

10 January 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Preventive Medicine Wall Planner

The 2014 Preventive Medicine Wall Planner is available for download from the [USAPHC Health Information Products eCatalog](#). Included on the planner are monthly health observances, health tips, and featured products from the eCatalog.



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U.S. MILITARY

Army releases November 2013 suicide information

30 December - The Army released suicide data today for the month of November 2013. Among active-duty soldiers, there were 14 potential suicides: one has been confirmed as suicide, and 13 remain under investigation. For October 2013, the Army reported 10 potential suicides among active duty soldiers: two have been confirmed as suicides, and

IOM Workshop on Hearing Loss and Healthy Aging

The impact of hearing loss on healthy aging in older adults has largely not been considered despite hearing loss being independently associated with cognitive and physical functional decline, an increased risk of developing dementia, mortality, and increased rates of hospitalization and health care utilization. Hearing loss may contribute to these outcomes through a variety of pathways, including social isolation, increased cognitive load, and poor health literacy, yet few studies address age-related hearing loss in the context of healthy aging and public health.

January 13: 9:00 – 5:00

January 14: 9:00 – 4:30

[Register](#)



eight are under investigation. For calendar year 2013, there have been 139 potential active duty suicides: 74 have been confirmed as suicides, and 65 remain under investigation. Updated active duty suicide numbers for calendar year 2012: 185 (184 have been confirmed as suicides, and one remains under investigation). During November 2013, among reserve component soldiers who were not on active duty, there were 10 potential suicides (six Army National Guard and four Army Reserve): one has been confirmed as suicide, and nine remain under investigation. [Defense.gov](#)

Army team to destroy Syrian chemical weapons afloat

3 January - Some 64 specialists from the Army's Edgewood Chemical Biological Center are expected to depart for the Mediterranean in about two weeks aboard the ship MV Cape Ray to destroy chemical weapons from Syria. The nearly 650-foot-long ship, now in Portsmouth, will travel to a yet-to-be specified location in the Mediterranean and will take on about 700 metric tons of both mustard gas and "DF compound," a component of the nerve agent sarin gas, and will then use two new, and recently installed "field deployable hydrolysis systems" to neutralize the chemicals. Onboard the Cape Ray will be 35 mariners, about 64 chemical specialists from Edgewood, Md., a security team, and a contingent from U.S. European Command. It's expected the operational portion of the mission will take about 90 days.

[Army.mil](#)

Military consolidates vaccine agencies

6 January - The Military Vaccine Agency and Vaccine Healthcare Centers Network have unified as one agency ready to provide the military community with the highest quality immunization standards and practices. Immunization is a cornerstone of the Military Health System's shift in focus from treating disease to preventing it. As one unified organization, the Military Vaccine Agency-Vaccine Healthcare Centers Network will be better able to provide expert consultation and response to immunization policy and practices, deliver education and training, enhance safety surveillance and research, implement communication activities, promote immunization standards, and make meaningful contributions to the body of knowledge surrounding immunization health care. [MHS](#)

VA doctor says Gulf War vets not getting effective treatments

7 January - As Department of Veterans Affairs physician Nancy Klimas told an agency panel Tuesday about the many successful ways her clinic has been treating Gulf War illness, veterans have responded with a combination of hope and anger. The hope came because her clinic appears to be making headway in using research-based methods to treat veterans with the disease, which consists of symptoms ranging from headaches to memory loss to chronic fatigue, and plagues one in four of the 697,000 veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War against Iraq. The anger came because, although Klimas had been using at least some of her methods for a decade, none of them have been disseminated throughout the VA system for use in other clinics. [USA Today](#)

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GLOBAL

A new test for malaria, no blood required

6 January - Rice University researchers have developed a rapid malaria test that uses a laser pulse, eliminating the need to draw blood. The test has not yet been tried on humans with the disease, but in experiments with blood samples and mice, it detected malaria when only one red blood cell in a million was infected, with no false positives, the inventor said... In theory, said the inventor, Dmitri O. Lapotko, a physicist who studied laser weapons in his native Belarus, the technology can be used in a device powered by a car battery and is rugged enough to work in dusty villages. With a fiber-optic probe attached to a finger or ear lobe, the device could screen one person every 20 seconds for less than 50 cents each. [New York Times](#)

Alcohol screening and counseling

January 2014 - At least 38 million adults drink too much and most are not alcoholics. Drinking too much includes binge drinking, high weekly use, and any alcohol use by pregnant women or those under age 21. It causes about 88,000 deaths in the US each year, and costs the economy about \$224 billion. Alcohol screening and brief counseling can reduce drinking on an occasion by 25% in people who drink too much, but only 1 in 6 people has ever talked with their doctor or other health professional about alcohol use. [CDC](#)

BPA increases risk of cancer in human prostate tissue

7 January - Fetal exposure to a commonly used plasticizer found in products such as water bottles, soup can liners and paper receipts, can increase the risk for prostate cancer later in life... Bisphenol A, or BPA, is widely used to soften plastics. Steering clear of the chemical is nearly impossible, says Gail Prins, professor of physiology at UIC and lead author of the paper... Exposure of the fetus to BPA in utero is of particular concern, because the chemical, which mimics the hormone estrogen, has been linked to several kinds of cancer, including prostate cancer, in rodent models. The new findings show that human prostate tissue is also susceptible. "Our research provides the first direct evidence that exposure to BPA during development, at the levels we see in our day-to-day lives, increases the risk for prostate cancer in human prostate tissue," Prins said. [EurekAlert!](#)

Obesity quadruples to nearly one billion in developing world



2 January - The number of overweight and obese adults in the developing world has almost quadrupled to around one billion since 1980, says a report from a UK think tank. The Overseas Development Institute said one in three people worldwide was now overweight and urged governments to do more to influence diets. In the UK, 64%

Distracted Driving



and Risk of Crashes

Watch Now »

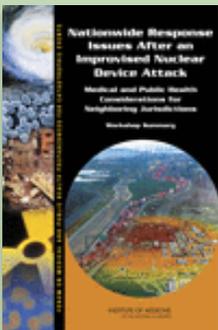
This video from the New England Journal of Medicine compares the risk of road crashes among novice and experienced drivers due to distracted driving.



Nationwide Response Issues After an Improvised Nuclear Device Attack: Medical and Public Health Considerations for Neighboring Jurisdictions

In partnership with the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), the IOM Forum on Medical and Public Health Preparedness for Catastrophic Events hosted a workshop that focused on key response requirements faced by local and regional public health and health care systems in response to an IND detonation.

Topics discussed included understanding the differences between types of radiation incidents and the implications of an IND attack on outlying communities as well as the roles of regional health care coalitions in coordination of health care response. This document summarizes the workshop.



of adults are classed as being overweight or obese. The report predicts a "huge increase" in heart attacks, strokes and diabetes. Globally, the percentage of adults who were overweight or obese - classed as having a [body mass index greater than 25](#) - grew from 23% to 34% between 1980 and 2008. [BBC News](#)

Pregnant, and forced to stay on life support

7 January - ...At 33, Marlise Munoz was brain-dead after collapsing on her kitchen floor in November from what appeared to be a blood clot in her lungs. But as her parents and her husband prepared to say their final goodbyes in the intensive care unit at John Peter Smith Hospital here and to honor her wish not to be left on life support, they were stunned when a doctor told them the hospital was not going to comply with their instructions. Mrs. Munoz was 14 weeks pregnant, the doctor said, and Texas is one of more than two dozen states that prohibit, with varying degrees of strictness, medical officials from cutting off life support to a pregnant patient. More than a month later, Mrs. Munoz remains connected to life-support machines on the third floor of the I.C.U., where a medical team monitors the heartbeat of the fetus, now in its 20th week of development... At least 31 states have adopted laws restricting the ability of doctors to end life support for terminally ill pregnant women, regardless of the wishes of the patient or the family, according to [a 2012 report](#) from the Center for Women Policy Studies in Washington. Texas is among 12 of those states with the most restrictive such laws, which require that life-support measures continue no matter how far along the pregnancy is. [New York Times](#)

Promising mosquito repellent announced

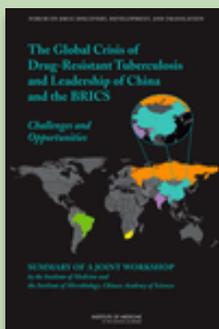
3 January - In many regions of the world, mosquitoes are a seasonal pest. In other regions, they carry serious diseases like malaria. The World Health Organization estimates that almost 630,000 people died of malaria-related causes in 2012, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Now, a group of U.S.-based scientists is working to develop a more effective and less expensive mosquito repellent than currently in use. The research, at the University of California Riverside, is based on the fact that mosquitoes use the same receptor for detecting carbon dioxide in our breath as they do for the odor from our skin when they come closer. The lead investigator, Anandasankar Ray, says scientists tested more than a million chemical compounds until they found a substance called Ethyl pyruvate that shuts down the mosquitoes' receptor. [VOA](#)

Sealant inspired by beach worm could become surgical superglue

8 January - ...Cardiac surgeon Pedro del Nido and his colleagues have developed a biodegradable adhesive that can patch a hole in a pig's heart or artery. The experimental glue is nontoxic and is strong enough to hold up under the high pressures in the human heart, the team report Wednesday in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*. So far, they've tested the glue only in animals. So the sealant is far from reaching the operating room or battlefield. But del Nido hopes the adhesive will eventually replace traditional

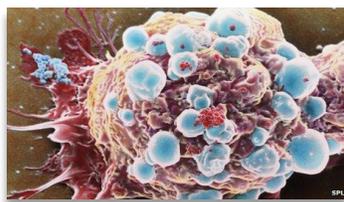
The Global Crisis of Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis and Leadership of China and the BRICS

The IOM along with the Institute of Microbiology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences held a workshop to address the current status of drug-resistant TB globally and in China. Among other topics, participants at the workshop considered the opportunities for emerging leadership in drug-resistant TB control from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (the BRICS countries), and discussed innovative strategies to advance and harmonize local and international efforts to prevent and treat drug-resistant TB. This document summarizes the workshop.



sutures and staples for some operations, especially heart surgery... For the heart glue, Karp and his team turned their attention to critters that stick to slippery surfaces, such as slugs, spiders and a bristly little worm that glues itself rocks in tidal pools, called the sandcastle worm. [NPR](#)

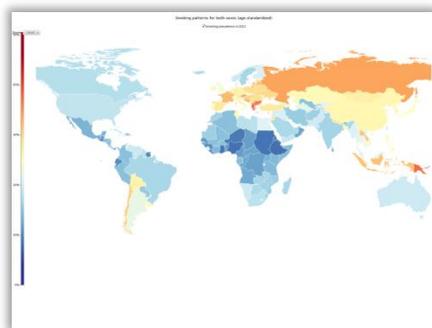
'Sticky balls' may stop cancer spreading



6 January - Cancer-killing "sticky balls" can destroy tumour cells in the blood and may prevent cancers spreading, early research suggests. The most dangerous and deadly stage of a tumour is when it spreads around the body. Scientists at Cornell University, in the US, have designed nanoparticles that stay in the bloodstream and kill migrating cancer cells

on contact. They said the impact was "dramatic" but there was "a lot more work to be done". One of the biggest factors in life expectancy after being diagnosed with cancer is whether the tumour has spread to become a metastatic cancer. [BBC News](#)

Where the smokers are now: Bulgaria, Greece and Macedonia



8 January - ... Overall, the prevalence of smoking has gone down worldwide over the past few decades. For men, smoking dropped 10 percentage points to 31 percent in 2012, from 41 percent in 1980. For women, it has been almost halved, falling from about 11 percent to 6 percent over the same period. But that's not the case everywhere. So where is smoking still common?

...The map above shows hot spots. Greece,

Bulgaria and Macedonia look like the burning tip of a cigarette. Russia, France and Austria aren't far behind. Click [here](#) or on the map to find the tobacco visualization tools put together by the institute. One of the interactive maps lets you look at how prevalence changed from 2011 to 2012. Smoking has gone up recently in Sweden, Belarus and Mexico. It's down in the U.S., Hungary and Argentina. [NPR](#)

Why ending malaria may be more about backhoes than bed nets

3 January - ... The federal government drove out malaria from the American South in the early part of the 20th century. And the lessons learned from that successful campaign could help control the disease in developing countries, says Daniel Sledge, a political scientist at the University of Texas, Arlington... Sledge and his colleague recently analyzed archived public records to try to determine what factors helped to eliminate malaria in Alabama. The

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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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findings were surprising. It wasn't getting people to sleep under insecticide-treated bed nets, or getting better medications to people who do get infected — two major tactics used to control malaria today in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Instead, the parasite left the U.S., in large part, because the government destroyed mosquito breeding grounds. "The primary factor leading to the demise of malaria was large-scale drainage projects, which were backed up by the creation of local public health infrastructure," he says. [NPR](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 52 (December 22-28, 2013), influenza activity continued to increase in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 6,419 specimens tested and reported by collaborating laboratories during week 52, 1,711 (26.7%) 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:** Two influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- **Influenza-associated Hospitalizations:** A cumulative rate for the season of 5.8 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported.
- **Outpatient Illness Surveillance:** The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 4.3%, above the national baseline of 2.0%. All 10 regions reported ILI at or above region-specific baseline levels. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Weeks 51 & 52, 150 specimens were collected and received from 36 locations. Results were finalized for 144 specimens from 35 locations. For specimens collected during Week 51, there were 70 influenza (55.4%) A (H1N1)pdm09 and two influenza A(H3N2). For specimens collected during Week 52, there were 10 influenza (71.4%) A(H1N1)pdm09.
- Cumulative results were finalized for 869 specimens from 66 locations. There were 161 specimens positive for influenza A (146 A(H1N1)pdm09, 12 A(H3N2), two A(H1N1)pdm09 & parainfluenza, and one A(H1N1)pdm09 & Rhinovirus/Enterovirus). There were six specimens positive for influenza B (five B/unknown lineage and one

B/Yamagata). Other respiratory pathogens identified were 22 adenovirus, 16 Chlamydomphila pneumoniae, 12 coronavirus, 10 human metapneumovirus, 31 Mycoplasma pneumoniae, 49 parainfluenza, 46 RSV, and 168 rhinovirus/enterovirus. To date, 47 non-influenza co-infections have been identified.

- Vaccination percentages for active duty service members are as follows: Army - 95%, Air Force - 97%, Marines - 89%, Navy - 92%, and Coast Guard - 96%. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

Early reports of pH1N1-associated illnesses for the 2013-14 influenza season

24 December - From November through December 2013, CDC has received a number of reports of severe respiratory illness among young and middle-aged adults, many of whom were infected with influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 (pH1N1) virus. Multiple pH1N1-associated hospitalizations, including many requiring intensive care unit (ICU) admission, and some fatalities have been reported. The pH1N1 virus that emerged in 2009 caused more illness in children and young adults, compared to older adults, although severe illness was seen in all age groups. While it is not possible to predict which influenza viruses will predominate during the entire 2013-14 influenza season, pH1N1 has been the predominant circulating virus so far. For the 2013-14 season, if pH1N1 virus continues to circulate widely, illness that disproportionately affects young and middle-aged adults may occur. [CDC](#)

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview

For week 52/2013:

- All 11 reporting countries recorded low-intensity influenza activity and all but one reported stable or decreasing trends.
- Of 46 sentinel specimens tested across seven countries, six (13%) were positive for influenza virus.

Since the start of weekly reporting on influenza surveillance for the 2013–2014 season in week 40/2013, there has been no evidence of sustained influenza activity in Europe. Due to the low level of reporting during the Christmas/New Year holidays, a comprehensive report on influenza activity in Europe cannot be provided. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

8 January – Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity is high in North America and ranges from low to high (Spain) in Europe. In the southern hemisphere levels range from minimal to low. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 28 December 2013 (Week 52)

- Influenza: Twenty cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (2 A/H3 and 18 A/H1N1) among US military basic trainees. There was an increase in flu activity at NRTC Great Lakes and Fort Benning.
- 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](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

First H5N1 avian flu death in North America

9 January - Canadian health officials confirmed Wednesday that a resident from Alberta has died from H5N1 avian flu, the first case of the virus in North America. Canada's Health Minister, Rona Ambrose, said the infected individual had recently traveled to Beijing. The Canadian case also is the first case of H5N1 infection ever imported by a traveler into a country where the virus is not present in poultry. No such H5N1 viruses have been detected in people or in animals in the United States... The CDC considers that the health risk to people in the Americas posed by the detection of this one case is very low. The U.S. agency is not recommending that the public take any special actions regarding H5N1 virus in response to the Canadian case. [NPR](#)

Human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus – update

9 January - The National Health and Family Planning Commission of China has notified WHO of seven additional laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus... The source of infection is still under investigation. So far, there is no evidence of sustained human-to-human transmission. [WHO](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Cold, wet weather may help spread deadly pig virus: USDA

9 January - Frigid temperatures across a large swath of the United States this week followed by warmer conditions could aid the spread of a fatal pig disease now in 22 states, affecting hundreds of thousands of pigs, a swine veterinarian said on Thursday... At this time of year the virus gets frozen on clothes and shoes, making it easy to track around and spread, Baker added. Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv), which causes diarrhea, vomiting and severe dehydration in hogs, has spread quickly across the U.S. hog belt since its discovery in the United States in April 2013. [Reuters](#)

Czechs honor army dog for Afghanistan service



7 January - Like many military victims of a Taliban attack in Afghanistan, Athos was treated by American doctors in the field, flown to the U.S. Ramstein base in Germany for his recovery, then awarded for his bravery back home. But Athos is a bomb-sniffing German shepherd who was helping Czech forces in Afghanistan, not a soldier, and during a ceremony honoring him on Tuesday, he received a buffalo bone and a leather collar. The 4-year-old dog was seriously wounded in a rocket attack on a military base in Logar province on Sept. 30, 2012. During the ceremony at a military dog center in Chotyne, Czech Republic, Defense Minister Vlastimil Picek called Athos "a soldier's irreplaceable friend." [KCAU TV](#)

Hundreds sick in Japan from pesticide-contaminated frozen foods

8 January - Hundreds of people in Japan have been sickened by food contaminated with the pesticide malathion. Reports on the number of victims differ from at least 890 to more than 1,000. The mass poisoning has been traced to Maruha Nichiro Holdings, which is recalling about 6.4 million bags of frozen foods, including croquettes, frozen pizza and chicken nuggets, after 2.6 million times the permitted levels of pesticide were found in the products. While 1.2 million packages have been recovered, another 5.2 million are still unaccounted for. Police are now investigating the company's plant in eastern Japan, and Japanese media report that police suspect the malathion was mixed into products there. [Food Safety News](#)

USDA suspends Foster Farms plant for cockroach infestation

8 January - One of the largest Foster Farms plants in California was ordered to suspend poultry processing on Wednesday after U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors cited it for "egregious insanitary conditions." According to The Oregonian, the federal agency's notice of suspension states that the plant in Livingston, CA, poses a public health threat because it was infested with live cockroaches. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service officials had reportedly cited the Livingston plant for roaches several times in the past few months. [Food Safety News](#)

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WELLNESS

A daily high dose of Vitamin E may slow early Alzheimer's disease

6 January - ...This study involved 613 people, nearly all men, who averaged 79 years old and had mild to moderate Alzheimer's. All participants were taking a cholinesterase inhibitor, a commonly prescribed Alzheimer's drug (donepezil, galantamine or rivastigmine). They were randomly assigned to one of four daily treatments: Vitamin E (2,000 international units); the Alzheimer's drug memantine (20 milligrams); both Vitamin E and memantine; or placebos. After a little more than two years, standardized scales measuring cognitive and functional abilities showed an overall decline, on average, among all participants. Little difference was noted for cognition and memory, but the deterioration in functional abilities (being able to do basic daily tasks) was slower among people taking only Vitamin E: 19 percent slower than for the placebo group, equal to about a six-month delay in progression of the disease. Disease progression was not slowed for people taking memantine, with or without Vitamin E. Those taking Vitamin E also required about two fewer hours a day of help from caregivers than did the others. [Washington Post](#)

Can upward mobility cost you your health?

4 January - ...Despite the risks that lower-income children face, we also know that a significant minority beat the odds. They perform admirably in school, avoid drugs and go on to college. Psychologists refer to these children as resilient, because they achieve positive outcomes in adverse circumstances... We followed these young people until they were 19 and studied their mental and physical health, focusing on depression, drug use, aggression and criminal behavior. As in past studies, those who were rated positively at age 11 had relatively few of these problems when they were 19. When we looked beneath the surface, though, these apparently resilient young people were not faring well. Compared with others

in the study, they were more obese, had higher blood pressure and produced more stress hormones (like cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenaline). Remarkably, their health was even worse than peers who, at age 11, had been rated by teachers as aggressive, difficult and isolated. They were at substantial risk for developing diabetes or hypertension down the line. [New York Times](#)

Drugs related to cannabis have pain-relieving potential for osteoarthritis

7 January - Chemical compounds synthesised in the laboratory, similar to those found in cannabis, could be developed as potential drugs to reduce the pain of osteoarthritis. These compounds could also reduce joint inflammation... Cannabis contains a number of natural chemicals called cannabinoids and the brain has the ability to respond to such compounds. Cannabis and synthetically manufactured cannabinoid compounds can relieve pain in animal models of arthritis, but their use has been limited because of undesirable psychological side-effects. Now a team of researchers... have shown that selectively targeting one of the molecules involved in the body's natural pain-sensing pathways, called cannabinoid receptor2 (CB2) can also reduce pain in animal models of osteoarthritis. This works in part through the central nervous system (spinal cord and brain). [EurekAlert!](#)

Fashion at a very high price

20 December - From cheerful red handbags to festive green belts, colored accessories are often mandatory for the style-conscious during the holiday season. But what many fashionistas don't know is that many of these products may be tainted with high levels of lead — and the brighter and shinier they are, the greater the risk. Accessories in red, green, yellow and orange are more likely to be contaminated than those in darker or more muted colors, new tests show. Use of lead salts to create these brilliant hues — a practice that dates to the Middle Ages — is common in the manufacture of inexpensive vinyl and plastic products. [New York Times](#)

High blood pressure may be worse for women



6 January - High blood pressure might be more dangerous for women than men, a new study suggests. As a result, women may need earlier and more aggressive treatment for the condition, the study authors said... "This is the first study to consider sex as an element in the selection of [drugs to treat high blood pressure] or base the choice of a specific drug on the various factors accounting for the elevation in blood pressure." Although deaths due to heart disease have dropped dramatically among men over the past three decades, the same is not true for women, the researchers noted. On the contrary, heart disease is a leading cause of death among American women, according to the news release. [MedlinePlus](#)

Makers of tainted supplements have criminal pasts

20 December - ...The problem of supplement adulteration is significant, whether it occurs with criminal intent or is the result of lax quality control and insufficient oversight of suppliers. Just over half of all Class 1 drug recalls in the USA from 2004 to 2012 — those that could cause serious health problems or death — involved supposedly all-natural dietary supplements that were spiked with hidden pharmaceuticals, according to research published this year in the scientific journal *JAMA Internal Medicine*. Of the 237 supplements recalled for hidden drugs, 40% were sold for sexual enhancement; 31% for bodybuilding and 27% for weight loss, the researchers said. [USA Today](#)

Shingles can increase heart attack risk

2 January - A British study has found that having shingles can increase the risk for heart attacks. The retrospective study, published in *Neurology*, included 106,601 shingles cases and 213,202 matched controls. The researchers followed the subjects for an average of 6.3 years after they contracted shingles. After adjusting for body mass index, smoking, cholesterol, hypertension, diabetes and other vascular risk factors, they found that over all, having shingles increased the risk of a heart attack by 10 percent and the risk of a so-called mini-stroke, or transient ischemic attack, by 15 percent, though it did not alter the risk of having a major stroke. [New York Times](#)

Spike in harm to liver is tied to dietary aids

21 December - ...Dietary supplements account for nearly 20 percent of drug-related liver injuries that turn up in hospitals, up from 7 percent a decade ago, according to an analysis by a national network of liver specialists. The research included only the most severe cases of liver damage referred to a representative group of hospitals around the country, and the investigators said they were undercounting the actual number of cases. While many patients recover once they stop taking the supplements and receive treatment, a few require liver transplants or die because of liver failure. Naïve teenagers are not the only consumers at risk, the researchers said. Many are middle-aged women who turn to dietary supplements that promise to burn fat or speed up weight loss. [New York Times](#)

Study raises questions for employer wellness programs

6 January - ...[A] study by RAND researchers and executives of PepsiCo, [published online Monday](#) in the journal *Health Affairs*, found that programs aimed at helping people with chronic illnesses stay healthy, by educating them and reminding them to take medication, resulted in significant cost savings. But so-called lifestyle management offerings, which aim to reduce health risks through programs focusing on weight loss or stress management, resulted in no net savings at all... Researchers estimate that disease management lowered health costs by \$136 per member per month, mostly thanks to a 29 percent reduction in hospital admissions. Lifestyle programs, however, had no significant effect on health care costs. That isn't necessarily surprising, said Soeren Mattke, a senior natural scientist at RAND

and the study's senior author, since it's easier to save money by addressing the problems of those whose baseline medical costs are already significant. "Cutting one hospital admission saves a lot of money," he said. [New York Times](#)

'Traffic light' food labels, positioning of healthy items produce lasting choice changes

7 January - The use of color-coded "traffic light" food labels and changes in the way popular items are displayed appear to have produced a long-term increase in the choice of more healthful food items among customers in a large hospital cafeteria. A Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) team reports in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* that the previously reported changes in the proportions of more and less healthy foods purchased in the months after their program began have persisted up to two years after the labeling intervention was introduced. [EurekAlert!](#)

Weight-loss companies charged with fraud

7 January - ...On Tuesday, the [Federal Trade Commission] charged four companies with deceptively marketing weight-loss products, asserting they made "unfounded promises" that consumers could shed pounds simply by using their food additives, skin creams and other dietary supplements. The four companies — Sensa Products, L'Occitane, HCG Diet Direct and LeanSpa — will collectively pay \$34 million to refund consumers. They neither admitted nor denied fault in the case. The case is part of a broader crackdown on companies that the government says "peddle fad weight-loss products." Linda Goldstein, the chairwoman of the advertising and marketing division at the law firm Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, said the settlements made clear that the commission would accept only double-blind, placebo-controlled studies to document the medical effectiveness of diet regimes. [New York Times](#)

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USAFRICOM

Namibia: Ministry probes cholera outbreak source

7 January – The Ministry of Health and Social Services is investigating the source of the cholera outbreak that has killed seven people in the Kunene Region since last week. Five of the victims died on Friday and two others on Sunday, while 85 new cases are under observation. Most of the dead are from Etanga village and Opuwo town. Ministry of Health Permanent Secretary, Andrew Ndishishi, said they have sent a team from Windhoek to help deal with the outbreak. [allAfrica](#)

Nigeria: Fresh cholera outbreak in Kano kills 25

2 January - At least 22 adults and three children have been confirmed dead while some 600 others are infected following a fresh cholera outbreak in Kano State in north western Nigeria. An epidemiologist with the state's Infectious Diseases Hospital (IDH), Dr. Tijjani Hussaini, told journalists that the three children died at the early hours of Thursday. "At least 20 persons are receiving treatment while five were discharged today. "There are also over 40 men and women at the diarrhoea treatment unit of the hospital," he said... Within the last one month, an estimated 39 reported deaths caused by Cholera occurred around the metropolitan city of Kano. [Channels](#)

Zimbabwe: Typhoid, anthrax under control

9 January - Recent outbreaks of typhoid and anthrax in Manicaland Province are now under control, a senior health official has said. Director of epidemiology and disease control in the Ministry of Health and Child Care Dr Portia Manangazira said in Makoni District, no anthrax-related deaths were reported... So far, 27 people have been treated for anthrax after they ate meat from infected animals prior to the festive season... Dr Manangazira said a typhoid outbreak in Nyanga was also under control. The outbreak, which started at the beginning of November left nearly 150 people affected. No typhoid deaths were reported. [allAfrica](#)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan's worsening, and baffling, hunger crisis

4 January – ...Afghan hospitals like Bost, in the capital of war-torn Helmand Province, have been registering significant increases in severe malnutrition among children. Countrywide, such cases have increased by 50 percent or more compared with 2012, according to United Nations figures. Doctors report similar situations in Kandahar, Farah, Kunar, Paktia and Paktika Provinces — all places where warfare has disrupted people's lives and pushed many vulnerable poor over the nutritional edge... Reasons for the increase remain uncertain, or in dispute. Most doctors and aid workers agree that continuing war and refugee displacement are contributing. Some believe that the growing number of child patients may be at least partly a good sign, as more poor Afghans are hearing about treatment available to them. [New York Times](#)

Oman: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – update

9 January - WHO has been informed of an additional laboratory-confirmed case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in Oman. The case is a 59 year-old man

who became sick with fever, cough and shortness of breath on 20 December 2013 and was admitted to hospital in North Batinha Governorate on 24 December. On 28 December his condition deteriorated and he was transferred to an intensive care unit and was diagnosed with pneumonia. The patient died on 30 December. A laboratory confirmation of MERS-CoV was made on 1 January 2014. The patient had a history of daily exposure to camels and other farm animals and also participated in camel race events. In addition, the man was a heavy smoker. Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 178 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 75 deaths. [WHO](#)

Syria: World Health Organization concerned by Syrian health situation

8 January - The United Nations' World Health Organization said it was concerned about the state of the healthcare system in Syria because of lingering civil war. "WHO continues to be concerned about attacks on health facilities and health workers, and urges all parties in the conflict to respect the integrity and neutrality of health facilities," the agency said in a statement Tuesday. WHO said the health situation in Syria has been in a steady state of deterioration since conflict began in early 2011. The health organization said attacks on healthcare workers, the destruction of health facilities and a general shortage of medicine was creating an emergency situation in Syria. [UPI](#)

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France: Autochthonous case of dengue, October 2013

12 December - In October 2013, autochthonous dengue fever was diagnosed in a laboratory technician in Bouches-du-Rhône, southern France, a department colonised by *Aedes albopictus* since 2010. After ruling out occupational contamination, we identified the likely chain of local vector-borne transmission from which the autochthonous case arose. Though limited, this second occurrence of autochthonous dengue transmission in France highlights that efforts should be continued to rapidly detect dengue virus introduction and prevent its further dissemination in France. [Eurosurveillance](#)

Measles still too common in Europe, says ECDC

8 January - The 30 countries in the European Union and European Economic Area (EU and EEA) had 12,096 measles cases from November 2012 through October 2013, which is well below 2010 and 2011 levels but still too high, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) reported yesterday. "The number remains unacceptably high, considering that measles and rubella are targeted for elimination in Europe by 2015," the agency said. The reported cases included three deaths and eight cases of acute measles encephalitis. Countries that reported the most cases were Germany, 14%; Italy, 28%; the

Netherlands, 18%; Romania, 14%; and the United Kingdom, 19%. The Netherlands had the highest incidence at 130 cases per million people. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

United Kingdom: Some patients visit A&E units 50 times a year

6 January - Data from 183 sites obtained under the Freedom of Information Act revealed nearly 12,000 people made more than 10 visits to the same [Accident and Emergency] unit in 2012-13. A small number of those - just over 150 - attended more than 50 times... [Dr Cliff Mann, of the College of Emergency Medicine] said there were a variety of issues which led patients to become frequent visitors, including mental health and problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, which suggested that with better support in the community, particularly from social care, repeat visits could be prevented. But he also said others were using A&E simply because they had had good experiences in the past, while those who struggled with the language may be using A&E units as a default because they found it hard to navigate their way round the system. [BBC News](#)

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Canada, Quebec: Lung infection outbreak tied to bat droppings stirred up in house renovation

2 January - Renovating may be all the rage when it comes to older homes, but in some cases there could be danger lurking behind those long-standing walls. That was the case in Quebec, where more than a dozen people became ill with a pneumonia-like infection after the exterior brick of a century-old house was removed as part of a renovation. The outbreak, which occurred in May, was reported Thursday in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's weekly morbidity and mortality report. Fourteen people — including workers, residents of the house and neighbours — developed symptoms of histoplasmosis, a fungal disease carried in the droppings of bats and birds. Two of the workers were admitted to hospital and the regional public health department was called in to deal with the outbreak. [570 News](#)

U.S.: Cancer Statistics 2014 - Death rates continue to drop

7 January - The annual cancer statistics report from the American Cancer Society finds steady declines in cancer death rates for the past two decades add up to a 20 percent drop in the overall risk of dying from cancer over that time period. The report, Cancer Statistics 2014, finds progress has been most rapid for middle-aged black men, among whom death

rates have declined by approximately 50 percent. Despite this substantial progress, black men continue to have the highest cancer incidence and death rates among all ethnicities in the U.S.—about double those of Asian Americans, who have the lowest rates. [EurekAlert!](#)

U.S., Illinois: Outbreak of drug-resistant bacteria linked to Lutheran General Hospital

6 January - The largest outbreak of a very specific and very dangerous bacteria in the U.S. has been linked to procedures performed at a north suburban hospital last year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has discovered 44 cases of a strain of bacteria called carbapenem-resistant enterobacteriaceae, or CRE, in northeast Illinois, including 38 confirmed cases involving patients at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge who underwent an endoscopic procedure of the pancreas or bile ducts between January and September 2013. There have only been 96 cases reported in the U.S. since the bacteria was first reported in 2009. [CBS Chicago](#)

U.S.: Lung cancer incidence trends among men and women — United States, 2005–2009

10 January - During 2005–2009, a total of 569,366 invasive lung cancer cases among men and 485,027 among women were reported in the United States. Lung cancer incidence was highest among those aged ≥ 75 years and decreased with decreasing age. In all age groups except persons aged < 35 years and 35–44 years, lung cancer incidence rates were higher among men than among women; this difference was greatest among those aged ≥ 75 years and narrowed with decreasing age. From 2005 to 2009, lung cancer incidence decreased among men in all age groups except those aged < 35 years, with an APC of -2.6% overall; among women, lung cancer incidence decreased among those aged 35–44 and 55–64 years and was stable in all other age groups yielding an APC of -1.1% overall. Lung cancer incidence rates decreased most rapidly among adults aged 35–44 years, decreasing 6.5% per year among men and 5.8% per year among women. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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China: Hepatitis B vaccine

6 January - China's 3 biggest hepatitis B vaccine manufacturers have suspended production, the food and drug administration announced late on Thursday [2 Jan 2014]. BioKangtai, Tiantan Biological Products and Dalian Hissen Bio-Pharm failed to meet the 2010 good manufacturing practice (GMP) code for all pharmaceutical manufacturers by the deadline at

the end of 2013. Those who did not reach the new standards must suspend production in 2014. Over the 1st 11 months last year [2013], hepatitis B vaccines produced by the 3 suppliers accounted for about 80 percent of total output. [ProMED-mail](#)

French Polynesia: WHO monitoring zika and dengue

9 January - The World Health Organisation says it's monitoring closely the situation in French Polynesia which is fighting outbreaks of [zika](#) virus and dengue fever. Officials say 20,000 people have sought medical help because of zika but they fear many more thousands could be infected. The French territory also has about 1,500 people confirmed with dengue fever. The WHO's head of emerging disease surveillance and response, Suva-based Dr Eric Nilles, says an epidemiologist from the WHO, and an entomologist from the SPC have been sent to French Polynesia to assist... Dr Nilles says the zika virus has spread to New Caledonia from French Polynesia. [Islands Business](#)

Philippines: Dengue surge reported in Central Mindanao

8 January - Dengue downed 12,719 people in Central Mindanao last year, almost three times more than the number of people the mosquito-borne disease sent to hospitals in 2012, the regional office of the Department of Health said Wednesday. Sixty-seven persons died in the region in 2013, up by 17 from 50 in 2012, according to regional health director Dr. Teogenes Baluma. [Inquirer.net](#)

Philippines faces massive resettlement needs as post-typhoon aid comes slowly



7 January - The typhoon that recently barreled through the Philippines has left in its wake one of the most profound resettlement crises in decades, with the number of newly homeless far exceeding the capacity of aid groups and the government to respond. Two months after one of the strongest typhoons on record, recovery in the central Philippines has been marked by a desperate scramble for shelter, as people return to the same areas that were ravaged and construct weaker, leakier and sometimes rotting versions of their old homes. That urgent but crude attempt to rebuild has raised the prospect that the storm-prone areas devastated by Typhoon Haiyan will emerge more vulnerable to future disasters. The self-made reconstruction effort also reflects the enormity of the damage. November's catastrophe displaced more than 4 million people — twice the number of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami or the 2010 Haiti earthquake. [Stars and Stripes](#)

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Chikungunya in the Caribbean

7 January - In December 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported cases of chikungunya in Saint Martin. Additional cases were reported in other islands in the Caribbean. This is the first time that local transmission of chikungunya has been reported in the Americas. Local transmission means that mosquitoes in the area have been infected with chikungunya and are spreading it to people.

As of January 2, 2014, the following Caribbean islands have reported cases of chikungunya:

- Saint Martin (French): 98 confirmed cases
- Sint Maarten (Dutch): 1 confirmed case
- Martinique: 13 confirmed cases; 1 case was also found in a person in French Guiana who had recently traveled from Martinique
- Guadeloupe: 3 confirmed cases, including 1 case in a person who had recently traveled from Saint Martin
- Saint Barthelemy: 7 confirmed cases [CDC](#)

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