

13 December 2013

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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NWSChat for Emergency Response

NWSChat is an Instant Messaging program used the National Weather Service to share critical warning decision expertise and other types of significant weather information essential to the NWS's mission of saving lives and property.

This information is exchanged in real-time with the media and emergency response community, who play a key role in communicating the NWS's hazardous weather messages to the public.

NWS partners can use NWSChat as an efficient means of seeking clarifications and enhancements to the communication stream originating from the NWS during a fast-paced significant weather or hydrologic event.



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U.S. MILITARY

Africom helps regional militaries fight HIV/AIDS

4 December - U.S. Africa Command is making headway in helping militaries across Africa confront the HIV/AIDS epidemic through a program focused on prevention, care and treatment, a senior command official reported today. "The whole focus is to reduce the incidence of HIV in foreign militaries," Mike Hrschchysn, chief of humanitarian and health

The Loathsome, Lethal Mosquito

Everyone hates mosquitos. Besides the annoying buzzing and biting, mosquito-borne diseases like malaria kill over a million people each year (plus horses, dogs and cats). And over the past 100 million years, they've gotten good at their job -- sucking up to three times their weight in blood, totally undetected. So shouldn't we just get rid of them? Rose Eveleth shares why scientists aren't sure.



activities for Africom's Security Cooperation Programs directorate... HIV and AIDS represent a potential threat to Africa's regional security and stability, he said. The disease weakens national governments and economies and erodes the readiness of their militaries. That degrades their effectiveness, not just within their own countries, but also in their ability to provide peacekeeping forces that support regional stability, he explained... The effort has reached nearly a half-million troops and their family members with educational programs about prevention and treatment, provided about 4,000 healthcare workers trained in HIV/AIDS care and treatment, and provided support to about 75,000 people living with the disease. [Defense.gov](#)

CDC: Water at Lejeune linked to birth defects

6 December - A long-awaited study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirms a link between tainted tap water at a U.S. Marine Corps base in North Carolina and increased risk of serious birth defects and childhood cancers. The study released late Thursday by the CDC's Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry surveyed the parents of 12,598 children born at Camp Lejeune between 1968 and 1985, the year drinking-water wells contaminated with chemicals from a leaky fuel depot and a dry cleaner were closed. The study concludes that babies born to mothers who drank the tap water while pregnant were four times more likely than normal to have such serious birth defects as spinal bifida. Babies whose mothers were exposed also had an elevated risk of such childhood cancers as leukemia. [Military Times](#)

GI drinking problems rise in Hawaii

7 December - The Army is reporting an "alarming increase" in drunken driving by soldiers in Hawaii as the military continues to struggle with the consequences of war and a return to "garrison" life... Between July and October, 74 cases of impaired driving were reported, Jackson said. Of those, 23 occurred on Army garrison installations, while 51 were off-post incidents involving soldiers, said Jackson, director of emergency services for the garrison... Some of the alcohol-related cases -- involving driving and problems at home -- have ranged from passing out at a gas station to domestic violence and erratic behavior.

[Stars and Stripes](#)

Update: Motor vehicle-related deaths, active and reserve components, U.S. Armed Forces, 1999-2012

November 2013 - From 1999 to 2012, there were 4,479 motor vehicle accident (MVA)-related deaths among members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Of these, the single most common underlying cause of death was motorcycle accidents (n=1,134; 25.6%). Among active component service members during the 14-year surveillance period, the annual number (n=355) and rate (25.1 per 100,000 person-years[p-yrs]) of MVA-related deaths peaked in 2004. Since then, a steady downward trend followed and the 2012 number (n=184) and rate (13.2 per 100,000 p-yrs) were the lowest of the entire period. For members of the reserve component, the annual number of deaths peaked in 2005 (n=86), but the number in 2012 (n=22) was the lowest of the period. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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Video shows brown shower water, mold in Fort Polk barracks

9 December - A Fort Polk soldier upset about conditions in the barracks, provided a video to a social media site showing coffee-brown shower water and a moldy bathroom ceiling in a barracks room... After the video appeared online, officials at Fort Polk, led by post commander Brig. Gen. William B. Hickman, conducted barracks inspections across the installation, a post official said. Hickman also walked through and inspected the barracks rooms. "The barracks-wide inspection conducted Dec. 5 on Fort Polk resulted in the temporary move of three soldiers to different rooms," Fort Polk spokesperson Kim Reischling said in an emailed statement. [Army Times](#)

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GLOBAL

Exam grades 'more nature than nurture'

11 December - Genetic influence explains almost 60% of the variation in GCSE exam results, twin studies suggest. Scientists studied academic performance in more than 11,000 identical and non-identical 16-year-old twins in the UK. The team from King's College London found that on average, genes explained 58% of differences between GCSE scores in core subjects such as maths. Differences in grades due to environment, such as schools and families, accounted for about 36%... Study leader Nicholas Shakeshaft, from the Institute of Psychiatry at King's, said: "Since we are studying whole populations, this does not mean that genetics explains 60% of an individual's performance, but rather that genetics explains 60% of the differences between individuals, in the population as it exists at the moment.

[BBC News](#)

First test to predict acute mountain sickness

12 December - The first test to identify acute mountain sickness has been developed by a team of researchers in Italy and France... The test could revolutionise trekking and climbing by predicting who will develop the potentially deadly condition so they can avoid high altitudes, ascend more gradually or take preventative medication... The researchers hypothesised that cardiovascular maladaptation to hypoxia is responsible for AMS symptoms, thus its early identification could predict the future development of symptoms. They studied cardiovascular function by means of non-invasive, ultrasound-based techniques in 34 healthy volunteers at sea level and after passive ascent (by cable car) to 3842m... [Dr Rosa Maria Bruno, first author of the study] said: "...when we combined O2 saturation and TAPSE [tricuspid annular plane systolic excursion], both very easily measurable, we found that a TAPSE value <28mm and O2 saturation <87% after 4 hours of

exposure to high altitude could predict who will develop AMS the day after with excellent negative predictive value (94%) and sensitivity (92%). If these results are confirmed by larger studies, it will be possible to identify vulnerable individuals and suggest particular behaviours and drugs only to this subgroup." [EurekAlert](#)

Global cancer cases reach 14 million, World Health Organization says

12 December - The number of people being diagnosed with cancer in the world each year has leaped to more than 14 million, the World Health Organization says. The data for 2012 shows a marked rise on the 12.7 million cases in 2008. In that time the number of deaths has also increased, from 7.6 million to 8.2 million. The rising burden of cancer is being driven by a rapid shift in lifestyles in the developing world to more closely reflect industrialised countries. Rising rates of smoking and obesity as well as people living longer are contributing to the rise. Lung cancer, which is mainly caused by smoking, was the most common cancer globally, with 1.8 million cases - about 13% of the total. The WHO also described a "sharp rise" in cases of breast cancer. Both the incidence and mortality have increased since 2008. The disease is now the most common cancer in women in 140 countries. [BBC News](#)

In mass attacks, new advice lets medics rush in

7 December - ...Federal officials and medical experts who have studied the Boston Marathon bombing and mass shootings like the one in Newtown, Conn., have concluded that this kind of aggressive medical response could be critical in saving lives. In response to their findings, the Obama administration has formally recommended that medical personnel be sent into "warm zones" before they are secured, when gunmen are still on the loose or bombs have not yet been disarmed... They recommended that any of those first responders sent into "warm zones" focus on stopping victims' bleeding. The guidelines also say that first responders should be equipped with body armor and be escorted by armed police, a policy that officials in Sparks and a handful of other cities had already adopted. [New York Times](#)

Neuroscience method of optogenetics as good as electrical stimulation

12 December - Neuroscientists are eagerly, but not always successfully, looking for proof that optogenetics – a celebrated technique that uses pulses of visible light to genetically alter brain cells to be excited or silenced – can be as successful in complex and large brains as it has been in rodent models. A new study... may be the most definitive demonstration yet that the technique can work in nonhuman primates as well as, or even a little better than, the tried-and-true method of perturbing brain circuits with small bursts of electrical current. Brown University researchers directly compared the two techniques to test how well they could influence the visual decision-making behavior of two primates... In all, the two primates made thousands of choices over scores of sessions between the T and the

distracting character with either kind of stimulation or none. Compared head-to-head in a statistical analysis, electrical and optical stimulation showed essentially similar effects in biasing the decisions... The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency funded the study... to lay the basic neuroscience groundwork for ultimately addressing traumatic brain injury and other damage. [EurekAlert](#)

New diagnostic test can detect chlamydia trachomatis in less than 20 minutes

12 December – Researchers have developed a new assay for rapid and sensitive detection of *Chlamydia trachomatis*, the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in humans. This procedure takes less than 20 minutes and can be easily performed at the point of care (POC) during the patient's visit. [EurekAlert](#)

New insights into the dementia epidemic

12 December - Described in the early 1980s as “The Silent Epidemic,” dementia in the elderly will soon become a clarion call for public health experts worldwide. The epidemic is largely explained by the prevalence of dementia in persons 80 years of age or older. In most countries around the world, especially wealthy ones, this “old old” population will continue to grow, and since it accounts for the largest proportion of dementia cases, the dementia epidemic will grow worldwide... Eventually, we will have results of studies conducted over longer periods with presumably more definitive findings. But for now, the evidence supports the theory that better education and greater economic well-being enhance life expectancy and reduce the risk of late-life dementias in people who survive to old age. The results also suggest that controlling vascular and other risk factors during midlife and early old age has unexpected benefits. That is, individual risk-factor control may provide substantial public health benefits if it leads to lower rates of late-life dementias. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Report: Recent malaria-control efforts saved 3.3 million lives

11 December - Global malaria-control efforts since 2000 have saved an estimated 3.3 million lives and reduced global mortality rates by 45%, the World Health Organization (WHO) said in its "[World Malaria Report 2013](#)," released today. A large majority of the lives saved were in the 10 countries with the highest rates of malaria and in preschoolers, who are most effective by the disease, the agency said. Mortality rates since 2000 have dropped 49% in Africa and an estimated 54% in African children. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

WHO launches plan for better health care in developing countries

12 December - Major donors are changing the way they fund health programs in low-income countries. The results in maternal and child health have been so successful that the

World Bank and the Global Fund are working together to add programs on AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The change in financing focuses on motivating health care workers to provide better care and on helping patients obtain it. When pregnant women get good health care and have a trained midwife or doctor at their side when giving birth, mothers and babies are more likely to survive. And when children get vaccinated against preventable diseases and get quality care when they're sick, they're more likely to reach their fifth birthday. [VOA](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

- In week 48 (through 6 December 2013), influenza-like-illness (ILI) and Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) decreased in NORTHCOM and PACOM.
- The percent of outpatient encounters due to ILI is above baseline in CENTCOM. In EUCOM levels are similar to previous seasons.
- Among training centers in week 48, influenza rates remain at or below expected values.
- The influenza vaccination coverage for the DoD (active duty component only) is 90% (as of 03 December 2013). [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 48 (November 24-30, 2013), influenza activity increased slightly in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 5,306 specimens tested and reported during week 48, 536 (10.1%) 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: One influenza-associated pediatric death was reported.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.9%, below the national baseline of 2.0%. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Weeks 47 & 48 (17 November - 30 November 2013), 93 specimens were collected and received from 31 locations. Results were finalized for 86 specimens from

31 locations. For specimens collected during Week 47, there were five influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & Rhinovirus/Enterovirus, and one A/not subtyped. For specimens collected during Week 48, there was one influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, and one A/not subtyped viruses identified. See Table 1 for results for other respiratory pathogens identified.

- Cumulative results were finalized for 441 specimens from 59 locations. There were 24 specimens positive for influenza (14 A(H1N1)pdm09, four A(H3N2), two A/not subtyped, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & Rhinovirus/Enterovirus, and three B/unknown lineage). Other respiratory pathogens identified were 12 adenovirus, four *Chlamydomphila pneumonia*, two coronavirus, seven human metapneumovirus, 22 *Mycoplasma pneumonia*, 38 parainfluenza, 10 RSV, and 112 rhinovirus/enterovirus. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

In week 48/2013 (25 Nov–1 Dec):

- All 29 reporting countries recorded low intensity influenza activity.
- Of 393 sentinel specimens tested across 24 countries, 3% were positive for influenza A virus.
- Three hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza A cases were reported by the UK.

Since the start of the 2013–2014 influenza surveillance period, week 40/2013, there has been no evidence of sustained influenza activity in Europe. The percentage of sentinel specimens testing positive for influenza is increasing in some countries, possibly indicating the start of the epidemic period in those countries. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

12 December – Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the overall level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere is low to moderate and in the southern hemisphere is minimal to low. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Influenza virus activity in the world

9 December - ...The WHO GISRS laboratories tested more than 31 592 specimens. 1169 were positive for influenza viruses, of which 852 (72.9%) were typed as influenza A and 317 (27.1%) as influenza B.... During weeks 46 and 47, influenza activity increased slightly in the northern hemisphere and remained low in the southern hemisphere. A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses were the predominant subtype globally, followed by A(H3N2) and influenza B viruses. [WHO](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 7 December 2013:

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 30 November 2013 (Week 48), influenza-like illness (ILI) activity continues to increase slightly in both Army and civilian populations, with influenza A activity steadily increasing nationwide.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 48 were 56% lower than for the same week last year, likely due to the Thanksgiving holiday period.
- Influenza cases: One hospitalized influenza case was reported to USAPHC in week 48. To date, 9 cases have been reported during this influenza season: 2 in AD SMs and 7 in non-AD beneficiaries.
- Viral specimens: During week 48, 126 of 639 (20%) laboratory specimens tested were positive for respiratory pathogens. For the first time since week 44, the majority of respiratory specimens were positive for RSV (47%). Influenza A accounted for 37%. 86% of influenza A specimens were submitted by SRMC.
- Army Vaccination Rates: Army (COMPO 1) compliance in week 48: USAREUR 99%, MEDCOM 97%, TRADOC 91%, USARPAC 94%, FORSCOM 94%, USARSO 76%. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

Vaccines help reduce U.S. flu cases, hospital stays: CDC

12 December - Flu shots reduced the number of U.S. flu cases and hospitalizations last year by an estimated 17 percent, highlighting the need for increasing vaccination rates, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Thursday. Vaccinations prevented more than six million cases of the flu and 79,000 hospitalizations, according to a CDC model that compared the actual number of flu cases and hospitalizations with the projected number that would have occurred had there been no vaccinations. "This is by far the largest number of hospitalizations and other illnesses we've seen prevented" since 2005, said CDC Director Thomas Frieden. [Reuters](#)

When it comes to flu shots, the more influenza strains, the better

11 December - Researchers conducted a test of the new four-strain influenza vaccine, available for the first time this year, to determine how well it protected against the flu in

young children. The four strain vaccine, which protects against four types of influenza—two viruses from the A class and two from the B class – does as good a job of protecting against flu than the three-strain shot, but is better at preventing moderate to severe disease than the traditional immunization. The international group of researchers, who described their findings in a report published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, attributed the four-strain, or quadrivalent vaccine's effectiveness to the fact that it contained both circulating B types of influenza. In previous years, in which only one of the B strains was included, the immunization had a 50-50 chance of being mismatched to the circulating virus, making it less effective. [Time](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

H7N9 found in samples from Shenzhen live-bird markets

11 December - Three environmental samples from live-poultry markets in Shenzhen, China, have tested positive for H7N9 avian flu virus, the *South China Morning Post* reported today. Two recent cases in Hong Kong have been linked to Shenzhen. Officials discovered the virus after collecting 70 samples at 13 live-bird markets throughout the city... University of Hong Kong microbiologist Ho Pak-leung urged Hong Kong to discontinue all live-poultry imports from the mainland. Currently, Hong Kong has suspended imports only from three Shenzhen farms. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

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

10 December - On 28 November and 6 December 2013, the National Health and Family Planning Commission, China notified WHO of two new laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus... On 2 December and 6 December 2013, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), China, Hong Kong SAR, notified WHO of two laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus. [WHO](#)

Using air transportation data to predict pandemics

12 December - Computational work conducted at Northwestern University has led to a new mathematical theory for understanding the global spread of epidemics. The resulting insights could not only help identify an outbreak's origin but could also significantly improve the ability to forecast the global pathways through which a disease might spread... Brockmann and Helbing's new approach for understanding global disease dynamics is based on the intuitive notion that in our strongly connected world, conventional geographic distances are no longer the key variable but must be replaced with "effective distances." "From the perspective of Frankfurt, Germany, other metropolitan areas such as London, New York or Tokyo are effectively not more distant than geographically close German cities

such as Bremen, Leipzig or Kiel," said Brockmann." ...With this type of mathematical foundation, Brockmann and Helbing can visualize the geographic spread of past diseases, such as SARS in 2003, or influenza H1N1 in 2009. [EurekAlert](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Artificial sweetener aspartame 'is safe'



10 December - The artificial sweetener aspartame is safe and poses no threat to health, European food regulators conclude. The European Food Safety Authority brought forward its review, planned for completion by 2020, at the request of the European Commission. Since it came into use in the 1980s, a number of medical studies have questioned aspartame's safety. The EFSA says it left "no stone unturned" during its full risk assessment... An Acceptable Daily Intake, or ADI, is set at 40mg per kg of body weight per day... The only exception is for people suffering from a rare genetic disease phenylketonuria who cannot safely consume aspartame. [BBC News](#)

FDA hopes to curb antibiotic use on farms

12 December - Farmers' frequent use of antibiotics to help their livestock grow is contributing to the rise of dangerous antibiotic-resistant bacteria, according to the Food and Drug Administration. On Wednesday, the government agency announced a new plan to phase out the use of certain antibiotics in the food production industry... An FDA report released in April showed that 81% of all the raw ground turkey the agency tested was contaminated with antibiotic-resistant bacteria. And turkey wasn't the only problem -- antibiotic-resistant bacteria were found in about 69% of pork chops, 55% of ground beef and 39% of chicken. Antibiotics are used in livestock to prevent disease, but they are also used as a protectant and to aid growth. About 29.9 million pounds of antibiotics were sold in 2011 for meat and poultry production, compared with the 7.7 million pounds sold for human use, according to the Pew Charitable Trusts. [CNN](#)

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WELLNESS

Exercise as potent medicine



11 December - Exercise can be as effective as many frequently prescribed drugs in treating some of the leading causes of death, according to a new report. The study raises important questions about whether our health care system focuses too much on medications and too little on activity to combat physical ailments. For the study, which was published in October

in *BMJ*, researchers compared how well various drugs and exercise succeed in reducing deaths among people who have been diagnosed with several common and serious conditions, including heart disease and diabetes... The results consistently showed that drugs and exercise produced almost exactly the same results. People with heart disease, for instance, who exercised but did not use commonly prescribed medications, including statins, angiotensin-converting-enzyme inhibitors or antiplatelet drugs, had the same risk of dying from — or surviving — heart disease as patients taking those drugs. Similarly, people with diabetes who exercised had the same relative risk of dying from the condition as those taking the most commonly prescribed drugs. [New York Times](#)

For altitude training, a narrow window for success

12 December - Researchers and athletes have long known that living at altitude holds the potential to improve athletic performance... However, though several studies have shown the promise of this type of training philosophy, it's been unknown what specific living altitude is best for enhancing athletic performance at sea level... These findings suggest that there's a defined window for altitude living—between 2000 and 2500 meters—that can improve sea level performance in competitive runners. [EurekAlert](#)

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USAFRICOM

Madagascar: Bubonic plague kills 20

10 December – A village in Madagascar has been hit by a deadly outbreak of the bubonic plague, medical experts on the island have confirmed. Tests were carried out after at least 20 people in the village, near the north-western town of Mandritsara, were reported to have died last week. The International Committee of the Red Cross warned in October that Madagascar was at risk of a plague epidemic. The disease is transmitted to humans via fleas, usually from rats. Last year, Madagascar had 60 deaths from the plague, the world's highest

recorded number... The Pasteur Institute said there were concerns that the disease could spread to towns and cities where living standards have declined since a coup in 2009 and the ensuing political crisis. [BBC News](#)

Tanzania: "Mystery" outbreak was due to hepatitis E, WHO says

10 December - A large outbreak in Tanzania previously reported as caused by an unknown illness was due to hepatitis E, the WHO's African region reported last week. Health authorities noted 690 cases of acute febrile illness from Aug 20 to Oct 29 in the Buhigwe district, Kigoma region of Tanzania. Fifteen of 46 samples tested in Nairobi were positive for hepatitis E... The delay in detection and confirmation of the outbreak cause was largely the result of most early cases being treated as malaria, the report said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

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USCENTCOM

Libya: Civilians trained by American mental health professionals bring healing to trauma victims of Libya's civil war

12 December - Civilians traumatized by Libya's civil war in 2011 -- which left many homeless, poor and grieving for loved ones -- have virtually no access to mental health professionals, but many have found healing through small groups led by Libyan volunteers who were trained by American professionals, according to a Baylor University study. The finding has implications for traumatized people elsewhere, including in Somalia and Ethiopia, where similar efforts have begun; and in Egypt and Uganda, where such training is to begin soon... "The American Psychological Association over the past few years has called for psychologists to develop new ways to deliver mental health services, because there simply aren't enough providers in the United States -- and it's even worse elsewhere," Stanford said. "Taking basic therapeutic principles and putting them into a format peers can deliver has been very effective." [EurekAlert](#)

Pakistan: Religious leader issues fatwa supporting polio vaccine

10 December - Pakistani Muslim scholar Maulana Sami-ul-Haq—known as the "Father of the Taliban"—has issued a fatwa (religious decree) supporting vaccines against polio and other serious diseases, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported today. Haq urged parents to have their children immunized against polio and other fatal diseases, noting that vaccination comply with Islamic law. The fatwa comes more than a year after the Pakistani

Taliban banned polio vaccination in the wake of a false immunization campaign that was set up by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to help track and kill al-Qaida head Osama Bin Laden. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

Saudi Arabia plans to map genomes of 100,000 citizens



9 December - Researchers plan to map the genomes of 100,000 people in Saudi Arabia for a new human genome project, BBC News reported. Funded by the Saudi Arabian national science agency, the project will help to create a DNA database that could pave the way for prenatal genetic screenings. The study is similar to one currently underway in England, which involves mapping the genomes of 100,000 National Health Service (NHS) patients... The project will take place at 10 genome centers across Saudi Arabia over the next five years. Researchers will analyze both normal genes and those linked with disease.

[Fox News](#)

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USEUCOM

France: Turning off the red light

7 December – ... With Germany having second thoughts about its decision over a decade ago to liberalise the world's oldest profession, the French have decided to follow Sweden, Finland and Norway in restricting prostitution. Paying for sex is not now illegal, although brothels, soliciting and pimping are. France has at least 20,000 sex workers, far fewer than the 400,000 or so thought to offer their services across the Rhine. But the nature of prostitution in France has changed radically over the past 20 years. Today about 90% of those working the streets in France are foreigners, up from 20% in 1990. Women (and some men) are trafficked to France from Romania, Bulgaria, Nigeria and China by prostitution rings; many are subjected to violence, as are their families. [Economist](#)

United Kingdom: Hospital coma guidelines require care for all patients

11 December - All patients in a coma or vegetative state should have access to specialist care, according to new guidelines. The Royal College of Physicians is keen to address inconsistencies in the level of resources in hospitals around England and Wales. Experts also want a patient register to help gauge numbers of patients with prolonged disorders of consciousness, which include coma, vegetative state and minimally conscious state. There are no official figures on cases. Derick Wade, professor of neurological rehabilitation at

University College London, estimates there are fewer than 10,000 such cases a year but admits there could be more. A register would track patients and record data to enable services to be planned "in a sensible and coherent way", he said. [BBC News](#)

United Kingdom: Thousands of patients at risk from incorrect use of IV drips

10 December - Patients' lives are being put at risk by an 'astonishing' lack of knowledge surrounding the correct administration of intravenous (IV) drips in hospitals in England and Wales...The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) has issued guidelines for medical practitioners on their use amid fears that tens of thousands of patients are suffering complications each year because most doctors do not know how to prescribe them properly. There is a risk of pneumonia or heart failure if a patient is given too much fluid, or kidney failure if they are given too little. [The Guardian](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Despite Mass. law, sex trade clients seldom punished

9 December - In fall 2011, state officials hailed the passage of a human trafficking law that increased penalties for men who pay for sex from women in Massachusetts. But two years later, the effort has stalled because of inadequate resources, a lack of knowledge about the law, and resistance to holding so-called johns accountable... The law — designed to stifle the commercial sex trade, an underground industry that ensnares tens of thousands of girls and women across the United States — calls for jail terms of up to 2½ years and a maximum fine of \$5,000 for buying sex, which is considered a misdemeanor. In a recent survey, none of the state's 11 district attorney's offices could cite a single case in which a defendant has faced even the minimum fine of \$1,000. [Boston Globe](#)

U.S.: Fewer psychiatrists seen taking health insurance

11 December - Psychiatrists are significantly less likely than doctors in other specialties to accept insurance, researchers say in a new study, complicating the push to increase access to mental health care. The study... found that 55 percent of psychiatrists accepted private insurance, compared with 89 percent of other doctors. Likewise, the study said, 55 percent of psychiatrists accept patients covered by Medicare, against 86 percent of other doctors. And 43 percent of psychiatrists accept Medicaid, which provides coverage for low-income people, while 73 percent of other doctors do... A federal rule issued last month requires insurers to cover care for mental health and addiction on the same terms as treatments for

physical illnesses, without charging higher co-payments or deductibles or imposing stricter limits on services... However, the study suggests that expanding coverage may not by itself guarantee access to psychiatrists. "Even if you have good insurance that covers mental health care, you may still have a problem if there's no doctor who accepts your insurance," Dr. Bishop said. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Measles 'eliminated' but still a threat



5 December - Fifty years after the introduction of an effective measles vaccine, the disease is no longer endemic in the U.S., but it remains a threat to health security, according to the CDC... But cases continue to be imported into the country from around the world, where an average of 430 children die from measles each day. From 2001 to 2011, Papania and colleagues reported, the median number of U.S. cases each year was 61. But 175 -- including 20 resulting in hospitalization -- were reported to the CDC from January through the end of November this year. Another surge was seen in 2011, when 222 cases were recorded... Nearly all of the individuals infected with measles this year were either not vaccinated or had unknown vaccination status. And previous outbreaks -- including one in San Diego in 2008 and one in Indiana in 2005 -- involved a high percentage of unvaccinated individuals. [MedPage Today](#)

U.S.: Task force - ban drug reps from 'ivory towers'

11 December - Drug sales reps should be banned from academic medical centers, but mingling between faculty and pharma researchers is not a problem, according to a conflict-of-interest task force. "Pharmaceutical sales representatives should not be allowed access to any faculty, students, or trainees in academic medical centers or affiliated entities," the task force, convened by the Pew Charitable Trusts, wrote in a 30-page [report released Tuesday](#). "However, faculty may invite pharmaceutical scientists for specific educational or scientific discussions that do not involve marketing of a specific product." The task force -- with representatives from seven academic medical centers, various consumer organizations, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), and the American Medical Student Association -- referenced a review of 29 studies that found physicians who interacted with sales reps prescribed lower-quality, higher-cost drugs compared with non-exposed doctors. [MedPage Today](#)

U.S. health improving; Hawaii ranks first, Miss. Last

11 December - An annual measure of the nation's health status finds evidence that Americans made "a notable shift" toward better health in 2013. Important gains were seen in more than two-thirds of the measures analyzed for the 2013 America's Health Rankings report, released today, including:

- A decline in the smoking rate, down from 21.2% of the adult population in 2012 to 19.6%. Seventeen states had significant drops in smoking, the largest being in Nevada,

Maryland, Oklahoma, Kansas and Vermont.

- A drop in physical inactivity, defined as not doing any physical activity outside work for 30 days, down from 26.2% of the adult population in 2012 to 22.9% in 2013. The prevalence of physical inactivity varies from a high of 31.4% in Arkansas to a low of 16.2% in Oregon.
- A leveling off of the obesity epidemic as the percentage of adults who are obese — defined as roughly 30 or more pounds over a healthy weight — holds steady.
[USA Today](#)

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USPACOM

China state media under fire for arguing benefits of smog

10 December - Commentaries by two of China's most influential news outlets suggesting that the country's air pollution crisis was not without a silver lining drew a withering reaction on Tuesday from internet users and other media. In online commentaries on Monday, state broadcaster CCTV and the widely read tabloid the Global Times, published by the Communist Party's official People's Daily, both tried to put a positive spin on China's smog problem. The Global Times said smog could be useful in military situations, as it could hinder the use of guided missiles, while CCTV listed five "unforeseen rewards" for smog, including helping Chinese people's sense of humor. While both pieces have since been deleted from their websites, Chinese newspapers lost little time in denouncing their point of view, in an unusual case of state media criticizing other state media, showing the scale of the anger. [Reuters](#)

South Korea: Poor spirits

7 December - ...[In 2011,] more than 4,000 South Koreans over the age of 65 committed suicide: a rate five times higher than in 1990, and nearly four times the rich-country average. Yet these "silent suicides" rarely get the attention that teenage ones do, says Ahn Yong-min, a psychiatrist at Seoul National University (SNU) and head of the Korea Association of Suicide Prevention. Young deaths are seen as a cry for help and attract plenty of government funds, though their number is on a par with the OECD average. Attempted suicides among the old are ten times higher. It does not help that self-inflicted harm is not covered by the health-care system. [Economist](#)

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Uruguay marijuana move 'illegal' - UN drugs watchdog



11 December - Uruguay's decision to legalise the production, sale and consumption of marijuana violates international law, the UN drugs watchdog says. The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) warned that the move would endanger young people and "contribute to the earlier onset of addiction". The new law will allow registered Uruguayans over 18 to buy up to 40g (1.4oz) of the drug a month. The government hopes it will help tackle drug cartels... After nearly 12 hours of debate on Tuesday, senators gave the government-sponsored bill their final approval, making Uruguay the first country in the world to legalise the production and sale of marijuana. [BBC News](#)

Saint Martin: WHO, PAHO weigh in on Caribbean chikungunya cases

10 December - The World Health Organization (WHO) today said it has received reports of two lab-confirmed chikungunya infections on the Caribbean island of St. Martin, which it said were identified during an investigation of an ongoing dengue outbreak. In a statement, the WHO said chikungunya infections were found in patients with joint pain and fever who recently tested negative for the dengue virus. So far four other probable infections have been reported, as well as 20 suspected cases. The WHO said the cases represent the first locally acquired chikungunya infections in its Americas region. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

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

