

14 September 2012

Army Public Health Weekly Update

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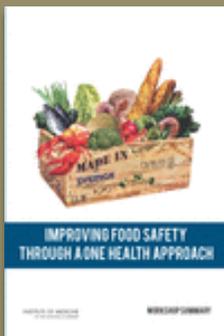
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Improving Food Safety through a One Health Approach

Globalization of the food supply has created conditions favorable for the emergence, reemergence, and spread of food-borne pathogens—compounding the challenge of anticipating, detecting, and effectively responding to food-borne threats to health.

A One Health approach to food safety may hold the promise of harnessing and integrating the expertise and resources from across the spectrum of multiple health domains including the human and veterinary medical and plant pathology communities with those of the wildlife and aquatic health and ecology communities.



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U.S. MILITARY

Army medic veterans finding themselves underemployed

11 September – Army Spc. Daniel Hutchinson once sliced a man's throat to keep him breathing. He knows how to slip a needle between a patient's ribs to re-inflate a lung. He fastened tourniquets on dozens of shredded limbs during 12 months in Iraq. Saving lives set him up for not much more than minimum-wage work at home. Combat medics, the Army's

Primary Care + Public Health in the Community

A **new video** from the IOM describes the clear need for better integration of primary care and public health. Based on the recent IOM report **Primary Care and Public Health: Exploring Integration to Improve Population Health**, the video offers concrete examples to show how primary care and public health can work together to improve health.



largest specialty after infantry, are hindered in the job market by a military that doesn't fully document their skills and a hodge-podge of state licensing laws that don't account for armed-forces experience. [Stars and Stripes](#)

Mayo clinic suicide prevention expert outlines new steps to tackle military suicide

10 September - The suicide rate in the U.S. Army now exceeds the rate in the general population, and psychiatric admission is now the most common reason for hospitalization in the Army. These concerning trends are described by Timothy Lineberry, M.D., a Mayo Clinic psychiatrist and suicide expert for the Army, in the September edition of Mayo Clinic Proceedings. In the article, he also outlines steps to assess and address military suicide — an issue he calls a major public health concern. Dr. Lineberry proposes greater use of gun locks, improving primary care for depression, and better monitoring for sleep disturbances, among other steps. [Health Canal](#)

Military mental health: An outsider takes a peek inside

11 September - Marjorie Morrison is a San Diego psychologist who took time out of her busy private practice to provide “pro-active” mental-health counseling to more than 500 Marines at the recruit depot there. Such counseling removes stigma – because everyone gets it, no one feels “different.” It’s designed to prevent mental-health ailments before they begin, instead of trying to fix them after they’ve taken root and disrupted lives. She details her fight and frustrations with the military’s mental-health bureaucracy in a new book, *The Inside Battle: Our Military Mental Health Crisis*. [Time](#)

New breed of robotics aims to help people walk again



11 September - When Joey Abicca pokes a metal crutch into the ground with his right arm, tiny motors start whirling around his left leg, lifting it and moving it forward. When he does the same with his left arm, the motors whir to life again and his right leg takes a step. The metallic whine is like something out of the movie “RoboCop.” Mr. Abicca, a 17-year-old from San Diego, is essentially wearing a robot. His bionic suit consists of a pair of mechanical braces wrapped around his legs and electric muscles that do much of the work of walking. It is controlled by a computer on his back and a pair of crutches held in his arms that look like futuristic ski poles... Ekso is one of several companies and research labs that are working on wearable robots made to help disabled people or to make the human body superhuman. In 2010, Raytheon released a suit for soldiers that is designed to reduce injuries from heavy lifting. [New York Times](#)

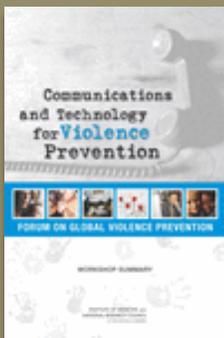
Senate panel approves burn pit registry

12 September - An effort to create a registry of service members and veterans who may have been exposed to airborne toxins while serving near open-air burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan advanced in Congress this week. Bills that would require the Veterans Affairs

Communications and Technology for Violence Prevention

In the last 25 years, a major shift has occurred in the field of violence prevention, from the assumption that violence is inevitable to the realization that violence is preventable.

At the same time, new communications technologies and distribution channels have altered traditional means of communications, and have made community-based efforts to prevent violence possible by making information readily available.



Department to track service members and veterans stationed near open-air disposal sites in the war zones were considered in both the House and Senate... If enacted, the [House] legislation would require VA to publicize the registry and inform veterans and troops of their eligibility to be listed. It also would require VA to keep registry members apprised of research and treatment developments for illnesses and diseases associated with exposure to toxic chemicals and fumes. The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee passed similar legislation Wednesday as part of a veteran's mental health care bill. [Army Times](#)

Stop-work order creates uncertainty for Ebola drug research

7 September - The world's first major outbreak of Ebola hemorrhagic fever since 2009 raged across Uganda and Congo in July and August, killing at least 26 people. Despite this development, two biotech firms under contract from the US government to design drugs to treat people infected with the deadly virus could not purchase new research supplies or change the course of ongoing trials last month. On 2 August, Massachusetts-based Sarepta Therapeutics and Canada's Tekmira Pharmaceuticals received a stop-work order from the US Department of Defense (DoD). Both companies are researching injectable drugs that block or interfere with the virus replication. As *Nature Medicine* went to press, the military's Transformational Medical Technologies (TMT) office planned to "evaluate each contractor's efforts independently to determine the plan for moving forward with the development of the best drug candidate possible," Cicely Levingston, a DoD spokeswoman, told the journal in an email. However, despite a decision expected on 1 September, the nearly month-long pause has already created some uncertainty for future Ebola work. [Nature](#)

Viral meningitis, active and reserve components, U.S. Armed Forces, 2002-2011

August 2012 – Viruses are the most common causes of meningitis, a condition characterized by inflammation of the protective membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. During the 10-year surveillance period, there were 3,205 confirmed cases, 724 probable cases, and 2,495 suspected cases of viral meningitis among active and reserve component members. In all three categories of cases, the most common diagnoses were meningitis due to enteroviruses; however a majority of these were unspecified enteroviruses. Nearly two-thirds (64.2%) of all cases due to enteroviral infection were hospitalized; on average, cases were hospitalized for 3.2 days. Numbers of cases peaked in late summer/early fall; and higher than average numbers of cases in 2003 reflected several outbreaks that occurred in civilian populations that year. Six states (Texas, California, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia) reported the most cases in 2003 and overall during the period. Prevention of viral meningitis relies upon the interruption of viral transmission, e.g., thorough hand washing and disinfection of contaminated surfaces. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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GLOBAL

Australian scientists develop genetic test to predict autism

12 September – Australian scientists have developed a genetic test to predict autism spectrum disorder in children, which could provide a long-sought way for early detection and intervention, according to a study published on Wednesday. ...The researchers used U.S. data from more than 3,000 individuals with autism in their study, published in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry*, to identify 237 genetic markers in 146 genes and related cellular pathways. By measuring these markers, which either contribute to or protect an individual from developing autism, scientists could assess the risk of developing autism. The risk markers increase the score on the genetic test, while the protective markers decrease the score. The higher the overall score, the higher the individual risk. "This test could assist in the early detection of the condition in babies and children and help in the early management of those who become diagnosed," lead researcher Stan Skafidas said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

Big med

6 August – Big chains thrive because they provide goods and services of greater variety, better quality, and lower cost than would otherwise be available. Size is the key. It gives them buying power, lets them centralize common functions, and allows them to adopt and diffuse innovations faster than they could if they were a bunch of small, independent operations... Medicine, though, had held out against the trend. Physicians were always predominantly self-employed, working alone or in small private-practice groups. American hospitals tended to be community-based. But that's changing. Hospitals and clinics have been forming into large conglomerates. And physicians—facing escalating demands to lower costs, adopt expensive information technology, and account for performance—have been flocking to join them. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only a quarter of doctors are self-employed—an extraordinary turnabout from a decade ago, when a majority were independent. They've decided to become employees, and health systems have become chains. [New Yorker](#)

Deaf gerbils 'hear again' after stem cell cure

12 September - UK researchers say they have taken a huge step forward in treating deafness after stem cells were used to restore hearing in animals for the first time. Hearing partially improved when nerves in the ear, which pass sounds into the brain, were rebuilt in gerbils - a UK study in the journal *Nature* reports. Getting the same improvement in people would be a shift from being unable to hear traffic to hearing a conversation. However, treating humans is still a distant prospect. [BBC News](#)

Disease-spreading ticks on the move as climate changes



7 September - ...Tick species are ...expanding into new territories as wildlife populations, forest habitats and weather patterns change across North America... While Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne disease in the Northeast and Upper Midwest, new research finds that it is not the greatest cause for concern in most

Southeastern states, the NSF said in a news statement about a research paper in the journal *Zoonoses and Public Health*... "The Southeast is dominated by different tick species than the ones that attack humans in the North," says Ellen Stromdahl, an entomologist at the U.S. Army Public Health Command and lead author of the paper. "The lone star tick is by far the most abundant tick in the Southeast, and which species of tick bites you is critical because different ticks carry different diseases... Most bites in the Southeast are from the tick species that spread spotted fever rickettsiosis and ehrlichiosis, but not Lyme disease, the NSF said. "A complicating factor for public health officials is that tick species are on the move, as wildlife populations, forest habitats and weather patterns change across the continent."

[National Geographic](#)

Mixed results for dengue vaccine trial

11 September - The results of the first trial of the effectiveness of a vaccine for dengue, a sometimes fatal disease endemic throughout most tropical countries, have engendered both enthusiasm and disappointment. The vaccine proved safe, and it protected against three of the four dengue virus variants, or serotypes—but surprisingly, it provided no protection against the fourth. Scientists are stumped as to why and pondering what this means for the global fight against a serious public health threat... Public health officials and affected communities are eager to have a dengue vaccine because there is no treatment and the disease burden is growing. Spread by mosquitoes, the four dengue serotypes infect as many as 100 million people, mostly children, worldwide each year. Exposure to one serotype usually causes minor illness, and the patient is immune for life to a second infection of the same serotype. But for poorly understood reasons, subsequent exposure to a second dengue serotype increases the chance of the illness progressing to the severe and sometimes fatal dengue hemorrhagic fever. [Science](#)

New model could help fill data gap in predicting historical air pollution exposure

12 September – In a study that analyzed relationships between air quality and unemployment levels, a Tufts University researcher has developed a new statistical model that retrospectively estimates air pollution exposure for previous time periods where such information is not available. Mary Davis, an associate professor of urban and environmental policy and planning at Tufts University School of Arts and Sciences, analyzed traffic-related air pollution levels and unemployment rates in four separate regions of California for which extensive air monitoring data was available: San Francisco Bay, Sacramento Valley, San Joaquin Valley, and the south-central coast between 1980 and 2000... Davis's analysis

revealed a pattern. During the highest periods of unemployment—early 1980s and early 1990s—concentrations of the three pollutants decreased in small but discernible amounts for every one percent increase in unemployment. The reason for the decrease, she says, was due to slowdowns in commercial trucking and car trips to work, shopping malls, or recreational destinations. [EurekAlert](#)

Tuberculosis: Taking high doses of vitamin D speeds recovery, scientists report



10 September – High doses of vitamin D speed the recovery of tuberculosis patients, according to a new study. The inspiration for testing the idea, scientists from Queen Mary University of London and other British hospitals said, was that 19th-century tuberculosis patients were sent to the mountains to lie in the sun. Ultraviolet B rays in sunshine convert cholesterol in the skin into vitamin D. ...Vitamin D seems to prevent lung damage by slowing down inflammatory responses to the TB bacterium. Since it does not interfere with the action of antibiotics, it may be useful in other illnesses, like pneumonia, according to the authors of [the study](#), published online by [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#) last week. In a clinical trial of 95 patients on antibiotics, those who also got vitamin D had less inflammation, and the mycobacteria in their lung phlegm cleared up 13 days earlier on average. [New York Times](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

- From July 12 through September 6, 2012, a total of 296 infections with influenza A (H3N2) variant (H3N2v) viruses have been reported from ten states. This is an increase of 8 over last week's report... Sixteen H3N2v-associated hospitalizations and one H3N2v-associated death have been reported. The vast majority of cases have occurred after prolonged swine exposure, though instances of likely human-to-human transmission have been identified. At this time no ongoing human-to-human transmission has been identified.
- During week 35 (ending 1 September 2012), 5.6% of all deaths reported through the 122-Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia and influenza This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 6.5% for week 35. [FluView](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

12 September – Estimates of flu activity based on aggregated Google search data indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere is minimal to low except for Russia where the level is moderate and ranges from minimal to low in the southern hemisphere except for Australia and New Zealand where the level is moderate. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 8 September 2012:

Adenovirus

Type 14 adenovirus is present at MCRD Parris Island.

FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Flu shot issue may not be ‘Canadian problem’ after all

9 September - A strange vaccine-related phenomenon spotted at the start of the 2009 flu pandemic may well have been real, a new study suggests. Canadian researchers noticed in the early weeks of the pandemic that people who got a flu shot for the 2008-2009 winter seemed to be more likely to get infected with the pandemic virus than people who hadn't received a flu shot. Five studies done in several provinces showed the same puzzling and unsettling results. But initially research outside of Canada did not, and the effect was dismissed as "the Canadian problem."... But a new study suggests the findings may indeed have been real. A group of Canadian researchers recreated the event in ferrets, the best animal model for predicting how influenza will act in humans... [Dr. Danuta Skowronski] and her colleagues worked with 32 ferrets, giving half the 2008 seasonal flu shot and the remainder a placebo injection. The work was blinded, meaning the researchers didn't know which ferrets received which shot. Later, all the ferrets were infected with the pandemic H1N1 virus. The ferrets in the vaccine group became significantly sicker than the other animals, though all recovered. [CTV News](#)

Swine flu evolves under the radar

12 September – Swine flu is back with a vengeance. Two weeks ago, a woman died after catching flu from a pig at an agricultural fair in Ohio. Now it seems that pigs in Korea are harbouring a similar strain of flu that spreads more easily and is more lethal - at least in animals - than the experimental bird flu that caused intense controversy last year. Robert Webster and colleagues at St Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, put an H1N2 flu virus, taken from the lungs of a pig slaughtered in South Korea in 2009, into the

noses and windpipes of three ferrets. All the animals died, which is worrying, as ferrets catch and develop flu in a similar way to humans. What's more, the virus was transmitted via airborne droplets to three ferrets in nearby cages, killing two of them. In passing between the ferrets, the H1N2 strain acquired two mutations that made it both more contagious and more virulent. The mutated version also grew faster than the original pig virus in cells cultured from the human nose and the lung, and in fresh samples of human alveoli (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*). [New Scientist](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Mexico: Brucellosis

11 September – The state laboratory of the Michoacan Secretariat of Health has confirmed 32 cases of brucellosis in the municipality of Coahuayana. According to information provided by Dr Maria Isabel Medina Villa, hospital epidemiologist, the 1st cases of brucellosis were detected in April 2012, noting that most of the 32 patients confirmed by the state laboratory are from the towns of El Ranchito (55 percent) and El Ticuiz (41 percent), and the rest from Coahuayana de Hidalgo and San Vicente. 25 patients are receiving the appropriate treatment. The epidemiologist reported that the Secretariat of Health has conducted surveys of milk and milk products such as cheese, cream, yogurt, and other dairy products consumed in the municipality of Coahuayana and especially where a higher incidence of the disease has been detected, without having identified the source of the infection. [ProMED-mail](#)

U.S.: Multistate outbreak of human *Salmonella* Typhimurium infections linked to hedgehogs

6 September - As of September 5, 2012, a total of 14 persons infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium have been reported from 6 states... The outbreak strain has been rarely seen in the past. Among the persons who reported the date they became ill, illnesses began between December 26, 2011 and August 13, 2012. Infected individuals range in age from less than 1 year to 62 years, and 50% of ill persons are 10 years of age or younger. Sixty-two percent of ill persons are female. Among 10 ill persons with available information, 3 (30%) have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. In interviews, ill persons answered questions about contact with animals and foods consumed during the week before becoming ill. Ten (100%) of 10 ill persons interviewed reported contact with hedgehogs or their environments before becoming ill. [CDC](#)

U.S.: Take steps now to reduce influenza risk

11 September - With human cases of H3N2 influenza virus, reportedly contracted from pigs at fairs this summer, pork producers are turning their attention to prevention measures among employees and in their herds. Investigations into H3N2v cases indicate that the main

risk factor for infection is prolonged exposure to pigs, mostly in fair settings, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Associated illness so far has been mostly mild with symptoms similar to seasonal flu and most cases have occurred in children who have little immunity against this virus. With influenza season ramping up, make sure that you take the normal precautions against infection since these viruses can move from pigs to people and from people to pigs, Koeman says. "Influenza viruses can move between pigs and people so it is important for all producers, swine workers, and their families to receive the seasonal influenza vaccination as soon as it is available." ...Although this season's flu vaccine will not protect against H3N2v, it will protect against seasonal influenza viruses expected to circulate this season and will reduce the risk of transmitting flu viruses to the herd," Koeman says. [Pork Network](#)

U.S.: Three deaths counted in Listeria outbreak linked to cheese

12 September – A new outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* has already killed three people, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said late Tuesday. The deaths are being blamed on cheese imported from Italy. According to CDC, a total of 14 persons are infected with the outbreak strain in 11 states and the District of Columbia. All have been hospitalized, but three have died. CDC said Listeriosis contributed to at least one of the deaths. The CDC report on the outbreak came 24 hours after Long Island-based Forever Cheese recalled one of its imported cheese brands for possible Listeria contamination. The number of ill persons identified in each state is as follows: California (1), Colorado (1), District of Columbia (1), Maryland (3), Minnesota (1), Nebraska (1), New Jersey (1), New Mexico (1), New York (1), Ohio (1), Pennsylvania (1) and Virginia (1). [Food Safety News](#)

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WELLNESS

Acupuncture provides true pain relief in study

11 September - A new study of acupuncture — the most rigorous and detailed analysis of the treatment to date — found that it can ease migraines and arthritis and other forms of chronic pain. The findings provide strong scientific support for an age-old therapy used by an estimated three million Americans each year. Though acupuncture has been studied for decades, the body of medical research on it has been mixed and mired to some extent by small and poor-quality studies. Financed by the National Institutes of Health and carried out over about half a decade, the new research was a detailed analysis of earlier research that involved data on nearly 18,000 patients. The researchers, who published their results in *Archives of Internal Medicine*, found that acupuncture outperformed sham treatments and standard care when used by people suffering from osteoarthritis, migraines and chronic back, neck and shoulder pain... Ultimately, Dr. Vickers and his colleagues found that at the end of treatment, about half of the patients treated with true acupuncture reported

improvements, compared with about 30 percent of patients who did not undergo it. [New York Times](#)

Bad sore throat? It's probably not strep, most likely viral

10 September - Although people often say they have "strep" throat, most sore throats actually are caused by a virus, not streptococcus bacteria, and shouldn't be treated with antibiotics, suggest guidelines published by the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA). Antibiotics are ineffective against viruses. The IDSA's newly revised guidelines for Group A streptococcal pharyngitis – strep throat – also advise that when a strep infection is confirmed by testing, it should be treated with penicillin or amoxicillin – if the patient does not have an allergy – and not azithromycin or a cephalosporin. Further, the guidelines recommend that children who suffer from recurrent strep throat should not have their tonsils surgically removed solely to reduce the frequency of infection... About 15 million people in the U.S. see the doctor for a sore throat every year and up to 70 percent receive antibiotics, although only a smaller percentage actually have strep throat: approximately 20 to 30 percent of children and just 5 to 15 percent of adults. [IDSA](#)

Half of women may have sleep apnea: study

7 September - Fully half of the 400 women given overnight sleep tests in a new Swedish study turned out to have mild-to-severe sleep apnea. In the random population sample of adult women who answered a questionnaire and were monitored while sleeping, half experienced at least five episodes an hour when they stopped breathing for longer than 10 seconds, the minimum definition of sleep apnea. Among women with hypertension or who were obese - two risk factors for sleep apnea - the numbers were even higher, reaching 80 to 84 percent of women. Many of the women in the study represent mild cases of sleep apnea... Young said sleep apnea is often thought of as a condition of men, but identifying women with it is especially beneficial, because her research has shown that women are good at sticking with treatment. [Reuters](#)

Marijuana smoking tied to testicular cancer: study

11 September - Young men who had smoked marijuana recreationally were twice as likely to be diagnosed with testicular cancer as men who have never used marijuana, according to a U.S. study. Researchers whose findings appeared in the journal *Cancer* said the link appeared to be specific to a type of tumor known as nonseminoma. "This is the third study consistently demonstrating a greater than doubling of risk of this particularly undesirable subtype of testicular cancer among young men with marijuana use," said Victoria Cortessis of the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, who led the study. [Reuters](#)

Ovarian cancer screenings are not effective, panel says

10 September – Tests commonly recommended to screen healthy women for ovarian cancer do more harm than good and should not be performed, a panel of medical experts said on Monday. The screenings — blood tests for a substance linked to cancer and ultrasound scans to examine the ovaries — do not lower the death rate from the disease, and they yield many false-positive results that lead to unnecessary operations with high complication rates, the panel said. [New York Times](#)

Popular pain-relieving medicines linked to hearing loss in women

12 September - ... According to a study by researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH), women who took ibuprofen or acetaminophen two or more days per week had an increased risk of hearing loss. The more often a woman took either of these medications, the higher her risk for hearing loss. Also, the link between these medicines and hearing loss tended to be greater in women younger than 50 years old, especially for those who took ibuprofen six or more days per week. There was no association between aspirin use and hearing loss. [EurekAlert](#)

Tattoo ink–related infections — awareness, diagnosis, reporting, and prevention



13 September - Tattoos have become increasingly popular in recent years. In the United States, the estimated percentage of adults with one or more tattoos increased from 14% in 2008 to 21% in 2012. The process of tattooing exposes the recipient to risks of infections with various pathogens, some of which are serious and difficult to treat. Historically, the control of tattoo-associated dermatologic infections has focused on ensuring safe tattooing practices and preventing contamination of ink at the tattoo parlors — a regulatory task overseen by state and local authorities. In recent months, however, reported outbreaks of nontuberculous mycobacterial infections associated with contaminated tattoo ink have raised questions about the adequacy of prevention efforts implemented at the tattoo-parlor level alone. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is reaching out to health care providers, public health officials, consumers, and the tattoo industry to improve awareness, diagnosis, and reporting (through the MedWatch program) in order to develop more effective measures for tattoo ink–related public health problems. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Without alcohol, red wine is still beneficial

10 September – Drinking red wine may help lower blood pressure, but a new study from Spain suggests that alcohol is not the reason. In a small randomized clinical trial, 67 men ages 55 to 75 who were at high risk for cardiovascular disease were assigned to daily drinks: four weeks drinking one ounce of gin, 10 ounces of red wine or 10 ounces of nonalcoholic red wine. All the men tried the three programs in succession. When the men drank gin, they experienced no change in blood pressure. With red wine, there was a slight but statistically insignificant lowering. But with nonalcoholic red wine, the men saw a significant decrease in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure. The study, published last week in *Circulation Research*, concludes that the blood-pressure-lowering effects of red wine are attributable not to its alcohol content, but to the beneficial chemicals called polyphenols that it contains, even in its nonalcoholic form. [New York Times](#)

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Democratic Republic of Congo: Ebola outbreak risks spreading to towns

13 September - An outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo risks spreading to major towns if not brought under control soon after the death toll doubled within a week, the World Health Organisation warned on Thursday. The number of people killed by the contagious virus for which there is no known treatment has now risen to 31, including five health workers. Ebola causes massive bleeding and kills up to 90 percent of its victims. "The epidemic is not under control. On the contrary the situation is very, very serious," Eugene Kabambi, a WHO spokesman in Congo's capital Kinshasa, told Reuters by phone. [Reuters](#)

Democratic Republic of Congo: Measles outbreaks kill 905 people in 2012

13 September - Since the beginning of this year, 34,192 cases of measles, including 905 deaths, have been reported in 88 health zones in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo). The information was revealed on Wednesday in Kinshasa by the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Equateur province in the Northwestern part of DR Congo is the most affected with over 4,000 cases reported. An anti-measles campaign was launched in the province targeting some 480,000 children ages six months to 14 years. [Xinhua](#)

Sierra Leone: Cholera update

8 September - The Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS) is closely working with partners at national and international levels to step up response to the cholera outbreak that has affected Sierra Leone since the beginning of the year. As of 5 September 2012, a total of 16 360 cases including 255 deaths with a case fatality rate (CFR) of 1.6% have been reported from 12 out of 13 districts. The western area of the country where the capital city of Freetown is located, reported more than 60% of all new cases... With support from national and international partners and donors, including UNICEF, Oxfam, British Red Cross, Save the Children, Care, Concern MSF, DFID, OCHA, IRC, and WHO, the MOHS is scaling up the response particularly in the areas of coordination of the overall response, surveillance and case management. [WHO](#)

Uganda: Floods displace 15,000 in north

7 September – Floods have forced at least 15,000 people to leave their homes in northern Uganda, where the deluge has destroyed houses, crops, roads and bridges. The Acholi districts of Agago, Kitgum, Lamwo and Pader are the most affected, with Agago alone having a total of 3,492 households affected, almost 13,000 hectares of crops inundated and some 2,000 latrines destroyed, according to a report by its district disaster management

office. ... [T]he government was going to dispatch immediate relief items such as medicines and disinfectant to prevent disease outbreaks. [IRIN](#)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: Flash floods kill or injure dozens in Kandahar province

11 September - According to local authorities in southern Kandahar province of Afghanistan several Afghan civilians were killed or injured and dozens of houses were damaged following flash floods in this province. Provincial public health chief Dr. Abdul Qayoum Pakhla confirming the report said at least 6 people including 4 women were killed and 8 others were injured following the flash floods. Dr. Abdul Qayoum further added more than 30 residential houses were also damaged. This comes as several people were killed or injured following flash floods in eastern Ghazni province of Afghanistan earlier. [Khaama Press](#)

Pakistan: Factory fires claim over 300 lives



12 September - The death toll from a pair of devastating factory fires that broke out in Pakistan's two biggest cities rose on Wednesday to 314 people, many of whom perished because they were unable to escape buildings that lacked emergency exits and basic safety equipment such as alarms and sprinklers.

The horrific toll highlights the atrocious state of industrial safety in Pakistan, where many factories are set up illegally in the country's densely populated cities, and owners often pay officials bribes to ignore safety violations. The more deadly of the two blazes, which both erupted on Tuesday night, was at a garment factory in the southern city of Karachi, the country's economic heart. The death toll there rose to 289 people Wednesday, as firefighters battled the flames for hours, said senior government official Roshan Ali Sheikh. It was one of the worst industrial accidents in Pakistan's 65-year history. [Christian Science Monitor](#)

Pakistan: Monsoon rains hit severely, leave 50 more dead

11 September - At least 50 persons have been died and hundreds others injured in the result of electrocution and house roof collapses incidents due to the heavy rains in different parts of Sindh, South Punjab, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (KPK) on Monday. At least 24 people died in Punjab, 10 in Sawabi, five in Kahirpur, 10 in Kashmore, meanwhile Chief Minister Sindh Qaim Ali Shah has declared rain emergency in the province; meanwhile emergency has also be imposed in DG Khan, Multan, Rajanpur and Jaffarabad. [South Asian News Agency](#)

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USEUCOM

Czech Republic: Bootleg alcohol 'kills 16'

12 September - At least 16 people in the Czech Republic have died after drinking bootleg alcohol, officials have said. The spirits were made from industrial chemical methanol and at least a further 22 people have been taken to hospital with alcohol poisoning. Police have arrested a 36-year-old man in connection with the deaths. Emergency measures have been imposed banning the sale of hard alcohol and authorities are carrying out searches to try to find the source of the drink... Some of those taken to hospital have gone blind after consuming the alcohol, with others being put into artificial comas by doctors. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: 2012 West Nile virus update

11 September – As of September 11, 2012, 48 states have reported West Nile virus infections in people, birds, or mosquitoes. A total of 2,636 cases of West Nile virus disease in people, including 118 deaths, have been reported to CDC. Of these, 1,405 (53%) were classified as neuroinvasive disease (such as meningitis or encephalitis) and 1,231 (47%) were classified as non-neuroinvasive disease. The 2,636 cases reported thus far in 2012 is the highest number of West Nile virus disease cases reported to CDC through the second week in September since 2003. Two thirds of the cases have been reported from six states (Texas, Louisiana, South Dakota, Mississippi, Michigan, and Oklahoma) and 40 percent of all cases have been reported from Texas. [CDC](#)

U.S.: Hantavirus update 2012

9 September – Yosemite National Park authorities have doubled the estimate of those likely infected in a recent outbreak of the hantavirus, a deadly pulmonary disease commonly carried by mice and other rodents. Given the rising number of confirmed cases (currently eight) and deaths (three), U.S. officials have sounded a worldwide alert to more than 22,000 domestic and international visitors to the park who may have been exposed. Containment of the virus is the first priority for the National Park Service, whose officials at first estimated that 10,000 people were at risk of contracting the hantavirus [infection] after staying in Yosemite's popular Curry Village lodging area in June through August [2012]. Officials expanded the warning this week to an additional 12,000 visitors to Yosemite's High Sierra camps, now that the eighth case of hantavirus was confirmed in a man who stayed in those areas. Furthermore, more than 2,500 of those individuals are from outside the United States.

[ProMED-mail](#)

U.S.: Whooping cough shots questioned

12 September - Increasing outbreaks of whooping cough across the U.S. may be partly a result of the waning efficacy of the vaccine used to protect against it, a new study suggests. The study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine Wednesday, found that protection against the disease diminished substantially over five years in immunized elementary school-aged children. That age group was once considered well immunized against the highly contagious disease after receiving five doses of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine—the last given between the ages of 4 and 6. But public health officials and researchers have been scrutinizing the lasting power of the vaccine and debating how to improve protection ever since more than 9,000 people developed whooping cough in California in 2010 and 2011. About a third of cases in 2010 were in children ages 5 to 12, according to the California Department of Public Health. They're focusing on whether the vaccine currently used in the U.S. is weaker than one it replaced in the 1990s, after the older shot was blamed for side effects ranging from tenderness and pain to occasional high fever.

[Wall Street Journal](#)

Household preparedness for public health emergencies — 14 states, 2006–2010

12 September - ...To estimate current levels of self-reported household preparedness by state and sociodemographic characteristics, CDC analyzed Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey data collected in 14 states during 2006–2010. The results of this analysis indicated that an estimated 94.8% of households had a working battery-operated flashlight, 89.7% had a 3-day supply of medications for everyone who required them, 82.9% had a 3-day supply of food, 77.7% had a working battery-operated radio, 53.6% had a 3-day supply of water, and 21.1% had a written evacuation plan. Non-English speaking and minority respondents, particularly Hispanics, were less likely to report household preparedness for an emergency or disaster, suggesting that more outreach activities should be directed toward these populations. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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USPACOM

China: Bubonic plague, fatal

11 September - The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health received notification from the Ministry of Health (MoH) today, 10 Sep 2012, concerning a case of bubonic plague. A CHP spokesman said that according to the preliminary information from the MoH, 3 villagers in Ganzizhou, Sichuan Province, had consumed a dead marmot on 2 Sep 2012. One of them presented with painful swelling of lymph nodes on the right side on 4 Sep 2012 and was admitted to hospital on 7 Sep 2012. His condition

deteriorated later and he died on the same day. According to the deceased's clinical characteristics, epidemiological investigation, and laboratory test results, the health authority of Sichuan Province confirmed the case as bubonic plague. [Pro-MED-mail](#)

Japan aims for zero nuclear power in 2030s

12 September - Japan aims to quit nuclear power in the 2030s in a new energy strategy to be unveiled soon, media said on Wednesday, a major shift from a pre-Fukushima disaster goal of boosting atomic energy to produce more than half the country's electricity. The March 2011 earthquake and tsunami triggered three meltdowns at Tokyo Electric Power Co's Fukushima Daiichi plant, spewing radiation and forcing about 160,000 people to flee their homes. It also prompted the government to scrap a 2010 plan to boost nuclear power's share of electricity to more than 50 percent by 2030. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda said on Monday that he wanted to decide on the new policy this week and would take into account a proposal by his Democratic Party for Japan to "invest all possible policy resources to make it possible to exit nuclear power in the 2030s". [Chicago Tribune](#)

Malaysia: Outbreak notice – sarcocystosis in Malaysia

CDC has received reports from GeoSentinel¹ of four cases of sarcocystosis that have been associated with 2012 summer travel to Tioman Island in Malaysia. Last year, 33 travelers returning from Tioman Island were similarly diagnosed with sarcocystosis. Sarcocystosis is a disease caused by a parasite called *Sarcocystis*. Sarcocystosis occurs in tropical or subtropical countries, including countries in Southeast Asia. This disease is common among wild and domestic animals but can also cause disease in humans. Two forms of the disease can occur: one causes diarrhea and the other causes muscle pain, fevers, and other symptoms. Muscle sarcocystosis is spread through the ingestion of food, water, or soil contaminated with infected animal feces. Many people infected with *Sarcocystis* may not have symptoms. The travelers described in this notice returned from Malaysia with severe muscle pain. Other reported symptoms included mild diarrhea and fever. Most people were ill for 2-4 weeks after leaving the island. [CDC](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Guatemala: 33,000 fleeing volcano eruption

13 September - A long-simmering volcano outside one of the Guatemala's most famous tourist attractions exploded into a series of powerful eruptions Thursday, hurling thick clouds of ash nearly two miles (three kilometers) high, spewing rivers of lava down its flanks and forcing the evacuation of more than 33,000 people from surrounding communities. Guatemala's head of emergency evacuations, Sergio Cabanas, said the evacuees were leaving some 17 villages around the Volcan del Fuego, which sits about six miles southwest (16 kilometers) from the colonial city of Antigua. ... There was a general orange alert, the

second-highest level, but a red alert south and southeast of the mountain, where, Chicna said, "it's almost in total darkness." Teresa Marroquin, disaster coordinator for the Guatemalan Red Cross, said the organization had set up 10 emergency shelters and was sending hygiene kits and water. "There are lots of respiratory problems and eye problems," she said. [San Francisco Chronicle](#)

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