

14 November 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Contents

U.S. MILITARY

- Deployment-related depression screening, 2001–2008
- DOD and VA Programs that address the effects of combat and transition to civilian life
- Japan: Military exposure to leptospirosis
- Military to curtail use of live animals in medical training
- Military tobacco policy recommendations delayed
- More than 600 reported chemical exposure in Iraq, Pentagon acknowledges
- Risk of type II diabetes and hypertension associated with chronic insomnia among active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 1998–2013
- Soldiers' suicide risk predictable with Big Data, study says

GLOBAL

- Mind control used to switch on genes
- New protocols at Walter Reed reduce medical errors
- Possible eradication of wild poliovirus type 3 — Worldwide, 2012
- Progress on eliminating measles has stalled, WHO warns
- Trend shows 'perfect storm' for diabetes, TB co-epidemics
- What our sewage can teach us
- EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE
- Ebola outbreak deaths pass 5,000
- Liberian President ends state of emergency
- MSF says new strategy needed to fight Ebola
- Pentagon names military bases as Ebola troop quarantine sites
- Revamped WHO burial protocols underscore dignity, religious practices
- Second Ebola outbreak in Mali eclipses early success

INFLUENZA

- Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary
- CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report
- DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program
- Flu News Europe
- Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update
- Study finds flu vaccine effective in elderly during widespread outbreaks
- USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

Warrior Care Month

During Warrior Care month, the Defense Department honors the courage of wounded, ill or injured service members, and highlights the programs that help them learn new life skills that enable them to return to duty or transition from the military.



VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- China criminal gang floods market with 100 metric tons of toxic tofu
- United Kingdom: One in 10 sausages 'carries risk of hepatitis E virus'
- U.S.: Chicago company's mung sprouts likely tied to summer listeriosis cases
- U.S. veterinarians issue guidelines for handling pets exposed to Ebola

WELLNESS

- Dementia study questions advice on taking supplements
- Exercising but gaining weight
- HIV discovery offers new lead in finding cure
- How an iPhone can lead to broken bones for young children
- Laundry detergent pods pose poisoning risk to kids
- Poor contact lens care leads to a whole lot of eye infections
- Protecting progress against childhood obesity — The National School Lunch Program
- Website explores sugar's effects on health

USAFRICOM

- Cancer a public health concern in Africa's developing countries
- Chinese group says new drug has rid African nation of malaria
- Ghana: Cholera in Ghana
- South Africa: Effects of vaccination on invasive pneumococcal disease
- Uganda: Marburg virus disease outbreak over

USCENTCOM

- Opium harvest in Afghanistan hits new high in 2014
- Saudi Arabia: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

USEUCOM

- Emerging cephalosporin and multidrug-resistant gonorrhoea in Europe
- France: France identifies 433 tularemia cases in a decade
- Portugal: Legionnaires' disease outbreak kills five
- Russia: Russian capital Moscow shrouded in noxious gas
- Study: *C diff* diagnosis missed in 23% of European hospital cases

USNORTHCOM

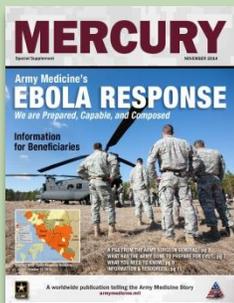
- U.S.: A glimmer of hope in the fight against hunger in America
- U.S.: Five more cases of puzzling polio-like sickness reported
- U.S.: Many U.S. doctors wary of genetic testing: survey
- U.S.: Post-exposure indication sought for BioThrax
- U.S.: Prevalence and costs of skin cancer treatment in the U.S., 2002–2006 and 2007–2011
- U.S.: Study shows men can get oral HPV infection from women
- U.S.: U.S. youth smoking, increased use of e-cigarettes a worry - CDC
- U.S.: Where is heart disease risk the highest and lowest?

USPACOM

- India: 12 women die after botched government sterilizations
- India: Tainted drugs suspected in Indian sterilization surgery deaths
- India: Talks in India to focus on link between hygiene and growth
- Indonesia: Life in Indonesia's sinking capital
- Malaysia: Rare form of malaria is spreading in Malaysia
- Nepal: Health woes in Nepal village known for organ sales

Mercury Special Supplement: Army Medicine's Ebola Response

To help combat this disease, Army Medicine is playing a key role in a comprehensive U.S. government and Department of Defense effort to work with the World Health Organization and other international partners to help respond and contain the outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa as quickly as possible.



- Philippines: Hope battles despair a year after Haiyan
- Philippines: Measles in the Philippines
- Vietnam: Measles in Vietnam

USSOUTHCOM

- Chikungunya cases rise steeply, especially in Central America
- El Salvador: Hundreds jailed for abortion

U.S. MILITARY

Deployment-related depression screening, 2001–2008

November 2014 - Potential adverse mental health effects of deployment, including depression, are an ongoing concern. Although a previous study assessed under-reporting of depression on post-deployment health assessments compared to anonymous surveys, those results were not examined at the individual level to identify demographic or military factors that may be associated with unwillingness to report depression symptoms. Moderate agreement ($\kappa=0.464$) was observed between paired survey responses. A higher proportion of active duty members, the unmarried, and new accessions into military service endorsed depression symptoms on the research survey but not the military-linked survey. ... Deployment health surveys are important tools for identifying returning service members experiencing depression symptoms. However, these findings suggest that ongoing stigma and barriers to appropriate follow-up mental health care remain to be addressed in the military setting. [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#)

DOD and VA Programs that address the effects of combat and transition to civilian life

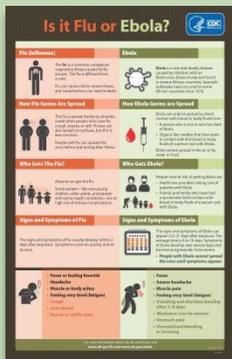
14 November - The GAO published "*Military and Veteran Support: DoD and VA Programs That Address the Effects of Combat and Transition to Civilian Life*," (GAO-15-24) on Nov. 7, 2014. In this report, GAO identified 99 programs provided by the Department of Defense (DoD) to help address the effects of combat on post-9/11 servicemembers, their families, or both. These programs often offer multiple types of services. The services most common are mental health and substance abuse (50), information and referral (37), and case management or care coordination (15). GAO also identified 87 programs administered either by DoD or the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to help post-9/11 servicemembers and veterans transition to civilian life. Some of the 87 programs offer more than one type of service, such as the Transition Assistance Program, which offers employment, education, and information on veterans' benefits, among other services. [Federal Health Care News](#)

Japan: Military exposure to leptospirosis

12 November - Corps officials have closed off a portion of the jungle warfare training center in Okinawa, Japan, thought to be contaminated with a bacterium that has left dozens of marines sick. Over the past 2 months, about 90 marines are suspected to have contracted a

Is it Flu or Ebola?

With flu season beginning, patients with flu symptoms may suspect they have Ebola. This graphic from CDC compares the two diseases. Included are how the germs are spread, who is likely to get the disease, and signs and symptoms.



rare illness called leptospirosis, which can turn serious if left untreated. So far, more than half of those cases were confirmed to be caused by the bacterial infection, which can cause chills, nausea, fever, vomiting, headaches and other flu-like symptoms ... The marines getting sick were all found to have attended the Jungle Warfare Training Center at Camp Gonsalves. The illness varied from marine to marine. Some were sent to an intensive care unit, and 3 had their gallbladders removed, she said. [ProMED-mail](#)

Military to curtail use of live animals in medical training

12 November - The Pentagon plans to halt the use of live animals in a variety of medical training programs, according to internal documents, putting it on a path to join the civilian medical community and most Western militaries, which have already banned such practices. The military has been instructed to instead use substitutes such as a realistic human dummy developed by a research team from Boston. Such training is designed to teach medical personnel how to administer anesthesia, resuscitate an unconscious person, and practice other life-saving procedures. [Boston Globe](#)

Military tobacco policy recommendations delayed

13 November - The target date for the services to recommend any changes in tobacco policies on military installations to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel has been pushed back to mid-December, a defense official said. A report was expected sometime in November. In March, the Navy reportedly was on track to eliminate tobacco sales on Navy and Marine Corps bases by mid-April. But that was put on hold after defense officials ordered a comprehensive department-wide review of tobacco policies. Meanwhile, legislation is pending that would block any DoD effort to remove tobacco products from military stores. [Military Times](#)

More than 600 reported chemical exposure in Iraq, Pentagon acknowledges

6 November - More than 600 American service members since 2003 have reported to military medical staff members that they believe they were exposed to chemical warfare agents in Iraq, but the Pentagon failed to recognize the scope of the reported cases or offer adequate tracking and treatment to those who may have been injured, defense officials say... Military officers said the previously unacknowledged data was discovered when, at Mr. Hagel's prodding, the Army's Public Health Command examined its collection of standardized medical-history surveys, known as post-deployment health assessments, which troops filled out as they completed combat tours. The assessments included the following question: "Do you think you were exposed to any chemical, biological and radiological warfare agents during this deployment?" For those who answered "yes," the forms provided a block for a brief narrative explanation. Col. Jerome Buller, a spokesman for the Army surgeon general, said Thursday that the review showed that 629 people answered "yes" to that question and also filled in the block with information indicating chemical agent exposure. [New York Times](#)

**Questions and
Answers about
Ebola and Pets**

The ongoing epidemic of Ebola in West Africa has raised several questions about how the disease affects the animal population, and in particular, the risk to household pets. While the information available suggests that the virus may be found in several kinds of animals, CDC, the US Department of Agriculture, and the American Veterinary Medical Association do not believe that pets are at significant risk for Ebola in the United States.



Risk of type II diabetes and hypertension associated with chronic insomnia among active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 1998–2013

October 2014 - Chronic insomnia is a common clinical complaint and its incidence in both U.S. military and civilian populations has increased. ... During 1998–2013, there were 205,740 incident cases of chronic insomnia among active component service members with an overall rate of 90.3 per 10,000 person-years. Individuals in the chronic insomnia cohort were at higher risk for type II diabetes (adjusted hazard ratio [HR], 2.17 [95% CI, 1.75–2.69]) and hypertension (adjusted HR, 2.00 [95% CI, 1.85–2.16]). Sleep hygiene education along with evaluation and treatment of persistent symptoms are of public health importance in active duty service members. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Soldiers' suicide risk predictable with Big Data, study says

12 November - ... New evidence from a massive Army study, however, could lead to improvements in predicting who is at highest risk for committing suicide. As part of the Army STARRS project (Study To Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers), professor of health care policy at Harvard Medical School Ronald Kessler and others found that by analyzing all sorts of data on soldiers hospitalized for mental health conditions, they could develop an algorithm to determine who may be at highest risk. According to the study published Wednesday in JAMA Psychiatry, more than half the suicides among soldiers that occurred after hospitalization from 2004 to 2009 happened among 5 percent of troops determined by the algorithm to be at highest risk. ... Soldiers in the predicted high-risk group suffered seven unintentional injury deaths, 830 suicide attempts and 3,765 additional hospitalizations within 12 months of discharge. [Military Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

GLOBAL

Mind control used to switch on genes

11 November - Swiss researchers have developed a way to "switch on" specific genes using the power of the mind. Their system uses human brainwaves to turn on an infrared light that then activates a gene to start making a protein in specially engineered cells. ... Study leader Martin Fussenegger, professor of biotechnology and bioengineering at the Swiss Institute of Technology, said: "Being able to control gene expression via the power of thought is a dream that we've been chasing for over a decade." This study was the first proof of concept of a technology that could ultimately be used to as a medical therapy, he

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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[A-Z Index](#)

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[Army Public Health and Health Information Weekly Update Archives](#)

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

[Medical Threat Briefings \(AKO\)](#)

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added. For example, the specific brainwave patterns that occurred prior to an epileptic seizure could be used to trigger the release of treatment before the patient was even aware it was happening, he said. [BBC News](#)

New protocols at Walter Reed reduce medical errors

12 November - A new procedure for handing off patients during shift changes, developed at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and several civilian hospitals, has been proved to reduce medical errors, according to a New England Journal of Medicine report. Facilities using the new protocols, known as I-PASS, saw injuries caused by treatment mistakes drop by 30 percent. ... With the new system, medical personnel use a computer or written record as well as a verbal mnemonic -- I-PASS -- to reinforce proper handoff procedures. I-PASS stands for Illness severity, Patient summary, Action list, Situational awareness and contingency planning and Synthesis by receiver. [Military Times](#)

Possible eradication of wild poliovirus type 3 — Worldwide, 2012

14 November - In 1988, the World Health Assembly resolved to eradicate polio worldwide. Since then, four of the six World Health Organization (WHO) regions have been certified as polio-free: the Americas in 1994, the Western Pacific Region in 2000, the European Region in 2002, and the South-East Asia Region in 2014. Currently, nearly 80% of the world's population lives in areas certified as polio-free. Certification may be considered when ≥ 3 years have passed since the last isolation of wild poliovirus (WPV) in the presence of sensitive, certification-standard surveillance. ... The efforts needed to interrupt all indigenous WPV1 transmission are now being focused on the remaining endemic countries: Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. WPV type 3 (WPV3) has not been detected in circulation since November 11, 2012. ... The rapidly declining genetic diversity of WPV3 isolates during the last decade is consistent with progress toward eradication and was observed during a period of improving surveillance performance in Pakistan and Nigeria, the two countries which harbored the last known WPV3 reservoirs. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Progress on eliminating measles has stalled, WHO warns

13 November - Progress toward wiping out measles worldwide has stalled, with deaths from the highly contagious disease rising last year and poor vaccine coverage leading to large outbreaks, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Thursday. More than 145,000 people died of measles in 2013, up from 122,000 in 2012, the WHO said. Epidemics in China, Congo and Nigeria contributed to this, but there were also outbreaks in the WHO's European region, including in Georgia, Turkey and Ukraine. [Reuters](#)

Trend shows 'perfect storm' for diabetes, TB co-epidemics



13 November - A report released at the recent 45th World Conference on Lung Health in Barcelona, Spain calls for international intervention to stop a looming co-epidemic of diabetes and tuberculosis. The study was released by the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease and the World Diabetes Foundation. It finds that

diabetes triples the risk that a person will develop TB and that this growing trend, what researchers refer to as a perfect storm, could reverse the progress made against tuberculosis over the last few decades. [VOA](#)

What our sewage can teach us

10 November - ... By analyzing wastewater samples from each of the five boroughs, Dr. [Jane M.] Carlton hopes to uncover trends in infectious disease — to detect flu viruses before the next outbreak, for instance, and keep tabs on antibiotic-resistant bacteria. ... If her team could sample sewage from every neighborhood in the metro area, Dr. Carlton reasoned, the resulting genetic map would highlight the city's microbial diversity across different districts. Once public health officials knew what normal bacteria and viruses to expect in each sector of the city, she hopes, they will be better able to identify dangerous outliers — a new strain of the flu, for instance, or an outbreak of food-borne illness.

[New York Times](#)

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

Ebola outbreak deaths pass 5,000

12 November - The number of people killed by the worst outbreak of Ebola has risen to 5,160, the World Health Organization (WHO) says. The frequency of new cases no longer appears to be increasing nationally in Guinea and Liberia but remains high in Sierra Leone, the health agency added. The Ebola outbreak is thought to have infected more than 14,000 people, almost all of them in West Africa. The deaths of three more people in Mali have been reported in the past day. [BBC News](#)

Liberian President ends state of emergency



13 November - Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is ending the state of emergency she instituted because of the Ebola crisis. In a speech Thursday, Sirleaf said the fight against Ebola is not over and that some restrictions will remain in place. "Until the national goal of zero new cases

by Christmas is achieved all across the country, we will keep many of the previous measures in place with appropriate adjustments consistent with the progress in our fight," she said. The Liberian president said markets can reopen, and a curfew will be pushed back to midnight in non-affected areas. She said "hot spots" for the virus continue to appear in rural areas, but the worst may be over. Sirleaf said 10 of Liberia's 15 counties have reported no new cases since Sunday. [VOA](#)

MSF says new strategy needed to fight Ebola

11 November - The medical aid agency Doctors Without Borders has called for a change of strategy in the fight against Ebola in Liberia, urging donors to finance rapid-response teams rather than huge isolation units. MSF said on Monday it was seeing a decline in the number of patients admitted to case-management centres in Liberia for the first time since the outbreak started, but warned that new hotspots continue to emerge. The global response must adapt to this new phase of the epidemic, MSF said. "Priority should be given to a more flexible approach that allows a rapid response to new outbreaks and gets the regular healthcare system safely up and running again," Fasil Tezera, MSF head of operations in Liberia, said. [Al Jazeera](#)

Pentagon names military bases as Ebola troop quarantine sites

8 November - The Pentagon said Friday it has designated five military bases inside the U.S. and two in Europe as quarantine areas for troops returning from the Ebola-response mission in West Africa. Servicemembers will be isolated for 21 days at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Hood and Fort Bliss, Texas; and Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia to check for symptoms of the deadly virus, Pentagon press secretary Rear Adm. John Kirby said. Army garrisons in Baumholder, Germany, and Vicenza, Italy, will also be quarantine sites. [Stars and Stripes](#)

Revamped WHO burial protocols underscore dignity, religious practices

7 November - In a move that could soothe tensions in West Africa about how the dead bodies of Ebola victims are handled, the World Health Organization (WHO) today released new protocols that weave in religious and family observances while spelling out what burial teams should do to protect themselves and the families of the deceased. [CIDRAP](#)

Second Ebola outbreak in Mali eclipses early success

12 November - The West African nation of Mali, which just beat its first outbreak of Ebola, has confirmed a second one that is larger and more threatening, global health authorities said on Wednesday. The victim who apparently began the new outbreak was an imam who fell ill in Guinea and traveled to Mali for better treatment at a major private clinic in Bamako, the capital. ... The imam died at the Pasteur Clinic in Bamako on Oct. 27. Because of his

status, his body was washed at a large mosque and returned to Guinea for burial after a funeral at another mosque. The Pasteur Clinic failed to diagnose Ebola as the underlying cause of the kidney failure for which it was treating the imam. Kidney failure is a possible complication of late-stage Ebola. The outbreak was detected only after a nurse at the clinic fell ill and died, and the chief W.H.O. representative in Mali heard from his counterparts in Guinea that members of the imam's family were dying. ... So far, 28 workers at the Pasteur Clinic, which is not related to France's Pasteur Institute or its African offshoots, have been quarantined, as have 50 people who had contact with the nurse. [New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 44:

- In NORTHCOM, influenza activity overall is low and at or below baseline levels for service members
- In EUCOM, among service members, influenza activity is minimal and below baseline
- In PACOM, Influenza activity is minimal and below baseline in service members
- In CENTCOM and AFRICOM, Influenza activity is minimal, but slightly above baseline in week 43 for service members
- In SOUTHCOM, among local nationals influenza activity is low. [AFHSC DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 44 (October 26 – November 1, 2014), influenza activity was low in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 8,439 specimens tested and reported by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories during week 44, 504 (6.0%) 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:** No influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported. [FluView](#)

DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program

During Surveillance Weeks 43 & 44 (19 October to 1 November 2014), a total of 159 specimens were collected and received from 40 locations. Results were finalized for 111 specimens from 33 locations. During Week 43, seven influenza A(H3N2) and one influenza B were identified. During Week 44, one influenza A/not subtyped and one influenza A(H3N2) were identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

Flu News Europe

Week 44/2014:

- In the fifth week of the surveillance season, all 41 countries submitting data reported low intensity influenza activity, but eight countries reported sporadic cases and two countries, increasing trends.
- For week 44/2014, of 459 sentinel influenza-like illness (ILI) and acute respiratory infections (ARI) specimens tested across 27 countries, 11 (2%) from five countries tested positive for influenza.
- No hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported.

Season

- As is typical for this time of year, influenza activity in the WHO European Region is low, and there is no indication that the influenza season has started in the Region.
- No indications of increased mortality due to influenza have been reported through the European monitoring of excess mortality for public health action project (EuroMOMO – <http://www.euromomo.eu>). [Flu News Europe](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For week 45 (through 8 November 2014):

- Influenza: One new case of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (B) among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were moderately elevated at CGTC Cape May. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

Study finds flu vaccine effective in elderly during widespread outbreaks

7 November - Seasonal influenza vaccination is significantly effective in elderly, community-dwelling populations during seasons in which flu activity is widespread, according to a

meta-analysis yesterday in *Lancet Infectious Diseases*. Dutch researchers analyzed 35 studies containing 49 datasets of information from 15 countries and 9 flu seasons. They reduced confounding bias and improved accuracy by including only studies that used a test-negative, case-control design. ... The meta-analysis found that seasonal flu vaccination was significantly effective against lab-confirmed flu in the elderly during regional or widespread outbreaks, regardless of whether the vaccine was a good match to circulating strains. The vaccine was also significantly effective during sporadic flu activity, but only when it was a good match. Vaccination was found to be *not* significantly effective in the elderly during local flu virus activity—ie, limited to one country—regardless of match to circulating strains, the authors said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 01 November 2014 (Week 44):

- Influenza-like illness (ILI) activity remains low in both Army and civilian populations. There was an increase in lab specimens that tested positive for influenza A (4.9% as compared to 3.5% in week 43); WRMC reported the most influenza A positive laboratory specimens (15).
- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 44 were 20% lower than for the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: No influenza cases were reported to USAPHC through DRSi in week 44.
- Viral specimens: During week 44, 84 of 585 (14%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens; 22 of 451 (4.9%) specimens tested for influenza A were positive. WRMC reported the most influenza A cases (68%), followed by SRMC (23%), NRM (4.5%), and PRMC (4.5%). RSV accounted for 39% of positive specimens. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

[top of page...](#)

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

China criminal gang floods market with 100 metric tons of toxic tofu

9 November - A criminal gang in eastern China has sold almost 100 metric tons (110.23 tons) of toxic tofu onto the local market, the latest in a string of scares that have thrown light on shady practices in the country's food industry. The gang added industrial bleaching agent rongalite to make dried tofu sticks brighter and chewier, the Shanghai Daily reported on Monday, citing official media in Shandong province. Rongalite is banned in food production as it can lead to cancer. Gut-wrenching food scares erupt regularly in China and highlight the challenges firms face to control supply chains. [Reuters](#)

United Kingdom: One in 10 sausages 'carries risk of hepatitis E virus'

11 November - One in 10 sausages and processed pork meat products in England and Wales could cause hepatitis E virus (HEV) infection if undercooked, experts warn. There has been an "abrupt rise" in the number of cases in England and Wales as people do not realise the risk, scientists advising the government say. Sausages should be cooked for 20 minutes at 70C to kill the virus, they said. ... Official government figures show there were 124 confirmed cases of HEV in 2003, which rose to 691 cases in 2013. There were 461 cases in the first six months of this year. [BBC News](#)

U.S.: Chicago company's mung sprouts likely tied to summer listeriosis cases

10 November - Five listeriosis cases over the summer, two of them fatal, appear to be related to mung bean sprouts from Wholesome Soy Products, Inc, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending that consumers not eat any products from the company, according to a Nov 7 outbreak report from the CDC. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) detected *Listeria monocytogenes* in the sprouts and in irrigation water used for growing them at the company, located in Chicago, during routine testing Aug 13. Wholesome Soy issued a voluntary recall of the sprouts and ceased production Aug 28, but production was resumed Sep 15. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

U.S. veterinarians issue guidelines for handling pets exposed to Ebola

12 November - An American veterinary group issued guidelines on Wednesday on how to handle and potentially quarantine pet cats and dogs that may have been exposed to humans with Ebola. Dogs and cats are not known to be capable of getting or spreading Ebola. ... The guidelines from the American Veterinary Medical Association aim to help state governments plan their response to Ebola, which has killed more than 5,000 people in an outbreak in West Africa and a handful of people in Europe and the United States. According to the guidelines, state health officials should evaluate a pet's exposure to a patient with Ebola and contact with other humans and animals, with detailed questions about where the pet sleeps and where it has gone outside the home. Based on that assessment, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can help public health officials decide whether to quarantine a pet. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

WELLNESS

Dementia study questions advice on taking supplements

13 November – Taking vitamin B12 and folic acid supplements does not seem to cut the risk of developing dementia, say Dutch researchers. This contradicts what has previously been suggested, they say. In one of the largest studies to date, there was no difference in memory test scores between those who had taken the supplements for two years and those who were given a placebo. The research was published in the journal *Neurology*. [BBC News](#)

Exercising but gaining weight



12 November - ... [Scientists] recruited 81 healthy but sedentary adult women. All of the women were overweight, based on their body mass index, but some were significantly heavier than others ... The women walked on treadmills at the laboratory three times per week for 30 minutes at a pace that represented about 80 percent of their maximum endurance. ... At the end of 12 weeks, the women were all significantly more aerobically fit than they had been at the start. But many were fatter. Almost 70 percent of the women had added at least some fat mass during the program, and several had gained as much as 10 pounds, most of which was from fat, not added muscle. A few of the women, though, had lost that much fat or more, and quite a few had remained at the same weight as at the start of the regimen. ... [The] scientists found no connection between any of the original parameters of health and fitness and the women's responses to the exercise program. But looking deeper into their data, they discovered one interesting indicator: Those women who were losing weight after four weeks of exercise tended to continue to lose weight, while the others did not. [New York Times](#)

HIV discovery offers new lead in finding cure

7 November - French scientists have reported finding a genetic mechanism by which they believe two men were spontaneously cured of HIV, a breakthrough that could lead to a new approach in the fight against AIDS. ... "HIV from the two studied patients was inactivated by interruptions in their genes," said researcher Philippe Colson. "HIV is still present but is no more able to replicate." The scientists believe the virus was deactivated by the combined effect of a common enzyme and a viral protein, resulting in spontaneous changes to the men's DNA. Despite still being HIV-positive, the genetic changes gave the men protection from the virus. ... "We believe that the persistence of HIV DNA can lead to cure, and protection from HIV," Colson and co-author Didier Raoult wrote in the journal *Clinical Microbiology and Infection*. [Al Jazeera](#)

How an iPhone can lead to broken bones for young children

11 November - ... Craig Palsson, a graduate student in the Yale economics department, argues in a new paper that the expansion of the 3G cellphone network led to more widespread adoption of the iPhone, which led to parents who discovered new apps and continual email on their cellphone; which led to parents who paid attention to their new toys at playgrounds and not necessarily to their small children; which led to 10 percent more accidents for those children from 2005 to 2012, including broken bones and concussions. The paper assembled data from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, run by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. ... The overall finding does not hold for children who are 6 and up. Presumably these are the children who require less monitoring. [New York Times](#)

Laundry detergent pods pose poisoning risk to kids

11 November - Laundry detergent "pods" seriously sickened more than 700 U.S. children and killed at least one in a recent two-year period, a new report reveals. Poison control centers across the country logged more than 17,000 calls about children exposed to the convenient laundry aids during that same period, researchers also found. ... The report authors analyzed statistics from U.S. poison control centers from 2012-13. They found 17,230 reports of kids younger than 6 who were injured by laundry pods, mostly (80 percent) by ingesting them. Children under 3 accounted for about three-quarters of cases, and 8 percent had what the researchers called a moderate or major medical issue as a result. [WebMD](#)

Poor contact lens care leads to a whole lot of eye infections

13 November - ... Improper contact lens use is the major risk factor for infections of the cornea, the clear covering of the eye, and those send people to the doctor or emergency room almost 1 million times a year, according to a [CDC study](#) published Thursday in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. It's the first national look at the issue. "I think we have badly underestimated the frequency of this problem," says Dr. Thomas Steinemann, a professor of ophthalmology at Case Western Reserve University and a spokesman for the American Academy of Ophthalmology. He's surprised by both the number of people who end up with keratitis and the cost of treating it: \$175 million a year. Most infections can be treated with antibiotics, but in some cases they can cause permanent eye damage or blindness. [NPR](#)

Protecting progress against childhood obesity — The National School Lunch Program

13 November - ... [Just] 2 years after its implementation began, the [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA)] is at risk of being undermined in substantial ways. Some school

officials, food-industry advocates, and the School Nutrition Association (SNA, a professional organization that represents school-lunch programs and whose members include food manufacturers) have raised concerns about increased food waste, decreased school-lunch participation, difficulties in meeting whole-grain and sodium goals, and potential for increased operating costs. In response, the House of Representatives included waivers for school-lunch nutrition standards in its fiscal-year 2015 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. The provision would allow schools with a 6-month net loss of revenue to opt out of providing the healthier meals outlined by the HHFKA. A deficit of any amount from any cause could allow schools to return to the same meals that the IOM found in 2008 to be nutritionally lacking. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Website explores sugar's effects on health

12 November - Most people know that too much sugar can be bad for you. But now a dozen scientists at three universities have started a new website called [SugarScience.org](#) to educate the public on precisely how too much sugar can make people sick. The scientists who started SugarScience.org say they have reviewed 8,000 independent clinical research articles on sugar and its role in metabolic conditions that are some of the leading killers of Americans, like heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and liver disease. ... [A] report published in the journal PLOS Medicine this year scrutinized more than a dozen large studies that asked whether soda intake causes obesity. The report found that studies carried out with food-industry funding came to very different conclusions from those that were carried out by independent scientists. [New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

USAFRICOM

Cancer a public health concern in Africa's developing countries

12 November - Medical experts say cervical cancer continues to be the leading cause of cancer related deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa. A majority die of ignorance. Less than one percent of women are scanned for the disease. Free vaccination campaigns for 9 to 13 years old girls are ongoing. Medical doctors from Chad, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and the Central African Republic say the impact of chronic diseases such as cancer is steadily growing in many low- and middle-income countries. [VOA](#)

Chinese group says new drug has rid African nation of malaria

11 November - In a controversial experiment involving a drug combination not approved for human use, Chinese scientists claim to have wiped out malaria on a tiny island nation off

the African coast, CBS News reported today. The entire population of Comoros—more than 700,000 people—received three doses of Artequick, a combination of antimalarial drugs not approved by any global health body, the story said. Comoros is an archipelago off the coast of east Africa. The researchers say the doses of Artequick have eliminated the malaria-causing *Plasmodium* parasite from the entire Comoran population's bloodstreams. The theory is that, if *Plasmodium* is eliminated in people for 3 months—the life-cycle of the mosquitoes that transmit malaria—the disease will disappear. For that to work, all the people had to take the drug at roughly the same time. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

Ghana: Cholera in Ghana

10 November - According to the World Health Organization, more than 20,900 cases and 166 deaths from cholera have been reported in Ghana as of October 5, 2014. Many cases have been in the Greater Accra region, including in the districts of Accra Metro and La-Dadekotopon. [CDC](#)

South Africa: Effects of vaccination on invasive pneumococcal disease

13 November – Rates of invasive pneumococcal disease among children in South Africa fell substantially by 2012. Reductions in the rates of disease caused by PCV7 serotypes among both children and adults most likely reflect the direct and indirect effects of vaccination. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Uganda: Marburg virus disease outbreak over

12 November - Uganda says it is free of Ebola-like Marburg after an outbreak in September 2014. Ugandan authorities said the east African country was free of Marburg, a virus similar to Ebola, after no new cases had been reported more than a month after a hospital worker died of the disease in the capital...A total of 197 people were in contact with the healthcare worker, but none of them were found to have been infected, junior health minister Sarah Opendi told a news conference. Opendi said 42 days is the minimum period of monitoring before an outbreak is declared contained, and there had been no new cases reported since the death in Kampala on 28 Sep 2014. "This implies that the Marburg outbreak in the country has been completely controlled," she said. [ProMED-mail](#)

[top of page...](#)

USCENTCOM

Opium harvest in Afghanistan hits new high in 2014

12 November– Opium cultivation and production in Afghanistan reached record levels this year, with the former increasing seven per cent to 224,000 hectares in 2014, and production

levels potentially climbing as much as 17 per cent, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). ... At the Vienna launch of the report, UNODC Executive-Director Yury Fedotov warned that Afghanistan's narcotics problem remains a major global challenge and shared responsibility. "The illicit opium economy and related criminality and corruption continue to undermine security, the rule of law, health and development in the region and beyond," he added. [UN News Centre](#)

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

7 November - Between 27 and 30 October 2014, the National IHR Focal Point of Saudi Arabia (KSA) notified WHO of 12 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, including 3 deaths. The cases are from Riyadh (5), Taif (4), Hafr Albatin (1), Jouf (1) and Makkah (1). ... Globally, WHO has been notified of 909 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 331 related deaths. [WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

USEUCOM

Emerging cephalosporin and multidrug-resistant gonorrhoea in Europe

13 November - *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* has consistently developed resistance to antimicrobials used therapeutically for gonorrhoea and few antimicrobials remain for effective empiric first-line therapy. ... During 2011, *N. gonorrhoeae* isolates were collected from 21 participating countries, and 7.6% and 0.5% of the examined gonococcal isolates had in vitro resistance to cefixime and ceftriaxone, respectively. The rate of ciprofloxacin and azithromycin resistance was 48.7% and 5.3%, respectively. Two (0.1%) isolates displayed high-level resistance to azithromycin, i.e. a minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) ≥ 256 mg/L. The current report further highlights the public health need to implement the European response plan, including further strengthening of Euro-GASP, to control and manage the threat of multidrug resistant *N. gonorrhoeae*. [Eurosurveillance](#)

France: France identifies 433 tularemia cases in a decade

13 November - A total of 433 cases of tularemia—with direct contact with hares and exposure to dust aerosols during outdoor leisure as the major likely causes—were reported in France over the first 10 years of national surveillance, according to a study in today's issue of *Eurosurveillance*. Epidemiologic surveillance for human tularemia was implemented in France in October 2002 as part of a bioterrorism preparedness plan. ... The authors counted

433 cases over the study period, 30% confirmed and 70% probable. Median age was 49 years, and the male-female ratio among cases was 1.8. The most common presentations were glandular (46%) and ulceroglandular (26%). Hospitalization was required in 43% of patients. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

Portugal: Legionnaires' disease outbreak kills five

11 November - An outbreak of Legionnaires' disease has killed five people and infected more than 230 others in Portugal, the authorities there say. Most of the cases have been in Vila Franca de Xira, a town about 25km (16 miles) north-east of Lisbon. The World Health Organisation (WHO) says the outbreak constitutes a "major public health emergency". ... Thirty-eight people are being treated in intensive care, officials say. Facilities in many of the capital's hospitals were stretched because of the outbreak, Portuguese media reported. [BBC News](#)

Russia: Russian capital Moscow shrouded in noxious gas

10 November - Residents of parts of the Russian capital Moscow have been urged by the emergencies ministry to stay indoors because of a noxious gas that is spreading through the city. The source of the gas is unclear - no accidents have been reported at any of Moscow's chemical factories. Media reports said that the gas was hydrogen sulphide, which can be highly toxic and smells like rotten eggs. It has been smelt in central, eastern and south-eastern parts of the city. ... An earlier report suggested that the foul-smelling gas was coming from a network of facilities treating urban wastewater. [BBC News](#)

Study: *C diff* diagnosis missed in 23% of European hospital cases

10 November - Active *Clostridium difficile* infections failed to be diagnosed in 23% of hospital patients, according to a study of almost 500 European hospitals published Nov 7 in *Lancet Infectious Diseases*. As part of the EUCLID study, a multi-center group of researchers gathered data on 2011-2013 laboratory testing for patients with diarrheal disease from 482 hospitals in 20 European countries. All diarrheal samples obtained from hospitals were re-tested by national laboratories. Researchers found that an average of 74 diagnoses of *C difficile* per day were missed by hospital laboratories. Researchers attributed underdiagnosis to suboptimum hospital testing practices, defining optimum testing as a two-stage process of enzyme immunoassay and toxin culture. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

[top of page...](#)

U.S.: A glimmer of hope in the fight against hunger in America

11 November - ...[The] latest Gallup poll on food insecurity in America offers a hint of hope: The percentage of Americans who say they did not have enough money to buy food for themselves or their families in the last 12 months dropped to its lowest level since 2008 – 17.2 percent, down from 18.9 percent in 2013, the poll found. "I absolutely would describe it as a glimmer of hope," says Elaine Waxman, vice president of research and nutrition at Feeding America, a network of U.S. food banks. Waxman oversaw the release this summer of Hunger in America 2014, the largest study of charitable food assistance in the country. That survey, which was conducted in 2013, found that more than 1 in 7 Americans used a food pantry last year — including many military families. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Five more cases of puzzling polio-like sickness reported

13 November - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified five more cases of unexplained polio-like illness in children, raising the total over the past few months to 75. The CDC has been investigating the cases and their possible causes, which include enterovirus D-68 (EV-D68), the source of a respiratory illness outbreak involving 1,116 cases in recent months, nearly all of them in children. Today the CDC reported one more death associated with EV-D68, raising the total to 12. But the total case count (1,116 in 47 states and Washington, DC) has not changed since a week ago. The 75 polio-like cases occurred in 29 states, according to a CDC update today. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

U.S.: Many U.S. doctors wary of genetic testing: survey

November 12 - Many American doctors may not support genetic testing in patients without a major family history of certain illnesses, suggests a new survey of physicians. When presented with the hypothetical case of a middle-aged man with a family history of cancer in an aunt and uncle, more than a third of 180 U.S. doctors surveyed said they wouldn't recommend any genetic testing. Almost half would only recommend testing for cancer genes, and fewer than one in five would recommend whole-genome testing, according to the survey. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: Post-exposure indication sought for BioThrax

11 November - Emergent BioSolutions Inc. has filed a supplemental Biologics License Application (sBLA) with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for expansion of Anthrax Vaccine Adsorbed's (BioThrax's) label to include a post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) indication, according to a news release yesterday from the company. BioThrax, the only

FDA-licensed vaccine for prevention of anthrax, is at present given in a three-dose series to adults at high risk for exposure to *Bacillus anthracis*, the bacterium that causes anthrax, primarily military personnel. The new indication would be for administration at 0, 2, and 4 weeks after suspected or confirmed exposure to *B anthracis*. The recommended course of antibiotics for anthrax would be given as well. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fifth item)

U.S.: Prevalence and costs of skin cancer treatment in the U.S., 2002–2006 and 2007–2011

9 November - ... The average annual number of adults treated for skin cancer increased from 3.4 million in 2002–2006 to 4.9 million in 2007–2011 ($p < 0.001$). During this period, the average annual total cost for skin cancer increased from \$3.6 billion to \$8.1 billion ($p = 0.001$), representing an increase of 126.2%, while the average annual total cost for all other cancers increased by 25.1%. During 2007–2011, nearly 5 million adults were treated for skin cancer annually, with average treatment costs of \$8.1 billion each year. These findings demonstrate that the health and economic burden of skin cancer treatment is substantial and increasing. Such findings highlight the importance of skin cancer prevention efforts, which may result in future savings to the healthcare system. [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#)

U.S.: Study shows men can get oral HPV infection from women

12 November - Men are at increased risk for oral human papillomavirus (HPV) infection if their female sex partners have oral and/or genital HPV infections, a new study shows. The findings suggest that HPV transmission occurs through both oral-oral and oral-genital routes, according to the authors of the study. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: U.S. youth smoking, increased use of e-cigarettes a worry - CDC

13 November - Fewer U.S. high school students are smoking traditional cigarettes, but youth tobacco use and the increasing popularity of electronic cigarettes remain causes for concern, federal health officials said on Thursday. New data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows 22.9 percent of high school students reported using a tobacco product in the previous 30 days in 2013, down from 24.3 percent in 2011. The percentage of high school students who had smoked a traditional cigarette during the prior month dropped to 12.7 percent in 2013 from 15.8 percent in 2011. Cigarettes are the most popular tobacco product among white and Hispanic high school students. However, the smoking of e-cigarettes by high school students overall tripled, to 4.5 percent in 2013 from 1.5 percent in 2011, the CDC survey found. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Where is heart disease risk the highest and lowest?

10 November - People's risk of developing heart disease depends on biological factors, such as their age and gender, but it also tends to vary based on where they live. Now, a new study has estimated the risk of heart disease for people in each U.S. state. Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention looked at medical data of nearly 300,000 people ages 30 to 74, to estimate people's risk of developing heart disease over the next 10 years. The risk was calculated by looking at a number of risk factors, including high blood pressure and cholesterol, smoking habits, obesity and low consumption of fruits and vegetables. The results showed a remarkable variation across states. People with a higher heart disease risk tended to live in the Southeastern states, and people with a lower risk tended to live in Northwestern states. [See a map of the U.S. with heart disease risk for each state] Nationally, the researchers' calculations predicted that 14.6 percent of men and 7.5 percent of women will develop heart disease over the next 10 years. [LiveScience](#)

[top of page...](#)

USPACOM

India: 12 women die after botched government sterilizations



11 November - Twelve women have died and dozens more were sickened after surgical sterilizations at a government-run camp in India, where women are often paid to undergo the procedures in an effort to control population growth, health officials said on Tuesday. The women were paid 600 rupees apiece, or almost \$10,

said Dr. Amar Singh Thakur, joint director of health services in the central Indian district of Bilaspur. One surgeon performed surgery on 83 women in the space of six hours on Saturday — meaning he could have spent only a few minutes on each patient, Dr. Thakur said. The women began to fall ill around five hours after being discharged, Dr. Thakur said, experiencing giddiness, vomiting and low blood pressure. Sixty-seven women are being treated for septic shock in hospitals, and four are in serious condition and on ventilators, he said. [New York Times](#)

India: Tainted drugs suspected in Indian sterilization surgery deaths

13 November - Tainted or sub-standard drugs probably led to the deaths of 13 Indian women after sterilization surgery at a family-planning "camp", and owners of the factories

that produced them have been summoned for questioning, a senior official said on Thursday. Meanwhile, the doctor who carried out the sterilization of 83 women in under three hours at a hospital in the eastern state of Chhattisgarh denied reports the equipment he used was rusty or dirty, and blamed adulterated medicines for the tragedy. ... Thirteen have died and scores are in hospital. [Reuters](#)

India: Talks in India to focus on link between hygiene and growth

10 November - Responding to new research that links childhood malnutrition with poor sanitation, Unicef began a conference here Monday to explore ways of encouraging better hygiene so children can avoid the devastating consequences of stunting. Researchers from around the world arrived in New Delhi to present their findings at the three-day conference, titled Stop Stunting and the group's first to focus on the connection. ... Half of India's population, or at least 620 million people, defecates outdoors, and recent research suggests that this may be an important reason that almost half of India's children are stunted. ... The reason is that constant exposure to human and animal feces may lead to chronic bacterial infections that prevent children from absorbing the nutrients they eat. [New York Times](#)

Indonesia: Life in Indonesia's sinking capital



10 November - ... North Jakarta suffers subsidence rates of up to 17cm a year in some areas - caused by the excessive extraction of ground water from the soft soil on which the city is built - meaning whole neighbourhoods will be several metres underwater by 2030. The homes of 4.5 million people are threatened with permanent inundation. To avert this disaster, Indonesia's outgoing government last month rushed to commence the construction of its futuristic \$40bn "giant seawall" development, otherwise known as the National Capital Integrated Coastal Development (NCICD). ... The project seeks to prevent Jakarta's inundation by two means: firstly by blocking out the ocean, and secondly by boosting water supply so that ground water extraction may be reduced - thus reducing average subsidence rates of 7.5cm a year. To achieve this second goal the bay, once sealed, will be converted into a giant "freshwater" reservoir fed by 13 rivers that flow through the city and out into the bay. However, the success of creating this alternative source of potable water - and perhaps the success of the entire project - may rely on the Indonesian government's ability to clean up West Java's fetid rivers. [Al Jazeera](#)

Malaysia: Rare form of malaria is spreading in Malaysia

10 November - A rare and sometimes lethal form of malaria usually found only in monkeys is becoming so common in Malaysia that it accounts for most malaria hospitalizations there, scientists have found. In the Malaysian part of the island of Borneo, a parasite called Plasmodium knowlesi causes severe malaria three times as often as Plasmodium falciparum,

which has long been considered the deadliest form of the disease. ... P. knowlesi is normally found only in long-tailed and pigtailed macaques, who get only mildly ill. But as loggers and palm oil producers have pushed deeper into Malaysia's forests, more humans have been bitten by mosquitoes carrying it. ... At the moment, the Anopheles leucosphyrus mosquitoes that carry P. knowlesi are found only in Southeast Asia, Dr. Singh said. But other mosquito species have been transplanted around the world. [New York Times](#)

Nepal: Health woes in Nepal village known for organ sales



14 November - ... Only about 4,000 people live here, yet at least 121 of them have sold their kidneys, said Krishna Pyari Nakarmi, who has been leading the campaign against the kidney trade in Hokshe. Those are only the cases she has been able to document, and she believes the number could be much higher. The scars are easily hidden under a shirt, and many villagers have moved away — possibly after going through the surgery. Despite a recent clampdown on the trade, authorities warn that the promise of easy money could easily erase any gains made against the organ traffickers. And villagers who already sold their kidneys continue to suffer the health consequences. [ABC News](#)

Philippines: Hope battles despair a year after Haiyan

8 November - One year after super typhoon Haiyan decimated entire communities across the central Philippines, killing at least 6,300 people, thousands remain stranded in evacuation sites where every day is a constant struggle to get by, and where hope is the most precious commodity. ... Emergency relief had been rapid with global aid groups, led by the United Nations, providing much-needed assistance as the government juggled its stretched resources. But as the response transitioned from a relief effort to one of recovery, bureaucracy, mis-coordination, and a lack of foresight - especially on relocation sites - have placed many of the most vulnerable into more precarious situations, survivors and officials said. ... Aquino finally signed off on the [recovery master] plan just days before the first year anniversary of the disaster, in what many see here as a move to silence some critics. The plan will release funds to repair and reconstruct more than 116 kilometres of roads, six airports, 35 seaports, nearly 20,000 classrooms, as well as hundreds of local health centres and municipal buildings. The plan also calls for the construction of more than 200,000 permanent housing units in the heavily affected areas. A year has passed and less than one percent of it has been achieved, however, official figures show. [Al Jazeera](#)

Philippines: Measles in the Philippines

10 November - According to the World Health Organization, 53,810 suspected cases of measles, including 17,893 confirmed cases and 102 measles deaths, were reported in the Philippines from January 1 through October 20, 2014. As of October 31, 23 US travelers who

returned from the Philippines have become sick with measles. Most of these cases were among unvaccinated people. The World Health Organization and the Philippines Department of Health are working to control the outbreak, including conducting vaccination campaigns. [CDC](#)

Vietnam: Measles in Vietnam

10 November - According to the World Health Organization, about 16,384 suspected measles cases, including 5,281 confirmed cases and 2 measles deaths, were reported in Vietnam as of October 20, 2014. CDC recommends that travelers to Vietnam protect themselves by making sure they are vaccinated against measles, particularly infants 6–11 months of age (1 dose of measles vaccine) and children 12 months of age or older (2 doses of measles vaccine). [CDC](#)

[top of page...](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Chikungunya cases rise steeply, especially in Central America

10 November - More than 95,000 new cases of chikungunya have been reported in the Caribbean and Americas since Oct 31, bringing the total to 888,806 cases since the outbreak began in December 2013, according to a Nov 7 update from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The largest increases were reported in El Salvador, with 76,831 new suspected and confirmed cases since the Oct 31 PAHO update. Chikungunya infections were also reported for the first time in Honduras, with 195 suspected and confirmed cases. The dramatic spike in cases comes after weeks of increases of well under 10,000 cases per week. Also, two chikungunya strains have been identified circulating in Brazil, according to a Nov 8 Communicable Disease Threats Report from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). An Asian strain transmitted via the female *Aedes aegypti* mosquito and responsible for the current outbreak was identified in Brazil, as well as an African strain. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

El Salvador: Hundreds jailed for abortion

11 November - When Maria Teresa Rivera suffered a miscarriage three-years ago, she was handcuffed to a hospital bed, surrounded by seven policemen, charged with murder and sent to jail. Rivera is among hundreds of women believed wrongly jailed in El Salvador for defying a ban on abortion, accused of inducing abortions when in fact they suffered miscarriages, stillbirths, or pregnancy complications, women's rights groups say. After a trial lasting eight months, 30-year-old Rivera was sentenced to 40 years imprisonment for aggravated murder - the longest sentence ever imposed on a woman in the Central

American nation for an abortion crime. ... Abortion in El Salvador has been illegal under all circumstances since 1998, even in cases of rape, incest, a deformed foetus, or when a women's life is in danger. ... The ban in El Salvador has led to 129 women being prosecuted for abortion or aggravated murder, of which 26 were convicted of murder and imprisoned, according to the Citizen Group for the Decriminalisation of Therapeutic, Ethical and Eugenic Abortion (CFDA), a local rights organisation. [Al Jazeera](#)

[top of page...](#)

[U.S. Military](#) | [Global](#) | [Influenza](#) | [Veterinary/Food Safety](#) | [Wellness](#) | [Contact Us](#)

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