9 June 2017

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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The 2017 Public Health & Preventive Medicine Course will be held July 10 - 14, 2017 at Joint base McGuire-Dix in Lakehurst, NJ.

The course will cover:
- Preventive Medicine Assets Alignment brief
- Update from the Medical Service Corp Chief
- Branch Manager and Consultant Panels
- Listen to new and Public Health & preventive medicine hot topics
- Implementation of the NDAA and IRIS how will this affect you
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- Healthcare Delivery, Force Development, and Health
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**USPACOM**

- Asia and Western Pacific Regions: Japanese encephalitis surveillance and immunization – 2016
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**U.S. MILITARY**

Deployment stress impacts well-being through different mental health issues for female and male vets

1 June - Experiencing stress-related mental health issues following deployment exposures increases risk of reduced well-being in other life domains in the years following military service for veterans. Gender plays an important role in these associations. ... The researchers concluded that each of the deployment stressors examined -- warfare exposure, military sexual harassment and family stressors -- had implications for veterans’ subsequent functioning and satisfaction in the areas of work and family. In addition, these exposures were often indirectly linked to functioning and satisfaction via mental health. Interestingly, the links differed between men and women. While PTSD symptoms played an important role for both genders, depression played a role as well, especially for female veterans.

*Science Daily*

Eating disorders as a result of military sexual trauma in veterans

6 June - Veterans who experienced military sexual trauma (MST) are at higher risk for post-deployment eating disorders (EDs), according to a new study. ... Of the total number of medical records examined (n=595,525), 3% (n=18,488) of veterans screened positive for MST. In the 1-year cohort, 0.01% (n=513, 74% female) had a diagnosis of ED, and in the 5-year cohort, 0.2% (n=504, 71% female) had a diagnosis of ED. In both cohorts, EDs were higher in female veterans, veterans with never-married status, younger age, non-black race/ethnicity, active duty service, service in the Navy/Coast Guard and Air Force, and a positive screen for MST. Veterans with significantly higher rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depressive disorders, and alcohol- and substance-related disorders were also more likely to be diagnosed with EDs. *Psychiatry Advisor*

Shaking up the blood supply

5 June - ... Freeze-dried plasma is one solution for military blood shortages. It provides a
OCCUPATIONAL HEARING LOSS RECORDING REQUIREMENTS

A new Technical Information Paper defines and clarifies the Department of the Army’s (DA) responsibility in recording occupational hearing loss in DA Civilians and Service members.

PUBLIC HEALTH REVIEW OF NET ZERO AND SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS

Another new Technical Information Paper provides an approach to conducting a public health review of installation and Medical Treatment Facility Net Zero and sustainability projects to help Army leaders identify and mitigate risks to public health.

Host of logistical advantages and is used by France, Germany and other NATO allies. However, it’s not yet approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which prevents it from reaching the majority of the American military. The Army has been working to get FDA approval for years and researchers recently launched a clinical trial for a new freeze-dried plasma product. ... This time around, freeze-dried plasma appears to be moving through the FDA pipeline more smoothly. The [U.S. Army Medical Material Development Activity] is collaborating with Teleflex Incorporated to create a product called RePlas. The Army submitted an investigational new drug application and partnered with Cincinnati Children’s Hoxworth Blood Center to begin clinical trials. After receiving FDA permission, the Cincinnati research team began to recruit patients for a phase one clinical trial. The researchers expect to have results in the middle of 2018. Science Line

Tri-service microbiome consortium holds inaugural workshop

2 June - Department of Defense experts in the field of microbiome research gathered for the inaugural Tri-Service Microbiome Consortium May 10-11 in Rockville, Maryland, to discuss collaboration and coordination among DOD services on microbiome-related projects. ... "Improved understanding of the microbiome could lead to new strategies to combat illness and infections like skin abscesses and food-borne pathogens for example, mitigate effects of stressors such as sleep deprivation that degrade performance, protect against toxicant exposures, and enhance mental well-being in U.S. warfighters and veterans," said Dr. Linda Chrisey, Naval Biosciences program officer and TSMC chair. Army.mil

U.S. Food and Drug Administration grants Arsenal Medical investigational device exemption approval to conduct clinical study on ResQFoam

5 June - Arsenal Medical announces today that they have received unconditional IDE approval from FDA to conduct a clinical study to examine the safety and effectiveness of ResQFoam™, a self-expanding material for the treatment of severe internal bleeding in trauma patients. This study will take place in trauma centers throughout the United States and is supported by funding from the US Army Medical Research and Materiel Command (USAMRMC). The study is designed to support ultimate product approval in the United States. PRWeb

VA to use DOD's electronic medical records system

5 June - Veterans Affairs administrators on Monday announced plans to shift veterans’ electronic medical records to the same system used by the Defense Department, potentially ending a decades-old problematic rift in sharing information between the two bureaucracies. VA Secretary David Shulkin announced the decision Monday as a game-changing move, one that will pull his department into the commercial medical record sector.
Composting Hospital Food Waste

This Technical Information Paper provides technical information and references to assist hospital personnel in evaluating, planning and implementing the composting of hospital food waste.


May 2017 - During 2007–2016, there were 1,258 and 1,259 incident diagnoses of acute and chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection, respectively. The overall incidence rates of diagnoses of acute and chronic hepatitis B were both 10.0 per 100,000 person-years (p-yrs).

... Overall incidence rates of chronic hepatitis B were highest among service members who were female; in the Navy or the Army; in healthcare occupations; and of non-recruit status. Asian/Pacific Islander service members, those of other/unknown race/ethnicity, and non-Hispanic black service members had overall rates of chronic hepatitis B that were more than 41, 11, and 10 times that of non-Hispanic white service members, respectively.

Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

Why child abuse in military families may go unreported

7 June - Advocates for children celebrated last year when President Barack Obama signed a law meant to keep military officials from concealing child abuse and neglect on military bases. But U.S. Department of Defense officials say the law doesn’t address one key reason why military children who are mistreated may not be getting all the help they need. Talia’s Law, named for a 5-year-old girl who was killed by her soldier father on a military base in Hawaii, requires military officials to immediately report any suspected child abuse or neglect involving military families to state social services agencies. But there is no reciprocal requirement for social services agencies — the agencies aren’t required to let the military know about reports of suspected child abuse and neglect in military families. ... Fifteen states have enacted such laws or started to follow such policies that were already in place. Nine more states are considering similar bills this year. ... But military families, child protective workers and others worry that if suspected abuse by a service member is reported to the military, it could be career-ending. PBS News Hour

GLOBAL

Aedes aegypti mosquitoes can transmit both Zika, chikungunya in 1 bite

5 June - A new study in PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases shows that the Aedes aegypti mosquito can transmit both Zika and chikungunya virus in one bite, and co-infection with the viruses does not alter vector competence. Dutch scientists infected the insects with both
viruses to determine transmission rates using an experimental blood meal and found that 73% of the mosquitoes transmitted Zika, 21% spread chikungunya, and 12% transmitted both viruses in one bite. CIDRAP News Scan (second item)

Clinical trials begin for two chikungunya vaccines

6 June - New clinical trials launched yesterday for two chikungunya vaccines, one developed by Austria-based Themis Bioscience and the other by India’s Bharat Biotech. The Themis vaccine phase 1/2 trial, sponsored by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), has started enrolling healthy adults and will take place at several NIAID-funded vaccine and treatment evaluation units. ... The vaccine, called MV-CHIKV, contains a measles vaccine virus modified to produce chikungunya virus proteins. ... Bharat Biotech announced yesterday that a phase 1 trial has begun in India of its inactivated vaccine based on a chikungunya strain isolated in the country. CIDRAP News Scan (fifth item)

Details of Lassa virus structure could inform development of vaccines, therapies

2 June - A 10-year Lassa virus research project has yielded structural and functional details of a key viral surface protein that could help advance development of Lassa vaccines and antibody-based therapeutics, which are currently lacking. ... Their research provides the first detailed view of the Lassa [glycoprotein precursor complex (GPC)] bound to a human neutralizing antibody from an African survivor. This high-resolution structure reveals how the molecule is assembled and that the most effective antibodies interact only with a fully assembled GPC. The structure also shows how the molecule can be stabilized to better elicit protective antibodies. The availability of this structure may facilitate development of vaccines or antibody-based therapeutics. NIH

Mefloquine: Health Canada finds limited evidence supporting that long-lasting and permanent neurological and psychiatric adverse events

2 June - ... Health Canada launched a safety review of mefloquine at the end of 2016. As part of the review, Health Canada examined all available scientific and medical information, including previously reviewed evidence, to determine whether there is a potential link between the use of mefloquine and rare long-term and permanent neurological and psychiatric adverse events. Health Canada also examined whether certain individuals could be at increased risk of experiencing these long-term adverse events. Health Canada’s safety review concluded that:

- Although some cases have been reported, there is no conclusive evidence that mefloquine can cause long-lasting and permanent neurological and psychiatric adverse events;
- some individuals were prescribed mefloquine even though they had contraindications against its use such as past or ongoing neurological or psychiatric
Fentanyl: Incapacitating Agent

The information and recommendations on this webpage were developed to address a wide area release of fentanyl as a weapon of terrorism, and are not specifically intended to address exposures associated with fentanyl use as an illicit drug.

NIOSH is currently reviewing more recent research and publications regarding appropriate emergency response guidelines for fentanyl. Consequently, some of the guidelines presented on this page may be different than recommendations for emergency response personnel responding to fentanyl used as an illicit drug. Please see this website for information for emergency response personnel responding to fentanyl as an illicit drug.

New approach to amputation could reduce phantom pain

2 June - People whose limbs have been amputated are often left with phantom sensations or pain in the missing appendage. Prosthetics don’t feel anything like the real thing. And people with artificial limbs have to keep looking down, because they can’t feel where their artificial arm or leg is in space. MIT Media Lab professor Hugh Herr … and his colleagues have made an advance they hope will address these problems. In a paper published this week in Science Robotics the team attached two bits of a rat’s muscle, taken from elsewhere in its body, to the end of severed nerves. This agonist-antagonist muscle pair allowed the body to sense the stretch, torque and speed of a muscle in a realistic way, electrical measurements showed, and in theory, would allow more control over a prosthetic limb. Although the study is only in rodents, Herr’s surgical colleagues have begun to show similar results in humans. Scientific American

Safety eyewear for computer vision syndrome

1 June - … Computer Vision Syndrome—“CVS” or Digital Eye Strain—occurs because the visual demands of the task exceed the visual abilities of the individual to comfortably perform them. … Specialty lenses are now developed to aid the computer user. These lenses provide the computer user greater convenience than other multifocal lenses. Computer lenses are made to filter out the harshest light, or “blue light.” The more bright blue light that is filtered out, the less eyes have to strain to look at a display. These lenses are available to also give the eyes a comfortable focusing distance from 20 to 26 inches away from the face. Occupational Health & Safety

What's the rate of smoking in the 13- to 15-year-old crowd?

5 June - A new report from the Centers for Disease Control looks at rates of smoking among 13- to 15-year-olds (most smokers start in adolescence) and how they feel about it, with a nod to the kinds of measures that work to cut rates of teen smoking. Worldwide, about 10 percent of the youngest teens smoke, according to the report, which analyzed data on more than 170,000 young teens in 61 countries. But in some countries, numbers are significantly higher, especially among boys. In Timor-Leste, the study found, 61 percent of early teen boys smoke cigarettes. And of course it’s not just boys. In Bulgaria, 29 percent of the girls smoke. Most kids who smoke say they want to stop. The survey asked kids in 51 of the countries if they wanted to stop smoking; in 40 countries, more than half of them said yes. NPR
Veterinary Corps provides over 100 years of animal care for Army missions, families

From its humble beginnings in 1776 -- when General Washington directed that a “regiment of horse with a farrier” be raised -- to its official commissioning on June 3, 1916, the Corps has evolved into a food safety, public health, research, and veterinary health force that serves all branches of the Department of Defense. The Corps works not only to conserve the fighting strength of valued four-legged warriors, but supports the upright forces as well.

WHO creates controversial ‘reserve’ list of antibiotics for superbug threats

6 June - The World Health Organization on Tuesday released new recommendations aimed at reducing the use of certain categories of “last resort” antibiotics as part of its ongoing efforts to combat the rise of superbugs. Public health officials pointed to the increasing rate of new strains of pathogens that are becoming antibiotic-resistant, saying these “nightmare bacteria” pose a catastrophic threat. Overuse of antibiotics in livestock as well as in humans is the main cause. ... The WHO’s new advice, the biggest revision in 40 years regarding this last-resort category of drugs, puts antibiotics in three categories — watch, access and reserve — that describe which antibiotics can be used more liberally and which ones should be saved for more serious cases. The Washington Post

ZIKA VIRUS

Puerto Rico declares Zika epidemic to be over

5 June - Puerto Rico’s Zika epidemic has ended, officials said Monday, noting substantially fewer new cases this spring. Only 10 cases have been reported in each four-week period since April, a dramatic decrease from the more than 8,000 cases reported in a four-week period at the peak of the epidemic last August, according to a health ministry statement. The island has been the part of the United States hardest hit by the mosquito-borne virus, with authorities counting more than 40,000 confirmed cases of Zika infection as of May 20, including 3,678 pregnant women. There have been 35 cases of Zika-related birth defects. Health officials and experts have expressed concern about underreporting of birth defects in Puerto Rico. The Washington Post

Zika affects 5 percent of babies with confirmed infections: CDC

8 June - The first report on how the Zika virus affected U.S. territories showed that 5 percent of women with confirmed infections had babies with birth defects, U.S. health officials said on Thursday. The report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is the first to include official numbers from the territory of Puerto Rico, which on Monday declared that its Zika epidemic had ended, based on data showing the number of new cases has fallen. The CDC on Thursday reiterated its recommendation that pregnant women not travel to Puerto Rico, noting that Zika remains a risk for pregnant women there and anywhere else the mosquito-borne virus is active. ... The report reviewed 2,549 cases of women with possible Zika infection who completed their pregnancies, of which 1,508 had confirmed infections. Besides Puerto Rico, the cases came from American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Marshall Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands from Jan. 1, 2016, through April 25, 2017. Of these confirmed cases, more than 120 pregnancies, or about 5 percent, resulted in Zika-associated birth defects, the CDC said in its Morbidity and
**Zika DNA vaccine protects reproductive tract in male mice**

7 June - A new DNA-based Zika vaccine protected mice from Zika-related damage to the testes in a new clinical trial. Inovio Pharmaceuticals, the makers of the vaccine (GLS-5700), published the results of the trial today. In a press statement, Inovio said the results of the trial could mean that GLS-5700 could one day prevent sexual transmission of the mosquito-borne disease. In the study, 10-week-old mice were challenged with high doses of Zika virus after receiving one dose of GLS-5700. Controls showed high levels of Zika RNA in sperm samples, but the vaccinated mice exhibited no signs of the Zika virus in their testes.

**INFLUENZA**

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

For 2016-2017 Influenza Season Week 21 ending May 27, 2017:

Based on National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) mortality surveillance data available on June 1, 2017, 5.7% of the deaths occurring during the week ending May 13, 2017 (week 19) were due to P&I. This percentage is below the epidemic threshold of 6.8% for week 19.

**NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update**

For 2017 Week 21:

- One Military Recruit sample from MCRD SD collected on May 1, 2017 tested positive for M. pneumoniae.
- Recent shipboard respiratory samples collected from March to May tested positive for Flu A, Flu B, and Rhinovirus.
- Acute Gastroenteritis recruit rates currently low. Naval Health Research Center

**Study finds flu vaccine protection gap in obese people**

7 June - People who are obese and are vaccinated against flu are almost twice as likely as their healthy-weight vaccinated peers to get sick with influenza-like illness (ILI), researchers based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill reported yesterday. The team evaluated 1,022 adults in North Carolina, including those who were normal weight, overweight, and obese. All had received the seasonal trivalent inactivated flu vaccine during...
the 2013-14 and 2014-15 flu seasons. Lab tests and symptom scores were used to confirm flu or ILI and to gauge the level of flu antibodies after vaccination. Though a small percentage of the study participants got sick, 9.8% of the people who were obese had confirmed flu or ILI, compared with 5.1% of the healthy-weight group.

CIDRAP Flu Scan (second item)

**USAFSAM & DHA: DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program**

During 14 - 27 May 2017 (Surveillance Weeks 20 & 21), a total of 59 specimens were collected and received from 30 locations. Results were finalized for 39 specimens from 24 locations. During Week 20, two influenza B viruses were identified. During Week 21, one influenza B virus was identified. Approximately 5% of specimens tested positive for influenza during Week 20. Approximately 6% of specimens tested positive for influenza during Week 21. The influenza percent positive for the season is currently 35%.

US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine & Defense Health Agency

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**VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

A kitten nursery saves tiny lives in a city aiming to become ‘no kill’

5 June - They are brought into shelters in crates, boxes and flower pots at this time of the year: tiny, mewing kittens with eyes barely open, with pink, toothless mouths — and usually with no mother to nurse them. And here’s what it takes to keep them alive: people to hand-feed formula through a syringe or tiny bottle every two to three hours around the clock, until the newborns are 4 weeks old. Most shelters do not have the resources to do this, so kittens younger than 8 weeks — the earliest age of adoption — are typically euthanized. ... Before the effort began, in 2012, about 57 percent of animals left the shelters alive; that percentage, or “live save rate,” is now in the mid-80s. The Washington Post

Consumer groups protest FDA’s perchlorate decision

8 June - The consumer groups Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Resources Defense Council, and others sent a letter to FDA Commissioner Gottlieb this week, objecting to the FDA’s denial of a petition to remove perchlorate from food packaging. ... Those groups claim that the FDA ignored evidence that shows the compound disrupts brain development in infants and children. ... The letter states that “... The agency’s decision and its underlying analysis grossly underestimated the extent to which perchlorate migrates from packaging and food handling equipment into dry food. In measuring this migration, FDA relied on a
single study using a test designed for small packaging that was conducted by a company with a vested interest in the outcome. This migration test bears little relevance to the actual conditions of use of the perchlorate in bulk packaging allowed by FDA.

Food Poisoning Bulletin

Creation Gardens recalls beef for possible *E. coli* O157:H7

6 June - Creation Gardens of Kentucky is recalling 22,832 pounds of raw ground beef and beef primal cut products for possible *E. coli* O157:H7 contamination. There have been no reports of illness received to date in connection with this issue. You can see the long list of recalled products, along with the package sizes and product codes, at the USDA web site. ... They were shipped to food service locations in Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee. The problem was discovered on June 5, 2017 when plant management notified FSIS in-plant inspection personnel of two positives for *E. coli* O157:H7 test results.

Food Poisoning Bulletin

FDA releases list of facilities that served hepatitis A positive tuna

5 June - The FDA has released a list of facilities that served frozen raw ahi tuna cubes that were recalled for possible hepatitis A contamination. In their investigation report they have added a table that includes the names and addresses of the 31 restaurants and stores that sold the product in California, Texas, and Oklahoma. ... The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is “not currently aware” of any illnesses linked to these products. But they are advising post exposure prophylaxis for anyone who has not been vaccinated against hepatitis A or has not had the illness.

Food Poisoning Bulletin

Multistate outbreaks of human *Salmonella* infections linked to live poultry in backyard flocks, 2017

1 June - CDC, many state departments of health and agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service are investigating eight multistate outbreaks of human *Salmonella* infections linked to contact with live poultry in backyard flocks. ... As of May 25, 2017, 372 people infected with the outbreak strains of *Salmonella* have been reported from 47 states. Illnesses started on dates ranging from January 4, 2017 to May 13, 2017. 71 ill people have been hospitalized, and no deaths have been reported. 36% of ill people are children younger than 5 years. Epidemiologic, traceback, and laboratory findings link the eight outbreaks to contact with live poultry, such as chicks and ducklings, which come from several hatcheries.

CDC

*Salmonella* outbreak ongoing since November; little known

4 June - A Michigan restaurant has temporarily closed while authorities investigate an
outbreak of *Salmonella* Saintpaul that has sickened at least 26 people in the state as well as others in Ohio and Illinois. The Oakland County Health Division in Pontiac, MI, did not name the Rochester, MI, restaurant in a notice posted Friday. “The ongoing investigation suggests that the *Salmonella* is being spread through personal contact,” Pamela Hackert, chief of medical services at the Health Division, said in the notice. ... Hackert and other Oakland County officials are investigating 15 confirmed cases of *Salmonella* Saintpaul. Other Michigan counties have confirmed cases, as have public health officials in Ohio and Illinois, according to the Oakland County notice. *Food Safety News*

The world’s most dangerous mushroom and what it did to an 18-month-old girl

3 June - They sprouted up in abundance after heavy rains, poking up through California lawns and forests, appearing harmless to some of those who found them — as though they’d make a good meal. And so they do, at first. The “death cap” mushroom is said to be delicious. A new federal report detailed what came after consumption for 14 people who sampled the Bay Area’s bloom of death cap — or *amanita phalloides* — last December: Violent nausea, in all cases. For some days later, organ damage as the death caps’ potent toxins ravaged the liver. Some victims got off relatively easy, including four young men who had expected a psychedelic trip but ended up having their insides washed out with fluids in a hospital — the only known treatment for *amanita phalloides* poisoning. Three who ate the California death caps needed liver transplants, according to the report. And one of them — an 18-month-old girl — now has permanent neurological damage. *The Washington Post*

WELLNESS

Consumer Reports identifies 15 dietary supplements to avoid

2 June - Consumer Reports has listed fifteen dietary supplement ingredients that consumers should avoid. These ingredients can cause organ damage, cardiac arrest, and cancer. Whether or not a person can develop these conditions depends on their own health, the quantity ingested, and the amount of time they are exposed to the ingredient. These ingredients can also interact with prescription medications such as statins and blood thinning drugs. They can even interact with common over the counter medications such as aspirin. Consumer Reports’ investigators found all fifteen of these ingredients in products available online or in stores such as Costco, BNC, Target, Vitamin Shoppe, Vitamin World,
Even moderate drinking linked to changes in brain structure, study finds

7 June - Drinking even moderate amounts of alcohol is linked to changes in brain structure and an increased risk of worsening brain function, scientists said on Tuesday. In a 30-year study that looked at the brains of 550 middle-aged heavy drinkers, moderate drinkers and teetotallers, the researchers found people drank more alcohol had a greater risk of hippocampal atrophy - a form of brain damage that affects memory and spatial navigation. People who drank more than 30 units a week on average had the highest risk, but even those who drank moderately - between 14 and 21 units a week - were far more likely than abstainers to have hippocampal atrophy, the scientists said. "And we found no support for a protective effect of light consumption on brain structure," they added. Reuters

Extreme exercise tied to gut damage

7 June - People who exercise very hard may be prone to acute or chronic gut issues, researchers reported. A systematic review suggested that exercise intensity was a key regulator of gastric emptying rate, with higher intensity exercise (≥70% peak power output) causing the greatest disturbance to gastric motility. ... However, steady state moderate exercise (60-70% peak power output or 66% VO2max equivalent) did not appear to influence gastric emptying and intestinal transit compared with rest in well-trained individuals. MedPage Today

Less dietary salt is coming from packaged foods these days

5 June - Packaged foods and store-bought drinks are blamed for adding a lot of salt to U.S. diets, but a new study suggests those foods and beverages don't contain as much sodium as they once did. The amount of salt brought into U.S. households through packaged food and store-bought beverages fell by about 18 percent from 2000 through 2014, researchers found. ... Over the study period, sodium from packaged foods and beverages fell from 2,363 mg per day per person to 1,967 mg per day. When they examined the nutritional content of the purchased foods, the researchers found that the salt content in the products had fallen about 12 percent over the study period. Reuters

Sleep deprived workers have less cognitive flexibility

7 June - People who are sleep deprived often perform expected tasks well, but their reaction times to unexpected events tend to be markedly impaired, researchers reported here. The inability to switch from proactive to reactive control states may explain why workers who do not get enough sleep or perform nighttime shift work are at higher risk for making serious errors. MedPage Today
They look like prescription drugs, but they’re actually deadly poison, Georgia authorities say

7 June - The small yellow pills look like prescription drugs from a pharmacy, but Georgia authorities say they’re anything but. In recent days, the drugs — which are purchased on the street — have led to dozens of overdoses and as many as four deaths in south and central Georgia, state health officials told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. ... In a Georgia Department of Public Health statement released Tuesday, authorities said patients reportedly thought they were purchasing Percocet, an opioid pain medication. The yellow pills actually contained another "extremely potent" substance that investigators are rushing to identify, the statement noted. "First responders say patients are unconscious or unresponsive and have difficulty breathing or have stopped breathing," the statement said. "Many patients need to be placed on ventilators." To counteract the substance’s effects, patients required “massive doses of naloxone (Narcan),” the statement added. The Washington Post

U.S. nutrition policies may cut heart disease and save lives

6 June - Public health policies have the potential to reduce heart disease in the U.S. and save nearly 250,000 lives over 15 years, researchers say. The kinds of policies they’re talking about would lower the price of fruit and vegetables, help lower-income families make better choices, impose taxes on sugary drinks and launch media campaigns. ... [Researchers] say large disparities exist along social and economic lines when it comes to diet and heart disease. While past research found policies could influence diets, the measurable effects on heart disease in the U.S. are unknown. ... A national 10 percent subsidy on fruits and vegetables would be the most beneficial policy, with approximately 150,500 lives saved from deaths by heart disease over the 15-year study period, the authors estimate. A 30 percent subsidy for SNAP participants would likely save 35,100 lives, and a 10 percent soda tax would save 31,000 lives, they calculate. A year-long mass media campaign was estimated to save 25,800 lives. Reuters

WHO warns hep-A outbreak may be exacerbated by gay pride season

7 June - An outbreak of hepatitis A has spread over the past year among gay men in Europe, the United States and Chile, and upcoming gay pride events and a vaccine shortage could worsen the situation, the World Health Organization said on Wednesday. The WHO said in a disease outbreak statement that any country noticing an unusual increase in cases among men who have sex with other men should report it to the WHO. It said the rise in cases was "of particular concern from a public health perspective because of the current limited availability of hepatitis A vaccine worldwide", and most of the affected countries had
Why therapists shouldn’t approve patients’ emotional support animals

2 June - ... Researchers asked 87 mental health professionals to review current laws and policies for determining when animals may qualify as emotional support animals in the U.S., including federal transportation requirements for air travel. Then, researchers questioned these professionals about how support animals should be certified. Overall, about 31 percent of the survey participants said they had previously recommended emotional support animals for people. However, 36 percent of them said they didn't feel qualified to do make these recommendations, including two practitioners who had done so in the past. ... The mental health professionals in the survey believed certifying emotional support animals can sometimes be appropriate, the survey found. But to sidestep potential legal and ethical problems, clinicians should not certify animals for patients they are already treating, the researchers argue. Mental health professionals who work in courts of law and who don’t have a prior relationship with a patient may be better able to make an impartial decision on whether an emotional support animal might actually benefit that person. Reuters

democratic republic of the Congo: WHO - new suspected case of Ebola in DRC

6 June - The World Health Organization (WHO) in its latest update reported a new suspected case of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), prompting the surveillance of 15 additional contacts. The suspected case is from the Ngayi health area, in northern DRC. Yesterday, a suspected case with a symptom onset date of Apr 29 was retrospectively confirmed as Ebola. So far, the last confirmed case reported was on May 11. There are currently 5 confirmed, 3 probable, and 1 suspected case. Of these, 4 patients survived and 4 died, making the case-fatality rate 50%. The WHO said most case contacts completed their 3-week monitoring period on Jun 2. And despite being approved by regulatory committees in the DRC, ring vaccination with the unlicensed Ebola vaccine is still not advised at this point. CIDRAP News Scan (first item)

Mediterranean death rate doubles as migrant crossings fall

3 June - The death rate among migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean to enter Europe has almost doubled over the past year. Comparing the first five months of this year...
with the same period last year, UN agency data reveals that the mortality rate grew from 1.2% to 2.3%. The death rate during all of 2015 was 0.37% – a sixth of its current level. Details of the drownings came as it emerged that far-right activists are planning to send boats to the Mediterranean this summer to disrupt search-and-rescue vessels that are attempting to save the lives of refugees. ... Aid agencies said the rising death rate was caused by a shortage of search-and-rescue vessels and the increasingly unsafe boats being provided by smugglers and traffickers in Libya. The Guardian

South Sudan: 15 South Sudanese children dead after measles campaign

2 June - The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed yesterday that 15 South Sudanese children died after receiving contaminated measles vaccines. The children all died from sepsis in early May. At least 32 other children suffered from fever and diarrhea after vaccination but recovered. The children lived in Nachodokopele village, Kauto County, a remote area of South Sudan. According to the WHO, the deaths were preventable and largely due to untrained and unqualified staff administering the vaccines. The vaccines were also handled improperly and not refrigerated. CIDRAP News Scan (fourth item)

South Sudan: Satellite images used to track food insecurity in South Sudan

2 June - The world is watching closely as food shortages grip parts of Africa and the Middle East. As humanitarian groups respond to the crisis, they have to solve a major problem: how to track food security in areas that are simply too remote or too dangerous to access. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) has come up with an innovative answer. The U.S.-funded organization is working with DigitalGlobe, a Colorado satellite company, to crowdsource analysis of satellite imagery of South Sudan. The effort will rely on thousands of volunteers — normal people with no subject matter expertise — to scour satellite images looking for things like livestock herds, temporary dwellings and permanent dwellings. The group has selected an area of 18,000 square kilometers across five counties in South Sudan to analyze. VOA

Saudi Arabia/United Arab Emirates/Qatar: WHO reports 3 Saudi hospital MERS clusters, new cases in UAE, Qatar

7 June - The World Health Organization (WHO) yesterday provided new details about three unrelated hospital MERS-CoV outbreaks that as of May 29 had infected 12 people, and Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Health (MOH) today announced five more cases, including at least...
four tied to the hospital cluster in Riyadh. In its overview of MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) cases, the WHO also noted what appear to be three new cases in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar, all of which involved direct links to camels. CIDRAP

**Syria: Syrian polio outbreak hits global effort to eradicate virus**

8 June - A polio outbreak has been confirmed in an area of Syria partly held by Islamic State, the first re-emergence of the virus in Syria since 2014, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and the World Health Organization said on Thursday. The virus was confirmed in stools of two people who had started to become paralyzed and those of a healthy child. The discovery is a fresh blow for hopes of eradicating the disease globally - a goal that was set for the year 2000 when the eradication initiative was launched in 1988. ... The outbreak in Syria was vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2, and occurred in Deir al-Zor governorate, the same area where a wild poliovirus type 1 outbreak caused 36 cases in 2013-2014. ... There were two vaccination campaigns in Deir al-Zor in March and April this year but only limited coverage was possible, since access is compromised by security problems, the statement said. However, detection of the cases did demonstrate that disease surveillance systems were functional in Syria, it added. Reuters

**Yemen: Yemen cholera cases pass 100,000 amid 'unprecedented' epidemic**

8 June - The number of suspected cases of cholera resulting from a severe outbreak in Yemen has passed 100,000, the World Health Organization says. A total of 798 deaths associated with the disease have been recorded in 19 out of 22 provinces since 27 April. ... Yemen's health, water and sanitation systems are collapsing after two years of war between government forces and the rebel Houthi movement. ... On Wednesday, the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the epidemic in Yemen was "of an unprecedented scale". In the past four weeks, it added, the number of deaths had been three times higher than that reported between October 2016 - when Yemen's government first announced an outbreak - and March 2017. BBC News

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**Europe: Drug deaths on the rise in Europe for third year - report**

6 June - Drug overdose deaths in Europe rose six percent to 8,441 in 2015, rising for the third consecutive year, driven by increasing use of synthetic opioids like fentanyl, Europe’s
Lisbon-based drug monitoring agency said on Tuesday. ... The European drug agency’s latest available data on overdose deaths shows they rose from 7,950 in 2014 and 7,345 in 2013. Opioids, which also include morphine and heroin, were related to 81 percent of all the deaths. Deaths from overdoses had been on a downward trend from 2008 until 2012. The agency warned that drug-related deaths in Europe could be much higher due to “systematic under-reporting in some countries” and delays in reporting. Reuters

Portugal: Measles outbreak after 12 years without endemic transmission, Portugal, February to May 2017

8 June - We report a measles outbreak in two Portuguese health regions (Algarve and Lisbon and the Tagus Valley) since February 2017, and which by 31 May resulted in 28 confirmed cases, of which 16 were unvaccinated. Thirteen cases were healthcare workers. One unvaccinated teenager died. Genotype B3 was identified in 14 cases from both regions. This outbreak occurs after 12 years without endemic measles transmission, and in a context of high measles vaccination coverage and immunity. Eurosurveillance

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U.S.: America’s hidden H.I.V. epidemic

6 June – [I]n certain pockets of the country, unknown to most Americans, H.I.V. is still ravaging communities at staggering rates. Last year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, using the first comprehensive national estimates of lifetime risk of H.I.V. for several key populations, predicted that if current rates continue, one in two African-American gay and bisexual men will be infected with the virus. That compares with a lifetime risk of one in 99 for all Americans and one in 11 for white gay and bisexual men. ... The crisis is most acute in Southern states, which hold 37 percent of the country’s population and as of 2014 accounted for 54 percent of all new H.I.V. diagnoses. The South is also home to 21 of the 25 metropolitan areas with the highest H.I.V. prevalence among gay and bisexual men. The New York Times

U.S.: Dental care presents the highest level of financial barriers, compared to other types of health care services

June 2017 - The Affordable Care Act is improving access to and the affordability of a wide range of health care services. While dental care for children is part of the law’s essential health benefits and state Medicaid programs must cover it, coverage of dental care for adults is not guaranteed. As a result, even with the recent health insurance expansion, many Americans face financial barriers to receiving dental care that lead to unmet oral health needs. Using data from the 2014 National Health Interview Survey, we analyzed financial
barriers to a wide range of health care services. We found that irrespective of age, income level, and type of insurance, more people reported financial barriers to receiving dental care, compared to any other type of health care. *Health Affairs*

**U.S.: Drug deaths in America are rising faster than ever**

5 June - Drug overdose deaths in 2016 most likely exceeded 59,000, the largest annual jump ever recorded in the United States, according to preliminary data compiled by The New York Times. The death count is the latest consequence of an escalating public health crisis: opioid addiction, now made more deadly by an influx of illicitly manufactured fentanyl and similar drugs. Drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death among Americans under 50. Although the data is preliminary, the Times’s best estimate is that deaths rose 19 percent over the 52,404 recorded in 2015. And all evidence suggests the problem has continued to worsen in 2017. *The New York Times*

**U.S.: FDA launches digital health unit**

5 June - The FDA’s Center for Devices and Radiological Health is ramping up medical app and device offerings with a recently announced digital health unit. The aim of this development is to centralize and coordinate digital health information so that there is consistency in applying policies. … [T]he primary responsibilities of those on the project will be to develop software and digital health tech to assist with premarket submissions or devices, utilize experts, and incorporate metrics that will aid review times and submissions. Over the past few years, the agency has taken numerous, albeit tentative, steps into the realm of digital health, including guidelines for wellness apps last year and cybersecurity guidelines for medical devices. *MedPage Today*

**U.S.: HCV cases have been underreported, CDC says**

7 June - The number of new hepatitis C virus (HCV) infections has tripled in just 5 years—to a 15-year high—but the true scale is only now being revealed, according to the CDC. Limited surveillance resources have led to underreporting, the CDC says. … Although 850 cases were reported in 2010 and 2,436 cases in 2015, the CDC estimates 34,000 actual new infections in 2015. … HCV infections are spreading most rapidly among young adults aged 20 to 29 years, the CDC says, primarily because of injection drug use associated with opioids. Because of that dual threat of virus spread and the opioid epidemic, HHS-recommended strategies include using comprehensive syringe service programs (SSPs). One CDC study found that 80% of young people with HCV live > 10 miles from an SSP. Another study found that only 3 states have laws that support full access to SSPs and HCV-related treatment and preventive services for people who inject drugs. *Federal Practitioner*

**U.S.: HHS announces over $70 million in grants to address the opioid crisis**

31 May - Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, M.D., today announced the availability of over $70 million over multiple years to help communities and healthcare
providers prevent opioid overdose deaths and provide treatment for opioid use disorder, of which $28 million will be dedicated for medication-assisted treatment (MAT). "Putting an end to the opioid crisis ravaging our country is a top priority for President Trump and all of us at the Department of Health and Human Services," said HHS Secretary Tom Price. HHS

U.S.: MSSA study finds more evidence for emerging genotype, spread from NYC

6 June - A retrospective analysis of 34,025 methicillin-susceptible Staphylococcus aureus (MSSA) isolates collected at 136 Veterans Administration (VA) medical centers between 2003 and 2014 suggests that an emerging genotype resistant to commonly used antibiotics is increasingly implicated in invasive infections and is diffusing outward from New York City. A team based at the University of Iowa ... used resistance to clindamycin and erythromycin, but susceptibility to tetracycline, as a cost-effective proxy for genotype analysis to track patterns with the ST398 genotype, which emerged in New York City. CIDRAP Stewardship/Resistance Scan (third item)

U.S.: NIOSH and OSHA introduce improved heat safety app for outdoor workers

6 June - An updated app for smart phones and other mobile devices can help workers stay safe when working outdoors in hot weather. The free app was redesigned by CDC’s National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), along with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool mobile app, for iOS and Android devices, determines heat index values – a measure for how hot it feels – based on temperature and humidity. Workers exposed to hot and humid conditions, including construction workers, landscapers, farmers, and others, are encouraged to use the app to check weather conditions if they will be outdoors for short or long periods during the summer heat. CDC

U.S.: Plumbing in hospitals and nursing homes can spread Legionnaires' disease

6 June - ... An analysis of more than 2,800 cases of Legionnaires' that occurred in 2015 found that 553 definitely or possibly occurred in a health care facility such as a nursing home or a hospital. ... Sixty-six patients died from the disease. ... The CDC says hospitals and nursing homes need to work harder to keep the bacteria from getting into places where patients might be exposed, such as showers, sinks and bathtubs, as well as medical equipment that uses water. NPR

U.S.: Police violence linked to increased risk of suicide attempt

2 June - Being a victim of police violence is tied to a fourfold higher risk of suicide attempts for those who reported physical assault and a greater than tenfold higher risk for those who...
reported assault with a weapon or sexual victimization, U.S. researchers say. ... [Researchers] conducted the Survey of Police-Public Encounters among 1,615 adults in four U.S. cities - Baltimore, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. - who were selected to be representative of the general population. ... A total of 172 survey participants reported some type of police victimization and researchers found that these experiences were associated with higher odds of having made a suicide attempt, but not with suicidal thoughts. The risk was especially elevated when it was related to experiencing physical or sexual violence at the hands of police. Reuters

U.S.: Powassan virus - potentially fatal tick disease that can be transmitted in minutes reported in Maine

6 June - Two new cases of a dangerous and potentially fatal tick-borne illness have health officials in Maine on high alert as agencies across the nation brace for a particularly high-population tick season. The patients ... contracted Powassan virus, which differs from Lyme disease as it can be transferred from tick to human in a matter of minutes. “It's a virus, whereas Lyme is a bacteria,” Dr. Kent Holtorf, a Lyme disease expert and medical director of Holtorf Medical Group, told Fox News. “If you catch Lyme early, antibiotics can eradicate it, but with a virus, you have much less options to do anything about it.” ... [T]he two most recent cases brings Maine’s total count to nine since 2000. Fox News

U.S.: Tick-borne disease suspected in 2-year-old’s death

8 June - A 2-year-old Indianapolis girl died Sunday of what doctors suspect is Rocky Mountain spotted fever, a disease spread by ticks. Her aunt, Jordan Clapp, described how Kenley Ratliff’s illness began: "She started with a fever of 100.8. That was at the first hospital. ... Her fever went up to 104, so we went to a second hospital." ... Kenley tested positive for strep throat and was given more antibiotics. But around day four or five, her fever hadn't dropped, and she was going limp. Light pink rashes also started popping up. ... It wasn’t until another antibiotic was administered and those pink rashes turned dark purple-red that doctors at Riley Children’s Hospital in Indianapolis thought Kenley might have Rocky Mountain spotted fever. "Because they had already given her so many antibiotics, they had to wait to give her the antibiotic to treat Rocky Mountain spotted fever," Clapp said. "By then, her brain was so swollen from the weeklong fever. She was brain-dead before they could give her the antibiotic." The diagnosis has not been confirmed, and autopsy results will not be available for a week. CNN
Asia and Western Pacific Regions: Japanese encephalitis surveillance and immunization – 2016

9 June - Japanese encephalitis (JE) virus is a leading cause of encephalitis in Asia. The World Health Organization recommends integration of JE vaccination into national immunization schedules in all areas where the disease is a public health priority. A review of surveillance and immunization program data in the 24 countries with JE virus transmission risk found that in 2016, 22 countries conducted at least some surveillance for JE, and 12 had implemented a JE immunization program. This represents substantial progress in JE prevention and control measures, but challenges remain, including incomplete case reporting, misclassification of cases, lack of immunization program monitoring data, and inadequate monitoring of JE vaccination coverage following vaccine introduction.

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report

Japan: Five workers exposed to radioactive material at Japan nuclear research facility

7 June - Five workers at a nuclear research facility in east Japan were exposed to radioactive material on Tuesday after a bag that contained it burst, the plant’s state-run operator said. Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) said in a statement the incident occurred during a check on radioactive storage inside a "controlled" room at the facility in Oarai, with no radioactive material leaking outside. Shunichi Tanaka, the chairman of the regulator Nuclear Regulation Authority, in a weekly news conference on Wednesday criticized JAEA for not being more careful and said the level of exposure within the room where the accident happened was "high". Up to 22,000 becquerels of radioactive materials were detected in the lungs of one of the workers, JAEA said. ... Another company spokesman said measurements of radioactive materials between 2,200 becquerels and 14,000 becquerels were detected in the other four workers. He said some of this may have come from plutonium. Reuters

Vietnam: New initiatives for lead exposure in Vietnam

6 June - The village of Dong Mai in Vietnam became known for one thing during the late 20th century: recycling acid lead batteries. By recycling old batteries, breaking them down and stripping the lead, they were able to repurpose the ingots and thus make a profit. This profit enabled the creation of a lead industry within the village. ... [T]his industry created a number of health issues that were not fully known until 2007, when an inspection documented “extremely” high levels of lead in the village. ... [T]he villagers had been there for generations, and there was no place for them to go, and no place for the soil to be replaced. The solution? Pektin, which is a compound found in citrus fruit. When given to individuals, they found that the Pektin was able to help absorb some of the lead in the blood, and was able to pass through the urine. Occupational Health & Safety
Ecuador: An egg a day appears to help young children grow taller

7 June - An egg a day might help undernourished young children grow to a healthy height, according to a six-month study in Ecuador. ... It could be a cheap way to prevent stunting, say researchers. ... Lora Iannotti and her colleagues set up a field experiment in the rural highlands of Ecuador and gave very young children (aged six to nine months) free eggs to eat to see if this might help. Only half of the 160 youngsters who took part in the randomised trial were fed an egg a day for six months - the others were monitored for comparison. ... Stunting was far less common among the egg treatment group by the end of the study - the prevalence was 47% less than in the non-egg group, even though relatively more of these egg-fed infants were considered short for their age at the start of the study. BBC News

PAHO reports 1,000 new chikungunya cases in the Americas

5 June - Following a week in which the chikungunya outbreak in the Americas grew by 80%, on Jun 2 the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), in its weekly report, noted a return to more modest but still notable numbers, as the agency detailed 1,039 new cases. The new cases lift the yearly total to 87,472, according to the latest update. ... The vast majority of new cases were in Bolivia, which reported 855 new chikungunya illnesses and 2,144 for the year. Peru was second, with 123 new cases and 1,120 total. The number of deaths from the disease remained at 13, all of them in Brazil. CIDRAP News Scan (third item)

Venezuela: Venezuela blocking medicine, humanitarian aid from US groups

6 June - For the last two years Norma Camero Reno has been shipping a steady supply of desperately needed medicines from the United States to Venezuela. ... Two weeks ago, however, that all changed. ... Reno discovered that none of the recent medicine shipments had made it to her contacts in the country. ... Venezuelans have struggled in recent years to get their hands on all types of medical supplies. ... Numerous other organizations have been thwarted in their attempts to send supplies. ... Many of the items that the nonprofit Sanando, which has operated in Venezuela for over 10 years, sends to the country are now banned. Caritas, an international NGO linked to the Catholic Church, told Fusion that it has tried three times in the past month to get an import permit to bring medicines and food into Venezuela, but has so far been ignored. Fox News
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