a total of 368 cases and 52 deaths in Metro Manila from January 1 to July 3. In the past month, reported cases shot 38 percent higher than the average in previous years. CNN Philippines

U.S.: Americans are having fewer babies. They told us why.

5 July - Americans are having fewer babies. At first, researchers thought the declining fertility rate was because of the recession, but it kept falling even as the economy recovered. Now it has reached a record low for the second consecutive year. Because the fertility rate subtly shapes many major issues of the day ... there's a lot of concern about why today's young adults aren't having as many children. So we asked them. Wanting more leisure time and personal freedom; not having a partner yet; not being able to afford child-care costs — these were the top reasons young adults gave for not wanting or not being sure they wanted children, according to a new survey conducted by Morning Consult. The New York Times

U.S.: Bipartisan bill proposes new 'pull' incentives for priority antibiotics

29 June - Representatives in the US House of Representatives yesterday introduced a bipartisan bill to encourage the development of new antibiotics, a move one expert called the most important antibiotic legislation in a generation. Currently, only a few large drug companies are involved in antibiotic research and development, because the cost of developing the drugs is so high and profit margins are so slim. Most new developments are modifications of existing drugs, and it's been three decades since the last new class of antibiotics was discovered. Experts have been advocating for "push" incentives that spur
development, but that type doesn't ensure that companies get an adequate return on their investment. On the other hand, the World Economic Forum said in report last week that effective “pull” incentives could be used to promote antibiotic stewardship, availability, and access. CIDRAP News

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U.S.: Chagas disease surveillance activities — seven states, 2017

6 July - Most of the estimated 300,000 cases of Chagas disease (caused by Trypanosoma cruzi infection) in persons living in the United States were acquired in countries where the disease is endemic. In 2017, Chagas disease was reportable in six states. Most cases identified, including among blood donors, are chronic cases and are not the result of local vectorborne transmission. Chagas disease surveillance remains important in states with frequent travelers from countries where the disease is endemic and with a risk for local transmission. Surveillance activities help increase awareness among public health professionals and physicians and can help link persons with chronic Chagas disease to treatment. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report

U.S.: Emergency rooms run out of vital drugs, and patients are feeling it

1 July - ... At Norwegian American Hospital and other emergency departments around the country, doctors and nurses have been struggling for months without crucial drugs like morphine, which is used to ease the pain of injuries like broken bones, or diltiazem, a heart drug. Norwegian has been out of morphine since March, and the shortages are part of a nagging problem that has intensified this year as a rash of decades-old staples became scarce. Hospitals small and large have been scrambling to come up with alternatives to these standbys, with doctors and nurses dismayed to find that some patients must suffer through pain, or risk unusual reactions to alternative drugs that aren't the best option. ... One of the main companies that makes the drugs, Pfizer, has warned that manufacturing problems at some of its plants will lower supplies of many of its products — like morphine — until next year. The New York Times

U.S.: Flight attendants have higher rates of breast, uterine, other cancers

26 June - American flight attendants have a higher prevalence of several forms of cancer, including breast, uterine, gastrointestinal, thyroid, and cervical cancers, when compared with the general public, according to new research from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The analysis, one of the largest studies of cancer among cabin crew members to date, is the first to show that U.S. flight attendants also have an elevated rate of non-
U.S.: Giant hogweed - A plant that can burn and blind you. But don’t panic.

2 July - The nasty effects of touching a giant hogweed — its sap can scar, burn and blind if you come in contact with it — have inspired frightening headlines after the recent discovery of the first confirmed population of the plant in Virginia. The invasive plant’s nefarious reputation is amplified by its size: Giant hogweed can grow to more than 14 feet tall, with leaves five feet wide and stems between two and four inches in diameter. The message from experts, however, is not so ominous. Yes, coming into contact with giant hogweed can be dangerous, and in some parts of the country, particularly New York, the plant is widespread. ... More than 1,300 sites were identified in the state as of mid-March, according to the conservation department. That is up from 950 in 2011. The New York Times

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U.S.: Gun injuries twice as common for city kids

2 July - Urban youngsters are almost twice as likely as rural youth to be hospitalized for gun injuries, a U.S. study suggests. That’s largely because youth 15 to 19 years in cities are almost eight times more likely than rural teens to be hospitalized after firearm assaults, which account for the majority of gun-related injuries for urban youth. In the U.S., more than 5,500 urban teens are hospitalized for gun injuries every year, at a rate of about 15 a day, researchers report in Pediatrics. Younger children in cities, however, have less than half the risk of gun-related hospitalizations than their rural peers. The bulk of these cases for children 5 to 14 years old occur in rural areas and involve accidents, not assaults. Reuters

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U.S.: New ATSDR study, released amid controversy, calls current EPA recommendations into question

26 June - Following mounting congressional pressure, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ... last week released its highly anticipated draft toxicology study on the health effects of perfluoroalkyl compounds (PFAs), including perfluorinated substances such as perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS). ... [The report] suggests that stricter guidelines for human exposure to these man-made emerging contaminants of concern should be considered, dropping some recommended levels into the single-digit parts per trillion (ppt). The ATSDR’s report also suggests that
human health risks may occur at levels significantly lower than the current federal recommendations. The report’s findings starkly contrast to those of the 2016 EPA health advisory for PFOA and PFOS of 70 ppt. JD Supra

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U.S.: NIH-funded scientists put socioeconomic data on the map

2 July - The Neighborhood Atlas, a new tool to help researchers visualize socioeconomic data at the community level is now available. This online platform allows for easily ranking and mapping neighborhoods according to socioeconomic disadvantage. Seeing a neighborhood’s socioeconomic measures, such as income, education, employment and housing quality, may provide clues to the effects of those factors on overall health, and could inform health resources policy and social interventions. NIH

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U.S.: OSHA proposes rule on crane operator certification

29 June - Eight years after it began the process of finalizing a rule to govern the certification of crane and derrick operators in the construction industry, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has finally issued a notice of proposed rulemaking that could just possibly be adopted as a … final rule in 2019. … Last November, the agency issued its “final” standard, which asserted OSHA’s long-held position that an operator is qualified to operate a particular piece of equipment only if the operator is certified for that type and capacity of equipment, or is certified for higher-capacity equipment of that same type. … The new proposed rule also seeks to clarify and permanently extend an employer’s ongoing duty to evaluate potential operators in regard to their ability to safely operate assigned equipment covered and to require that employers document the evaluation. EHS Today

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U.S.: U.S. coal industry needs 'fundamental shift' to fight black lung – report

28 June - Coal companies need to make a “fundamental shift” in how they control exposure to coal dust in underground mines to address the recent surge in black lung disease rates, according to a federal report released Thursday. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine report found that even though coal operators largely comply with recently tightened rules requiring monitoring for coal dust, those measures may not be sufficient. … The report recommends that the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Mining Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) improve monitoring and conduct studies on the causes of the resurgence in the disease, which had been nearly eradicated in the 1990s. Cases of the incurable illness, caused by inhaling coal dust, are rising to levels not seen in decades as miners plumb the depths of played-out coal seams using heavy blasting equipment, according to government health officials. Reuters
U.S.: White House wants to cut this public health service corps by nearly 40 percent

27 June - The White House is proposing to reduce by nearly 40 percent the uniformed public health professionals who deploy during disasters and disease outbreaks, monitor drug safety and provide health care in some of the nation’s most remote and disadvantaged areas. The proposal is part of a plan announced last week by the Office of Management and Budget to overhaul the federal government. It would cut the size of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps from its current 6,500 officers to “no more than 4,000 officers.” Administration officials, who have said the officers are “more expensive” than equivalent civilians, want “a leaner and more efficient organization” better prepared to respond to public health emergencies. They have not offered projections on how much might be saved.

The Washington Post

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U.S.: Wildfire in Yolo County grows to 86,000 acres with containment at 27%

4 July - A wildfire burning in Yolo County grew Wednesday as high temperatures and breezy conditions continued to stoke the blaze. The County fire had spread to 86,000 acres and was 27% contained as of Wednesday evening, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said. More than 3,400 fire personnel are on hand to fight the blaze, which has moved into Napa County as well....

Forecasters say record-breaking heat and gusty winds expected by the weekend will prime California’s brush-covered hills and valleys for fast-moving wildfires, but fire officials said Wednesday’s cooler weather and higher humidity helped firefighters before temperatures warm up over the weekend. Los Angeles Times

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Brazil: Leprosy - 62% of the Amazonian armadillos carry the bacteria

29 June - The bacteria that causes leprosy, a chronic disease that can lead to disfigurement and nerve damage, is known to be transmitted to humans from nine-banded armadillos. A new study in PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases reports that 62% of the armadillos in the western part of Pará state in the Brazilian Amazon are positive for the leprosy bacteria. Transmission of Mycobacterium leprae from
armadillos to humans has been shown to occur in the southern United States. However these animals also live in the Brazilian Amazon, where some residents hunt and kill armadillos as a dietary source of protein. It has not previously been proved whether these animals act as a natural reservoir for leprosy transmission in Brazil. Outbreak News Today

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Brazil: Polio vaccine coverage low in hundreds of Brazil cities

4 July - Low polio vaccine coverage, especially in children under five years old, has sparked a red light in Brazil, according to health ministry officials. In a meeting with representatives of states and municipalities, the Ministry of Health warned that 312 Brazilian municipalities are covered by vaccines below 50% for poliomyelitis. “The risk exists for all municipalities that are covered with less than 95% coverage. We have to keep in mind that vaccination is the only way to prevent poliomyelitis and other diseases that are no longer circulating in the country. Outbreak News Today

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Guyana: Trying to stop suicide - Guyana aims to bring down its high rate

29 June - ... [Govin] Munswami has begun to speak out against suicide in his rural community of Black Bush Polder, known by many as the "suicide belt" of the small Caribbean nation of Guyana. In a 2014 report by the World Health Organization, Guyana was cited as the country with the highest suicide rate in the world — 44.2 suicides per 100,000 deaths, four times the global average. ... The WHO report represented an effort to bring global attention to the issue of suicide. The goal was to encourage individual countries to take steps to prevent suicide, considering their specific culture and addressing local risk factors. In 2015, Guyana became one of only 28 countries to develop a suicide prevention plan in response to the report. The plan identifies factors that could contribute to the country's high rate of suicide. ... [T]he National Suicide Prevention Plan issued by the Ministry of Health, identif[ied] poverty, pervasive stigma about mental illness, access to lethal chemicals, alcohol misuse, interpersonal violence, family dysfunction and insufficient mental health resources as key factors. NPR

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