

10 April 2015

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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## Sleep Problems and Their Impact on U.S. Servicemembers

A RAND study — the first to comprehensively assess the prevalence and impact of sleep problems in the U.S. military and review the policies and programs related to sleep in the military — found that only 37 percent of servicemembers sleep the recommended seven to eight hours per night, and nearly half the sample had clinically significant poor sleep quality.

What factors contribute to such high prevalence of sleep problems among servicemembers, and what are the consequences of short sleep and other sleep problems among servicemembers?



### WELLNESS

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- Pakistan: How cellphones helped to dramatically reduce new cases of dengue fever
- Saudi Arabia: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)
- Syria: Two Syrians die from H1N1 swine flu

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- France bans super-skinny models in anorexia clampdown
- Germany had low-level EV-D68 circulation in 2014
- United Kingdom: Antibiotic resistance: 80,000 'might die' in future outbreak

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- U.S.: California governor defends water restrictions that largely spare farms
- U.S.: California's mandatory vaccine bill passes Senate vote
- U.S.: Climate change is a public health issue, Obama says
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- U.S.: Indiana begins needle exchange in county with HIV outbreak
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- U.S.: Non-treatable virus found in ticks in southern Connecticut
- U.S. report is cautious on climate change impact on infectious diseases
- U.S.: Shigella outbreak extra rough on S.F.'s vulnerable homeless

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- China considers tobacco tax
- Dengue fever: Malaysia, Vietnam and Fiji updates
- India: Without vultures, fate of Parsi 'sky burials' uncertain
- Philippines: Report says Philippines needs to bolster efforts to oust measles

### USSOUTHCOM

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- Cholera cases in Haiti, Dominican Republic continue to top 2014
- Jamaica: The impacts of benzene on public health

## Exposure Ed

Exposure Ed is an app that delivers information on military-related exposures to health care providers.

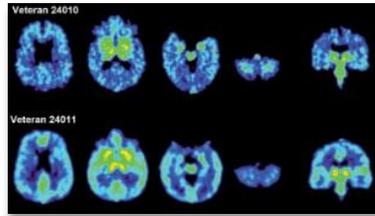
Veterans may have been exposed to a range of chemical, physical, and environmental hazards during service, and providers can use this tool to have an informed discussion with Veterans about their individual exposure-related concerns and potential impacts on their health.

Providers can also access information on exposure-related programs and benefits offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs and help Veterans assess their participation eligibility. This application should not be used for diagnostic purposes.



## U.S. MILITARY

### Could veterans have concussion-related CTE?



6 April - ... CTE, or chronic traumatic encephalopathy, [is] a crippling neurological disorder caused by repeated blows to the head. Characterized by deep depression, failing memory and anger that lurks just under the surface, CTE is a form of dementia that first came to light in the boxing world. ... Images like these

are traditionally gathered post-mortem, from brain samples taken at autopsy. That's been the only way CTE could be diagnosed. ... "For us to be able to make the diagnosis of the injury or the disease in living people is paramount to being able to help them, treat them and to find some way to keep them out of progressing into a terminal problem," says [Dr. Julian] Bailes. The scans of [two] ex-soldiers was a plus: a tiny sample designed to give a glimpse into what might be causing their debilitating symptoms. And they offer a chance to explore what many experts are beginning to suspect: The blasts and energy jolts common in warfare might be creating a new form of CTE, a "blast-variant" version. "In the military, it seems it would be vitally important to know who has been exposed to this, and then be able to identify, mark, follow the progression of brain degeneration from blast injury," says Bailes. Sure enough, the specific pattern of the tau the researchers found in Garcie and Shoemaker's brains didn't look at all like Alzheimer's. Instead, it looked similar to the tau display found in the 14 players suspected of having CTE and the results taken from brain autopsies of people diagnosed with CTE. [CNN](#)

### Incidence and prevalence of diagnoses of eye disorders of refraction and accommodation, active component service members, U.S. Armed Forces, 2000-2014

March 2015 - More than half of service members on duty in the active component of the U.S. Armed Forces in July 2014 had been previously diagnosed with at least one of the eye disorders of refraction and accommodation examined in this report. During 2000–2014, the most common diagnoses among service members, in descending order of frequency, were myopia, astigmatism, hyperopia, and presbyopia. The incidence rates for myopia were highest among those younger than 30 years and the rates for hyperopia and presbyopia were highest among those older than 39 years. Incidence rates and prevalence for all the disorders examined were higher among females than males. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

### New eye tracking technology helps diagnose brain injuries

5 April – [Researchers have] developed an eye-tracking tool that can objectively identify and

## Can I Eat This?

Montezuma's revenge, Delhi belly, or travelers' diarrhea—whatever you call it, it can ruin your international trip. Help prevent travelers' diarrhea by using CDC's *Can I Eat This?* app. Select the country you're in and answer a few simple questions about what you're thinking about eating or drinking, and *Can I Eat This?* will tell you whether it's likely to be safe. With *Can I Eat This?*, you can be more confident that your food and drink choices won't make you spend your international trip in the bathroom.



quantify signs of concussion after injury, even at the initial ED evaluation. Patients are seated in a chair, head on a chinrest, and look through a small aperture focused on a video screen. Imagine a patient seated at a Haag-Streit slit lamp -- only instead of looking straight ahead, the patient is looking at a music video (we used Shakira Waka Waka or K'NAAN Wavin'Flag) for 220 seconds. The aperture moves over a set trajectory along the video screen, and a computerized algorithm tracks binocular pupil movements in horizontal and vertical planes while the video plays and the aperture moves. The tracking tool then plots and quantifies eye tracking movements which we can distinguish as 'normal' or 'abnormal-concussion', as long as there were no pre-existing CNS or oculomotor abnormalities. In addition, we can track concussion improvement through subsequent eye tracking tests.

[MedPage Today](#)

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## GLOBAL

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### Breast milk bought online often contaminated with cow's milk

6 April - Breast milk purchased over the internet may be adulterated with cow's milk, according to a Pediatrics study. Researchers tested 102 samples of breast milk bought online. After two rounds of testing, 11 samples (11%) tested positive for DNA from cow's milk plus human milk. Ten of the 11 contained DNA levels consistent with at least 10% fluid cow's milk. Researchers conclude: "Because buyers have little means to verify the composition of the milk they receive, all should be aware of the possibility that it may be adulterated." The FDA recommends against parents buying breast milk from unscreened donors. Cow's milk can cause problems for infants who are allergic or intolerant. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

### Is pain a public health crisis?



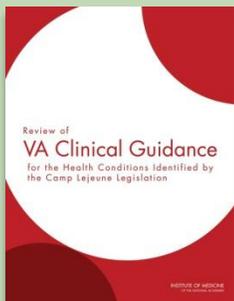
4 April - A federal advisory group has released a draft version of its National Pain Strategy, which seeks to redefine the way pain is perceived and treated in the U.S. The strategy ultimately derives from a mandate in the 2010 Affordable Care Act, which asked the Department of Health and Human Services to "increase the recognition of pain as a significant public health problem." ... It involved six working groups that tackled various aspects of pain care: population research, prevention and care, disparities, service delivery and reimbursement, professional education and training, and public awareness. The report does not make specific treatment recommendations; rather it acknowledges evidence gaps and calls for further research to better understand pain in order to treat it more appropriately. [MedPage Today](#)

**Review of VA  
Clinical Guidance  
for the Health  
Conditions  
Identified by the  
Camp Lejeune  
Legislation**

Between 1957 and 1987, the ground water at Camp Lejeune was inadvertently contaminated with chemicals, primarily industrial solvents that are now known to cause cancer and other health problems.

In 1980, drinking water contaminants, primarily trichloroethylene (TCE) and perchloroethylene (PCE), as well as other solvents, were first detected at Camp Lejeune in treated drinking water. The contaminated wells were closed in 1987.

In 1989, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency placed Camp Lejeune on the National Priorities List, also known as Superfund. It is estimated that between 500,000 and 1,000,000 people may have used the contaminated water and many of them continue to have concerns about the long-term effects that might result from that exposure.



## Lessons in diabetes care from around the world

3 April - Type 2 diabetes (diabetes mellitus) is one of the most common chronic diseases worldwide and requires coordinated care and active patient engagement for effective management. ... Around the world, a range of programs are attempting to confront this growing trend by implementing care transformations that support prevention and disease management. ... To assess how health systems were implementing and sustaining innovative diabetes programs, the Brookings Institution conducted five global cases studies in Mexico, India, Spain, and the U.S. to examine clinical and financial models for transforming diabetes care. Given the impact of behavioral choices on the disease, all of the diabetes programs rely heavily on patient engagement and support. This type of care often requires significant paradigms shifts with technological and organizational transformation within health systems, which in turn are difficult to sustain under a wide range of financing models.

[MedPage Today](#)

## Trade in harmful counterfeit pills going global

9 April - Cheap but fake medications, now available at online pharmacies, a growing problem across Southeast Asia. ... An Al Jazeera undercover investigation in Thailand and the Philippines has found fake medicines openly for sale on the streets and in pharmacies, putting lives at risk. ... Sophisticated criminal gangs are now selling fake drugs to consumers around the world via "online pharmacies". When consumers call the phone number listed on the pharmacy website, they are connected with a call centre, often in the Philippines, according to Ken Gamble, a cyber-crime private investigator based in Manila. "They do the front line kind of processing from the website and then send it out to their counterparts in India and China ... to actually ship out the drugs to the customer," said Gamble, who investigates the websites on behalf of pharmaceutical companies and passes his findings on to the police. "The money trail will go from Hong Kong into various other countries where the masterminds may have bank accounts... It's rare that the money will come into the Philippines. It will usually go to an offshore merchant set up in a foreign country." [Al Jazeera](#)

## When 'Moneyball' meets medicine

2 April - What's worse: Ebola or AIDS? Measles or malnutrition? Lung cancer or low back pain? As individuals, as a nation, and as a global community, where should we focus our time and money to improve lives the most? The way we usually answer these questions is to count the number of deaths: The more people killed, the more important the problem. Counting deaths is so familiar that few have thought to question it. But death toll alone says nothing about how long people live, and good health is much more than not being dead.

[New York Times](#)

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## Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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## INFLUENZA

# Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 12:

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity continues to decrease. Of those positive in week 12, 83% were identified as flu B.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity seemed to have peaked in many countries. A/H3N2 viruses continue to be the predominant subtype.
- PACOM: Moderate influenza activity was seen in Hawaii and there was minimal activity throughout the rest of PACOM.
- CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Influenza activity was minimal in CENTCOM and AFRICOM.
- SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity remains low. [AFHSC DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

## CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

- During week 12 (March 22-28, 2015), influenza activity continued to decrease, but remained elevated in the United States.
- Viral Surveillance: Of 12,014 specimens tested and reported during week 12, 1,300 (10.8%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- Influenza-associated Pediatric Deaths: Seven influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 2.0%, which is at the national baseline of 2.0%. Five regions reported ILI at or above region-specific baseline levels. [FluView](#)

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

- During 15-28 March 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 11 & 12), a total of 166 specimens were collected and received from 40 locations. Results were finalized for 104 specimens from 31 locations. During Week 11, the laboratory identified 12 influenza A(H3N2) and 15 influenza B. During Week 12, five influenza A(H3N2) and 10 influenza B were identified.
- Since the end of last season to present, influenza A(H3N2) has predominated. However, the proportion of influenza B has been increasing in recent weeks. In the past two weeks, approximately 25% of specimens tested positive for influenza (influenza B 15%,

influenza A 10%). Overall, we are seeing a downward trend in influenza activity. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

## Egypt: WHO notes 9 new H5N1 cases in Egypt, outlines patterns

9 April - The Egyptian health ministry reported nine more H5N1 avian influenza infections that occurred in March to the World Health Organization (WHO), a sign that a surge in infections with the lethal virus that began last fall is still ongoing. In an update today from its Eastern Mediterranean regional office, the WHO said the new cases lift Egypt's total for the year so far to 125 cases, 33 of them fatal. The fatality count, however, is 3 fewer than reported in the last WHO update on Mar 21. The agency said the H5N1 total for March alone is 30 cases, 4 of them fatal. [CIDRAP](#)

## Flu News Europe

Week 13/2015 (23-30 March 2015)

- Influenza activity continued to decrease in most reporting countries, although the proportion of influenza-virus-positive specimens remained high (37%).
- Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2) and type B viruses continued to circulate in the WHO European Region, but type B viruses accounted for 70% of detections for week 13/2015.
- Half of hospitalized influenza cases were reported mainly among people aged 65 years and over. [Flu News Europe](#)

## Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 12 January 2014:

### Influenza

- Three cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza one (A/H3) and two (B) among US military basic trainees.
- Decreasing influenza activity at US military recruit sites.

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](#)

## USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 28 March 2015 (Week 12)

Influenza A activity in Army and civilian populations and the number of specimens tested are decreasing.

- Influenza-like illness (ILI) activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week twelve

were 7% lower than in the previous week.

- Influenza cases: 4 hospitalized influenza cases were reported to USAPHC in weeks eleven and twelve: 1 active duty (AD) Service member (SM) and 3 non-AD beneficiaries, one of whom was not vaccinated. To date, 91 cases have been reported during this influenza season: 23 AD SM and 68 non-AD beneficiaries.
- Viral specimens: During week twelve, 239 of 1111 (22%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens; 55 of 844 (6.5%) specimens tested for influenza A were positive. ERMIC reported the most influenza A-positive specimens (27%), followed by SRMC (25%), NRMIC (20%), PRMC (18%), WRMC (9%), and CENTCOM (0%). [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

## U.S.: bird flu outbreak accelerates as wild ducks migrate north

9 April - A U.S. outbreak of a deadly strain of bird flu accelerated on Wednesday with the infection of a sixth turkey flock in Minnesota, the nation's top turkey-producing state, in less than a week. The infected flock of 310,000 turkeys was the ninth case of the H5N2 flu in Minnesota in just over a month and the biggest flock yet to be confirmed with the disease, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The virus was detected at a facility west of Minneapolis that is owned by a subsidiary of Spam maker Hormel Foods Corp, the company said. Since the beginning of the year, the flu, which can kill nearly an entire poultry flock within 48 hours, has also been found in birds from Oregon to Arkansas. ... The number of infections is climbing as migratory ducks, which are believed to be spreading the disease, return to Minnesota to breed after spending the winter farther south, said Beth Thompson, assistant director of the Minnesota Board of Animal Health. The larger number of ducks likely increases the risk for wild birds to transmit the virus. [Reuters](#)

## WHO Influenza Update

6 April - Globally, influenza activity decreased further but remained above the seasonal threshold in the northern hemisphere. While influenza A(H3N2) viruses predominated this season, the proportions of influenza B and influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 detections increased in the last few weeks.

- In North America, influenza activity continued to decrease but remained slightly above the threshold while the proportion influenza B detections increased.
- In Europe, influenza activity continued to decline in most countries. Influenza A(H3N2)virus continued to predominate this season, but there was an increase in the proportion of influenza B detections in many countries.
- In northern Africa and the Middle East, influenza activity decreased in most of the region. Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 remained predominant in the region.
- In western Asia, influenza activity decreased in most countries in the region. But influenza detections have increased in Turkey with influenza B and influenza

A(H1N1)pdm09 co-circulating.

- In the temperate countries of Asia, influenza activity continued to decrease in most of the region, but increased in the Republic of Korea. In north China, influenza B activity increased, while the peak of influenza activity occurred in the beginning of the year.
- In tropical countries of the Americas, influenza activity was reported to increase slightly in most countries. Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico reported increased influenza-like illness (ILI), with detections of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and influenza virus.
- In tropical Asia, influenza activity remained high and influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 predominated in India and Bhutan. Influenza activity with influenza A(H3N2) and B continued to decrease from its peak in southern China and China Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.
- In the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels. [WHO](#)

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#### **VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

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## **Blue Bell suspends operations at Oklahoma ice cream plant**

3 April - Blue Bell Ice Cream announced Friday that it has suspended operations at an Oklahoma production facility that officials had previously connected to a foodborne illness linked to the deaths of three people. ... Last month, the company and health officials said a 3-ounce cup of ice cream contaminated with listeriosis was traced to a plant in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. The now-recalled ice cream product — cups of chocolate, strawberry and vanilla — is not sold in retail locations and is shipped in bulk to "institutional accounts" such as hospitals in 23 states that comprise less than 5 percent of the company's sales. ... The recall, the first in the company's 108-year history, began when five patients at Via Christi St. Francis hospital in Wichita, Kansas, became ill with listeriosis while hospitalized at some point from December 2013 to January 2015. Officials determined at least four drank milkshakes that contained Blue Bell ice cream. Three of the patients later died. [Yahoo! Mail](#)

## **Canine flu in Chicago 2015: Over 1,000 dogs sickened with outbreak**

6 April - More than 1,000 dogs in Chicago have been hit with canine influenza, ABC News reported Monday. The rare virus forced the Cook County Department of Animal and Rabies Control to issue an advisory following the deaths of five dogs in the past month. "It's almost an epidemic," Dr. Jerry Klein told WBBM-TV, Chicago. "I've been here for 35 years. It's

probably the worst type of outbreak I've ever experienced." People cannot catch the virus from their pets, but it's highly contagious among dogs. Like with the human flu, there is a vaccine for dogs. "This isn't a typical vaccination we give, but because of the outbreak, we're recommending it for all high-risk dogs," Dr. Anne Cohen, an emergency veterinarian, told ABC News. [International Business Times](#)

## Funding gap hinders law for ensuring food safety

7 April - After thousands of people were sickened by tainted eggs, peanut butter and spinach, Congress passed a sweeping food safety law in 2010 that gave the Food and Drug Administration new powers to prevent additional outbreaks. But lawmakers have not provided enough money for the mission. The Congressional Budget Office said the F.D.A. would need a total of \$580 million from 2011 to 2015 to carry out the changes required by the Food Safety Modernization Act. So far, Congress has appropriated less than half of that amount, even as the agency is moving to issue crucial rules under the law this year. ... In its previous five budget requests, the F.D.A. proposed user fees that would cover the bulk of the cost of carrying out the food safety law. Last year, for example, it asked for \$263 million for the law, with about \$229 million coming from fees on food companies. But lawmakers soundly rejected those proposals after lobbying by the food industry. [New York Times](#)

## Sabra pulls 30,000 cases of hummus off store shelves because of Listeria fears

9 April - Sabra Dipping Co., which makes the top-selling brand of hummus in the United States, has voluntarily pulled 30,000 cases of hummus — about 360,000 containers nationwide — from stores after a sample tested positive for the potentially deadly bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. Listeria infection can be particularly dangerous to young children, the elderly and people with weak immune systems. ... A random hummus sample collected by a state agency at a retail location in Michigan on March 30 led to the recall. [Washington Post](#)

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### WELLNESS

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## Being a night owl may be bad for your health



8 April - A new study suggests that early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy — although not necessarily wealthy or wise. Korean researchers recruited 1,620 men and women, ages 47 to 59, and administered a questionnaire to establish whether they were morning people or night owls. They found 480 morning types, 95 night owls, and 1,045 who fit into neither group. ... After controlling for an array of variables, they found that compared with morning people, men who were night owls were significantly more likely to have diabetes, and

women night owls were more than twice as likely to have metabolic syndrome — high blood sugar levels, excess body fat around the waist, and abnormal lipid readings. The reasons for the effect are unclear, but the scientists suggest that consuming more calories after 8 p.m. and exposure to artificial light at night can both affect metabolic regulation.

[New York Times](#)

## Common painkiller may not ease lower back pain or osteoarthritis

8 April - People with lower back pain or aching hips or knees might not get much relief from the painkiller paracetamol (also known as acetaminophen), a review of past research suggests. "Our systematic review found that paracetamol is ineffective for patients with low back pain and only provides negligible benefits for patients with lower limb osteoarthritis," said lead study author Gustavo Machado, a researcher at the George Institute for Global Health in Sydney, Australia. [Yahoo! News](#)

## FDA to investigate Bayer's *Essure* contraceptive device

3 April - The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has opened an investigation of the *Essure* (Bayer Healthcare Pharmaceuticals Inc) permanent contraceptive device after allegations that the company falsified and altered medical records during clinical trials, failed to report adverse events, deceived the public and the FDA about the device's safety and efficacy, and used defective materials in manufacturing, according to a petition from the Law Offices of Koch Parafinczuk & Wolf, PA. The petition was filed on behalf of hundreds of women who complained of adverse events including organ perforation, device migration out of the fallopian tubes, and pain. [Medscape](#)

## Retailers to stop sales of controversial supplements

9 April - Some leading vitamin stores have announced that they were pulling from their shelves a group of supplements that may contain a dangerous stimulant. Vitamin Shoppe, one of the country's largest specialty retailers of dietary supplements, said that it planned to stop selling all supplements that list on their labels a plant known as acacia rigidula after [a study published on Tuesday reported](#) that many of these products contained an amphetamine-like stimulant called BMPEA. The authors of the study noted that the chemical, which was first synthesized in the 1930s as a replacement for amphetamine, has never been fully studied in humans and that under federal law is not an authorized dietary supplement ingredient. Canadian health authorities pulled a popular supplement that contains BMPEA from stores in December and warned consumers that the chemical could cause strokes and other serious cardiovascular complications. [New York Times](#)

## Study warns of diet supplement dangers kept quiet by F.D.A.



7 April - ... [Public] health experts contend that the F.D.A.'s reluctance to act in [the case of nine supplements containing a chemical nearly identical to amphetamine] is symptomatic of a broader problem. The agency is not effectively policing the \$33 billion-a-year supplements industry in part because top agency regulators themselves

come from the industry and have conflicts of interest, they say. In recent years, two of the agency's top officials overseeing supplements — including one currently on the job — were former leaders of the largest supplement industry trade and lobbying group. [New York Times](#)

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### USAFRICOM

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## Ebola region sees sharp drop in new confirmed cases

8 April - Ebola numbers in West Africa's outbreak region tumbled last week, with the lowest totals since May 2014, fueled by improving response indicators in Sierra Leone and Guinea, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today in its weekly epidemiologic snapshot. ... Liberia didn't report any new confirmed cases last week, so the 30 cases from the region are from Guinea and Sierra Leone, a sizeable drop from the 57 lab-confirmed cases the WHO reported the week before. The latest illnesses include 21 from Guinea and 9 from Sierra Leone. The WHO said the outbreak total has reached 25,515 confirmed, probable, and suspected cases, with the number of deaths rising to 10,572. [CIDRAP](#)

## Ebola virus diagnostic tool developed by physician who worked in Liberia

3 April - An emergency medicine physician who treated Ebola-infected patients in Liberia last year used his field experience to create a tool to determine the likelihood that patients presenting with Ebola symptoms will actually carry the virus. ... In Levine's Ebola Prediction Score tool, six ... symptoms create the model--sick contact, diarrhea, loss of appetite, muscle pain, difficulty swallowing and absence of abdominal pain. A scoring system based on these signs may help clinicians determine who is most likely to require isolation while laboratory tests confirm diagnosis. [ScienceDaily](#)

## Second-generation Ebola vaccines show promise in animal study

8 April - Two candidate Ebola vaccines developed as possible next-generation products fully protected monkeys immunized with a single dose against experimental infection with the strain responsible for West Africa's outbreak, researchers reported today. The vaccines are intermediate and highly attenuated versions of a vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV) vaccine that contains the Ebola virus glycoprotein. A team from the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) at Galveston and Profectus BioSciences, Inc., reported its findings today in the latest issue of Nature. Human safety and efficacy trials are under way in Liberia and Guinea on the first-generation version of the vaccine, VSV-EBOV, which was developed by researchers at the Public Health Agency of Canada and licensed by NewLink Genetics and Merck. [CIDRAP](#)

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**USCENTCOM**

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## Afghanistan: Afghan women activists face rising violence, Amnesty says

7 April - Afghan women activists who are working to improve the human rights situation in their country face increased violence, including threats, sexual assault and assassinations, Amnesty International said Tuesday. The London-based watchdog criticized Afghan authorities in a new report released in Kabul, saying that both the Afghan government and the international community have abandoned the women activists despite the gains made in the past decade. Based on interviews with more than 50 women rights defenders and their relatives across the country, Amnesty said it found that Afghan authorities consistently ignored or refused to act on threats against women. ... [Salil Shetty, Amnesty International's secretary general] said that out of the 50 cases Amnesty examined, in only one instance was an arrest made. In all the other cases, complaints were neglected or ignored by officials.

[Virginia Gazette](#)

## Pakistan: How cellphones helped to dramatically reduce new cases of dengue fever

3 April - ... [In 2012], anti-dengue activities [in Pakistan] were being recorded via an app. Dr. Umar Saif, the young, energetic, then-chairman of the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB), was tasked by the government with developing a solution to fight dengue. PITB developed an app to record anti-dengue activities. Everyone in dengue-tracking teams was given smartphones. They took geo-tagged pictures that were displayed live. After the data was gathered, Saif led the data analysis process to find out where the government

should focus its preventive activities. This new dashboard allowed officials including the chief minister to track the progress. He used the dashboard in his meetings to ensure "that no vulnerable or affected areas were neglected." The app made a difference. In 2012, there were 258 confirmed dengue cases in Lahore -- 80 times fewer cases than in 2011, when there were (even according to conservative estimates) at least 21,000 dengue cases.

[Huffington Post](#)

## Saudi Arabia: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

9 April - Between 24 and 31 March 2015, the National IHR Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia notified WHO of 12 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, including 2 deaths. ... Globally, WHO has been notified of 1102 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 416 related deaths. [WHO](#)

## Syria: Two Syrians die from H1N1 swine flu

6 April - Two Syrians died of H1N1 swine flu last month and six others were suspected of carrying the infection, Syria's state news agency SANA said on Monday. The World Health Organization has warned that the collapse of Syria's health system during its four-year civil war has led to the spread of disease. Typhoid, hepatitis and the polio virus have taken hold in the country. SANA said the two men were from the southern province of Sweida, where government forces and rebels have clashed. [Al Arabiya](#)

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### USEUCOM

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## Europe: Sex education in Europe turns to urging more births

8 April - Recently, Sex and Society, a nonprofit group that provides much of Denmark's sex education, adjusted its curriculum. The group no longer has a sole emphasis on how to prevent getting pregnant but now also talks about pregnancy in a more positive light. It is all part of a not-so-subtle push in Europe to encourage people to have more babies. Denmark, like a number of European countries, is growing increasingly anxious about low birthrates. Those concerns have only been intensified by the region's financial and economic crisis, with high unemployment rates among the young viewed as discouraging potential parents. [New York Times](#)

## France bans super-skinny models in anorexia clampdown

3 April - France will ban excessively thin fashion models and expose modeling agents and the fashion houses that hire them to possible fines and even jail, under a new law passed on Friday. The move by France, with its fashion and luxury industries worth tens of billions of euros, comes after a similar ban by Israel in 2013, while other countries, like Italy and Spain, rely on voluntary codes of conduct to protect models. ... Lawmakers also made it illegal to condone anorexia and said any re-touched photo that alters the bodily appearance of a model for commercial purposes must carry a message stating it had been manipulated. ... The law ... envisages imprisonment of up to six months and a fine of 75,000 euros (\$82,000) for any agency contravening it. A second measure means that any website inciting a reader to "seek excessive thinness by encouraging eating restrictions for a prolonged period of time, resulting in risk of mortality or damage to health" will face up to a year in prison and fines of up to 100,000 euros. [Reuters](#)

## Germany had low-level EV-D68 circulation in 2014

7 April - German researchers yesterday reported evidence that enterovirus D68 (EV-D68), which caused a widespread outbreak of respiratory illness in American children last fall, also circulated at low levels in Germany at about the same time. [Scientists] from the Robert Koch Institute in Berlin reported that they tested 325 nasal swab samples collected in sentinel surveillance from patients who had an influenza-like illness or acute respiratory illness. The samples were collected from August through October of 2014 at various sites around Germany. A rhinovirus or enterovirus was found in 143 of 325 samples (44%). Of these, 25 were identified as EV-D68 through sequencing of the viral protein 2 and 4 gene regions, the report says. ... The 25 EV-D68 cases, which represented 7.7% of the surveillance sample, involved 10 children and 15 adults. ... The report does not mention any neurologic illnesses, such as acute flaccid myelitis, which was seen in a number of EV-D68 patients in the United States. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## United Kingdom: Antibiotic resistance: 80,000 'might die' in future outbreak

6 April - About 80,000 people could die if there were a "widespread outbreak" of an antibiotic-resistant blood infection, according to a government document. The National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies says such an outbreak could be expected to hit 200,000 people - and two in five of them "might die". The document also says "high numbers of deaths could also be expected" from other forms of resistant infection. It warns infection risk could make "much of modern medicine" unsafe. The Cabinet Office document says the number of infections "complicated" by antimicrobial resistance is expected to "increase markedly over the next 20 years". [BBC News](#)

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## U.S.: California governor defends water restrictions that largely spare farms

5 April - Governor Jerry Brown defended his state's new mandatory water restrictions on Sunday as critics claim they largely spare some farms that consume much of California's water. The state's farms account for 80% of its water consumption but only 2% of its economy, according to the think tank Public Policy Institute of California. But Brown asserted in an ABC News interview taking water away from farmers could create a number of problems, including displacing hundreds of thousands of people and cutting off a region that provides a significant fraction of the country's food supply. "They're not watering their lawn or taking long showers," he said. "They're providing most of the fruits and vegetables of America and a significant part of the world." [TIME](#)

## U.S.: California's mandatory vaccine bill passes Senate vote

6 April - California lawmakers on Wednesday advanced a bill that would require schoolchildren in the state to be vaccinated amid impassioned pleas from parents and doctors, even activist Robert Kennedy Jr. Under the proposal, parents would no longer be able to send unvaccinated kids to school with waivers citing religious or personal beliefs. Exemptions would be available only for children with health problems. Supporters say the measure would increase the number of vaccinated young people and improve public health. [ABC 7 News](#)

## U.S.: Climate change is a public health issue, Obama says

7 April - Climate change is a public health issue, President Obama said Tuesday, rolling out a White House initiative to make the data connecting those dots more accessible to scientists and the public. "What we know is that the temperature of the planet is rising," Obama told a roundtable at Howard University in Washington. "And we know that in addition to the adverse impacts that may have when it comes to more frequent hurricanes, or more powerful storms, or increased flooding, we also know that it has an impact on public health." Wildfires create more particulate pollution, which can cause allergies and asthma, Obama said. Higher temperatures can lead to more insect-borne diseases. "You can't cordon yourself off from air or from climate," Obama said. The Obama administration announced Tuesday that it was releasing 150 government data sets on climate and health in order to allow scientists, application developers and the public to better understand the relationship between the two. The White House has also convened 30 deans of medical and public health schools to better address the health impacts of climate change. [USA Today](#)

## U.S.: Increased levels of radon in Pennsylvania homes correspond to onset of fracking

9 April - Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health researchers say that levels of radon in Pennsylvania homes – where 42 percent of readings surpass what the U.S. government considers safe – have been on the rise since 2004, around the time that the fracking industry began drilling natural gas wells in the state. The researchers ... also found that buildings located in the counties where natural gas is most actively being extracted out of Marcellus shale have in the past decade seen significantly higher readings of radon compared with buildings in low-activity areas. There were no such county differences prior to 2004. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

## U.S.: Indiana begins needle exchange in county with HIV outbreak

4 April - State and local health officials began a needle-exchange program Saturday in a southeastern Indiana county where an HIV outbreak among intravenous drug users has grown to nearly 90 cases. Scott County's needle-exchange program was created through an emergency executive order signed last week by Gov. Mike Pence in an attempt to curb the state's largest-ever HIV outbreak. That 30-day order temporarily suspended Indiana's ban on such programs, but only for the southeastern Indiana county about 30 miles north of Louisville, Kentucky. [Chicago Tribune](#)

## U.S.: Kids treated for assault more apt to face future gun violence

7 April - Adolescents and young adults with a history of drug use who presented to the emergency department (ED) for assault injury had a higher risk for subsequent firearm violence, according to the results of a small study. Compared with their peers (ages 14 to 24) without a history of injury by assault, those with an assault-based injury had a 40% higher risk of reporting firearm violence during their 24 months of follow-up (59.0% versus 42.5%, relative risk=1.39, P<0.001), reported Patrick M. Carter, MD, of the University of Michigan Injury Center in Ann Arbor, and colleagues. [MedPage Today](#)

## U.S.: More U.S. teens opt for birth control with IUDs, implants

7 April - The use of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) by teens increased from 2005 to 2013 but still remained relatively low, researchers reported. The percentage of female teens, ages 15 to 19, selecting LARC, which includes subdermal implants and intrauterine devices (IUDs), at Title X National Family Planning Program sites was 7.1% in 2013, up from 0.4% in 2005 (P<0.001 for trend), according to Lisa Romero, DrPH, MPH, of the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the CDC in Atlanta, and colleagues. ... Common barriers included "unfounded concerns about safety,

high upfront costs, and lack of awareness about LARC," they added. They promoted three strategies to reduce those barriers: educating clinicians that LARC is safe for teens, training providers on contraceptive counseling and LARC insertion, and providing contraception at reduced or no cost to teens. [MedPage Today](#)

## U.S.: Non-treatable virus found in ticks in southern Connecticut

7 April - An emerging tick-borne disease is starting to show up in Bridgeport and Branford, a researcher says. The Powassan virus has symptoms that are similar to those of Lyme disease, including headache, nausea and fever. ... But once contracted, there's no treatment for Powassan. In some cases, it can be fatal, said Dr. Theodore Andreadis, who heads The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. "These ticks will transmit this virus when they feed within a matter of hours, whereas with Lyme disease, for example, ticks generally have to feed up to two days before they're capable of transmitting it," Andreadis said. ... There were 12 reported human cases nationally in 2013, the last year for when statistics are available. [CBS New York](#)

## U.S. report is cautious on climate change impact on infectious diseases

8 April - A draft White House report on the impact of climate change on human health takes a cautious tone regarding the possible effects of a warming climate on the prevalence of infectious diseases. The report, "The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment," was released by the US Global Climate Change Research Program yesterday. The program has invited public comments on the report and is also submitting it to the National Academy of Sciences for peer review. The report says climate is just one of many factors that affect the distribution of diseases caused by pathogens carried by vectors such as mosquitoes, fleas, and ticks. Other factors are land use, socioeconomic and cultural variables, pest control, access to health care, and human responses to disease risk. "Whether climate change in the U.S. will increase the chances of domestically acquiring diseases such as dengue fever is uncertain, due to vector-control efforts and lifestyle factors, such as time spent indoors, that reduce human-insect contact," the report states. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## U.S.: Shigella outbreak extra rough on S.F.'s vulnerable homeless

7 April - An outbreak of shigellosis — a highly infectious gastrointestinal infection — that started in November and hit San Francisco's homeless population especially hard has heightened awareness about how vulnerable to infection people living on the streets and in shelters may be, and resulted in new measures to prevent the spread of disease. San Francisco has seen more than 200 cases of shigellosis — commonly called shigella, the name of the bacteria that cause the disease — since November. ... Aside from the size of the

outbreak, public health officials are concerned about the community most affected — more than a quarter of patients are homeless — and because the strain of bacteria involved appears to be resistant to the antibiotic most commonly used to treat shigella. ... [Public] health officials have passed out small hand sanitizers to people living outdoors in homeless encampments who may not have access to clean running water. And they taught homeless outreach teams to do simple health evaluations and distribute oral rehydration packages to people suffering diarrhea, the main symptom of shigella. [SF Gate](#)

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### China considers tobacco tax

9 April - Adding a 50 percent excise tax onto tobacco products in China – which has the highest number of tobacco users in the world – could significantly reduce smoking-related deaths while generating substantial financial risk protection and poverty alleviation benefits to households, according to a study led by a Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health researcher. While tobacco taxes have been criticized as unfairly impacting poorer people, who spend a higher percentage of their income on taxes than wealthy people, the researchers wrote that only about 14% of the tax income would come from the lowest income group, while 24 percent would come from the wealthiest group. [Harvard Gazette](#)

### Dengue fever: Malaysia, Vietnam and Fiji updates

6 April – **Malaysia:** As the number of dengue fever cases in Malaysia nears 35,000 cases for the year, the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) is calling on the public to do its part to curb the outbreak. ... Bernama, the Malaysian National News Agency, is reporting the dengue death toll has increased by three to 104, although this is not reflected on the Ministry of Health website as of this report.

**Vietnam:** The number of dengue fever cases in Ho Chi Minh City is around 3,000 to date, a 43 percent increase from the same period last year, according to a Vietnam Net report Sunday. Two fatalities have been reported. In addition, Dong Nai Province's Preventive Health Centre has reported 860 dengue fever cases in the last three months, an increase of 93 per cent compared to the same period last year. Two patients have died due to dengue here also.

**Fiji:** The Pacific island of Fiji is also recording an increase in dengue fever, according to local media. According to Fiji Village, 502 confirmed dengue fever cases have been recorded so far. The Health Ministry said 401 dengue fever cases have been recorded in the Northern Division. In 2014, Fiji saw some 28,000 dengue cases and 14 deaths. [Outbreak News Today](#)

## India: Without vultures, fate of Parsi 'sky burials' uncertain

7 April - It is a thorny issue that beleaguers this fast diminishing community daily - how to preserve a 3,000-year-old ritual of giving "sky burials" to the Parsi dead amid a nearly extinct vulture population? In 1931, in the wildernesses of the Malabar hills overlooking the financial capital of Mumbai, Parsi Zoroastrians erected a Dakhma - Tower of Silence. Fleets of white-rumped and long-billed vultures once swooped and returned to the blue skies after having quickly devoured the corpses left there. ... "The vultures disappeared nearly 30-35 years ago from the Tower of Silence," Asad Rahmani, Director of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) told Al Jazeera. "At that time, it was presumed that they disappeared due to change in the land use, and construction of tall buildings all around. But I think vultures declined mainly due to the prevalence of Diclofenac" ... when the Indian government opened this drug for use in livestock as well. Today, there is not a single vulture in the state, according to Rahmani. "Diclofenac is lethal to vultures. ... As corpses take longer, sometimes eight weeks, to decompose fully, the tower of silence continues to be a scene of partially decomposed bodies. [Al Jazeera](#)

## Philippines: Report says Philippines needs to bolster efforts to oust measles

9 April - Progress toward eliminating measles in the Philippines has faltered in the past few years, and greater efforts are needed to push the disease out of the country and surrounding regions. ... In 1998 the Philippines set a national goal of eliminating measles by 2008, the report says. Coverage with the first dose of measles-containing vaccine (MCV) as estimated by the World Health Organization (WHO) increased from 80% in 1998 to 90% in 2013. Routine vaccination with a second dose of MCV began in 2010, and second-dose coverage rose to 53% by 2013. After nationwide supplemental immunization activities (SIAs) in 1998 and 2004, the Philippines achieved historic lows in measles cases in 2006, the article says. But despite more SIAs in 2007 and 2011, cases and incidence generally increased from 2007 to 2012. In 2013 and 2014, large outbreaks affected infants, children, and young adults. Contributing factors in the outbreaks included first-dose vaccine coverage of less than 95%, low second-dose coverage, and delayed and patchy outbreak-response immunization efforts. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

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## Cholera cases in Haiti, Dominican Republic continue to top 2014

9 April - Haiti and the Dominican Republic continue to report cholera cases in early 2015

well above levels seen during the same period last year, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported late last week. From the first of the year through mid-March, **Haiti** had 10,328 cases, 8,124 hospitalizations (79% hospitalization rate), and 106 deaths. That compares with 7,225 cases, 5,794 hospitalizations, and 86 deaths reported by PAHO a month ago. The agency said 2015 levels are on par with the same period in 2012. ... Cholera impact in the **Dominican Republic** through mid-March reached 185 suspected cases and 9 deaths, more than double the number in the same period in 2014. The number is up from 99 cases and 6 deaths reported a month ago. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## Jamaica: The impacts of benzene on public health

5 April - The Ministry of Health's acknowledgment of the highest benzene concentration ever recorded in Jamaica's air following the March 2015 fire at the Riverton dump site is only the tip of the iceberg. The weak air quality monitoring programme conducted by the National Environment and Planning Agency prevents the public from appreciating the real magnitude of Jamaica's environmental health problems, especially those related to poor solid waste management. ... Ontario regulations propose a 24-hour average standard of 2.3 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for benzene, based on the carcinogenic effects associated with exposure to benzene. The concentration of benzene at the Half-Way-Tree Road background monitoring station was 7.87. Two weeks after the 2012 fire, the benzene concentration was 13. Therefore, background benzene concentrations in Jamaica exceed the Ontario standard. Jamaica does not have standards for benzene. [Jamaica Observer](#)

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The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* is published by the Health Information Operations Program, Deputy Chief of Staff for Communication, United States Army Public Health Command.

