

15 November 2013

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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## Great American Smokeout November 21, 2013

The Great American Smokeout, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, is an annual event that encourages smokers to make a plan to quit, or to plan in advance and quit smoking on that day, in an effort to stop permanently.

Fifty years after the release of the first Surgeon General's report on smoking and health, remarkable progress has been made. Since 1964, smoking prevalence among U.S. adults has been reduced by half. Unfortunately, tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States.

In 2010, nearly two out of three adult smokers wanted to quit, and more than half had made a quit attempt for >1 day in the preceding year. However, an estimated one out of five U.S. adults still smokes.



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## 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>

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## U.S. MILITARY

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### Gastrointestinal infections, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2002-2012

October 2013 - Over the past eleven years, over 280,000 gastrointestinal illnesses of active component service members were attributed (through diagnoses in administrative medical records) to bacterial, viral, or parasitic causes. Of note, during the period, there were more cases of gastroenteritis reported without than with attributions of specific etiologies. Approximately 70 percent of cases with reported etiologies were attributed to viral agents; this percentage is slightly higher than the proportion of GI cases attributed to viral causes among service members deployed in the U.S. Central Command operational theater. Increases of incidence rates for several conditions mirrored those reported in civilian populations. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that *Campylobacter* incidence in 2012 was 14 percent higher than the baseline reference period of 2006-08 and was the highest annual rate since 2000; this report documented a similar increase in *Campylobacter* cases... In addition, hospitalization rates for *C. difficile* infections have been increasing in both civilian and military populations. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

### Pentagon: Reports of sexual assaults up 46 percent

7 November - Reports of sexual assaults in the military increased by an unprecedented 46 percent in the past fiscal year, the Pentagon said Thursday. It wasn't possible to know whether the spike represented an increase in assaults, an increase in the number of people reporting them, or both. Defense Department officials portrayed the sharp rise as a sign that people are more confident about coming forward now that improvements are being made to the military's system for handling assaults. Reports of sexual assaults in the military increased by an unprecedented 46 percent in the past fiscal year, the Pentagon said Thursday. The military received 3,553 complaints of sexual assault from October 2012 through June, compared with 2,434 reports during the same period the previous year. [Washington Post](#)

### Sex assaults prompt two bills to overhaul Article 32 hearings

11 November - Congress is facing two competing proposals to reform pretrial hearings to make the process less invasive for sexual assault victims. While similar in intent, the different approaches leave open the question of how far lawmakers are willing to go in overhauling the process that determines whether enough evidence exists to take a case to trial — a process that some say “re-victimizes” rape and assault victims. “It is time to stop putting sexual assault victims on trial,” said Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio, a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee and sponsor of HR 3360, one of the Article 32 reform bills... Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., chief sponsor of S 1644, a second bill to change the

pretrial hearing process, said military procedures put victims through something “that has no parallel in the civilian world.” [Military Times](#)

## Telemedicine: Revolutionizing health care for soldiers and veterans

11 November - Telemedicine – the exchange of medical information via electronic communications – has vastly changed the way deployed soldiers receive access to health care. And now, this new communication system promises to offer better access to care for veterans in the future as well... Today, soldiers in Iraq or Afghanistan can get second opinions on tricky medical situations from doctors located halfway around the world. They can receive diagnoses from medical specialists – even when none are stationed at their base. And they can access psychiatric care via Skype-like technology when stationed in remote locations... This technology has allowed the military to spot medical conditions that would have otherwise been missed or quickly garner second opinions on cases that have the potential to warrant costly evacuations. They can also utilize the technology to spot false alarms, like in the case of one pilot that Poropatich treated who had an abnormal EKG reading. [Fox News](#)

## Texas and 5 other states resist processing benefits for gay couples

10 November - ...Texas is one of six states refusing to comply with Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel’s order that gay spouses of National Guard members be given the same federal marriage benefits as heterosexual spouses. Mr. Hagel’s decree, which applies to all branches of the military, followed the Supreme Court’s ruling in June that struck down part of the Defense of Marriage Act that had prohibited the federal government from recognizing same-sex marriages. While a majority of states ban same-sex marriages, most are not fighting the new policy. But Pentagon officials say that in addition to Texas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and West Virginia have balked. Each has cited a conflict with state laws that do not recognize same-sex marriages. (A West Virginia official said, however, that the state intended to follow the directive.) While the president has the power to call National Guard units into federal service — and nearly all Guard funding comes from the federal government — the states say the units are state agencies that must abide by state laws. [New York Times](#)

## VA hires Rutgers to conduct first-of-its-kind, multi-million dollar genotyping study

6 November - The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs has awarded a multi-million dollar, five-year contract to a Rutgers University-based research partnership to conduct a first-of-its kind genotyping study to improve the health of veterans... [T]he landmark contract will improve research into medical issues affecting veterans and enable scientists to better predict what kinds of diseases veterans may encounter as a function of service or in civilian

life... Brooks said 220,000 veterans have already agreed to participate, exceeding expectations, and 107,000 DNA samples are expected to be collected this year. [NJ Biz](#)

## Veterans of Iraq, Afghanistan battle lung trouble

8 November - ...[L]ung problems have proved to be a persistent concern for those who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan, and the military is struggling with how to address the phenomenon. Now, the Department of Defense is reviewing its policy of not requiring mandatory lung tests for troops amid growing outside pressure to take a harder look at what two wars in perennially dusty, sometimes toxic climates have done to soldiers' lungs and how to better handle these issues in the future... Returning veterans and contractors have brought lawsuits against their employers and the U.S. government, citing exposure to burn pits, where troops typically burn all their trash while on deployment, including plastics, human waste and things like batteries. Congress has ordered the VA to establish a burn-pit registry by January, where vets from Iraq, Afghanistan and the Gulf Wars can log on and document their concern about health problems tied to the exposure. [Wall Street Journal](#)

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### GLOBAL

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## 21 nations take up polio 'emergency'

14 November - Some 21 nations in the Middle East and nearby regions have jointly made the eradication of polio an emergency priority and recognized that Pakistan is a key part of the problem, the World Health Organization said Wednesday. The joint resolution by nations who are part of the [U.N.](#) health agency's Eastern Mediterranean region have called on Pakistan to urgently vaccinate all of its children to prevent the virus from spreading internationally. Pakistan also approved the resolution, which the Geneva-based agency says includes Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The problem is particularly challenging in Pakistan, where a U.N.-backed eradication campaign has suffered from violence and mistrust directed against polio workers and people who want their children vaccinated. [Chron.com](#)

## Diabetes battle 'being lost' as cases hit record 382 million



13 November - The world is losing the battle against diabetes as the number of people estimated to be living with the disease soars to a new record of 382 million this year, medical experts said on Thursday. The vast majority have type 2 diabetes - the kind linked to obesity and lack of exercise - and

the epidemic is spreading as more people in the developing world adopt Western, urban lifestyles. The latest estimate from the International Diabetes Federation is equivalent to a global prevalence rate of 8.4 percent of the adult population and compares to 371 million cases in 2012. By 2035, the organization predicts the number of cases will have soared by 55 percent to 592 million. [Reuters](#)

## Genetic signature identified for RSV, the leading cause of infant hospitalizations worldwide

14 November - Scientists have identified the genetic signature of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), the leading cause of infant hospitalizations around the world. The work is a key step toward a better understanding of the immune response to RSV, which will aid the development of a vaccine and a tool that could allow physicians to determine the severity of the infection when symptoms first develop. The study, from a team at The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital, was published this week in *PLOS Medicine*. [Nationwide Childrens](#)

## Photos: Dengue fever outbreaks causing problems around the globe

12 November - ...Outbreaks of Dengue this year have affected countries from South America to South Asia and have even shown up in the Mediterranean. [Mercury News Media Center](#)

## Pneumonia kills one million kids every year

12 November - Every year, more than one million children die from pneumonia. It's the single biggest killer of kids under age five globally. On World Pneumonia Day, health officials say there are simple, but effective ways to prevent these deaths. [VOA](#)

## Report on climate change depicts a planet in peril

11 November - Climate change will disrupt not only the natural world but also society, posing risks to the world's economy and the food and water supply and contributing to violent conflict, an international panel of scientists says. The warnings came in a report drafted by the United Nations-backed Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The 29-page summary, leaked and posted on a blog critical of the panel, has been distributed to governments around the world for review. It could change before it is released in March... The report describes a planet in peril as a result of the human-caused buildup of greenhouse gases since the Industrial Revolution, where glaciers are shrinking and plants and animals have shifted their ranges in response to rising temperatures. As global warming continues through the 21st century, many species will face greater risk of extinction, marine life will shift toward the poles and seawater will grow more acidic, the report says. [Los Angeles Times](#)

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## INFLUENZA

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### Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

- 15 November - Across the overseas DoD laboratory surveillance network, influenza activity remains low and comparable to past influenza seasons.
- The influenza vaccination coverage for the DoD (active duty component only) is 70%. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

### CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

- During week 44 (October 27-November 2, 2013), influenza activity remained low in the United States.
- Viral Surveillance: Of 4,118 specimens tested during week 44, 201 (4.9%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths: Two influenza-associated pediatric deaths that occurred during the 2012-2013 season were reported. [FluView](#)

### DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Week 44 (27 October - 2 November 2013), 73 specimens were received from 34 locations. Results were finalized for three specimens from three locations. There was no influenza identified. The only respiratory pathogen detected was one rhinovirus/enterovirus.
- Cumulative results were finalized for 172 specimens from 45 locations. There were seven specimens positive for influenza (three A(H1N1)pdm09, three A(H3N2), and one B/unknown lineage). Other respiratory pathogens identified were five adenovirus, one *Chlamydomydia pneumonia*, one coronavirus, two human metapneumovirus, eight *Mycoplasma pneumonia*, 14 parainfluenza, one RSV, and 58 rhinovirus/enterovirus. To date, five non-influenza co-infections have been identified (two adenovirus & rhinovirus/enterovirus, one human metapneumovirus & rhinovirus/enterovirus, and two RSV & rhinovirus/enterovirus).
- Of 172 ILI cases, 93 are service members (54.1%), 51 are children (29.7%), and 28 are spouses & other beneficiaries (16.3%). There are no unknown beneficiary types. The median age of ILI cases with known age (n=172) is 24 (range 0, 85) and 55 (32%) of these specimens are from ILI cases 18 years of age or younger. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

During week 44/2013 influenza activity was low in Europe:

- All 25 reporting countries experienced low intensity of clinical influenza activity and reported stable or decreasing trends.
- Sporadic cases were reported by five countries.
- Of 236 sentinel specimens collected by 19 countries, one tested positive for influenza virus.
- Nine hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases have been reported since week 40 by Ireland and the UK. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

## Google.org: Flu Trends

13 November - Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere is generally low but moderate in Russia and Mexico; in the southern hemisphere levels range from minimal to low.

[Google.org Flu Trends](#)

## Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week 45 (through 9 November 2013):

Influenza: One 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 at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

## USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity

For the week ending 2 November 2013 (Week 44):

- With the exception of the Southeast region of the country, where activity is slightly elevated, overall influenza-like illness (ILI) activity remains low in both Army and civilian populations nationwide.
- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 44 were 12% lower than for the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: Zero hospitalized influenza cases were reported to USAPHC in week 44; three cases have been reported to date during this influenza season for Army MTFs.
- Viral specimens: During week 44, 98 of 580 (17%) laboratory specimens tested were positive for respiratory pathogens. RSV accounted for 35% of positive specimens. The majority of influenza A-positive specimens were submitted by MTFs in SRMC.

- Army Vaccination Rates: Army (COMPO 1) compliance in week 44: USAREUR 95%, MEDCOM 88%, TRADOC 75%, USARPAC 74%, FORSCOM 67%, USARSO 46%. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity](#)

## PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

### Cambodia: 24th new human case of avian influenza H5N1 in 2013

8 November -The Ministry of Health (MoH) of the Kingdom of Cambodia wishes to advise members of the public that one new human case of avian influenza has been confirmed for the H5N1 virus. This is the 24th case this year and the 45th person to become infected with the H5N1 virus in Cambodia. The case, from Kampot province, is currently in a critical condition. Of the 45 confirmed cases, 34 were children under 14, and 27 of the 45 were female. In addition, only 12 cases out of the 24 cases this year survived. [WHO](#)

### Experimental bird flu vaccines show promise in early trials



14 November - The first human tests of experimental vaccines against a deadly strain of avian flu, using novel technology that could produce millions of doses very quickly, has produced protective antibodies in the vast majority of recipients. Encouraging results in early-stage trials were announced for separate vaccines from Swiss drugmaker Novartis and Novavax, a biotech company based in Rockville, Maryland. Details of the Novavax vaccine were published online in the New England Journal of Medicine late on Wednesday, while Novartis disclosed its positive findings on Thursday. [Reuters](#)

### Taiwan: First case of new bird flu H6N1 found in 20-year-old woman

14 November - A new bird flu strain called H6N1 has infected its first human. Taiwanese researchers are reporting the new bird flu appeared in a 20-year-old woman from central Taiwan. The woman had been working in a delicatessen before she began experiencing flu-like symptoms and shortness of breath. She was then hospitalized in May 2013. She has since fully recovered following treatment with antiviral drugs. The woman had not traveled abroad three months prior to the infection, and she said she had not been in close contact with poultry or wild birds. Interviews with 36 relatives and friends of the woman found no other cases of H6N1. Researchers say the source of her infection remains unknown.

[CBS News](#)

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## E. coli O157:H7 outbreak linked to RTE salads; multi-agency investigation under way

12 November - The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Nov. 10 announced that it is collaborating with public health officials in California, Washington, and Arizona; the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS); and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to investigate a multistate outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 (STEC O157:H7) infections. The infections have been linked to ready-to-eat (RTE) salads produced by Glass Onion Catering, a business of Richmond, CA-based Atherstone Foods. On Nov. 10, the company voluntarily recalled certain prepackaged salads retailed by Trader Joe's and Walgreen's, as well as two bulk-packed salads retailed by Whole Foods Markets. [Food Safety Magazine](#)

## Improved food safety practices needed on smaller farms

13 November - A large portion of farmers with small- to medium-sized farms follow such practices as using raw manure on crops and potentially unsafe water for irrigating and washing produce that can put consumers at risk for foodborne illness, according to a study in the *Journal of Food Protection*... Of the farmers responding, 128 (>56%) reported using manure on their crops, with 34% of that group using either raw or mixed raw and composted manure and more than 26% applying manure less than 90 days before harvest. About half the farmers reported that their crops are harvested with bare hands, but only two-thirds had bathroom or hand-washing facilities near fields or packing sheds... Sixteen percent used untested water for washing produce, and surfaces that touch produce were not sanitized on 43% of the farms. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

## Study: Biggest factor in restaurant-associated food outbreaks is workers

13 November - Food worker health and hygiene was the most common contributing factor in foodborne disease outbreaks associated with eating at restaurants and delicatessens, followed by improper food preparation practices, a study in the *Journal of Food Protection* found. The authors analyzed data from the 457 foodborne illness outbreaks, defined as an incident where two or more persons experienced similar illnesses from ingestion of a common food, reported in 2006 and 2007 at Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet) sites, which at that time comprised about 15% of the US population. A total of 300 (66%) of the outbreaks were associated with restaurants and delicatessens, with 295 (98%) of the reports listing at least one contributing factor. A single etiologic agent was identified in 257 of the restaurant-associated outbreaks, with norovirus by far the most common, causing 154 (60%) of them; worker health and hygiene was listed as a contributing factor in 137 (89%) of these. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

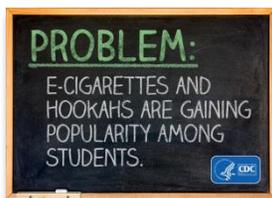
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## Depression 'makes us biologically older'



12 November - Lab tests showed cells looked biologically older in people who were severely depressed or who had been in the past. These visible differences in a measure of cell ageing called telomere length couldn't be explained by other factors, such as whether a person smoked. The findings, in more than 2,000 people, appear in *Molecular Psychiatry*. Experts already know that people with major depression are at increased risk of age-related diseases such as cancer, diabetes, obesity and heart disease. This might be partly down to unhealthy lifestyle behaviours such as alcohol use and physical inactivity. But scientists suspect depression takes its own toll on our cells. [BBC News](#)

## Emerging tobacco products gaining popularity among youth



14 November - Emerging tobacco products such as e-cigarettes and hookahs are quickly gaining popularity among middle- and high-school students, according to a report in this week's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. While use of these newer products increased, there was no significant decline in students' cigarette smoking or overall tobacco use. Data from the 2012 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) show that recent electronic cigarette use rose among middle school students from 0.6 percent in 2011 to 1.1 percent in 2012 and among high school students from 1.5 percent to 2.8 percent. Hookah use among high school students rose from 4.1 percent to 5.4 percent from 2011 to 2012. [CDC](#)

## FDA warns against counterfeit male sexual enhancement product

12 November - The Food and Drug Administration warned on Tuesday of a counterfeit dietary supplement for male sexual enhancement that could be particularly harmful to patients with diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and heart disease. In a safety warning posted on its website, the FDA said the fake product is represented as "ExtenZe Maximum Strength" and looks similar to the actual product, ExtenZe, which is made by Monrovia, California-based Biotab Nutraceuticals Inc. The FDA said its analysis showed that the counterfeit ExtenZe contains sildenafil, an active ingredient in various FDA-approved prescription medicines, including Pfizer's Viagra, for erectile dysfunction... Sildenafil may interact with nitrates -- found in some prescription drugs and often taken by men with diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or heart disease -- and could lower blood pressure to dangerous levels, the FDA said. [Reuters](#)

## Meat products could raise diabetes risk: Study

12 November - To avoid developing type 2 diabetes, you may have been told to watch your calories and kick up your activity level. Now researchers say there's something else you might consider: your so-called dietary acid load. And that might mean cutting down on meat, since the French researchers say a diet heavy in animal products and other acidic foods can cause an acid load in the body, resulting in health complications. This includes reduced insulin sensitivity, which can lead to type 2 diabetes, according to the new study. "We have demonstrated for the first time in a large prospective study that dietary acid load was positively associated with type 2 diabetes risk, independently of other known risk factors for diabetes," the researchers said. [WebMD](#)

## Most women keep using IUDs, contraceptive implants

13 November - More than 90 percent of women who opt for long-term reversible forms of birth control keep using them for at least six months, a new study found. Those birth control methods include intrauterine devices (IUDs) and contraceptive implants. The findings mean most women did not have side effects, such as cramping or bleeding, that were serious enough for them to stop using their birth control... "We hope that this study helps reassure providers that the discontinuation rate is not a big concern," Madden said... About seven percent of women using levonorgestrel IUDs or implants and eight percent of copper IUD users chose to have their device removed in the first six months. Younger women continued using these methods just as often as older women did, according to findings published in the journal *Obstetrics and Gynecology*. [Reuters](#)

## Shift in cholesterol advice could double statin use

12 November - ...[N]ew guidelines published Tuesday afternoon throw out the notion that a specific blood cholesterol level should automatically trigger treatment with cholesterol-lowering drugs. Also out the window is any notion of treating patients with drugs until their so-called bad cholesterol hits a specific target – one that for most people is all but impossible to achieve by diet alone. Instead, the new guidelines groups adults into four categories most likely to benefit from cholesterol-lowering drugs. They include people with heart disease and diabetes, as well as people with high levels of LDL cholesterol, the bad kind. The guidelines also explicitly tell doctors not to bother with drugs other than statins, saying they're the only ones proven to reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes. The effect of the new guidelines would be to double the number of Americans who are candidates for lifelong statin therapy. [NPR](#)

## So, you have gonorrhea. Who tells your ex?



12 November - In an effort to stop a spate of gonorrhea outbreaks, at least one public health department in the Pacific Northwest is offering a helpful service to infected patients: anonymous notification of former sexual partners. That's right. A government worker will track down and

contact each ex for you. Awkward for all concerned? Yes. But at a time when gonorrhoea is becoming stubbornly drug-resistant, health officials see it as time — and embarrassment — well spent. [NPR](#)

## Supplements may not guard against cancer, heart disease

11 November - There is little evidence that vitamin and mineral supplements protect people from cancer and heart problems, according to a new analysis. Based on those findings, a U.S. government-backed panel issued draft recommendations that echo its previous conclusion: it cannot recommend for or against taking vitamins and minerals to prevent those conditions... It's estimated that Americans spend about \$12 billion each year on supplements. [Reuters](#)

## Women under 60 with diabetes at much greater risk for heart disease

31 October - Results of a Johns Hopkins study published today in the journal *Diabetes Care* found that young and middle-aged women with type 2 diabetes are at much greater risk of coronary artery disease than previously believed. Generally, women under 60 are at far less risk for coronary artery disease than men of the same age. But among women of that age who have diabetes, their risk of heart disease increases by up to four times, making it roughly equal to men's risk of this same form of heart disease. [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)

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### **USAFRICOM**

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## Africa: Transformation of food systems needed for better nutrition

13 November - Severe nutrition problems afflict more than half the world's population and food systems will need to undergo significant changes to improve people's diets and lives, speakers told country representatives and experts as they opened a meeting organized by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO). The 13-15 November event is a preparatory technical meeting designed to lay the groundwork for the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), scheduled to take place in 2014, from 19 to 21 November. The aim is to boost coordination of international efforts to tackle the agricultural, economic, health, food system and other factors that negatively influence what and how people eat, especially in developing countries. [All Africa](#)

## Sudan polio vaccination blocked, says UN's John Ging



12 November - Efforts to vaccinate 165,000 children against polio in Sudan have been blocked by the government and rebels, the UN humanitarian chief says. John Ging said the two sides should stop "filibustering" and give health workers access to children in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. The government and rebels had ignored a Security Council resolution to give health workers access, he said. The UN fears that conflict in the two states could lead to a polio outbreak. According to the UN World Health Organization, Sudan has been polio-free for more than two years. [BBC News](#)

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### USCENTCOM

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## Afghanistan: Opium cultivation soars to record

13 November - Opium cultivation in Afghanistan reached a record this year, a new United Nations survey shows, a major setback to over a decade of international efforts to combat the drug trade and persuade farmers to switch to legal crops. The amount of land under opium cultivation jumped 36% to 209,000 hectares (516,000 acres) in 2013, according to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime and the Afghan counternarcotics ministry... The study's findings add to worries among U.S. and other international officials that Afghanistan is evolving into an economy dominated by the drug trade and organized crime just as most U.S.-led troops prepare to leave by the end of 2014. [Wall Street Journal](#)

## Kuwait reports first MERS-coronavirus case

13 November - Kuwait reported its first case of the deadly MERS coronavirus on Wednesday, the fifth Gulf Arab country the strain has emerged in since the outbreak began in neighboring Saudi Arabia last year. The Kuwaiti patient is in a critical condition, state news agency KUNA said, citing a statement from the Health Ministry. It gave no further details. [Reuters](#)

## Middle East: Polio virus strain in Syria confirmed as being from Pakistan - WHO

11 November - Polio that has crippled at least 13 children in Syria has been confirmed as being caused by a strain of the virus that originated in Pakistan and is spreading across the Middle East, the World Health Organization said. Genetic sequencing shows the strain found in Syrian children in Deir al-Zor, where an outbreak was detected last month, is linked

to the strain of Pakistani origin found in sewage in Egypt, Israel and Palestinian territories in the past year. [Reuters](#)

## **Qatar: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) - update**

10 November - WHO has been informed of an additional laboratory-confirmed case of infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in Qatar. The patient is a 48-year-old man with underlying medical conditions. He became ill on 25 October 2013 and was admitted to a hospital on 31 October 2013. He is currently in a critical condition. Preliminary investigations reveal that he frequently visited animal barns. The patient did not recently travel and has had no contact with a previously laboratory-confirmed case with MERS-CoV. [WHO](#)

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

11 November - WHO has been informed of two additional laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in Saudi Arabia. The first patient is a 72-year-old man from Riyadh with underlying medical conditions. He became ill on 23 October 2013, and has been hospitalised since 31 October 2013. The second patient is a 43-year-old man from Jeddah. He became ill on 27 October 2013 and has been hospitalised since 3 November 2013. Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 153 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 64 deaths. [WHO](#)

## **Syria: Polio**

11 November - Thirteen cases of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) have been confirmed in the Syrian Arab Republic. Genetic sequencing indicates that the isolated viruses are most closely linked to virus detected in environmental samples in Egypt in December 2012 (which in turn had been linked to wild poliovirus circulating in Pakistan). Closely related wild poliovirus strains have also been detected in environmental samples in Israel, West Bank and Gaza Strip since February 2013. Wild poliovirus had not been detected in the Syrian Arab Republic since 1999. [WHO](#)

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### **USEUCOM**

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## **Bulgaria: Tick-borne encephalitis in Bulgaria, 2009 to 2012**

14 November - For the last 60 years, only a few cases of tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) have been detected in Bulgaria. Considering the remarkable increase in TBE morbidity in Europe

over the past two decades, we conducted a study of TBE among patients with acute viral meningitis who were hospitalised in Bulgaria during 2009 to 2012. A total of 86 patients with viral meningitis of unknown aetiology during this period were tested. Acute TBE was confirmed in three of these patients. The last TBE case was detected in October 2012; the other two were diagnosed in 2009. To the best of our knowledge, these three patients are the first confirmed TBE cases reported in Bulgaria. The risk of TBE is underestimated in Bulgaria due to the low awareness of medical doctors. [Eurosurveillance](#)

## Europe at 'polio risk' from Syria

7 November - Europe could be at risk from polio following a recent outbreak in Syria, infectious disease experts say. In the *Lancet* journal, two doctors in Germany say the cases in Syria - which had been free of wild poliovirus since 1999 - could endanger nearby regions. They say because only one in 200 people infected develops paralysis it could take a year of "silent transmission" before an outbreak is detected. [BBC News](#)

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### **USNORTHCOM**

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## Mexico: Cholera

13 November - The Ministry of Health in Mexico has reported an additional four cases of infection with *Vibrio cholerae* O1 Ogawa. Of these, two are from the state of Hidalgo and two from the state of Veracruz. Since the beginning of this outbreak in September 2013 to date, a total of 180 confirmed cases, including one death, of cholera due to *Vibrio cholerae* O1 Ogawa has been reported in the country... Ninety-two of the total confirmed cases are women and 88 are men, with the age ranging from three-months to 88 years old. [WHO](#)

## U.S.: Surgeon General speaks about public health in visit

7 November - More than 400 people attended Acting U.S. Surgeon General Boris D. Lushniak's lecture, "From Healthcare to Health — The National Prevention Strategy," [at the University of Washington] on Thursday night... Lushniak stated that he and the PHS Commissioned Corps are promoting public health through the National Prevention Strategy. The strategy is centered on seven priorities, which include preventing drug abuse and excessive alcohol use, active living, healthy eating, injury and violence-free living, and reproductive/sexual health. The priority of "tobacco-free living" is one that Lushniak is particularly striving for at college campuses, including the UW. [The Daily](#)

## U.S.: Traffic deaths up for first time since 2005, safety agency says



14 November - Traffic deaths are on the rise for the first time in many years, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The agency said Thursday that highway deaths rose by 1,082, or 3.3%, to 33,561 in 2012, compared with the previous year. Most of the increase, 72%, came in the first quarter of last year and involved motorcyclists and pedestrians. This was the first increase in traffic deaths since 2005. But the tally still remains near a historic low. With the exception of last year, fatalities were at their lowest level since 1950, the NHTSA said. Early data from this year indicate that traffic deaths could be on their way back down, the agency said. [Los Angeles Times](#)

## U.S.: What makes U.S. health care so overpriced? It's not what you think

12 November - U.S. medical care is getting ever pricier, but it's not because so many old people are running up charges, experts reported Tuesday. Most of the money's being spent on people under 65 with chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease... "Based on this review...the U.S. 'system' has performed relatively poorly," Moses and colleagues wrote in the report, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Their findings echo what other experts have found – U.S. health care gives little value for the money. One big problem is that people have no idea what they are paying for health care services, so traditional free market forces cannot act to keep costs down. "This is not a market. It's far from a market. Few prices are known. They are not publicized," Moses says. [NBC News](#)

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### USPACOM

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## Japan: Okinawa - the junk heap of the Pacific

11 November - In June, construction workers unearthed more than 20 rusty barrels from beneath a soccer pitch in Okinawa City. The land had once been part of Kadena Air Base — the Pentagon's largest installation in the Pacific region — but was returned to civilian usage in 1987. Tests revealed that the barrels contained two ingredients of military defoliants used in the Vietnam War: the herbicide 2,4,5-T and 2,3,7,8,-TCDD dioxin. Levels of the highly toxic TCDD in nearby water measured 280 times the safe limit... Although Okinawa's main island hosts more than 30 U.S. bases — taking up 20 percent of its land — there has never been a concerted attempt to investigate levels of contamination within them. [Japan Times](#)

## PHILIPPINES

### Desperate Philippine typhoon survivors loot, dig up water pipes



13 November - Desperation gripped Philippine islands devastated by Typhoon Haiyan as looting turned deadly on Wednesday and survivors panicked over shortages of food, water and medicine, some digging up underground water pipes and smashing them open. Five days after one of the strongest storms ever recorded slammed into cities and towns in the central Philippines, anger and frustration boiled over on Wednesday as essential supplies dwindled. Some survivors scrawled signs reading "Help us"... Some areas appeared to teeter near anarchy amid widespread looting of shops and warehouses for food, water and supplies. [Reuters](#)

### Logistical hurdles paralyze relief effort at the center of a typhoon's fury

13 November - Typhoon gridlock threatened rescue operations in the most devastated part of the Philippines on Wednesday, with aid piling up but few ways to distribute it, plentiful gasoline but no merchants willing to sell it, and an influx of emergency volunteers but no place to house them. The intensifying frustrations of delivering aid after Typhoon Haiyan struck last week elicited a plea from the top United Nations relief official to the mayor of Tacloban, imploring him to persuade gas station owners to open so relief convoys could begin a large-scale expansion into the flattened port city of 220,000 and interior regions of Leyte Province. The gas stations have fuel in their tanks, but the owners fear theft and violence if they reopen... Tacloban's paralysis was acknowledged later in the day by the United States government, which is playing a major role in the emergency effort, using military cargo planes to bring in aid and to evacuate the most vulnerable residents. In a telephone briefing from Washington, a senior official assigned to the effort said that it was focused mainly on food, water, shelter and medicine, but that the provision of fuel in the city was "very much on our radar screen." [New York Times](#)

### "National Calamity" in Philippines fueling isolation, risk of disease

12 November - ... The storm ravaged some of the country's modern hospitals, including the regional hospital in the city of Tacloban, some 580 kilometers southeast of Manila, where essential medical supplies washed out to sea. A top priority for aid groups is distributing basic medicines to manage chronic conditions like diabetes. Workers are also fighting to get shelter, safe water and sanitation facilities into place even as the nation faces the added threat of a tropical storm later this week. Remote areas of the country, such as the city of

Guiuan at the southernmost tip of Samar Island, have remained inaccessible... Aid groups now are talking about the country's vulnerability to waterborne diseases. Poor sanitation and crowded environments can cause explosive outbreaks of diarrhea-causing infections in the aftermath of man-made or natural disasters, sometimes with fatal results. Outbreaks of cholera, for example, can occur if there are endemic levels of the disease in the area, which is the case in the Philippines. [Reuters](#)

## One of world's strongest storms blasts Philippines

8 November - One of the strongest storms on record slammed into the central Philippines on Friday, killing at least four people, forcing hundreds of thousands from their homes and knocking out power and communications in several provinces. But the nation appeared to avoid a major disaster because the rapidly moving typhoon blew away before wreaking more damage, officials said. Huge Typhoon Haiyan raced across a string of islands from east to west — Samar, Leyte, Cebu and Panay— and lashed beach communities. Nearly 750,000 people were forced to flee their homes. Weather officials said Haiyan had sustained winds of 235 kph (147 mph) with gusts of 275 kph (170 mph) when it made landfall. That makes it the world's strongest typhoon this year, said Aldczar Aurelio of the government's weather bureau. Due to cut-off communications, it was impossible to know the full extent of casualties and damage. At least two people were electrocuted in storm-related accidents, one person was killed by a fallen tree and another was struck by lightning, official reports said. Southern Leyte Gov. Roger Mercado said the typhoon triggered landslides that blocked roads, uprooted trees and ripped roofs off houses around his residence. The dense clouds and heavy rains made the day seem almost as dark as night, he said. [AP](#)

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### USSOUTHCOM

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## Chile issues health alert as trash keeps piling up amid strike

8 November - Chile's government is issuing a health alert for the port of Valparaiso, where thousands of tons of trash have been piling up for 18 days amid a strike by garbage collectors. Health Minister Jaime Manalich said Thursday that the measure seeks to protect the residents of Valparaiso from a strike "that carries huge health risks." [Japan Times](#)

## Tobago reports first dengue-related death in 2013

13 November - Tobago has recorded its first dengue-related death for 2013. *Tobago News* has confirmed a woman in her mid-40s succumbed to dengue haemorrhagic shock syndrome at the Scarborough General Hospital, a little over a week ago... There have been reports of an increased number of dengue cases in Tobago, but County Medical Officer of

Health Dr Viswanath Partapsingh explained this is normal for the rainy season.

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