

10 July 2015

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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

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Performance Triad - Summer Health Tips

A new video that lays out the top ten health tips for summer. They include using sunscreen, staying hydrated, and getting good sleep.



Control of Mosquitoes in and around the Home

This video provides you with the steps you can take to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and reduce your disease risk.



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- France: Vaccines - Practices and hesitancy among general physicians in France
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Army Vector-borne Disease Report

Chikungunya: Cases continue to occur in the Americas; 2 AD Army cases have been reported this year to date.

Spotted Fever

Rickettsiosis: 4 cases of RMSF have been reported in Army beneficiaries during 2015.



- India makes another world record, this time by washing hands together
- India: Open defecation linked to adverse pregnancies
- North Korea: UNICEF - Drought puts North Korean children at risk
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- Republic of Korea: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

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- Brazil introduces new caesarean birth rules
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U.S. MILITARY

Anthrax lab snafu update: 85 US labs now involved, Italy joins list

9 July - The number of US labs that were mistakenly sent live samples of *Bacillus anthracis*—the bacterium that causes anthrax—has increased by 7, to 85, and Italy has been added to the list of foreign countries affected, the Department of Defense (DoD) said in an update today. The commercial, academic, and federal labs are in 20 states and the District of Columbia. They received live samples from the Dugway Proving Ground's Life Science Test Facility in Utah after insufficient methods were used to inactivate the bacteria. The DoD on Jun 29 had listed 78 labs. In addition, labs in Japan, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Australia, Canada, and now Italy have received live *B anthracis* from the Utah facility. The biosafety lapse was first reported on May 28. [CIDRAP Biosecurity Scan](#) (second item)

Recruits show lower immunity levels to measles, mumps, rubella

9 July - The percentage of U.S. Air Force recruits with detectable immunity to measles, mumps and rubella was lower than found in previous nationwide samples and may be low enough for outbreaks to occur. ... Researchers at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Defense Health Agency, and Joint Base Lackland-San Antonio ... studied more than 32,500 recruits in basic training between April 2013 and April 2014 to determine whether there were a sufficient number of recruits with immunity to prevent an outbreak. They found that the percentage with adequate antibodies to measles, mumps, and rubella were 81.6%, 80.3%, and 82.1%, respectively. These are generally lower than levels required to maintain herd immunity. [Newswise](#)

Researchers: PTSD is factor in troop, vet violence

26 June - ... According to research conducted at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill School of Medicine on a random sample of 1,000 post-9/11 veterans, one-third reported being involved in an incident of physical aggression the previous year and 11 percent engaged in acts of severe or lethal violence. Researcher Eric Elbogen, an associate professor

The Road to Zero: CDC's Response to the West African Ebola Epidemic, 2014–2015

The 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa is the first in history. The first case was reported in Guinea in March 2014, and the disease spread in the neighboring countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Over the span of a year, the Ebola epidemic has caused more than ten times as many cases of Ebola than the combined total of all those reported in previous Ebola outbreaks. As the outbreak became more widespread, travel-associated cases appeared in Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, and even countries outside Africa, including the United States.

Download: [The Road to Zero: CDC's Response to the 2014 Ebola Epidemic](#)



at the school, found that PTSD is "the risk factor most consistently associated with violence." But other circumstances — age, history of abuse as a child, financial stress and substance abuse — also contribute, Elbogen said. And by knowing a patient's history for these factors, doctors can tailor treatments that may reduce the likelihood of patients being involved in violence or running afoul of the law. [Military Times](#)

Suicide risk factors for U.S. Army soldiers identified

8 July – A new study identifies distinct profiles for U.S. army officers and enlisted soldiers at highest risk of attempting suicide. Researchers say the results particularly highlight the importance of focusing prevention efforts on young enlisted men and women in their first tour of duty. For the new study, the researchers analyzed data on suicide attempts among U.S. Army soldiers from 2004 through 2009, during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[Reuters](#)

Update: Accidental drownings, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2005–2014

June 2015 – ... During 2005–2014, there were 1,193 incident episodes of accidental drowning with a rate of 8.4 per 100,000 person-years. Approximately one in six (n=162; 13.6%) of drowning episodes resulted in death. The overall incidence rate of accidental drowning decreased during the surveillance period; however, the death rate remained relatively stable. Incidence rates overall and death rates were relatively high among service members who were male, young, and in either the Navy or Marine Corps. The percentage of cases that were fatal was greatest among black, non-Hispanic service members. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

VA: Report on data from the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit (AH&OBP) Registry

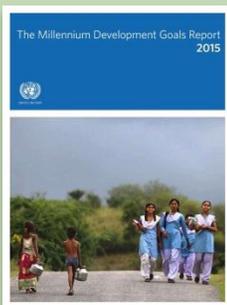
June 2015 - Between April 25, 2014 and December 31, 2014, nearly thirty thousand Veterans and Active Duty Servicemembers filled out the registry survey. [Review the report](#) with the latest data. The report highlights health conditions and physical limitations experienced by burn pit registry participants.

- The most common doctor-diagnosed health problems reported were insomnia and neurological problems.
- Other commonly diagnosed health problems reported include allergies, high blood pressure, and lung disease like emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and asthma.
- It is important to remember that Registry findings alone can't tell us if exposure to burn pits, dust storms, or other hazards caused these health conditions. [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

The Millennium Development Goals Report – 2015

The MDGs helped to lift more than one billion people out of extreme poverty, to make inroads against hunger, to enable more girls to attend school than ever before and to protect our planet. They generated new and innovative partnerships, galvanized public opinion and showed the immense value of setting ambitious goals.

However, in 2011, nearly 60 per cent of the world's one billion extremely poor people lived in just five countries. Too many women continue to die during pregnancy or from childbirth-related complications. Progress tends to bypass women and those who are lowest on the economic ladder or are disadvantaged because of their age, disability or ethnicity. Disparities between rural and urban areas remain pronounced.



VA taps ‘Million Veteran Program’ data for new studies

8 July - Tapping into the nation’s largest database linking genetic, clinical, lifestyle and military exposure information, the Department of Veterans Affairs is funding four new studies in the areas of heart disease, kidney disease, and substance use. As part of a data access beta test, the newly-funded studies are among the first to leverage the database—called VA’s Million Veteran Program (MVP)—which has enrolled more than 390,000 veterans to date. ... Specifically, the studies will target understudied African American and Hispanic veteran populations, addressing questions related to common chronic illnesses. [Health Data Management](#)

Veterans hotline tries to survive without Pentagon funds

4 July - ... {A} peer hotline, [Vets4Warriors](#) ... connects troops and former service members seeking help with veterans. Since 2011, Vets4Warriors has fielded more than 130,000 calls from military personnel stationed around the world. The counselors say their military service and nonclinical approach help them form a bond with callers that can break down mistrust. ... Though the program has been lauded as a model, the Pentagon has ended its funding as part of an effort to cut costs and streamline services. ... The program’s counseling will be taken over by another help line, [Military OneSource](#), which has more services available. [New York Times](#)

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GLOBAL

Effective concussion treatment remains frustratingly elusive, despite a booming industry

3 July – ... Over the last decade, the Defense Department has spent more than \$800 million on [brain injury](#) research, with organizations and companies like the National Football League and General Electric spending tens of millions more. And as people become more aware of the debilitating long-term consequences of repeated concussions, businesses have been chasing salable solutions. ... The search for ways to treat and prevent concussions has spawned screening tools, helmet sensors, electronic mouthpieces, diagnostic blood tests and brain imaging devices. ... But as the industry booms, medical experts are raising concerns that it is a business where much of the science is sketchy, belief frequently outruns fact, and claims of technological breakthroughs evaporate soon after they are made. [New York Times](#)

Faith groups can help boost healthcare in developing nations: expert

6 July - Religious groups are an under-used health resource that could help achieve

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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universal healthcare and accelerate the medical response to disease outbreaks, health experts said on Tuesday. Faith-based organizations such as the Islamic Relief or the Salvation Army are the only health providers in some regions and the medical community should build on their experience, reach and influence to save lives, a study published in the Lancet medical journal said. [Reuters](#)

Global poverty drops sharply, with China making big strides, U.N. report says

6 July - Dire poverty has dropped sharply, and just as many girls as boys are now enrolled in primary schools around the world. Simple measures like installing bed nets have prevented some six million deaths from malaria. ... These are among the findings that the United Nations released Monday as part of a final report on the successes and failures of the Millennium Development Goals, a set of targets established 15 years ago to improve the lives of the poor. ... [How] much of those gains can be attributed to the goals is unknown. The sharp reductions in extreme poverty are due largely to the economic strides made by one big country, China. Likewise, some of the biggest shortfalls can be attributed to a handful of countries that remain very far behind. In India, for example, an estimated 600 million people defecate in the open, heightening the risk of serious disease, especially for children. [New York Times](#)

New implant raises hopes of restoring movement to paralyzed limbs

7 July - A new implant that can chemically and electrically stimulate nerve growth could one day make it possible for someone with a shattered spine to walk again. Conventional spinal implants cause inflammation and damage because they are too stiff to stay in the soft tissue surrounding the spine long enough to be effective. ... Older implants were placed above the dura mater instead of directly on the spinal cord tissue because, according to the researchers, the spinal cord is "one of the most demanding environments of the central nervous system." In contrast, e-dura's soft silicone material can be inserted directly underneath the dura mater, so it can provide direct electrical and chemical stimulation to the nerves in the spinal cord. [VOA](#)

People with brain injuries heal faster if they get up and get moving

6 July - ... Doctors have long encouraged their surgical patients to get out of bed as soon as it's safe to do so. Movement increases circulation, reduces swelling, inflammation and the risk of blood clots, and it speeds healing. ... "The predominant thinking was that rest was better suited for the brain," Manno says. ... Over the course of a year, Klein tracked more than 600 patients with brain injury, getting more than half of them up and out of bed as early as the first day they were admitted to the ICU. What she found was that getting up and moving had clear benefits. Patients who started their rehabilitation earlier spent less

time in the ICU and less time in the hospital. "They have less pressure ulcers, less infections and spend less time on the ventilator if they need ventilator therapy," says Klein. And most say they feel a lot better. [NPR](#)

Promise is seen in an inexpensive cholera vaccine

8 July - An inexpensive, little-known cholera vaccine appears to work so well that it can protect entire communities and perhaps head off explosive epidemics like the one that killed nearly 10,000 Haitians in 2010. A major study published on Wednesday in *The Lancet* found that the vaccine gave individuals more than 50 percent protection against cholera and reduced life-threatening episodes of the infection by about 40 percent in Bangladesh, where the disease has persisted for centuries. In a result that surprised researchers, the vaccine worked far better than supplying families with chlorine for their water and soap for hand-washing. [New York Times](#)

Researchers trace path of measles outbreak at Vancouver Olympics

8 July - ... Scientists in British Columbia have used the genetic signatures of viruses to trace the source and path of a measles outbreak that occurred after the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. The research brought into focus what is generally invisible: the path that the highly contagious virus took as it moved from person to person across wide expanses of British Columbia. ... [The study] shows that after two different strains of measles were introduced into the Vancouver area during the 2010 Winter Olympics, one strain headed north along a single highway. ... "All of those cases, even though they occurred in towns that were thousands of kilometres apart, they were all the result of one single introduction of virus into that region. They all had this one mutation that said: 'Hey, these came from one person.'" [CTV News](#)

Review of West Nile virus studies finds long-term effects common

9 July - Studies of West Nile virus cases suggest that muscle weakness, fatigue, pain, and cognitive effects persist in many patients for months or years, according to a systematic review published this week in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. ... The most common lingering physical effects, reported in 24 studies, were muscle weakness, fatigue, and myalgia, the report says. ... The most common cognitive or psychological sequelae, reported in 19 studies, were memory loss (in up to 59% of patients), depression (up to 41%), and difficulty concentrating (up to 48%). Problems with activities of daily living were common. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Study identifies new way to kill the malaria parasite

7 July - Scientists have discovered new ways in which the malaria parasite survives in the blood stream of its victims, a discovery that could pave the way to new treatments for the

disease. ... By identifying one of the key proteins needed for the parasite to survive in the red blood cells, the team have prevented the protein from working, thus killing the parasite. The discovery could be the first step in developing a new drug to treat malaria. [EurekAlert!](#)

Study shows diseases like plague can perilously evolve

6 July - Contrary to what was previously believed, the bacterium responsible for the Black Death probably caused small outbreaks of lung disease for many years before it evolved its better-known bubonic form, according to a new genetic study. Also, only one added gene was needed to turn the *Yersinia pestis* bacterium into a killer, and only one tiny mutation in that gene was needed to give it two ways of spreading — by cough or by flea bite. ... During last year's Ebola outbreak in West Africa, some feared that the disease, which spread through blood, vomit and feces, could become airborne. Plague bacteria are very different from Ebola virus, Dr. Lathem said, "but this shows that new modes of transmission can occur through very small changes, so you need to keep an eye out." [New York Times](#)

WHO independent panel calls out Ebola response flaws

7 July - An independent committee appointed to review how the World Health Organization (WHO) performed during West Africa's Ebola outbreak found several management and cultural problems that slowed the response, but it also said flaws in the International Health Regulations (IHRs) also posed tough obstacles. One of the group's main requests going forward was for a way to signal an alert earlier, aside from declaring a full-blown public health emergency, which often takes months and can be bogged down by political concerns. [CIDRAP](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

- During week 25, 5.8% of all deaths reported through the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia and influenza. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 6.1% for week 25.
- Nationwide during week 25, 1.1% of patient visits reported through the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) were due to influenza-like illness (ILI). This percentage is below the national baseline of 2.0%. [FluView](#)

DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program

During 31 May - 4 July 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 22-26), a total of 87 specimens were collected and received from 36 locations. Results were finalized for 80 specimens from 35

locations. A total of three influenza viruses were identified. During Week 22, one influenza A(H3N2) and one influenza B/Victoria virus were identified. During Week 23, one influenza B/Yamagata virus was identified. There were no influenza viruses identified during Weeks 24 through 26. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

Flu News Europe

This site is currently being blocked at the Army NETCOM level. We hope to get access again shortly. [Flu News Europe](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For Week 26 (through 4 July 2015):

- Influenza
 - Six cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (four influenza A/H3 and two influenza B) among US military basic trainees.
 - Recent clusters of influenza A and B cases at MCRD San Diego. No evidence of vaccine breakthrough at this time.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

Red tape, vaccine issues, future fears mark avian flu hearing

8 July – The U.S. Agriculture Department wants to improve its handling of the nation's worst-ever outbreak of bird flu in poultry after coming under criticism for a slow and confusing response. The USDA is aiming to assign one person to communicate with each infected farm during the entire time the facility is affected by the deadly virus, John Clifford, the chief U.S. veterinary officer, said at a U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee hearing on Tuesday. [CIDRAP](#)

WHO Influenza Update

29 June - Globally, influenza activity has decreased from its peak of influenza activity in early 2015 to low levels in the Northern Hemisphere while there were increases in activity in the Southern Hemisphere.

- In North America, influenza activity was at low, inter-seasonal levels. Influenza type B continued to be the predominant strain in circulation in recent weeks.
- In Europe, influenza activity remained low with influenza B predominant in recent weeks
- In northern Africa, influenza activity remained at low levels in most countries with influenza A activity being predominant throughout the whole season.

- In western Asia, most countries reported decreasing influenza activity remaining at low levels in recent weeks.
- In the temperate countries of Asia, influenza activity remained at low levels.
- In tropical countries of the Americas, low inter-seasonal levels of influenza activity were reported in most countries except Peru where low levels of influenza type A circulation was detected.
- In tropical Asia, increased influenza activity was reported from Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region, China), Singapore, southern China, Viet Nam, and Sri Lanka with influenza type A viruses predominating in recent weeks.
- In the Southern Hemisphere, influenza activity increased in most of the regions but remained at low levels. However, South Africa reported high influenza activity with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) co-circulation in recent weeks. [WHO](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Ask Well: Guidelines for when food goes bad



6 July - ... Food expiration dates are generally guidelines rather than hard-and-fast rules. ... The Food and Drug Administration doesn't regulate expiration dates except on baby formula. Many dates are there for the benefit of the store, not the consumer. ...

- A "sell by" date indicates how long a store should display a product on its shelves. Foods can still be tasty and are safe for several days longer if stored properly.
- A "use by" or "best if used by" date comes from the manufacturer and refers to taste and texture, not safety.
- An "expiration" date is the only packaging date related to food safety. If this date has passed, throw the food out. [New York Times](#)

Beef slaughterhouse kill steps reduce *Salmonella*, *E coli*, FSIS says

9 July - Food safety measures at beef slaughter plants seem to be reducing levels of *Salmonella* and *Escherichia coli* on carcasses, Food Safety News reported today, citing federal data. The US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) last week released data from the first 6 months of surveys meant to establish baseline levels

of the two pathogens on beef and veal carcasses. They showed drops in both *Salmonella* and *E coli* levels after interventions. The FSIS found 24.5% of beef carcasses were contaminated with *Salmonella* immediately after slaughter and hide removal, but this dropped to 3.9% after a kill step such as a hot water or lactic acid wash. *E coli* O157:H7 prevalence dropped from 1.6% to 1.1% after the kill step, and non-O157:H7 *E coli* rates dropped from 8.4% to 1.8%, according to FSIS data. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

CDC: *Salmonella* cases in 40 states tied to live poultry

2 July - A total of 181 people in 40 states have recently been infected with *Salmonella* associated with live chicks and ducklings bought from feed stores and hatcheries, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced yesterday. Thirty-three people have been hospitalized, but no one has died, the agency said. Alabama has the most cases, 17, while most states have fewer than 10. Illness onset dates ranged from Jan 6 to Jun 13.

[CIDRAP](#)

In China, stomachs turn at news of 40-year-old meat peddled by traders

24 June - ... The Chinese news media announced that the authorities had seized nearly half a billion dollars' worth of smuggled frozen meat this month across China, some of it dating to the 1970s. The caches of beef, pork and chicken wings, worth up to 3 billion renminbi, or \$483 million, were discovered in a nationwide crackdown that spanned 14 provinces and regions, the state news agency Xinhua reported. Typically, the meat was shipped from abroad to Hong Kong and then brought to Vietnam, where traders would smuggle the product across the Chinese border without declaring it to customs officials or going through required inspection and quarantine procedures. From there, criminals would often transport the meat in unrefrigerated trucks to save costs and refreeze it several times before it reached customers. ... The authorities in Changsha seized 800 tons of frozen meat on June 1 and arrested 20 suspected members of two gangs. [New York Times](#)

Is there a killer squirrel virus?



9 July - Three squirrel breeders in Germany likely died of a novel virus they caught from the animals, researchers said. Over a 2-year period, the three men developed progressive encephalitis or meningoencephalitis that led to death within 2 to 4 months, according to Martin Beer, DVM, of the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut in Greifswald-Insel Riems, Germany, and

colleagues. The men, all from the German state of Saxony-Anhalt, bred variegated squirrels, a species native to Central and southern North America that is kept as an exotic pet in Europe, Beer and colleagues reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Genomic analysis found a previously unknown bornavirus in a contact squirrel and in brain tissue from the three men, the researchers reported, and it is the "likely causative agent" in their deaths. [MedPage Today](#)

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WELLNESS

Adults meeting fruit and vegetable intake recommendations — United States, 2013

10 July - Overall, 13.1% of respondents met fruit intake recommendations, ranging from 7.5% in Tennessee to 17.7% in California, and 8.9% met vegetable recommendations, ranging from 5.5% in Mississippi to 13.0% in California. Substantial new efforts are needed to build consumer demand for fruits and vegetables through competitive pricing, placement, and promotion in child care, schools, grocery stores, communities, and worksites. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Affordable Care Act results in dramatic drop in out-of-pocket prices for prescription contraceptives

7 July - Average out-of-pocket spending for oral contraceptive pills and the intrauterine device (IUD), the two most common forms of contraception for women, has decreased significantly since the Affordable Care Act (ACA) took effect. ... "We estimate that the ACA is saving the average pill user \$255 per year, and the average woman receiving an IUD is saving \$248. Spread over an estimated 6.88 million privately insured oral contraceptive users in the United States, consumer annual contribution to spending on the pill could be reduced by almost \$1.5 billion annually." [EurekaAlert!](#)

Ageing rates vary widely, says study

7 July - A study of people born within a year of each other has uncovered a huge gulf in the speed at which their bodies age. The report, in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, tracked traits such as weight, kidney function and gum health. Some of the 38-year-olds were ageing so badly that their "biological age" was on the cusp of retirement. [BBC](#)

Antidepressant birth defect risk limited to Paxil and Prozac

9 July - While use of paroxetine (Paxil) and fluoxetine (Prozac) increased the risk of several birth defects, the majority of SSRIs were not associated with significant harm to the fetus during the first trimester. ... [Researchers] found that women taking paroxetine during their first trimester of pregnancy more than doubled their risk of five out of seven serious birth defects, while those taking fluoxetine (Prozac) had a higher risk of two serious birth defects. However, the authors found no link between citalopram (Celexa), escitalopram (Lexapro), or sertraline (Zoloft) and birth defects in the first trimester, they wrote in the BMJ. [MedPage Today](#)

Healthier meals do cost families more

8 July - Shopping for healthier groceries, like whole wheat bread instead of white bread and lean meat instead of fattier cuts, would cost a family of four about \$1,500 more a year at their regular stores, according to a new U.S. study. The small survey focused on 23 families of children with type 1 diabetes. Parents are urged to feed kids with diabetes a low-fat diet, but they may need help with problem-solving skills to provide healthy foods without a heavy burden of extra costs or prep time, researchers say. [Reuters](#)

Indoor tanning rates dropping

7 July - Use of indoor tanning is on the decline, according to a new study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Cancer Institute. Between 2010 and 2013, the percentage of adults using indoor tanning beds fell from 5.5 percent to 4.2 percent, the researchers report. This translates to two million fewer people who are tanning themselves with these devices, they said. [Reuters](#)

Overhydration potentially dangerous for athletes, experts warn

9 July – While the risks of dehydration are well known, new international guidelines seek to protect athletes from the serious health risks associated with drinking too many fluids while exercising. Overhydrating with water or sports drinks can lead to a condition called exercise-associated hyponatremia ... when the body has too much water relative to its salt level, Rosner said. When the salt level in the blood falls too low, he added, it leads to significant neurological problems and can be fatal. [EurekAlert!](#)

Public confused by sunscreen labelling, say experts

26 June – There is huge confusion over the labels on sun creams, and manufacturers should all use the same rating system, says the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. A survey of 2,000 UK adults found one in five was unaware that the SPF rating does not mean protection against all sun damage - only that from UVB rays. Protection against UVA rays is indicated by a "star" rating. [BBC News](#)

Research encourages the consideration of air pollution when planning housing near transit

7 July - Policymakers and developers planning high-density housing near public transit with the goal of reducing automobile use and greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming need a clearer understanding of the health risks from air pollution that may be created if that housing is also built near busy roads and freeways, according to new research by Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California (USC) scientists. [EurekAlert!](#)

Reusable shopping bags encourage shoppers to buy produce – and junk food?

7 July - ... "Grocery store shoppers who bring their own bags are more likely to purchase organic produce and other healthy food. But those same shoppers often feel virtuous, because they are acting in an environmentally responsible way. That feeling easily persuades them that, because they are being good to the environment, they should treat themselves to cookies or potato chips or some other product with lots of fat, salt, or sugar," write the authors, Uma R. Karmarkar (Harvard University) and Bryan Bollinger (Duke University). [EurekAlert!](#)

Screen addiction is taking a toll on children

6 July - Excessive use of computer games among young people in China appears to be taking an alarming turn and may have particular relevance for American parents whose children spend many hours a day focused on electronic screens. The documentary "[Web Junkie](#)," to be shown next Monday on PBS, highlights the tragic effects on teenagers who become hooked on video games, playing for dozens of hours at a time often without breaks to eat, sleep or even use the bathroom. Many come to view the real world as fake. Chinese doctors consider this phenomenon a clinical disorder and have established rehabilitation centers where afflicted youngsters are confined for months of sometimes draconian therapy, completely isolated from all media, the effectiveness of which remains to be demonstrated. [New York Times](#)

Self-diagnosis on Internet not always good practice

8 July - ... The first wide-scale study of the accuracy of general-purpose symptom checkers found that although the online programs are often wrong, they are roughly equivalent to telephone triage lines commonly used at primary care practices — and they are better than general Internet-search self-diagnosis and triage. ... Overall, the software algorithms that the researchers studied listed the correct diagnosis first in 34 percent of cases. The correct diagnosis was included in the top three diagnoses in the list in 51 percent of cases and in the top 20 in 58 percent. ... Overall, the 23 symptom checkers provided correct triage advice in 58 percent of cases, with the checkers performing much better in more critical cases, correctly recommending emergency care in 80 percent of urgent cases. [Harvard Gazette](#)

Smoking 'may play schizophrenia role'

9 July - Smoking could play a direct role in the development of schizophrenia and needs to be investigated, researchers say. The team at King's College London say smokers are more likely to develop the disorder and at a younger age. Published in the *Lancet Psychiatry*, their analysis of 61 separate studies suggests nicotine in cigarette smoke may be altering the brain. Experts said it was a "pretty strong case" but needed more research. ... The researchers said nicotine altered levels of the brain chemical dopamine, which has already been implicated in the psychosis. [BBC News](#)

Sugary drinks take a deathly toll

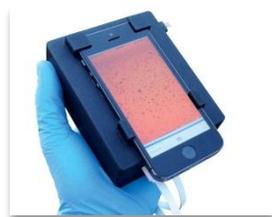
1 July - Consumption of sugary drinks results in some 184,000 deaths worldwide each year, a new analysis found. To reach their conclusions, scientists pooled data from dozens of dietary surveys and large prospective studies of the effect of sugar-sweetened beverage intake on body mass index and Type 2 diabetes, and of the effect of B.M.I. on cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer. They used data on sweetened drink consumption from 62 national dietary surveys, which included more than 600,000 people in 51 countries surveyed between 1980 and 2010. ... Worldwide, they estimate that sweetened drinks cause 133,000 deaths from diabetes, 45,000 from cardiovascular disease, and 6,450 from cancers.

[New York Times](#)

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USAFRICOM

An iPhone microscope to help eradicate river blindness



25 June - ... A river blindness treatment campaign for sub-Saharan Africa has been thwarted for about two decades because the drug used was found to harm patients also infected with another parasite, called Loa Loa. ... CellScope Loa is a video microscope that attaches to an iPhone. A custom app screens a patient's blood to check whether he can safely receive treatment

for river blindness, an insect-borne infection that affects millions. ... The iPhone clips to a plastic base housing the microscope, which a health worker loads with a small glass capillary of blood from a patient's finger prick. ... The phone's camera records short video clips of the blood sample. Within minutes, CellScope's app reports how many Loa Loa parasites it spotted and whether the patient can take river blindness meds. ... A study of 33 patients in Cameroon yielded zero false negatives and two false positives. [BloombergBusiness](#)

Ebola recovery goals focus on rebuilding health systems

9 July – The three Ebola-hit countries laid out their outbreak recovery plans today during the first day of a high-level donors meeting hosted by United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, an event designed to help the countries fund their activities over the next 2 years. National representatives are expected to spell out a \$7.2 billion price tag for getting to zero cases and rebuilding their countries over the next 2 years. Earlier this week, World Health Organization (WHO) officials estimated that the three countries would need a total of \$696.2 million to rebuild their health systems and provide services through the end of 2017. In advance of the meeting, experts weighed in on some of the priorities for rebuilding health systems, considered a key to stamping out the disease in the three countries. [CIDRAP](#)

Liberia: Recurrence of Ebola transmission in Liberia

3 July - On 9 May 2015, Liberia marked an important milestone in the management of their Ebola outbreak. On that day, the country was declared free of Ebola transmission because no new cases had been identified for 42 days after the safe burial of the last person confirmed to have been infected with Ebola virus disease. ... On Monday, 29 June 2015 ... a post-mortem swab taken from a seventeen-year-old male who died on June 28 from a febrile illness managed as malaria tested positive for Ebola virus disease. ... [The] Liberian 'incident management system' immediately activated a team to carry out a detailed investigation in the area, and began tracing people who had been in contact with the young man while he was symptomatic. The investigation revealed that close to 200 people had been in contact with the young man while he had symptoms of Ebola and these people are now being closely monitored. Two of those people have developed symptoms and have tested positive for Ebola virus. [WHO](#)

Liberia: Source of new Liberian Ebola outbreak a mystery – WHO

8 July - The source of a new outbreak of Ebola in Liberia remains a mystery, experts said on Wednesday, describing the cluster as "separate" from the epidemic that killed thousands. The west African nation announced last week that a 17-year-old boy had died of the tropical fever after spreading it to two other people, in the first cases of infection for more than three months. "The origin of infection of the cluster of cases is currently under investigation," the World Health Organization (WHO) said in the latest of its weekly reports on the progress of the epidemic. "At present, these cases are considered to constitute a separate outbreak from that which was declared over on May 9." [Yahoo! News](#)

Somalia: Counterfeit medicine endangering Somali lives

3 July - Unlicensed clinics and pharmacies with unqualified staff have been dispensing counterfeit and expired medicines that are making people sick and endangering the lives of Somalis. ... Doctors feel powerless as traders flood the market with not just counterfeit and expired medicines, but also sub-standard ones. Doctor Dufle's hospital, one of the biggest private clinics in the city, has seen firsthand what these drugs do to patients. Every month more than 30 patients who have been given expired or counterfeit medicine walk through the doors of his hospital. [Al Jazeera](#)

South Sudan: Cholera kills 32 in South Sudan, education key to stemming outbreak – U.N.

7 July – A cholera outbreak in war-torn South Sudan has killed at least 32 people, a fifth of them children under five, and schools have a major role to play in stemming the spread of the disease, the United Nations said on Tuesday. More than 700 cholera cases have been reported in the capital Juba and Bor, the capital of Jonglei state, in the last five weeks, according to the U.N. children's agency UNICEF. [allAfrica](#)

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Afghanistan: No country for women

3 July - Thirteen years after the fall of the Taliban, women in Afghanistan continue to suffer oppression and abuse. Research by Global Rights estimates that almost nine out of 10 Afghan women face physical, sexual or psychological violence, or are forced into marriage. In the majority of cases the abuse is committed by the people they love and trust the most - their families. While shelters are trying to provide protection and legal help to some, many women return to abusive homes because there is no alternative. Unable to escape their circumstances, some are turning to drastic measures like self-immolation to end their suffering. [Al Jazeera](#)

Number of Syrian refugees climbs to more than 4 million

9 July - The number of Syrians who have fled into neighboring countries to escape the civil war has reached more than four million, the United Nations said Thursday, and with the fighting dragging into its fifth year the number is still rising. More than 24,000 people crossed into Turkey to escape fighting in northern Syria in June, pushing the number now sheltering in neighboring countries past four million, increasing the Syrian refugee population by one million in just 10 months, the United Nations refugee agency reported. International aid agencies say the fighting has driven at least 7.6 million people who remain in the country from their homes. [New York Times](#)

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

3 July - Between 19 and 30 June 2015, the National IHR Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia notified WHO of 6 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection. ... Globally, since September 2012, WHO has been notified of 1,363 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 487 related deaths. [WHO](#)

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Cultural and economic factors affect European antidepressant use

9 July – Public attitudes towards mental illness and levels of healthcare spending may explain the huge variation in antidepressant use across Europe, according to a new study by

researchers from the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London. The study, published today in the British Journal of Psychiatry, found that antidepressants were prescribed more often and used more regularly in countries with higher levels of healthcare spending. [EurekAlert!](#)

France: Vaccines - Practices and hesitancy among general physicians in France

8 July - ... [In] recent years, a growing number of unfavourable opinions regarding [vaccination] has been observed among the general population in France. ... Some physicians express doubt concerning the risk of serious side-effects from certain vaccines, even when these doubts are refuted by the results of pharmacovigilance and epidemiological studies. ... Over a quarter of them (26%) also believe that some vaccines recommended by the public authorities are unnecessary, and 20% even believe that children are vaccinated against too many diseases. [Medical Xpress](#)

Gaza Strip: Health sector critically ill after war

7 July - One year after violence tore through the Gaza Strip in the summer war of 2014, Palestinian human rights groups have released a report detailing the damage to Gaza's health sector, saying that its effect will last well beyond the ceasefire. In the report "No More Impunity: Gaza's Health Sector Under Attack", researchers investigated attacks by the Israeli military on ambulances, hospitals, and healthcare workers in Gaza. According to the report, these attacks crippled the health sector's ability to dispense care to civilians during the 50-day war. Drawing on testimonies and on-site evidence, the report estimates that 511 of the 2,217 Palestinians killed in the war were blocked from seeking care and ambulance access. [Al Jazeera](#)

United Kingdom: FGM app launches in Britain as school holiday danger zone nears

7 July - A new app designed to educate young people about female genital mutilation (FGM) was launched in Britain on Tuesday amid a government crackdown on people who take girls abroad to undergo the practice during the summer holidays. Britain's first FGM app, "Petals", presents facts and information about the practice, offers a quiz to test the user's knowledge and provides details on where young girls can receive help - including a direct link to an FGM advice line. [Reuters](#)

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U.S.: Coccidioidomycosis where it shouldn't be

2 July - Although coccidioidomycosis is not believed to be endemic in Missouri, cases have markedly increased there in recent years. Coccidioidomycosis — or valley fever — is caused by a fungus found in soil and is endemic in the southwestern U.S., Mexico, and Central and South America. In endemic areas of the U.S., reported cases increased eightfold between 1998 and 2012. Incidence has also increased in nonendemic areas. Retrospective analysis of data from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services revealed that 93 confirmed coccidioidomycosis cases were reported in the state between 2004 and 2013, with incidence per 100,000 increasing from 0.05 to 0.28 during that period. ... The authors note that some of the apparent increase may be due to initiation of mandatory coccidioidomycosis reporting in 2003 or to increasing awareness of the illness. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

U.S.: Cutting health care costs isn't easy

7 July - Convincing the nation's most vulnerable citizens to avoid costly emergency department visits is proving harder than expected. A new study from the University of Iowa found improving access to affordable primary care reduced preventable hospital stays for black and Hispanics who receive both Medicare and Medicaid but failed to reduce the number of trips to the emergency department. [EurekaAlert!](#)

U.S.: CVS Health quits U.S. Chamber over stance on smoking

7 July - The CVS Health Corporation said on Tuesday that it would resign from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce after revelations that the chamber and its foreign affiliates were undertaking a global lobbying campaign against antismoking laws. ... The New York Times reported last week that the chamber and its vast network of foreign affiliates had targeted restrictions, often in developing countries, on smoking in public spaces, bans on menthol and slim cigarettes, advertising restrictions, excise tax increases, plain packaging and graphic warning labels. The chamber's efforts have put it in direct opposition to the World Health Organization's efforts to curb tobacco use around the world. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Fitness apps data reveals American workout habits, most active states

6 July - Millions of Americans are recording their workout routines and activities on apps that are giving fitness experts new insights into the habits of a logged-in population. Data compiled by fitness and workout tracker apps, MyFitnessPal and MapMyFitness, show that California, Colorado and Washington are the U.S. states with the most active residents based on the length, frequency and type of exercise they recorded. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: HHS 2015 preparedness grants hold at 2014 level

7 July - The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced yesterday that this year's package of grants to support emergency preparedness for local public health agencies and healthcare systems will total about \$840 million, the same as last year's amount. The funds for fiscal year 2015 include \$611.75 million in Public Health Emergency Program (PHEP) grants and \$228.5 million in Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) grants, HHS announced. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S.: Measles death in Washington state is first in US since 2003

6 July - Measles was confirmed as the culprit in a Washington state woman's death this spring, the Washington State Department of Health (WSDH) said on Jul 2, the first US measles death in 12 years. "The woman was most likely exposed to measles at a local medical facility during a recent outbreak in Clallam County. She was there at the same time as a person who later developed a rash and was contagious for measles," the agency said in a news release. "The cause of death was pneumonia due to measles," the WSDH said. The woman, from Clallam County, had several other medical conditions and was taking immune-suppressing medication, which would make her especially vulnerable to measles. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

U.S.: Texas *Cyclospora* outbreak grows to 135 cases

8 July - Texas has had 32 new cases of *Cyclospora* infection since Jul 2, bringing the total in the state to 135, the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS) said in an update today. Cases of the gastrointestinal illness have surged in recent days, with 123 of the total coming in the past 2 weeks. Cyclosporiasis is caused by consuming food or water contaminated by the parasite, but so far no source has been identified in the outbreak. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

U.S.: Today's heroin epidemic

7 July - Heroin use has increased across the US among men and women, most age groups, and all income levels. Some of the greatest increases occurred in demographic groups with historically low rates of heroin use: women, the privately insured, and people with higher incomes. Not only are people using heroin, they are also abusing multiple other substances, especially cocaine and prescription opioid painkillers. [CDC Vital Signs](#)

U.S.: Top court backs Obamacare, president says it's here to stay

27 June - The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a conservative legal challenge that could have doomed President Barack Obama's healthcare law, upholding nationwide tax subsidies crucial to his signature domestic policy achievement. Obama strode into the

White House Rose Garden after the ruling to declare that the law known as Obamacare is working, helping millions of Americans afford health insurance who otherwise would have none, and that it is "here to stay." [Reuters](#)

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India: Funding crunch affects India's fight against TB: report

9 July – India's program to fight tuberculosis is in disarray due to a shortage of funds and the government has failed to meet annual targets to control spread of the nation's most fatal infectious illness, a leaked assessment report said. The report was drafted by several experts including those from the government's TB division and the World Health Organization. The draft is not in the public domain but was leaked on the Internet by health activists late on Wednesday. Reuters could not verify its authenticity. [Reuters](#)

India makes another world record, this time by washing hands together

4 July - ... India has made another world record. And this time around, 12,76,425 [sic] students from Madhya Pradesh have created history by washing their hands together. The feat was attempted on October 16, 2014 on global hand washing day but was officially recognized only now. The attempt was made at 13,196 venues across Madhya Pradesh under the supervision of supervision of the state's Panchayat and Rural development. ... This record is an important step in creating awareness about hand washing among children. [Health Site](#)

India: Open defecation linked to adverse pregnancies

8 July - New research suggests pregnant women who defecate in the open are more likely to have a premature delivery or give birth to a baby with low weight than those who use toilets. Researchers studied some 670 pregnant women in India's eastern Orissa state. More than half a billion people in India still continue to defecate in the open, according to WHO. ... When several of these potential confounding causes like living conditions and poverty levels were factored in, they found that open defecation was still "significantly associated" with a greater risk of APOs. [BBC News](#)

North Korea: UNICEF - Drought puts North Korean children at risk

8 July - A severe drought in North Korea is putting the lives of children at risk and many are in serious danger of disease and malnutrition, the U.N. children's agency said on

Wednesday. UNICEF said in a statement that there had been in a sharp increase in cases of diarrhea among children in drought-affected areas, as access to safe drinking water and sanitation was severely compromised. ... The North said it is experiencing its worst drought in a century, with some of its main farming regions particularly hard hit. The country's large number of malnourished children – as many as one in four children according to a 2012 study – heightens concerns about the impact of drought, UNICEF said. [VOA](#)

Philippines: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

8 July - On 6 July 2015, the IHR National Focal Point of the Philippines notified WHO of 1 laboratory-confirmed case of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection. The case is a 36-year-old male from Finland. Between 10 and 18 June, he travelled to Saudi Arabia and stayed in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. The patient had cough before travelling to Saudi Arabia; however, while in Saudi Arabia, he did not feel unwell and did not seek medical attention. [WHO](#)

Philippines reports 2nd MERS case as Korean, Saudi totals grow

6 July - Health officials in the Philippines today announced the country's second imported MERS-CoV case this year, in a traveler from the Middle East, as the total in South Korea's hospital outbreak—also triggered by a traveler—grew to 186 cases. Elsewhere, Saudi Arabia over the past 4 days reported one more MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) case, as the World Health Organization (WHO) fleshed out more information on other recent cases, including some linked to a hospital outbreak in Hofuf. [CIDRAP](#)

Republic of Korea: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

7 July - Between 4 and 7 July 2015, the National IHR Focal Point of the Republic of Korea notified WHO of 2 additional confirmed case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Additional information on the outbreak in Korea: To date, a total of 186 MERS-CoV cases, including 33 deaths, have been reported. One of the 186 cases is the case that was confirmed in China and also notified by the National IHR Focal Point of China. [WHO](#)

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Argentina: Top court rules for family of patient in a right-to-die case

7 July - In a landmark decision, Argentina's Supreme Court ruled Tuesday that a patient who has required life support for two decades can be allowed to die, renewing debate here over a so-called death with dignity law. In their ruling, the justices fended off resistance against a measure approved in 2012 by lawmakers that allows patients, or their relatives, to refuse life support. [New York Times](#)

Brazil introduces new caesarean birth rules

7 July – New rules have come into force in Brazil aimed at reducing the country's high number of caesarean births. Eighty-five per cent of all births in Brazilian private hospitals are caesareans and in public hospitals the figure is 45%. The new rules oblige doctors to inform women about the risks and ask them to sign a consent form before performing a caesarean. Doctors will also have to justify why a caesarean was necessary. [BBC News](#)

Cuba is first to earn WHO seal for ending mother-baby HIV transmission

6 July - ... On June 30, Cuba became the first country to receive what can be seen as a global seal of approval — the World Health Organization validation — for essentially eliminating transmission of AIDS from a mother to her baby. (Cuba has eliminated transmission of syphilis as well.) That doesn't mean Cuba is on a pedestal all by itself. By 2014, more than 40 countries were testing and treating more than 95 percent of pregnant women; some places, including Anguilla, Barbados, Canada, Montserrat, Puerto Rico and the United States, have likely hit the mark as well. But Cuba is the first to go through the WHO monitoring program, which requires data on transmission for at least two years and an on-site visit by WHO members examining care in all parts of the country, including remote, impoverished and underserved areas. [NPR](#)

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