

16 May 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Health, United States presents national trends in health statistics on such topics as birth and death rates, infant mortality, life expectancy, morbidity and health status, risk factors, use of ambulatory and inpatient care, health personnel and facilities, financing of health care, health insurance and managed care, and other health topics.



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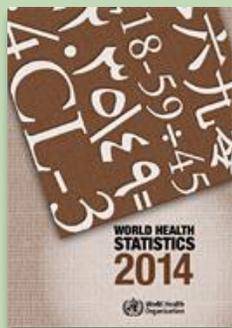
Climate change poses threat to national security, report says

14 May - The effects of climate change — including extreme weather, drought and sea-level rise — pose a serious threat to U.S. national security, according to a report released

World Health Statistics 2014

People everywhere are living longer, according to the "World Health Statistics 2014" published today by WHO. Based on global averages, a girl who was born in 2012 can expect to live to around 73 years, and a boy to the age of 68. This is six years longer than the average global life expectancy for a child born in 1990.

WHO's annual statistics report shows that low-income countries have made the greatest progress, with an average increase in life expectancy by 9 years from 1990 to 2012.



Wednesday. Because of the effects, the country's already "stretched" military capacity is being put to the test, it said. "[National Security and the Threat of Climate Change](#)," written by 12 retired military leaders and published by the Center for Naval Analyses, a national security analysis nonprofit, said the U.S. armed forces should create a 30- to 40-year plan to address the risks... Unlike traditional national security concerns, climate change has the potential to create multiple chronic conditions occurring simultaneously around the world, the report said. It called climate change's projected impact on water, food and energy security "profound." [Al Jazeera](#)

Developers file \$37 million federal suit over Fort Detrick contamination

10 May - The would-be developers of a residential neighborhood in Frederick are suing the federal government over alleged groundwater contamination from neighboring Fort Detrick. Waverley View Investors LLC, which owns 92 acres near the long-standing center for biological research, says "the U.S. Army's negligence in its chemical handling and disposal practices" dating back decades has led to levels of trichloroethylene of up to 42 times the federal maximum contaminant level. [Baltimore Sun](#)

Hospitalizations among members of the active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2013

April 2014 - In 2013, there were 77,790 records of hospitalizations of active component members of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard; 37% of the hospitalizations were in non-military facilities... The annual hospitalization rate (all causes) for 2013 was the lowest rate reported within the last 10 years... As in prior years, in 2013 three diagnostic categories accounted for more than half (54.6%) of all hospitalizations of active component members: mental disorders (23.2%), pregnancy- and delivery-related conditions (20.7%), and injuries and poisonings (10.7%). Similar to 2009 and 2011, in 2013 there were more hospitalizations for mental disorders than for any other major diagnostic category (per the ICD-9-CM). [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#) (page 8)

Mind-controlled robotic arm wins FDA nod

9 May - The FDA Friday approved marketing of the first powered prosthetic arm that the user can control with his or her thoughts. Made by New Hampshire-based DEKA Integrated Solutions, the device detects and translates electromyographic activity in nearby muscles -- which the user can consciously control -- into signals that direct specific movements and actions in the prosthetic arm. It's the same size and weight as a normal adult arm and is capable of 10 different powered movements, according to the FDA. Approval was based primarily on a trial in 36 participants who were patients in the Veterans Affairs medical system. "The study found that approximately 90% of study participants were able to perform activities with the DEKA Arm System that they were not able to perform with their current prosthesis, such as using keys and locks, preparing food, feeding oneself, using zippers, and brushing and combing hair," the FDA said. [MedPage Today](#)

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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Obama asked to create commission to investigate VA

13 May - The Obama administration was asked Tuesday to set up a special, bipartisan commission to investigate accumulating allegations of health care delays at VA hospitals, dozens of the cases linked to findings or allegations of patient deaths... The VA has recently come under intense pressure over charges or findings that veterans have waited months to be seen by a doctor. In dozens of cases in recent years, some died before treatment was provided. Earlier this year, the VA said its own internal review found 23 veterans deaths in the last three to four years that were linked to delays in cancer screenings. [Military Times](#)

Smartphone app aids victims of sexual assault

13 May - U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command recently developed a "We Care" app that can be used by victims of sexual assault, someone who witnesses sexual harassment or assault, and those in need of suicide prevention help. "The app is aimed at empowering victims and bystanders to get help, intervene, and support those impacted by Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault or suicide," said Ellen Helmerson, in the Office of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command... The app, designed for Soldiers at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., has buttons for the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, DOD Safe Helpline, post chaplain, post medical treatment facility, and the SHARP hotlines for both Fort Eustis and Langley Air Force Base. The best thing about the app, Helmerson said, is you just push the button to get help. No dialing is involved. Besides that, it's free. [Army.mil](#)

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GLOBAL

Alcohol-related deaths hit 3.3 million in 2012



13 May - About 3.3 million people worldwide died from causes related to drinking alcohol in 2012, according to a new report by the World Health Organization. Alcohol consumption can lead to addiction and increase peoples risk of developing more than 200 diseases, including liver cirrhosis and some cancers, according to the report

released May 12. "We found that worldwide about 16 percent of drinkers engage in heavy episodic drinking often referred to as binge drinking which is the most harmful to health," said Dr. Shekhar Saxena, director for mental health and substance abuse at WHO. [Fox News](#)

Doctors debate whether screening for domestic abuse helps stop it

14 May - Domestic violence affects a third of women worldwide, according to the World Health Organization. In many cases nobody knows of the suffering, and victims aren't able

to get help in time. That's why in many countries, including the U.S., there's been a push to make screening for domestic violence a routine part of doctor visits. Last year, the influential U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommended that clinicians ask all women of childbearing age whether they're being abused... But an analysis published Monday in BMJ, formerly the British Medical Journal, suggests such generalized screenings may not be helping much. A review of 11 studies involving 13,027 women in wealthy countries found that screening questions did help doctors identify more than twice as many patients who were suffering from abuse. But routine screenings didn't necessarily help those women get the follow-up support they needed, researchers found. [NPR](#)

Measles virus used to put woman's cancer into remission

15 May - A woman with an incurable cancer is now in remission, thanks, doctors say, to a highly concentrated dose of the measles virus. For 10 years, Stacy Erholtz, 49, battled multiple myeloma, a deadly cancer of the blood. Doctors at the Mayo Clinic say she had received every type of chemotherapy drug available for her cancer and had undergone two stem cell transplants, only to relapse time and again. Then researchers gave her and five other multiple myeloma patients a dose of a highly concentrated, lab-engineered measles virus similar to the measles vaccine... Mayo Clinic scientists say thousands of cancer patients have been treated with viruses, but this is the first case of a patient with a cancer that had spread throughout the body going into remission. [CNN](#)

Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – update

15 May - The following cases of laboratory confirmed Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) have been reported:

Netherlands - On 14 May 2014, the National IHR Focal Point for the Netherlands notified WHO of the first laboratory confirmed case of MERS-CoV infection in the Netherlands. The patient is a 70 year-old male citizen of the Netherlands, with travel history to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between 26 April 2014 and 10 May 2014.

United States of America - On 12 May 2014, the United States IHR National Focal Point reported the second laboratory confirmed MERS-CoV infection in the United States in a male health-care worker in his 40s, who lives and works in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

United Arab Emirates - On 11 May 2014, the National IHR Focal Point of the United Arab Emirates reported nine additional MERS-CoV cases residing in Abu Dhabi. Two are UAE nationals, one is an Omani national, and six are of different nationalities but residing in Abu Dhabi.

Jordan - On 11 May 2014, the National IHR Focal Point for Jordan reported to WHO an additional case of MERS-CoV.

Lebanon - On 8 May, 2014, the National IHR Focal Point (NFP) of Lebanon reported the first laboratory-confirmed case of MERS-CoV infection.

Based on the current situation and available information, WHO encourages all Member States to continue their surveillance for severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) and to carefully review any unusual patterns. [WHO](#)

Q fever and rheumatoid arthritis

8 May - Patients with [rheumatoid arthritis] who were being treated with tumor necrosis factor inhibitors during a large outbreak of Q fever in the Netherlands between 2007 and 2010 had no greater likelihood of becoming infected than were patients not receiving these biologic agents, Dutch researchers reported. [MedPage Today](#) (second item)

Report links mucormycosis outbreak to hospital linens

13 May - A report in the May issue of the *Paediatric Infectious Disease Journal* has linked hospital linens to an outbreak of mucormycosis that resulted in five deaths at a paediatric hospital, 2008 - 2009... An abstract of the journal concluded: "Hospital linens should be laundered, packaged, shipped and stored in a manner that minimises exposure to environmental contaminants." Following the journal's publication and New York Times story, Gregory Gicewicz, president of the Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council (HLAC) said: "This report again reinforces the need for laundry processing standards that are patient-safety focussed and have been developed based on federal regulations and guidelines as well as best industry practices." He added: "Hospitals, nursing homes and all healthcare facilities should demand it." [Laundry and Cleaning News International](#)

WHO calls for stronger focus on adolescent health

14 May - WHO's "Health for the world's adolescents" report reveals that depression is the predominant cause of illness and disability for both boys and girls aged 10 to 19 years. The top 3 causes of adolescent deaths globally are road traffic injuries, HIV/AIDS, and suicide. Worldwide, an estimated 1.3 million adolescents died in 2012. [WHO](#)

WHO statement on the Fifth Meeting of the IHR Emergency Committee concerning MERS-CoV

14 May - The fifth meeting... concerning Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) was held... 13 May 2014... [The] Committee indicated that the seriousness of the situation had increased in terms of public health impact, but that there is no evidence of sustained human-to-human transmission. As a result of their deliberations, the Committee concluded that the conditions for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) have not yet been met. However, the Committee emphasized that its concern about the situation had significantly increased. Their concerns centred on the recent sharp rise in cases; systemic weaknesses in infection prevention and control, as well as gaps in critical information; and possible exportation of cases to especially vulnerable countries. [WHO](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 18 (April 27-May 3, 2014), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 3,692 specimens tested and reported during week 18, 460 (12.5%) 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.
- **Influenza-associated Hospitalizations:** A season-cumulative rate of 35.4 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported.

[FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

During Weeks 17 & 18, a total of 55 specimens were collected and received from 24 locations. Results were finalized for 41 specimens from 20 locations. For specimens collected during Week 17, there were four influenza B identified. During Week 18, there were three influenza B specimens identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

For week 18/2014:

- Low intensity of influenza activity with sporadic cases or no geographic spread was reported by 24 reporting countries
- Of 114 sentinel specimens tested across 17 countries, six (5%) were positive for influenza A virus.
- Fifteen hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported, nine of which were admitted to intensive care units.

Overall, the influenza activity is low and declining in reporting countries.

[Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week 18 ending 3 May 2014:

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- *C. pneumoniae* found in recent FRI and pneumonia cases at Ft. Leonard Wood
- FRI surveillance at eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were moderately elevated at Lackland Air Force Base. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

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

15 May - On 12 May 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of five additional laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus... The overall risk assessment has not changed. [WHO](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Brazil confirms second case of atypical mad cow disease

10 May - Brazil has confirmed a second case of atypical mad cow disease, a year after several countries banned Brazilian beef imports when a similar case of the disease was confirmed. The agriculture ministry said late Friday that a lab in Weybridge, England approved by the World Animal Health Organization confirmed it was a spontaneous case of atypical bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease, with no link to contaminated feed. The 12-year-old cow found dead in March in a slaughterhouse in Mato Grosso state was born and never left the same farm where cattle are fed by pasture grazing and mineral salts, and not feed, according to a ministry statement. Classical cases of mad cow are caused when cattle are fed brain or spinal tissue of other ruminants, which is now forbidden in nearly all beef producing countries, including Brazil. [Reuters](#)

UK study finds same MRSA strains in humans, pets

13 May - The same strains of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) circulate in both humans and pets without undergoing host adaptation, according to a study today in *mBio*, published by the American Society for Microbiology (ASM). UK researchers sequenced the genomes of 46 MRSA samples from cats and dogs collected from 2003 to 2007 from two large veterinary hospitals and several smaller veterinary practices in the United Kingdom. The samples were found to be similar to human MRSA strains. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

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WELLNESS

'Arrogance' of ignoring need for sleep



12 May - Society has become "supremely arrogant" in ignoring the importance of sleep, leading researchers have told the BBC's Day of the Body Clock. Scientists from Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Manchester and Surrey universities warn cutting sleep is leading to "serious health problems". They say people and governments need to take the problem seriously. Cancer, heart disease, type-2 diabetes, infections and obesity have all been linked to reduced sleep. The body clock drives huge changes in the human body. It alters alertness, mood, physical strength and even the risk of a heart attack in a daily rhythm. [BBC News](#)

Constipation, celiac disease, gastroparesis

11 May - A remote-controlled, orally administered vibrating capsule passed a preliminary clinical study as a treatment for chronic constipation, as the number of spontaneous bowel movements increased significantly with few adverse events. [MedPage Today](#)

Drugs to aid alcoholics see little use, study finds

13 May - Two medications could help tens of thousands of alcoholics quit drinking, yet the drugs are rarely prescribed to patients, researchers reported on Tuesday. The medications, naltrexone and acamprosate, reduce cravings for alcohol by fine-tuning the brain's chemical reward system... Less than a third of all people with alcohol problems receive treatment of any kind, and less than 10 percent are prescribed medications... The researchers focused on a measure known as the "number needed to treat," an indicator of how many people need to take a pill for one person to be helped. The study found that to prevent one person from returning to drinking, the number needed to treat for acamprosate was 12; for naltrexone, the number was 20. [New York Times](#)

'Exercise snacks' may help control blood sugar



15 May - Short bursts of intense exercise before meals may help control blood sugar spikes better than one longer, less intense session, suggests a new small study. Researchers say these “exercise snacks” may be an effective way to improve blood sugar control among people with insulin resistance, a precursor to diabetes. “Exercise spread across the day reduces sedentary time, and spread before meals reduces blood glucose spikes after meals,” said lead author Monique Francois. [Reuters](#)

Metabolic syndrome: Genetic trigger?

14 May - Genetic mutations causing an inherited form of the metabolic syndrome have been found, with implications for drug development across diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. A substitution error in the gene DYRK1B tracked exactly with early-onset coronary artery disease, abdominal obesity, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes running in three large families in Iran, Arya Mani, MD, of Yale, and colleagues found... Approximately 3% to 4% of the population may carry these mutations impacting metabolic syndrome risk, Mani predicted, although there does appear to be an interaction with environment. [MedPage Today](#)

New questions about polio shots

9 May – Question: Is there any danger in getting a second polio inoculation if I cannot remember if I got one many years ago (1950s, postwar Japan)?

Answer: No. There is no harm in receiving a booster of the polio vaccine. In the United States, widespread polio vaccinations began in the 1950s. After initial campaigns with a killed virus given by injection, the authorities switched to using a weakened live form of the virus given orally. That’s the method still used today in the developing world... But the oral form is no longer given in the United States because polio is not a threat here anymore, and because there is a one-in-a-million chance that even a weak, live virus can mutate to become harmful again. [New York Times](#)

Single episode of binge drinking linked to gut leakage and immune system effects

14 May - A single alcohol binge can cause bacteria to leak from the gut and increase levels of bacterial toxins in the blood, according to a study funded by the National Institutes of Health. Increased levels of these bacterial toxins, called endotoxins, were shown to affect the immune system, with the body producing more immune cells involved in fever, inflammation, and tissue destruction. Binge drinking is defined by NIAAA as a pattern of drinking alcohol that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08g/dL or above. For a typical adult, this pattern corresponds to consuming five or more drinks for men, or four or more drinks for women, in about two hours. [NIH](#)

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USAFRICOM

Africa: A simple theory, and a proposal, on H.I.V.

10 May - While around the world a vast majority of AIDS victims are men, Africa has long been the glaring exception: Nearly 60 percent are women. And while there are many theories, no one has been able to prove one. In a modest public health clinic behind a gas station here in South Africa's rural KwaZulu/Natal Province, a team of Norwegian infectious disease specialists think they may have found a new explanation. It is far too soon to say whether they are right. But even skeptics say the explanation is biologically plausible. And if it is proved correct, a low-cost solution has the potential to prevent thousands of infections every year. The Norwegian team believes that African women are more vulnerable to H.I.V. because of a chronic, undiagnosed parasitic disease: genital schistosomiasis. [New York Times](#)

AFRICOM chief to aid search for Nigerian schoolgirls

13 May - The commander of US forces in Africa held talks Tuesday in Nigeria as Washington sought to help the government in Abuja trace more than 200 schoolgirls kidnapped by Islamist militants. Gen. David Rodriguez, head of US Africa Command, flew to Nigeria on Monday as the United States confirmed it was flying manned surveillance aircraft over the country and sharing commercial satellite imagery to aid the hunt for the abducted girls. The talks are focused in part on forging an agreement that will enable the United States to share intelligence with Nigeria from spy planes and other sources, officials said Tuesday... The United States already has deployed a team of 30 specialists from different agencies, including 16 military personnel, to help in the search for the kidnapped schoolgirls. [Defense News](#)

Malawi: Between life and death

12 May - ...Until recently, Malawi had the highest rate of maternal mortality in the world for a non-conflict country. But it has achieved a dramatic turnaround towards the 2015 global MDG targets. First, in 2008 the government controversially banned traditional birth attendants who had been looking after pregnant women in rural villages. Their lack of medical training often left them unequipped to deal with birthing complications. So the government asked all women to give birth in hospitals. Health outreach workers now educate and help mothers in these areas by identifying them and giving them access to a "secret mother", a person who can monitor their pregnancies and make sure they have as much information as possible before they give birth... The numbers are improving.

[Al Jazeera](#)

West Africa: Ebola virus disease – update, 15 May 2014

Guinea - As of 18:00 on 12 May 2014, the Ministry of Health (MOH) of Guinea has reported a cumulative total of 248 clinical cases of Ebola virus disease (EVD), including 171 deaths. Since the last update of 9 May 2014, there have been five new cases confirmed by ebolavirus PCR and no new deaths among the confirmed cases.

Liberia and Sierra Leone - There have been no new alerts in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. Liberia is preparing to host a cross-border meeting with Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone and surveillance activities have been enhanced in districts bordering Guinea. [WHO](#)

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USCENTCOM

Pakistan: Departing travelers must get polio vaccine

13 May - As of June 1, Pakistan will require everyone leaving the country to get a polio vaccination, the Health Ministry said Tuesday. The World Health Organization declared the spread of polio an international public health emergency this month and identified Pakistan, Syria and Cameroon as having allowed the virus to spread beyond their borders. Pakistani officials said all provinces had been given the necessary guidance and materials to set up special counters at hospitals and airports for polio vaccination and certification. [New York Times](#)

Syria: Health care workers under attack, doctors say

14 May - Syrian government forces in the country's civil war have systematically attacked doctors and other medical workers in rebel-held areas and are responsible for 90percent of the confirmed assaults on health care facilities in the country, Physicians for Human Rights, a leading advocacy group, said in a report released on Wednesday. While the United Nations and a number of rights organizations have documented the collapse of Syria's health care system because of the war — which has led to an acute shortage of doctors and an increase in preventable diseases, including the reappearance of scourges like polio — the report, which is essentially an annotated map, represents what its creators called the most comprehensive look at attacks on medical-aid providers, hospitals and clinics since the war began. [New York Times](#)

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Europeans are getting fatter, just like Americans



9 May – Ireland is predicted to become the fattest country in Europe by 2030, according to a study released by the World Health Organization and the UK Health Forum. As many as 90 percent of Irish men and 84 percent of Irish women are projected to be classified as overweight or obese by then. Blame goes to the usual culprits: unhealthy diets high in sugar and fats, and a lack of exercise. The study defines overweight as a body mass index (BMI) of 25 (169 to 202 pounds for a 5' 9" adult, for example) and obese as a BMI of 30 (over 203 pounds for that height). The picture isn't a whole lot prettier for the rest of Europe. The study, which used a vast quantity of BMI measurements from around the Continent and computer modeling to predict trends, show rises in obesity rates across nearly all 53 Eurozone countries. [NPR](#)

Gaza water crisis worsens



12 May - The 1.7 million Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip are facing a growing water shortage. Currently, 90 percent of Gaza's main water supply is unfit for drinking, and unsuitable even for agricultural use. The besieged territory's main water supply, the coastal aquifer, is over-pumped, and a crippling Egyptian-Israeli blockade on Gaza has exacerbated the problem. While water treatment plants exist in Gaza, they are under-developed, and frequent fuel shortages force them to regularly halt operations. As a result, local authorities are now pumping 90 million cubic litres of partially-treated sewage into the Mediterranean sea off the Gaza coast on daily basis. The untreated sewage has infiltrated Gaza's groundwater, contaminating the water supply, which now contains high chloride and nitrate levels. The Palestinian Ministry of Health has urged Palestinians in Gaza to boil water before they drink it or use it for cooking. An estimated 26 percent of diseases in Gaza are water related. [Al Jazeera](#)

Germany: Health officials report 12 Q fever infections

12 May - Twelve people in Sulzfeld, Germany, have contracted Q fever this year, according to a Bavarian news story translated and posted by ProMED, the news service of the International Society for Infectious Diseases. Half of the patients required hospitalization from the disease, which is caused by the bacterium *Coxiella burnetii*, which is most commonly found in sheep, goats, and cattle. Some had lung infections... Incubation in humans is typically 2 to 3 weeks, so more infections may be confirmed, the report said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

Turkey: Angry Turks demand answers after mine disaster



14 May - As hopes began to fade for hundreds of coal miners still trapped underground in a hellish explosion, antigovernment protests broke out across the country on Wednesday while victims' families demanded answers in what is emerging as perhaps the worst industrial accident in the country's history... More than 200 miners were thought to be underground still, after an explosion in a power distribution unit on Tuesday afternoon set off a fire that was still burning on Wednesday. The death toll was the highest seen in a Turkish mining disaster, surpassing the 263 workers who died in a gas explosion at a mine near Zonguldak on the Black Sea in 1992. [New York Times](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Birth defect in some rural Washington state babies stumps scientists

14 May - An alarming number of babies in a rural swath of central Washington state over the last four years have been born with a rare and fatal defect that leaves them without part of their brain and skull, and scientists are stumped. In a three-county area that includes the city of Yakima, 26 babies born between 2010 and 2013 suffered from anencephaly, which occurs early in pregnancy when the fetal neural tube does not close, according to Juliet VanEenwyk, an epidemiologist with the Washington State Department of Health. The number of cases is four times the national average, VanEenwyk said, and health officials haven't been able to work out the cause. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Cervical cancer rate higher than previously thought, especially among older and black women

13 May - Cervical cancer occurrence rates in American women, particularly in older women and in black women, may be significantly higher than was previously believed, a new study indicates. Women over the age of 65 -- the age at which women are normally told they can stop regular screening -- were found to have high rates of occurrence, the study in the American Cancer Society's journal *Cancer* said. [Tech Times](#)

U.S.: First confirmed cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection in the United States

16 May - Since mid-March 2014, the frequency with which cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection have been reported has increased, with the majority of recent cases reported from Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE)... The first case of MERS in the United States, identified in a traveler recently returned from Saudi Arabia, was reported to CDC by the Indiana State Department of Health on May 1, 2014, and confirmed by CDC on May 2. A second imported case of MERS in the United States, identified in a traveler from Saudi Arabia having no connection with the first case, was reported to CDC by the Florida Department of Health on May 11, 2014...

As of May 12, 2014, 536 laboratory-confirmed cases of MERS-CoV infection have been reported by WHO. This includes 145 deaths. All reported cases have been directly or indirectly linked through travel or residence to seven countries: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, Kuwait, and Yemen. Public health investigations are ongoing to determine the reason for the increase in cases.

The median age of persons with laboratory-confirmed MERS-CoV infection is 49 years (range = <1–94 years); 346 (65%) cases are in males, and 104 (19%) occurred in health-care workers. Although 62% of cases involved severe respiratory illness requiring hospitalization, 32 (5%) occurred in persons who had mild symptoms or illness not requiring hospitalization and 110 (21%) were asymptomatic, generally as a result of contact investigations. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Health, United States, 2013 includes special section on prescription drugs

14 May - About half of all Americans reported taking one or more prescription drugs in the past 30 days during 2007-2010, and 1 in 10 took five or more, according to Health, United States, 2013, the government's annual, comprehensive report on the nation's health... This year's report includes a special section on prescription drugs. Key findings include:

- About half of all Americans in 2007-2010 reported taking one or more prescription drugs in the past 30 days. Use increased with age; 1 in 4 children took one or more prescription drugs in the past 30 days compared to 9 in 10 adults aged 65 and over.
- Cardiovascular agents (used to treat high blood pressure, heart disease or kidney disease) and cholesterol-lowering drugs were two of the most commonly used classes of prescription drugs among adults aged 18-64 years and 65 and over in 2007-2010.

[CDC](#)

U.S.: If 'clean,' big data can improve U.S. health care

14 May - A growing body of research has found that information Americans share on social media websites about their health and lifestyle is more up to date and accurate than what they share with doctors, employers, insurance companies and government agencies... By combining the Facebook data with medical-record analysis, predictions for some health outcomes — such as whether an infant would have low birth weight or whether an adult would be in general poor health — were two to four times more accurate than those based on medical or socio-economic data alone, according to the study done by New York-based MKTG. "The power of 'Likes' is that they represent behavior," wrote Steve Gittelman, a veteran of online market research. [USA Today](#)

U.S.: Ohio measles outbreak hits 73 cases as US totals pile up

13 May - A measles outbreak in Ohio has reached 73 cases—the largest state outbreak since 1996—and has helped spur US cases to some of their highest levels in recent years, according to data from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Ohio outbreak began in March and involves patients from 1 to 52 years old, with about even numbers male and female, according to an ODH update today. Five patients have required hospitalization. Forty-five of the cases have been in Knox County, while Ashland County has recorded the second-highest total, at 14. All of the patients are Amish, according to a USA Today story published today. The outbreak began after Amish missionaries returned from the Philippines, which is experiencing a large, ongoing measles outbreak. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

U.S.: Report highlights child labor on U.S. tobacco farms

14 May - An international rights group is pushing the federal government and the tobacco industry to take further steps to protect children working on U.S. tobacco farms. A report released Wednesday by Human Rights Watch claims that children as young as 7 are sometimes working long hours in fields harvesting nicotine- and pesticide-laced tobacco leaves under sometimes hazardous conditions. Most of what the group documented is legal, but it wants cigarette makers to push for safety on farms from which they buy tobacco. Human Rights Watch details findings from interviews with more than 140 children working on farms in North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia, where a majority of the country's tobacco is grown. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Top 5 neglected parasitic infections in the U.S.

9 May - The CDC is taking aim at five neglected parasitic infections in the U.S. based on the number of people affected, illness severity, and the ability to prevent and treat the illnesses. The infections, which are reviewed in the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, include:

- Chagas disease, caused by *Trypanosoma cruzi*; more than 300,000 Americans are

infected with *T. cruzi*.

- cysticercosis, caused by the larval cysts of the tapeworm *Taenia solium* and responsible for 1000 hospitalizations annually.
- toxocariasis, caused by *Toxocara* roundworms; an estimated 14% of people in the U.S. have been exposed to the parasites.
- toxoplasmosis, caused by *Toxoplasma gondii*, which are chronically infecting 60 million Americans.
- trichomoniasis, caused by *Trichomonas vaginalis*; some 3.7 million people in this country may have this sexually transmitted infection.

CDC editorialists write that immediate interventions to prevent infections include deworming dogs and cats, picking up pet feces immediately, covering sandboxes to lower the risk for contamination with animal feces, and cooking meat thoroughly. The articles also cover clinical manifestations. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

U.S.: Valley fever fungus causes concern in E. Oregon

13 May - ...A fungus that causes the potentially fatal illness known as valley fever has been found in southeastern Washington state, and health officials are trying to determine if it has spread to Oregon. Three cases of valley fever were diagnosed in Washington state from 2010-11 in Benton, Franklin and Walla Walla counties in Washington state. Soil samples taken there recently tested positive for the fungus, or *Coccidioides*, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention... In Oregon, public health officials are taking soil samples from Umatilla County to test for the fungus, which is normally found in the southwest United States and parts of Mexico, Central America and South America. [Capital Press](#)

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USPACOM

Fiji battling more than 25,000 dengue fever cases

15 May - Fiji health authorities are battling still battling a major epidemic of dengue fever that is concentrated on the main island of Viti Levu. There are 25,300 cases of dengue that has claimed 15 lives since last October. The National Advisor for Communicable Disease in the Fiji Ministry of Health, Dr Mike Kama says the epidemic has been controlled through the work of the health department, international donors and local communities. [ABC Radio Australia](#)

India: Ancient enemy

13 May - Leprosy in India still persists, despite being officially 'eliminated' in 2005. Stigma remains a huge obstacle to early diagnosis and treatment of this curable disease. Health hero Rajni Kant Singh has been working as a state coordinator for a leprosy NGO for many years. He laments the fact that since leprosy was declared 'eliminated' in India in 2005 it has slipped off the agenda and resources have dried up. Yet the disease persists in India, with some 130,000 new cases a year. These patients need help with diagnosis, treatment and often social and psychological support too... Early diagnosis and multi-drug treatment can cure leprosy and prevent disability but stigma still leads to people ignoring symptoms and leaving the bacteria to attack in stages, ultimately becoming untreatable. [Al Jazeera](#)

Myanmar patients in India



14 May - A doddering healthcare system pushes many from Myanmar to cross the Indian border into the town Moreh in the northeastern state of Manipur, to seek testing and treatment. Most patients suffer from drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB) and are HIV positive... The drug-resistant TB patients stay six months to two years on the Indian side to complete the arduous treatment, which includes very strong drugs and many side effects... Sometimes Indians cross the border into Myanmar to seek treatment in Tamu, as there is no blood transfusion available in the town of Moreh. Pregnant Manipuri women say they would rather deliver babies at the hospital in Tamu than travel five hours to Imphal, the capital of the Indian state. [Al Jazeera](#)

Nepal: Jaundice outbreak - experts blame contaminated water

12 May - Consumption of water contaminated with faecal coliform is the major reason behind outbreak of jaundice that has so far claimed 10 lives in Biratnagar, according to experts. Laboratory tests of samples sent from the jaundice affected area show that more than 90 percent of the patients are suffering from hepatitis E, a liver infection caused by a virus. The test reports suggested the waterborne infection was caused by consumption of contaminated water. A team of experts from Kathmandu, which inspected the affected area this week, said the city lacked a proper drainage system and sewerage could easily seep into the drinking water mains which need an immediate overhaul. Over 1,200 people have been affected since the outbreak was reported three weeks ago. [eKantipur](#)

U.S., South Korean health experts team up to contain North Korean pandemic risk



14 May - ...In 2010, a report from Amnesty International painted a grim picture of North Korea's crumbling health care system, with witnesses and health care workers recounting barely-functioning hospitals, multiple medication shortages and epidemics caused by malnutrition... Given the country's extreme medical

deficiencies, U.S. military officials soon grew concerned over the possibility of a lethal pathogen originating within North Korea, as the nation's health care officials would be nearly powerless to stop the spread of infection. And if such an illness were to continue to expand, a global pandemic would likely occur. In order to prevent such a catastrophic event, the U.S. Army launched in October the Joint United States Forces Korea Portal and Integrated Threat Recognition program – also known as JUPITR. A collaboration between American and South Korean doctors, JUPITR utilizes advanced technologies to monitor the border between North and South Korea for potential disease agents that could become serious health hazards. [Fox News](#)

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Haiti chikungunya outbreak spikes to over 1,500 cases

13 May - According to Ronald Singer, a spokesman for Haiti's health ministry, at least 1,529 cases of the chikungunya virus have been confirmed. Of these, about 900 of them, were found in the west department, where the capital of Port-au-Prince is located. Another 300 cases were confirmed in northwestern Haiti, the Associated Press reports. This is up dramatically from the 14 confirmed cases just less than a week ago. [Global Dispatch](#)

Haitian orphan gets nation's first 3-D printer prosthesis



12 May - A 12-year-old orphan boy handicapped from birth became the first recipient of a 3-D printer prosthesis in Haiti last month, thanks to a British-born software engineer in California. Born without fingers on either hand, Stevenson Joseph had little hope of treatment in a country where programs for the disabled are rare apart from a handful of charities. Now the 3-D prosthesis fitted to his left hand has given him a whole new range of dexterity, including being able to play catch with his friends for the first time and maybe

even enabling him to write one day, according to staff at the home for disabled orphans where he lives... Back in California, [John] Marshall read an article about Richard van As, a South African man who developed a plastic prosthetic "Robohand" using a 3-D printer after losing his fingers in an woodwork accident in 2011. Marshall and van As worked for months to design a 3-D print prosthesis for the Haitian boy. [Reuters](#)

Venezuela: Dengue fever in Caracas up 374% so far this year

14 May - The number of cases of dengue fever in the first 18 weeks of the year has jumped by 766 with respect to the same period in Caracas in 2013. The information was disclosed by the Epidemic Report issued by the Health Ministry. As many as 205 cases were reported during such period in 2013. In Caracas, the accrued figure during the same period this year amounted to 971 cases. [El Universal](#)

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

