

13 April 2012

Army Public Health Weekly Update

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Building a Resilient Workforce: Opportunities for the Department of Homeland Security

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has raised concerns that long-term exposures to stressors may reduce individual resilience and negatively affect employee's physical and mental well-being.

DHS employs a diverse staff that includes emergency responders, border patrol agents, federal air marshals, and policy analysts. These employees may be exposed to traumatic and disturbing information as part of their jobs.

This workshop brought together an array of experts from various fields including resiliency research, occupation health psychology, and emergency response.



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U.S. MILITARY

Case report: Chest pain in Service members following smallpox vaccination

March 2012 - Vaccines are extremely safe, but rare serious adverse reactions can and do occur in susceptible individuals. A few serious adverse events are predictable and thus avoidable, but the majority occur unexpectedly. Post-vaccination myopericarditis is one such unexpected adverse event. It is associated most often with the smallpox vaccine, but has also been reported in temporal association with other ACIP recommended vaccines as well... For individuals presenting with unexpected chest pain, shortness of breath, and/or palpitations, a complete evaluation, including a vaccination history, and a heightened index of suspicion will aid in correctly diagnosing, reporting, and managing post-vaccination myopericarditis. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Policy fraught with danger

11 April - Since the start of the Iraq war in 2003, the rate of suicide among U.S. Army soldiers has soared, according to a study by the U.S. Army Public Health Command. The study shows an 80 percent increase in suicides among Army personnel between 2004 and 2008... Washington Sen. Patty Murray last month began an investigation into whether military hospitals are denying treatment to service members with post-traumatic stress disorder because of cost considerations, The News Tribune of Tacoma reported. Now the Los Angeles Times reports on a contributing factor to the mental health problems plaguing all branches of the military that has not been part of the discussion -- the heavy use of psychotropic drugs to keep troops going. In a small but growing number of cases, lawyers are blaming their clients' illegal behavior and related health problems on the medications, the paper reported. [Herald Net](#)

Warrior resiliency conference shared tools for force and families

5 April - Good nutrition and open communications are two qualities of a strong and resilient force, which includes individual servicemembers, their units, families and communities. At a recent [Warrior Resiliency Conference](#) held in Washington, D.C., workshops focused on practical tools to enhance resilience. The importance of a proper diet was highlighted in a breakout session on nutritional resilience. All too often pizza, pop-tarts and soda are the mainstay for some young servicemembers and families, said presenters. Lauren King, a Semper Fit health promotion dietitian with the [Marine Corps Community Services](#), Quantico, Va., said the Marines are rolling out a new food initiative in May 2012 called "Fueled to Fight." Simple guidelines King described include a color-coded stoplight system of red, yellow and green to help with grocery shopping and meal planning. "You want your plate to be filled with the green coded food choices," King said. [MHS](#)

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Brain tumors linked to dental X-rays

10 April - A study published this week in the journal *Cancer* shows that people who have had dental X-rays are more likely to develop a type of brain tumor called meningioma than those who have not. This does not prove that X-rays cause tumors, but supports previous research about the connection. Dental X-rays have also been [implicated in thyroid cancer](#). "It's a cautionary tale ... we do know that radiation can cause tumors, and we have to be judicious with its use," said Dr. Donald O'Rourke, an associate professor of neurosurgery at the University of Pennsylvania who was not involved in the study. [CNN](#)

Dementia cases worldwide will triple by 2050, WHO

11 April - Cases of dementia — and the heavy social and financial burdens associated with them — are set to soar in the coming decades as life expectancy and medical care improve in poorer countries, the World Health Organization says. Some 35.6 million people were living with dementia in 2010, but that figure is set to double to 65.7 million by 2030, the U.N. health agency said Wednesday. In 2050, it expects the number of dementia cases to triple to 115.4 million. Most dementia patients are cared for by relatives, who shoulder the bulk of the current estimated annual cost of \$604 billion, WHO said. [Associated Press](#)

Emergence of artemisinin resistance on Thai-Myanmar border raises spectre of untreatable malaria



8 April - Evidence that the most deadly species of malaria parasite, *Plasmodium falciparum*, is becoming resistant to the front line treatment for malaria on the border of Thailand and Myanmar was reported in *The Lancet* April 5. This increases concern that resistance could now spread to India and then

Africa as resistance to other antimalarial drugs has done before. Eliminating malaria might then prove impossible. The study coincides with research recently published in *Science* in which researchers in south east Asia and the USA identify a major region of the malaria parasite genome associated with artemisinin resistance. This region, which includes several potential candidate genes for resistance, may provide researchers with a tool for mapping resistance. [Science Daily](#)

For the public's health: Investing in a healthier future

10 April - In a new report, the IOM assesses both the sources and adequacy of current government public health funding, and identifies approaches to building a sustainable and sufficient public health presence going forward. The poor performance of the United States in life expectancy and other major health outcomes, as compared with its global peers reflects what the nation prioritizes in its health investments. It spends extravagantly on clinical care but meagerly on other types of population-based actions that influence health

more profoundly than medical services. The health system's failure to develop and deliver effective preventive strategies continues to take a growing toll on the economy and society.

[Institute of Medicine](#)

HealthMap iPhone, iPad and Android apps

10 April - HealthMap is announcing the release of new iPhone, iPad and Android apps. Visit the iTunes Store and Google Play to download "HealthMap: Outbreaks Near Me." With Outbreaks Near Me, users have access to the latest information on infectious disease worldwide. Check the most recent health news in your neighborhood or travel destination, or submit reports of new outbreaks that have not yet been identified. The new app maintains familiarity but features a sleeker look, increased usability, and more features. Switch between map view, list view, and news from our publication, The Disease Daily. Submit a new report, or view your past submissions by entering your email address.

[ProMED-mail](#)

Scientists discover genetic mutations linked to autism

6 April - Three new studies have uncovered extremely rare genetic mutations that shed new light on the potential environmental and biological roots of autism, a brain disorder that causes social and developmental delays in children, beginning at a young age. Scientists say the DNA glitches found in a small subset of autistic children were not inherited by them, but occurred spontaneously at their conception, increasing their risk for developing the disorder. The mutations, also called "de novo" mutations, are spontaneous abnormalities that scientists say are distributed widely across the genome of affected children. They account for a very small percentage of diagnosed cases of autism, a diverse family of disorders with a variety of suspected genetic and environmental causes. [VOA News](#)

World Health Day focuses on older people



7 April - The World Health Organization is calling for urgent action to make sure all people reach old age in the best possible health. To mark this year's [World Health Day](#), WHO says good health is essential for maintaining a good quality of life as people get older in this rapidly aging world... This video produced for World Health Day presents a montage of elderly people throughout the world engaged in activities that would exhaust many a younger person. Particularly impressive is the image of a 100-year-old man finishing a marathon. [VOA News](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

For the week ending 12 April 2012:

- A case of an influenza A (H3N2) variant has been detected in a 4-year-old dependent by the DoD laboratory network (USAFSAM; DoD sentinel surveillance site) this week; the specimen was shared with CDC for confirmatory testing. An investigation is currently ongoing to determine if there was swine exposure, other possible cases and contacts. This is the 1st case in a military beneficiary and the 14th case in the U.S. since Aug 2011.
- Influenza activity remains low to moderate in overseas DoD laboratory surveillance networks and the influenza activity decreased slightly within the MHS compared to the previous week.
- The influenza vaccination rate for the DoD (Active Duty component only) was 97% (final update of the season). [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 13 (March 25-31, 2012), influenza activity was elevated in some areas of the United States, but declined nationally and in most regions. [FluView](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 7 April 2012:

Influenza: There was an increase in influenza cases among basic training and DoD dependent surveillance populations in March 2012

Adenovirus: Type 14 adenovirus is present at MCRD Parris Island.

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

7 April – Influenza activity appears to be decreasing and overall activity remains lower than last year.

- Viral specimens: During week fourteen, 117 specimens were submitted for testing, of which 31 were positive for respiratory disease. Influenza A was identified in 12 (39%) of these positive samples.
- Influenza cases: 740 influenza cases have been reported in DRSI through week fourteen of the 2011- 2012 season. Nineteen (3%) were reported with onset dates

in week 14.

- Army MEDCEN & reporting trend: Influenza A and RSV were the most commonly identified respiratory pathogens within the previous 4 weeks, accounting for 46% and 23% of positive specimens, respectively. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Avian influenza – situation in Egypt – update

12 April - The Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt has notified WHO of a new case of human infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) virus. The case is a 36 year-old female from Giza governorate. She developed symptoms on 1 April 2012 and was admitted to a hospital on 7 April 2012 and died on the same day... Epidemiological investigations into the source of infection indicate that the case had exposure to backyard poultry. Of the 167 cases confirmed to date in Egypt, 60 have been fatal. [World Health Organization](#)

Cambodia: WHO confirms H5N1 case

6 April - A fatal human case of avian influenza (H5N1) in Cambodia was added yesterday to the World Health Organization's (WHO's) official count of H5N1 cases. The patient was a 6-year-old girl from Kampong Chhnang province. Her symptoms began Mar 22, she was hospitalized Mar 28 in Phnom Penh, and she died Mar 30. The girl had had contact with sick or dead poultry before symptom onset, says a WHO alert. Her case was reported by news outlets earlier this week. The case brings the total number of human H5N1 cases in Cambodia since 2005 to 20, with 18 deaths. [CIDRAP News](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

U.S.: Arsenic in chicken, or just feathers?



6 April - Is there "[Arsenic in Our Chicken?](#)" That's the title of a recent article by New York times columnist Nicholas Kristof that has caused an online feeding frenzy, so to speak. The answer is yes - sort of. The claim of arsenic appears largely based on a study co-authored by Keeve E.

Nachman in the journal [Science of the Total Environment](#). The study found levels of arsenic in feather meal, which is made from chicken feathers and used as feed for poultry, hogs and fish, among other things. It turns out there are different kinds of arsenic, not all of which are

considered poisonous. And, as the study's authors themselves point out in their paper, "There's no evidence that such low levels of arsenic harm either chickens or the people eating them." The National Chicken Council responded in a statement that "chickens in the United States produced for meat are not given 'arsenic' as an additive in chicken feed, or any of the other compounds mentioned in this study." However, the council admits that some feed used to contain a product called Roxarsone, which is a molecule that includes organic arsenic, not the inorganic type that is considered a poison. The product was removed from market last year and is no longer used in raising U.S. chickens, according to the council. [CNN](#)

U.S.: Durbin calls FDA to regulate energy drink caffeine levels

5 April - In a letter to the Commissioner of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today called for an investigation into energy drinks such as Red Bull, Rockstar and Monster. Durbin's call for an investigation comes after learning of a 14-year-old girl from Maryland who died last December due to cardiac arrhythmia. She had drunk two 24-ounce Monster energy drinks in a 24-hour period. "Young people are especially susceptible to suffering adverse effects because energy drinks market to youth," Durbin said. "Their bodies are not accustomed to caffeine and energy drinks contain high levels of caffeine and stimulating additives that may interact when used in combination." In Thursday's letter, Durbin called for the FDA to enforce the caffeine levels in energy drinks. The FDA has already regulated the limit in caffeine levels in soft drinks to .02 percent of the product. [MSNBC](#)

U.S.: Killer bat disease target of new research

10 April - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced seven grant awards totaling approximately \$1.4 million to continue the investigation of white-nose syndrome (WNS) in bats, and to identify ways to manage it. White-nose syndrome has killed more than 5.5 million bats in eastern North America and has spread rapidly across the United States and into Canada since it was first detected in 2006. "Bats are crucial to our nation's ecosystems and our economy," said Service Director Dan Ashe. "These grants provide critical support for the Service and our partners in addressing this unprecedented wildlife crisis." The Service is leading a cooperative effort with federal and state agencies, tribes, researchers, universities and other non-government organizations to research and manage the spread of WNS. Funding for grants was provided through Endangered Species Recovery funds. Grant recipients were selected from among 31 grant proposals. [Western Farm Press](#)

U.S.: Salmonellosis, serotype Bareilly, possible sushi link

9 April - A total of 100 individuals infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* [enterica serotype] Bareilly have been reported from 19 states and the District of Columbia. The 7 new cases are from Connecticut (1), Illinois (1), Maryland (2), New Jersey (1), Pennsylvania (1), and Wisconsin (1). Among 100 persons for whom information is available, illness onset dates range from 28 Jan 2012 to 25 Mar 2012. Ill persons range in age from 4 to 78 years, with a median age of 31. 47 percent of patients are female. Among 51 persons with

available information, 10 (20 percent) reported being hospitalized. No deaths have been reported... On initial interviews, many of the ill persons reported consuming sushi, sashimi, or similar foods in a variety of locations in the week before becoming ill. [ProMED-mail](#)

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WELLNESS

Asthma vaccination targets dust mite

6 April - French researchers say they have developed a vaccine that could counter the effect of house dust mites on asthma patients. The vaccine targets a specific substance shed by the dust mite and known to aggravate allergic reactions. Directly injecting into the muscle of an asthmatic mouse led a nanovector to significantly reduce both inflammation and hypersensitivity to the allergen Derf1 (*Dermatophagoides farinae* 1), a very common allergen carried by the dust mite, researchers said... They associated useful genetic sequences of the allergen Derf1 with a nanovector consisting of a synthetic polymer. This DNA sequence, transported by a "molecular taxi" into the muscle cells that ensure protein synthesis of the allergen, modulated the allergic response in asthmatic animals. [Englemed](#)

Meet the active couch potato



4 April - Can someone exercise and still be a couch potato? That peculiarly modern question motivated a [new study from Finland](#) in which a group of healthy, physically active volunteers donned special shorts that measure muscular activity in the legs. The volunteers then went about their daily lives. All were diligent exercisers. Some ran. Others lifted weights or played soccer. A few Nordic-walked. On one day during the study, they worked out as usual. On another, they did not exercise. Throughout, the shorts measured how much they actually moved...They found that the more hours the men and women sat every day, the greater their chance of dying prematurely. Those people who sat more than eight hours a day — which other studies have found is about the amount that a typical American sits — had a 15 percent greater risk of dying during the study's three-year follow-up period than people who sat for fewer than four hours a day. That increased risk held true in the Australian study even if the people sitting eight hours a day spent at least part of that day exercising. [New York Times](#)

Overuse injuries common among female college athletes

6 April - Overuse injuries account for more than one-quarter of all injuries suffered by U.S. collegiate athletes, a new study has found. Women -- especially those who played field hockey, soccer, softball and volleyball -- accounted for the majority of the overuse injuries (62 percent)...Overuse injuries tend to occur gradually and are caused by repeated small injuries, without a single, identifiable event. Acute injuries -- typically suffered by athletes

playing high-speed and full-contact sports such as football or hockey -- have specific and identifiable causes. The most common overuse injuries were general stress (27 percent), inflammation (21 percent) and tendinitis (16 percent). Overuse injuries were most common among athletes in low-contact sports that involve long training sessions or in which athletes repeat the same movement numerous times, such as long-distance running, rowing and swimming. Four women's sports in particular -- field hockey, soccer, softball and volleyball -- had the highest rates of overuse injuries. The study appears in the April issue of the *Journal of Athletic Training*. [Medline Plus](#)

Social rank 'linked to immunity'



10 April - A study of rhesus macaque monkeys may have solved a long-standing puzzle on a link between social rank and health. A study of 10 social groups of macaque females showed that the activity level of an individual's immune genes was an accurate predictor of her social rank. In [a paper in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#), the team also showed that the monkey's immunity changed when social rank was altered. The work suggests that status drives immune health, rather than vice-versa. A great many studies have shown associations in both humans and non-human primates between social environment and biological markers of health. [BBC News](#)

Timing pregnancy an important health concern for women

11 April - A newly published article in the journal *Nursing for Women's Health* highlights the importance of a woman's ability to time her childbearing. The author asserts that contraception is a means of health promotion and women who work with their health care providers to ensure they are healthy prior to conceiving can minimize their risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) there were more than four million births in the U.S. in 2009. A study by Kuklina et al. (2009) shows an increase in severe obstetric complications from 1998-1999 to 2004-2005, with renal failure increasing by 21%, pulmonary embolism by 52% and the need for blood transfusion by 92%. Moreover, maternal mortality has risen sharply in the past 20 years with a low of 6.6 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 1987, rising to 12.7 in 2007. "There is a new urgency to ensuring that women have access to affordable contraceptive services given the rising rates of maternal morbidity and mortality in the U.S.," explains Catherine Ruhl, CNM, MS, Director of Women's Health Programs at the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) in Washington, DC.

[EurekAlert!](#)

Web-based tool produces fast, accurate autism diagnosis

10 April - Researchers at Harvard Medical School have significantly reduced from hours to minutes the time it takes to accurately detect autism in young children. The process of diagnosing autism is complex, subjective, and often limited to only a segment of the population in need. With the recent rise in incidence to 1 in 88 children, the need for

accurate and widely deployable methods for screening and diagnosis is substantial. Dennis Wall, associate professor of pathology and director of computational biology initiative at the Center for Biomedical Informatics at Harvard Medical School, has been working to address this problem and has discovered a highly accurate strategy that could significantly reduce the complexity and time of the diagnostic process. [EurekAlert!](#)

Women's height linked to ovarian cancer

3 April - Taller women have a slightly higher risk of ovarian cancer, according to a review of studies. Obesity is also a risk factor among women who have never taken HRT, say international researchers. Previous studies have suggested a link, but there has been conflicting evidence. The latest research, published in the journal [PLOS Medicine](#), analysed all worldwide data on the topic. [BBC News](#)

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USAFRICOM

Horn of Africa: Greater food insecurity forecast



5 April - Food insecurity in the eastern Horn of Africa is expected to worsen as a result of less rain than previously forecast falling in the key March-to-May season. The US Agency for International Development's Famine and Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) [warned](#) that rainfall in this period would be 60-85 percent of the long-term average and that there was a 30 percent chance of the lower figure materializing. "An expansion in the size of the food insecure population and an increase in the severity of food insecurity is likely," FEWS NET said in an 3 April report. The report warned of "significant impacts on crop production, pasture regeneration, and the replenishment of water resources" in a region that in 2011 suffered one of its worst drought-related food crises in decades. [IRIN](#)

Nigeria: Officials want polio vaccination made compulsory by law

10 April - Officials and traditional rulers in some of Nigeria's states are pushing for a law that would make it criminal for any parent to prevent their child from receiving the vaccine against polio, Nigeria's Guardian newspaper reported on Tuesday... Health officials and traditional rulers say the situation has improved over the years but some authorities believe that a law passed by the National Assembly making immunisation compulsory and its rejection an offence would produce even better results, the paper said. [AlertNet](#)

South Africa: Breastfeeding, not formula, for country's HIV-positive mothers

1 April - South Africa's nine provinces will begin phasing out provision of free formula to HIV-positive mothers and implement a new policy on breast-feeding from Sunday. But despite the clarity of the policy and its supporting data, vocal critics, including respected individuals from leading medical and academic institutions, have decried the choice. Since the Aug. 23, 2011 announcement that exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) will be promoted in South Africa from Apr. 1, debate over the Tshwane Declaration's soundness, rather than discussion around implementation, has dominated the conversation. A simple two-page document, the declaration states unequivocal support for EBF for all infants up to six months, including HIV-exposed infants, who should receive antiretrovirals (ARVs) to prevent mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT), as recommended in the 2010 World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. The declaration originated from concern over low exclusive breastfeeding rates - the lowest in the world at eight percent; unacceptably high child mortality rates - the rate for 2010 remained almost level with the 1990 figure, with 58,000 children dying before the age of five; and the fact that formula feeding increases the risk of death from diarrhoea and pneumonia, the biggest killers of infants and children in South Africa. [All Africa](#)

South Sudan: Over 1.5 million people at risk of Kala azar, WHO

8 April - World Health Organization (WHO) reported that more than 1.5 million people in South Sudan are at risk of contracting Kala azar disease. The influx of returnees from Sudan and increase in displacement and refugees are raising fear of widespread outbreak of Kala azar (visceral leishmaniasis) in the coming years. The humanitarian community and other experts anticipated that after South independence, the security and humanitarian conditions would improve so that additional resources could be channeled into nation recovery and development. Visceral leishmaniasis known as Kala azar is an epidemic disease and a major public health problem in South Sudan. Kala azar was first reported in this country in 1904 and the burden of the disease is difficult to estimate because weak health system and limited access to health services, while many suspected Kala azar cases do not report to health facilities for diagnosis and treatment. The disease in the then Southern region was characterized by periodic outbreaks and high mortality rates. Between 1985 and 1993, major Kala azar epidemics in South Sudan killed an estimated 100,000 people. The spread of this disease in this country has been exacerbated by the protracted civil war, chronic food shortages, mass population movement, poor health infrastructure and system. [All Africa](#)

Tanzania: Mobile experimental malaria huts trialed

5 April - Improvements to the design of mobile huts designed to study malaria transmission in rural Tanzania have provided new insights into mosquito behaviour. Experimental huts have been used in Africa since the 1940s, and improvements have been introduced over the years to enable researchers to better understand how mosquitoes behave in human dwellings. A new hut design was developed by scientists at the Ifakara Health Institute, in

Tanzania, in 2007. The huts have been used in a range of malaria transmission studies in Benin, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia in recent years. They come in a kit form, which means they can be moved from place to place, allowing for more efficient studies compared to permanently located experimental structures. "You [can easily] dismantle the whole hut, take the panels to another place and plug it in, in a short period," said Nico Bovela, a senior research scientist at the institute. "The major problem with [previous designs] is with experimental flexibility," he said. "If you want to capture variations across different places it becomes difficult unless you build huts in [every area you wish to study], which is very expensive and no donor would be willing to support it." [All Africa](#)

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USCENTCOM

Egypt: Rising poverty threatens gains in fight against TB



10 April - Rising poverty, overcrowded public transport, and sprawling slums threaten to reverse the gains made in eradicating tuberculosis (TB) in Egypt, experts say. In recent days, the government has released new figures showing a significant decrease in mortality caused by TB. But medical experts warn the government will never be able to stamp out the disease through a narrow medical approach. Rather, it must tackle the socio-economic problems at the disease's root if it is to avoid a dramatic increase in infections. "Our slums, our transport, and the poor economic conditions of millions of Egyptians make many people prone to the disease," Mahmud Amr, a chest disease expert from Cairo University, told IRIN. "TB will continue to shatter the lives of thousands of people as long as no progress is made in these areas." [IRIN](#)

Pakistan: Avalanche buries more than 120 soldiers, highlighting a 'futile' war

9 April - An avalanche that buried more than 120 soldiers in a Himalayan region close to India has put a spotlight on what critics say is one of world's most pointless military deployments: two poverty-wracked nations engaged in a costly standoff over an uninhabitable patch of mountain and ice. Since Saturday morning, when the massive wall of snow engulfed a Pakistani military complex close to the Siachen Glacier, rescue teams have been unable to dig up any survivors. There is now very little hope that even a small number of people will come out alive. A team of U.S. military experts was expected to arrive at the site Monday to assist in the rescue efforts, according to an American official. [Mercury News](#)

United Arab Emirates: Sharjah sees 100% registration for medical waste collection

7 April - All the medical centres in Sharjah have registered with Wekaya, the company that collects medical wastes for the emirate. According to a senior official of the firm, nearly 53 tonnes of medical waste was handled by the company in March 2012 alone... Khalifa Al Shaibani, General Manager of Wekaya, told Khaleej Times, "Before we started the facility in June last year, majority of the centres were disposing of medical waste illegally by dumping it in routine garbage. This was causing diseases and putting lives of the residents at risk."

[Zawya](#)

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USEUCOM

Excess mortality among the elderly in 12 European countries, February and March 2012

5 April - In February and March 2012, excess deaths among the elderly have been observed in 12 European countries that carry out weekly monitoring of all-cause mortality. These preliminary data indicate that the impact of influenza in Europe differs from the recent pandemic and post-pandemic seasons. The current excess mortality among the elderly may be related to the return of influenza A(H3N2) virus, potentially with added effects of a cold snap. [Eurosurveillance](#)

United Kingdom: Baby boomers pose cannabis problem

5 April - Britain is facing a generation of elderly people who have been taking illicit drugs for much of their lives, according to research published today. A study of people aged 50 to 64 has found more than ten per cent of them report having taken cannabis throughout their adult lives. However only about a fifth of these admitted to recent use of the drug. This compares with just 1.7 per cent of those over the age of 65 who report having been users of cannabis. A person who is 65 now was 20 in 1967 when psychedelia and hippy cultured exploded on the youth scene. In central London, researchers found, more than 40 per cent of those over 50 reported being cannabis users - while nine per cent of these had taken the drug in the last 12 months. The findings, reported in the journal *Age and Ageing*, come from a study of nearly 4,000 people over the age of 50. Researcher Professor Robert Stewart, of King's College, London, said: "The key message of this paper confirms something which has been long-suspected but which has not, to our knowledge, ever been formally investigated in the UK – namely that illicit drug use will become a more common feature in older generations over the next 1-2 decades. [Englemed](#)

United Kingdom: Diabetes blood pressure control warning



9 April - Half of people with diabetes are failing to keep control of their blood pressure, risking "damaging" complications, figures suggest. The analysis of NHS data in England by Diabetes UK showed the number of people not hitting their target has been stuck at about 50% in recent years. High blood pressure increases the risk of conditions such as heart disease, kidney failure and stroke. The charity said people needed more support to control their condition. People with diabetes are normally told to keep their blood pressure below 130/80, slightly lower than the target for the rest of the population. For someone without diabetes, blood pressure should be no higher than 140/85 mmHg. Ideally, we should all have a blood pressure below 120/80. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

Canada: Pertussis, unimmunized group

10 April - A pertussis outbreak in the Low German-speaking Mennonite population of the region is proving challenging for public health officials to contain. The issue was raised this week during a board meeting of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. Pertussis, commonly referred to as whooping cough, is highly contagious. Its presence was first confirmed in the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph area on 15 Feb 2012, but the outbreak was declared elsewhere in late January 2012. The local health unit is one of 7 dealing with the problem. Dr Nicola Mercer, medical officer of health, told board members that since the Low German Mennonite population generally does not seek medical attention or vaccination, fighting the outbreak is extremely difficult. She said public health officials are confident there are many other cases of whooping cough among the population. Immunization clinics have been set up, but are poorly attended. So far 4 children have been hospitalized throughout the 7 health units. The family in the one case in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph was provided access to antibiotic medications to treat the disease. The family refused immunization. An outbreak roughly 2 years ago among the same Mennonite population left a number of people very sick. "They continue to have an under-immunized population, so we likely will continue to have outbreaks," Mercer said, adding that whooping cause can cause death. The most vulnerable are the very young. She added that an 85 percent immunization rate is generally what is needed to have a serious impact on a disease. [ProMED-mail](#)

Canada: Suicide rates rising among Canadian girls: study

9 April - Suicide rates for female teens and pre-teens in Canada rose over the past few decades even though the overall number of youths who took their own lives was dropping, according to a Canadian study that covered nearly 30 years. Researchers whose findings were published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal also noted a change in the preferred methods of suicide, from guns or poisons to suffocation by strangulation. "Our message is that all suicide is a tragedy and the trend is very disturbing," said lead author Robin Skinner, an epidemiologist with the Public Health Agency of Canada in Ottawa. In 1980, 0.6 per 100,000 girls between the ages of 10 to 14 committed suicide, rising to 0.9 per 100,000 in 2008. But among girls 15 to 19 years old, the rate rose from 3.7 per 100,000 in 1980 to 6.2 per 100,000 in 2008. Overall, suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between 10 and 19 years old, after accidents. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Documentary examines the ordeal of bullied children

7 April - ...Tyler's story is one of five family accounts director Lee Hirsch presents in *Bully*, a harrowing documentary about bullying in schools. "It happens in urban schools, it happens in rural schools. I don't believe that the problems the families in this film experience are unique to small town America," he said...The film's power lies in the heartbreaking testimony of these socially isolated kids and their parents. Some of them have lost their kids forever. The movie aims at educating and mobilizing people against bullying. [VOA News](#)

U.S.: Rabies risk assessment of exposures to a bat on a commercial airliner

13 April - On August 5, 2011, a bat flew through the cabin of a commercial airliner minutes after takeoff during an early morning flight from Wisconsin to Georgia, potentially exposing the passengers and flight crew to rabies virus. Three days later, the Wisconsin Division of Public Health (WDPH) requested assistance from CDC to conduct a rabies risk assessment for the passengers, flight crew, and ground crew members associated with the flight. No one was determined to have been exposed to rabies virus based on Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices guidelines for rabies prevention (1). An environmental assessment of the Wisconsin airport found a rigorous animal control and incident documentation program and no evidence of bat infestation. Although none of the persons assessed required postexposure rabies prophylaxis in this incident, bats active in daylight or found in areas where they are not normally found (e.g., aboard an aircraft) can pose risks for rabies transmission, and public health officials should be prepared to respond to such occurrences. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)



U.S. teen birth rate drops to a record low

10 April - The teenage birth rate in the United States has

fallen to a record low in the seven decades since such statistics were last collected. A report released Tuesday by the National Center for Health Statistics showed the teenage birth rate for American teenagers fell 9% from 2009 to 2010. The national level, 34.3 teenage births per 1,000 women between the ages of 15-19, is the lowest since 1946. The rates dropped across all racial and ethnic groups, and nearly all states. Experts suggested that the numbers may mean more teens are delaying sex or using contraception, representing gains for both abstinence-only and contraceptive education programs. [CNN](#)

U.S.: Women lack exercise; at risk of developing metabolic syndrome

10 April - A national study shows that women are less likely than men to get at least 30 minutes of exercise per day, resulting in greater odds of developing metabolic syndrome – a risky and increasingly prevalent condition related to obesity. Metabolic syndrome is a name for a group of risk factors – including high cholesterol, high blood pressure and extra weight around the middle part of the body – which occur together and increase the risk for coronary disease, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes. The researchers initially were interested in the correlation between physical activity, depression and metabolic syndrome, and ended up finding a gender difference. [OSU](#)

U.S.: Wildfires arrive early



10 April - ... Already, 24 states and D.C. have posted red flag fire warnings, extremely unusual on the east coast, with fires as far north on Massachusetts. Traffic on I- 285 south had to crawl through dense fog. Jacksonville issued an air pollution alert with dozens of fires burning statewide... An early start to a season, and already busy on the fire line. Fire commanders say it is so dry, so windy, and there's so much dry fuel out there, it only takes a cigarette or a downed power line to get a fire that's going and out of control. They're asking everyone in the affected states to use extreme caution. [NBC Nightly News](#)

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USPACOM

Indonesia: Filariasis

9 April - [Filariasis], the tropical disease, caused by mosquito-transmitted filaria worms, is endemic in Indonesia. Nationwide, there are almost 12 000 people diagnosed with the condition, but the recent discovery of a town in East Kalimantan where nearly everyone is infected has disease control experts scrambling to contain an outbreak. Nearly an entire village in East Kalimantan is believed to be afflicted with the mosquito-borne disease filariasis, which can cause elephantiasis. Sutrisno, head of community health at the district

health office, said on Sunday [8 Apr 2012] that recent tests showed 210 of the 300 inhabitants of Sebakung Jaya village in North Penajam Paser district had the filariasis parasite. The health office is now making plans to bring in the necessary drugs to treat everyone in the village, he said. First, however, they are waiting for the test results to be confirmed by the provincial health office in the East Kalimantan capital of Samarinda.

[ProMED-mail](#)

Indonesia: Strong quakes cause panic, not tsunami

11 April - Two massive earthquakes triggered back-to-back tsunami warnings for Indonesia on Wednesday, sending panicked residents fleeing to high ground in cars and on the backs of motorcycles. No deadly waves or serious damage resulted, and a watch for much of the Indian Ocean was lifted after a few hours... The U.S. Geological Survey said the first 8.6-magnitude quake was a shallow 22 kilometers (14 miles), hitting in the sea 270 miles (435 kilometers) from Aceh's provincial capital... The only wave to hit, though, was less than 30 inches (80 centimeters) high, rolling to Indonesia's emptied coastline... The World Meteorological Organization said communication systems set up after the 2004 tsunami appeared to have worked well. "Our records indicate that all the national meteorological services in the countries at risk by this tsunami have received the warnings in under five minutes," said Maryam Golnaraghi, the head of WMO's disaster risk reduction program.

[MSNBC](#)

Sri Lanka: Dengue numbers triple in first quarter of 2012



11 April - Sri Lankan health personnel have reported a three-fold increase in the number of recorded dengue fever cases in the first quarter of this year. "This rise is mainly due to weather patterns," Sudath Peries, deputy chief epidemiologist at the Epidemiology Unit of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Health, told IRIN.

Containers or hollows where stagnant water can accumulate provide breeding grounds for mosquitoes, promoting the spread of dengue. "If there are heavy rains and flooding, dengue breeding grounds will likely be washed away," said Sumanasiri Gamage, an independent health worker. "However, due to intermittent rains, the breeding continues." According to the World Health Organization (WHO), dengue is the most common mosquito-borne viral disease in humans. Some 2.5 billion people - two-fifths of the world's population - are at risk from dengue fever, with an estimated 50 million infections worldwide every year. [IRIN](#)

Vietnam: Mild disease turns deadly for children



5 April - A dangerous strain of the typically non-lethal hand-foot-and-mouth disease (HFMD) has affected more than 21,000 persons - mostly children younger than five - killing 16 thus far in Vietnam, according to the Ministry of Health. "Despite being a benign viral infection in developed countries, the strain EV71 of

HFMD is causing multiple deaths of children under five here in Asia. We are especially

worried about South Vietnam, where lots of children are in informal [hygienically unregulated] crèches while their parents work," Bhupinder Tomar, representative of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in Vietnam, told IRIN. HFMD's symptoms are fever, sores in the mouth and blisters on the hands and feet. The disease spreads by direct contact with fluids from infected persons and there is no specific treatment. [IRIN](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Argentina: Buenos Aires hit by deadly storm

5 April - At least 14 people have been killed in severe storms in Argentina. Most of the victims died in the province of Buenos Aires, where winds reached speeds of more than 100km (60 miles) an hour, toppling trees and causing roofs to cave in. A teenager was electrocuted in the city of Santa Fe, in the north-east, when he stepped on a downed power cable. Many neighbourhoods in the capital, Buenos Aires, were left without power as cables snapped in the strong winds. Residents said unseasonably hot and humid weather gave way to the violent storm. Some local media reported squalls of up to 120km (75 miles) an hour. City streets were blocked by fallen trees and masonry blown off roofs. Ten people were injured when the roof of a church was lifted by the strong winds and fell onto passengers waiting for a bus some 40m (40 yards) along the road. Most of the casualties were crushed by fallen trees and masonry, while others were electrocuted by downed power cables. [BBC News](#)

Brazil tests GM mosquitoes to fight dengue

April 11 - Males with offspring-killing genes are replacing wild insects, say researchers. Scientists in Brazil say an experiment to reduce populations of the dengue-carrying *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, by releasing millions of genetically modified (GM) insects into the wild, is working. More than ten million modified male mosquitoes were released in the city of Juazeiro, a city of 288,000 people, over a period of time starting a year ago... "From samples collected in the field, 85 per cent of the eggs were transgenic, which means that the males released are overriding the wild population. This [should result] in the decrease of *Aedes* mosquitoes, and in the decrease of dengue transmission," he told SciDev.Net. [Nature](#)

Chile: Pertussis

9 April - Although the incidence of pertussis in South America has remained low in recent years, disease rates in Chile remain slightly higher than those of neighboring countries [1-3]; see graph: <http://www.gideononline.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/pertussis-chile.png>. Surprisingly, DPT vaccination uptake in Chile has continued to be comparatively high for over 2 decades; see graph: <http://www.gideononline.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Chile-DPT.png>. [ProMED-mail](#)

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