

18 April 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Post-traumatic growth--thriving through life's crises

Professionals have become very skilled in diagnosing, treating, and sometimes even preventing mental disorders; however, focus on disease and injury alone may blind us to hidden growth opportunities.

Many experiencing crises and adversity are able to resolve and grow from these events, drawing upon internal strengths previously unrecognized. There is an advantage to not seeing yourself as traumatized.



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- South Korea: Nearly 300, mostly teens, missing after South Korean ferry sinks
- Tonga: Ten thousand infected in Tonga's first chikungunya outbreak
- Vietnam: Measles-related death toll rises to 108 in 3 large hospitals in Vietnam's capital alone

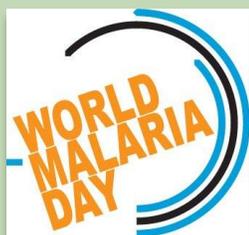
USSOUTHCOM

- Chikungunya cases in the Caribbean approach 25,000
- Chile surveys damage from massive blaze
- Guatemala makes progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS

April 25th is World Malaria Day

World Malaria Day is a chance to shine a spotlight on the global effort to control malaria. Each year, Roll Back Malaria (RBM) partner organisations unite around a common World Malaria Day theme.

Invest in the future: defeat malaria is a three-year theme partners chose for the period of 2013-2015 to call attention to the need to reach the 2015 Millennium Development Goals and defeat malaria in the future.



U.S. MILITARY

A loyal soldier doesn't deserve this

12 April - ...Iraq is but a fading memory for most Americans, and Afghanistan may soon recede as well. But for countless others like Mike and Leigh Anna, the war continues and will for decades to come. The Department of Veterans Affairs says that it has made progress in reducing its backlog in processing disability compensation claims, but critics say that is because of the way it defines the backlog — and many hundreds of thousands of veterans are still awaiting decisions. Likewise, the V.A. has improved suicide prevention work, but, by all accounts, it's not enough, so that veterans are dying unnecessarily... [Mike] was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. (Of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who have been treated by the V.A., 55 percent have been diagnosed with a mental disorder.) [New York Times](#)

Anonymous online counseling for vets shows early success

14 April - When they contracted with the Vets Prevail program late last year, Veterans Affairs Department officials hoped the Web-based mental health resource could enroll about 2,200 new veterans in its anonymous counseling over a year. The program reached that number in a little more than three months. "We think that shows the real need for something like this," said Richard Gengler, founder of Prevail Health Solutions, which runs the program. "A lot of the time, veterans are scared away from getting any help because of the stigma. But this is a way to reach them and help them." In recent years, VA officials have put extra effort into outreach efforts for the millions of veterans who don't seek help from the department. Last year, nearly 9 million veterans — roughly 40 percent of the U.S. veteran population — used some type of VA health service. But officials believe that even more could benefit, especially in the realm of mental health. [Military Times](#)

Lower obesity rate during residence at high altitude among a military population with frequent migration

16 April – We sought to evaluate whether residence at high altitude is associated with the development of obesity among those at increased risk of becoming obese. Obesity, a leading global health priority, is often refractory to care. A potentially novel intervention is hypoxia, which has demonstrated positive long-term metabolic effects in rats. Whether or not high altitude residence confers benefit in humans, however, remains unknown... We found service members had a lower hazard ratio (HR) of incident obesity diagnosis if stationed at high altitude as compared to low altitude... In conclusion, high altitude residence predicts lower rates of new obesity diagnoses among overweight service members in the U.S. Army and Air Force. [PLOS ONE](#)

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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Update: Heat injuries, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2013

The number of active component service members treated for heat stroke in 2013 (n=324) was the lowest since 2010 (n=321). Incidence rates of heat stroke were higher among males, those younger than 20 years of age, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Marine Corps and Army members, recruit trainees, and service members in combat-specific occupations, compared to their respective counterparts. Fewer service members were treated for “other heat injuries” in 2013 (n=1,701) than in any other year of the 5-year surveillance period. In addition, there were fewer reportable medical events, ambulatory encounters, and hospitalizations for “other heat injuries” in 2013 than in any of the prior 4 years. The incidence rate of “other heat injuries” was higher among females than males and 304 percent higher among recruit trainees than among other enlisted members or officers. During 2009-2013, a total of 909 heat injury events occurred in Iraq/Afghanistan; 6.4 percent (n=58) of those events were due to heat stroke. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#) (page 10)

U.S. unprepared for military mental-health caseload, senator says

14 April - The Army's mental health caseload has doubled since 2007, and Sen. Dick Durbin says the United States is not “up to that challenge” that “may be with us for some time.” “What we are learning,” the Illinois Democrat said in an interview, “is that the cost of war goes way beyond the end of conflict.” ...Congress and the Pentagon have been struggling to provide resources and focus to address the problem of mental health among military veterans. Army spending on mental health has gone from \$322.6 million in fiscal year 2013 to \$358.4 million in the current year, with just under \$375 million requested for next year. [Stars & Stripes](#)

Why are so many older veterans committing suicide?



13 April -...The stigma attached to Vietnam may have made some veterans reluctant to immediately seek the help they needed when they first returned from service, Tom Berger, executive director of the Vietnam Veterans of America national health council] said. "It's taken a long time for us to overcome that negative image," he said. A

study released last year by the VA recommends that the department increase its suicide-prevention measures for those who served in Vietnam. VA officials estimate that only one in five veterans who commit suicide were enrolled in VA health care. The VA's updated suicide information earlier this year showed a decrease in the suicide rate for middle-aged male veterans who use VA health care, compared with an increase for the same age group of veterans who don't. Robert Bossarte, who coauthored the VA study, said that despite initial

worries that older veterans wouldn't use the Veterans Crisis Line, the opposite has proven true. [National Journal](#)

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GLOBAL

Animal study yields promising results for measles drug

16 April - Measles vaccination gaps have stalled efforts to further reduce the burden of the disease, but early results from animal tests suggest that health departments may someday have an oral drug to help knock down outbreaks. The encouraging findings come at a time when health officials in many countries scramble to extinguish outbreaks, most recently in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, California, New York City, and even a cruise ship in Europe... [D]eaths from measles dropped in number but have plateaued at around 150,000 per year since about 2007 because of vaccine coverage gaps—access problems in the developing world and parental suspicions about vaccines in developed nations... The group envisions that the shelf-stable drug could be stockpiled and used to stem measles outbreaks in settings where vaccination rates fall below critical thresholds. [CIDRAP](#)

For diabetics, health risks fall sharply

16 April - Federal researchers on Wednesday reported the first broad national picture of progress against some of the most devastating complications of diabetes, which affects millions of Americans, finding that rates of heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure and amputations fell sharply over the past two decades. The biggest declines were in the rates of heart attacks and deaths from high blood sugar, which dropped by more than 60 percent from 1990 to 2010, the period studied. While researchers had had patchy indications that outcomes were improving for diabetic patients in recent years, the study, published in The New England Journal of Medicine, documents startling gains [New York Times](#)

How a person can recover from Ebola

11 April - At least eight Ebola patients in Guinea have beaten the odds. They have recovered and been sent home. In past outbreaks, the death rate has been as high as 90 percent. In Guinea so far, about 60 percent of the 157 suspected cases have ended in death. The first seven to 10 days after infection is the "peak of the illness," when people are most likely to die, says Barbara Knust, an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. But if the body begins to produce antibodies to fight off the infection, then there's hope. Doctors on the scene think the treatment regimen may play a role in boosting survival odds. "It's hard to say conclusively that what we are able to give treatmentwise is causing that increased survival rate," says Tom Fletcher, an infectious diseases physician who is with the World Health Organization team in Guinea. "But we think interventions such

as intravenous fluids, IV antibiotics and paying attention to symptom control and nutrition are probably all important." Such care has not always been available to patients during past Ebola episodes. [NPR](#)

In a cloning first, scientists create stem cells from adults

17 April - Scientists have moved a step closer to the goal of creating stem cells perfectly matched to a patient's DNA in order to treat diseases, they announced on Thursday, creating patient-specific cell lines out of the skin cells of two adult men. The advance, described online in the journal *Cell Stem Cell*, is the first time researchers have achieved "therapeutic cloning" of adults. Technically called somatic-cell nuclear transfer, therapeutic cloning means producing embryonic cells genetically identical to a donor, usually for the purpose of using those cells to treat disease. [Reuters](#)

Malaysia and United Arab Emirates: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – update

17 April - On 17 April 2014, the Ministries of Health of Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) reported an additional 5 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). This is the first case with MERS-CoV infection in [Malaysia.] The Ministry of Health reported that so far no human-to-human transmission has been observed amongst close contacts and in health-care facilities in Malaysia... [In UAE, a] cluster of four health-care workers were identified through screening of contacts of a previously laboratory-confirmed case from Abu Dhabi who died on 10 April 2014. [WHO](#)

Pressure sensors to help prevent pain for amputees

14 April - Researchers have developed a new type of pressure sensor - dubbed a "second skin" - which they say could prevent dangerous sores. The technology is being developed initially for amputees who suffer rubbing against their artificial limbs. If the Southampton University work is successful the sensors may also be used for others at risk, such as wheelchair-users and those confined to bed... Pressure sensors are already used, but this Medical Research Council-backed project - in partnership with the prosthetics firm Blatchford - differs in that it is able to detect rubbing as well as downward pressure. This could make it better at detecting sores at an earlier stage. [BBC News](#)

Researchers identify novel vancomycin-resistant MRSA superbug in Brazil

17 April - ...The new superbug is part of a class of highly-resistant bacteria known as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA, which is a major cause of hospital and community-associated infections. The superbug has also acquired high levels of resistance to vancomycin, the most common and least expensive antibiotic used to treat severe MRSA infections worldwide. Most worrisome is that genomic analyses indicated that this novel

vancomycin-resistant MRSA superbug belongs to a genetic lineage that is commonly found outside hospitals (designated community-associated MRSA), said Arias, the report's senior author and an associate professor of medicine, microbiology and molecular genetics at the UTHealth Medical School. [Medical News](#)

Scientists grow viable vaginas from girls' own cells

11 April - Four young women born with abnormal or missing vaginas were implanted with lab-grown versions made from their own cells, the latest success in creating replacement organs that have so far included tracheas, bladders and urethras. Follow-up tests show the new vaginas are indistinguishable from the women's own tissue and have grown in size as the young women, who got the implants as teens, matured. Two of the four implant recipients, who were born with a working uterus but no vagina, now menstruate normally. It is not yet clear whether these women can bear children, but because they are menstruating, it suggests their ovaries are working, so it may be possible. [Al Jazeera](#)

Study: 72% of pre-vaccine oropharyngeal cancers positive for HPV

16 April - An analysis of oropharyngeal tumor tissue samples collected from patients before human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines were approved for US use showed a high prevalence of HPV and that almost two thirds of patients had HPV type 16 or 18, the strains covered in both US vaccines, according to a report today in *Emerging Infectious Diseases*. Researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) extracted HPV DNA from 557 samples collected from 1995 through 2005. They found that 72% were positive for HPV and 62% for HPV types 16 or 18... The prevalence of HPV 16 and 18, however, was lower in women (53%) than in men (66%), and lower in African-American patients (31%) compared with other racial or ethnic groups (68% to 80%). [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

With guns, suicide is the biggest problem

11 April - Every day, 88 people die from firearm-related injury; two-thirds of those deaths are suicides, a high proportion of which are committed by seniors and individuals living in rural areas, researchers reported here. "Mass shooting episodes are obviously horrible," Molly Cooke, MD, president of the American College of Physicians (ACP), told reporters in a press briefing. "But one of the points we make in the paper is that every day there are 88 firearms-related deaths." ...Cooke said that the researchers found that in cities, gun-related deaths were typically homicides, whereas in rural settings suicides were more often the situation. Cooke said isolation, combined with alcohol or other substance abuse and ready access to a gun, was a trifecta often seen in reports of suicide. [MedPage Today](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

- Northern Command - The percent of outpatient encounters due to influenza-like illness (ILI) or pneumonia and influenza (P&I) continued to decrease and was below baseline in week 14 (30 March – 05 April 2014) for service members and dependents.
- Southern Command - Among local nationals in Peru in weeks 13 and 14, 15 samples were tested and 7 tested positive for flu (3 A/H1, 4 B).
- Central Command - The percent of encounters that were ILI or P&I related remained low and was below baseline.
- Africa Command - There were no positive flu results among local nationals in Cameroon or Uganda in week 14.
- European Command - The percent of outpatient encounters due to ILI or P&I remained low in week 14 for service members and dependents and was at or below baseline.
- Pacific Command - The percent of outpatient encounters due to ILI or P&I remained stable and were at or below baseline in week 14 for service members and dependents.

[AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 14 (March 30-April 5, 2014), influenza activity continued to decrease in most regions of the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 5,127 specimens tested and reported during week 14 by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories, 685 (13.4%) 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: Three influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- Influenza-associated Hospitalizations: A season-cumulative rate of 32.4 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.6%, which is below the national baseline of 2.0%. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Weeks 13 & 14, a total of 108 specimens were collected and received from 35 locations. Results were finalized for 61 specimens from 24 locations. For specimens collected during Week 13, there were five influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 11 influenza A(H3N2), and six influenza B identified. For specimens collected during Week 14, there were two influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, two influenza A/not subtyped and nine influenza B identified.
- Cumulative results were finalized for 3,240 specimens from 85 locations. There were 1,015 specimens positive for influenza A (905 A(H1N1)pdm09, 92 A(H3N2), one A(H1N1)pdm09 & adenovirus, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & coronavirus, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & parainfluenza, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & RSV, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & rhinovirus/enterovirus, and 10 A/not subtyped). There were 78 specimens positive for influenza B (72 B/unknown lineage and six B/Yamagata). Other respiratory pathogens identified were 68 adenovirus, 32 *Chlamydomphila pneumoniae*, 212 coronavirus, 109 human metapneumovirus, 45 *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, 67 parainfluenza, 180 RSV, and 326 rhinovirus/enterovirus. To date, 144 non-influenza co-infections have been identified [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

For week 14/2014:

- Low intensity was reported by all reporting countries except UK (Northern Ireland) which reported medium intensity.
- Of the 404 sentinel specimens tested across 23 countries, 31% were positive for influenza virus. Of these, 95% were type A and 5% type B.
- Six countries reported 76 hospitalised, laboratory-confirmed influenza cases, 28 of which were admitted to intensive care units.

Overall, influenza activity is declining but influenza viruses were still detected in the vast majority of reporting countries. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 12 January 2014:

Influenza

- No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- Influenza activity is decreasing among NHRC surveillance populations.

[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

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

16 April - On 15 April 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of an additional laboratory-confirmed case of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus. The patient is a 30 year-old man from Hengyang City, Hunan Province. He became ill on 9 April, was admitted to a hospital on 13 April and is currently in a stable condition. [WHO](#)

Study notes H5N1 tweaks that boost airborne spread

14 April - In a controversial study published 2 years ago Dutch scientists described a lab-modified strain of H5N1 influenza virus that was capable of airborne transmission among ferrets. Now the same researchers say they have identified five specific mutations that gave the virus this ability, a claim that is renewing debate about the risks of conducting and publishing such experiments. [CIDRAP](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

FDA OK's ionizing radiation for crustaceans

11 April - In response to a petition from the National Fisheries Institute, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said today that it is allowing ionizing radiation on crustaceans like crab, shrimp, lobster, and crayfish to control foodborne pathogens and extend shelf life. The agency said it based its decision on a "rigorous safety assessment" that considered potential toxicity, the effect of irradiation on nutrients, and the potential microbiological risk. It also factored in previous evaluations of the safety of irradiating other foods, including poultry, meat, mollusks, lettuce, and spinach. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Military dog that saved patrol retires with honors



11 April - Staff Sgt. Shannon Hutto thought his bomb sniffing dog Eddie was just being lazy when he wouldn't move from a certain spot one hot day in Afghanistan in 2012.

But Hutto then saw what Eddie smelled: a homemade bomb, partially buried in the dirt. It was six inches from Hutto's foot... A short time later, Eddie sniffed out another improvised explosive placed on a bridge the patrol unit was about to cross. Eddie saved Hutto's life, the

lives of a dozen patrol members and countless people in the village. For his service, Eddie retired Friday with full military honors... The Belgian Malinois dog was assigned to MacDill's 6th Security Forces Squadron and has served for about five years. He's also helped sweep government buildings and helped the Secret Service by checking presidential and vice presidential visit venues. In retirement, he will be reunited with his first handler, Andrew Grymes. [AP](#)

Raw oysters spike U.S. rise in bacteria infections, CDC says

17 April - Raw oysters, so good with hot sauce, increasingly can carry something even more unsettling to the stomach: A bacteria linked to vomiting, diarrhea and pain. Infections with vibrio, a saltwater-based bacteria that can pool in shellfish, jumped 75 percent last year from 2006-2008, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta said in a report today. That's the highest level seen since tracking began in 1996, the CDC said. There were 242 infections logged by CDC's FoodNet at 10 sites in the U.S. covering about 15 percent of the population. Vibrio accounts for about 100 deaths and 80,000 illnesses in the U.S. a year. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#)

Vermont steps closer to passing GMO food-labeling law

16 April - The Vermont Senate passed a bill on Wednesday that would make it the first U.S. state to enact mandatory labeling of foods made with genetically modified organisms, or GMOs. Unlike bills passed last year in Maine and Connecticut, which require other states to pass GMO labeling laws before they can be enacted, Vermont's contains no such trigger clause. Vermont's effort comes as the developers of genetically modified crops and the \$360 billion U.S. packaged food industry push for passage of an opposing bill introduced in Congress last week that would nullify any law that would require labeling of foods made with genetically modified crops. GMO labeling is just one front in an increasingly high-stakes food fight raging in the United States, where consumers increasingly are demanding to know where their food comes from and how it was produced. [Reuters](#)

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WELLNESS

FDA sends warning to makers of CRAZE dietary supplement

16 April - Driven Sports Inc. has some new supplements it would like to start selling, but after its product, CRAZE, was found to contain an unapproved meth-like ingredient, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says it will need some information first. In a warning letter to the company dated April 4, the FDA outlined next steps for the company. CRAZE, which was marketed as a sports supplement, contains "Dendrobex", which is listed on the product label as an ingredient and N, α -diethylphenylethylamine, the meth-like ingredient, which is not. Neither chemical is approved for use in dietary supplements, so the presence of either one renders product adulterated, according to the FDA... Driven Sports Inc. never issued a recall for CRAZE and was supposed to have destroyed its remaining stockpile of the product. The FDA would like the company to provide documentation of the destruction of CRAZE and meet with the agency to discuss its plans for future products. The company has 15 days to reply. [Food Poisoning Bulletin](#)

Jump-starting natural resilience reverses stress susceptibility

17 April - Scientists have traced vulnerability to depression-like behaviors in mice to out-of-balance electrical activity inside neurons of the brain's reward circuit and experimentally reversed it – but there's a twist. Instead of suppressing it, researchers funded by the National Institutes of Health boosted runaway neuronal activity even further, eventually triggering a compensatory self-stabilizing response. Once electrical balance was restored, previously susceptible animals were no longer prone to becoming withdrawn, anxious, and listless following socially stressful experiences. [NIH](#)

School lunch: Any chicken in those 'food-like nubbins'?

12 April - It took a Freedom of Information Act to get the Chicago Public Schools to disclose what's in the chicken nuggets they serve in their cafeterias... [Monica Eng has] been asking the Chicago public schools for weeks to reveal what goes into their chicken nuggets, or as she calls them, food-like nubbins. When the school district said that information wasn't available from their food contractors, the station went to the Illinois attorney general's office and filed a Freedom of Information Act request - all to get a chicken nuggets recipe, not information on government wiretaps. Yesterday, the Chicago public schools finally responded and supplied a recipe that lists at least 28 ingredients, even without the breading. Chicago public schools' chicken nuggets turn out to be made from textured soy protein concentrate, isolated soy protein - hope I'm not going too fast for you to write all this down - brown sugar, salt, onion powder, maltodextrin, silicon dioxide, citric acid, potassium chloride, sodium phosphates and, oh, yes, a little chicken. [NPR](#)

SMMC says tobacco ban is a 'shameful idea'

13 April - The sergeant major of the Marine Corps will fight for Marines' right to buy and use tobacco products on base, despite Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's full support of a review of the product's use and sales aboard military installations. Sgt. Maj. Mike Barrett told Marine Corps Times on April 11 that he thinks banning the sale and use of tobacco on base is a "shameful idea." Taking away choices from the very people who join the military to defend the Constitution isn't right by him, he said. "I'm offended by that," Barrett said. "We're going to take away that freedom of choice of something that is legal, yet we're legalizing marijuana? What the hell are we thinking?" Barrett said if the military is going to pick on tobacco as a wellness issue, it opens the door for a host of other items approved for sale or use on base to come under review. That could include anything from alcohol to snack cakes, potato chips, energy drinks and sport motorcycles, he said. [Marine Times](#)

The push for pullups: Why soldiers want it added to PT test

14 April - ...Army Times recently asked readers to weigh in on what PT changes they wanted to see. The request received thousands of responses and many endorsed the idea of making pullups a part of the Army Physical Fitness Test. The current APFT, required of soldiers twice annually, is meant to test their strength, endurance and cardiovascular fitness. Soldiers must complete pushups, situps and a 2-mile run, and receive a score from zero to 100 in each event. A minimum of 60 points for each is required to pass. Training and Doctrine Command is spearheading a potential overhaul of the test as part of larger efforts toward a gender-neutral Army and more combat jobs for women. [Army Times](#)

Voodoo dolls prove it: Hunger makes couples turn on each other



15 April - ... Many studies have suggested that low blood sugar may be the underlying cause of hunger-induced crankiness. But most of those studies were performed with strangers in the laboratory. [Brad Bushman from Ohio State University] wondered: What about people who get along well, or who even love each other? ...To figure that out, Bushman recruited 107 couples for a study. He assessed the quality of their relationships and taught them how to measure their blood sugar. Then he sent each volunteer home with something unusual: a voodoo doll and 51 pins. "We told the participants this doll represented their spouse," Bushman says, "and that every night before they went to bed they should stab the doll with pins depending on how angry they were with their spouse. So the more pins they put in the doll, the angrier they were with their spouse." After three weeks, Bushman and his team assessed the damage done to each doll. Volunteers who had low levels of blood glucose stuck more pins in the voodoo dolls than those who had high levels of blood glucose,

Bushman and his team reported... In fact, people with the lowest blood sugar levels stuck more than twice as many pins in the voodoo dolls, compared to people with the highest levels, the researchers found. [NPR](#)

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USAFRICOM

Kenya: Rape-prevention program cuts sexual assaults in Kenya

16 April - Self-defense and empowerment classes designed to arm girls with tools to prevent rape reduced sexual assaults among Kenyan students, a new study shows. The number of rapes dropped 38 percent among adolescents living in high-crime Nairobi settlements 10 months after the classes began, the study found. In addition, half of the nearly 2,000 girls enrolled in the intervention classes reported using skills learned in the program to stop a total of 817 sexual assaults, according to results published in *Pediatrics*. [Reuters](#)

Nigeria: Assessment of potential zoonotic disease exposure and illness related to an annual bat festival — Idanre, Nigeria

18 April -...Every year a festival takes place in Idanre, Nigeria, in which males of all ages enter designated caves to capture bats... Festival participants use a variety of techniques to capture bats, but protective equipment rarely is used, placing hunters at risk for bat scratches and bites. Many captured bats are prepared as food, but some are transported to markets in other parts of the country for sale as bushmeat... Interviews conducted with 54 persons who have participated in the festival as bat hunters revealed that 43 (80%) had a history of bat scratches and 39 (72%) had a history of bat bites. Only one (1.9%) hunter reported ever having received rabies vaccine. None of the hunters knew of a person who had acquired a fatal illness as a result of contact with bats or entering the caves. Additional data analyses and serologic assays are pending. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

West Africa: Ebola virus disease – update

17 April – **Guinea:** As of 18:00 on 16 April, the Ministry of Health (MOH) of Guinea has reported a cumulative total of 197 clinical cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), including 122 deaths... Twenty-four (24) health-care workers (HCW) have been affected with 13 deaths... Contact tracing activities continue in all affected areas including new contacts generated by a HCW who passed away 3 days ago.

Mali: The Ministry of Health (MOH) of Mali has on the 16th April reported that the clinical

samples on the 6 suspected cases have tested negative for ebolavirus...As of 16 April, no new suspected cases have been reported in Mali.

Liberia: As of 16 April the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) of Liberia has reported a cumulative total of 27 clinical cases of EVD, including 13 deaths attributed to EVD. One new suspected case reported yesterday from Nimba County has been laboratory confirmed as a case of Lassa fever.

Sierra Leone: On 15 April, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS) provided a consolidated report of surveillance activities conducted in that country from 19 March onwards. A total of 12 suspected cases have been identified during that period. Two previously reported suspected EVD deaths occurred in individuals from one family who died in Guinea and their bodies repatriated to Sierra Leone for burial. All of the 15 case contacts have completed 21 days of medical follow-up and have remained well. [WHO](#)

West African Ebola outbreak caused by new strain of disease – study

17 April - An Ebola outbreak blamed for 135 deaths in West Africa in the past month was not imported from Central Africa but caused by a new strain of the disease, a study in a U.S. medical journal said, raising the spectre of further regional epidemics. The spread of Ebola from a remote corner of Guinea to the capital and into neighbouring Liberia, the first deadly outbreak reported in West Africa, has caused panic across a region struggling with weak healthcare systems and porous borders. Ebola is endemic to Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, South Sudan and Gabon, and scientists initially believed that Central Africa's Zaire strain of the virus was responsible for the outbreak. Using analysis of blood samples from infected patients, however, researchers determined that while the Guinean form of the Ebola virus (EBOV) showed a 97 percent similarity to the Zaire strain, the disease was not introduced from Central Africa. "This study demonstrates the emergence of a new EBOV strain in Guinea," wrote the group of more than 30 doctors and scientists, who published their preliminary findings on the website of the New England Journal of Medicine. [Reuters](#)

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Afghanistan: Violence data show spike during Afghan presidential election

14 April – The days leading up to Afghanistan's presidential election this month were full of headline-grabbing Taliban attacks: Gunmen and bombers assaulted the election commission headquarters, the luxury Serena Hotel and the American charity Roots of Peace. But on voting day, the country seemed unusually calm, prompting Afghan politicians to speculate that the Taliban had intentionally allowed the election to proceed... The statistics

tell another story. Data released Monday by the U.S. military in Kabul show that April 5 was, in fact, an unusually violent day, spiking far above the norm, although falling 36 percent short of the peak number of attacks during the 2009 election, one of the bloodiest days of the war. [Washington Post](#)

Iran mother spares son's killer from hanging on gallows

17 April - When he felt the noose around his neck, Balal must have thought he was about to take his last breath. Minutes earlier, crowds had watched as guards pushed him towards the gallows for what was meant to be yet another public execution in the Islamic Republic of Iran... The victim's mother approached, slapped the convict in the face and then decided to forgive her son's killer. The victim's father removed the noose and Balal's life was spared... As of last week, 199 executions are believed to have been carried out in Iran this year, according to Amnesty, a rate of almost two a day. Last year Iran and Iraq were responsible for two-thirds of the world's executions, excluding China. [Irish Times](#)

MERS kills foreigner in Saudi Arabia

13 April - A foreigner has died from the deadly MERS coronavirus in Saudi Arabia, while Yemen has reported its first case of the disease. The foreign man, whose nationality has not been disclosed, died from the coronavirus as eight others in the kingdom, including five health workers in the city of Jeddah, were infected. The death brings the nationwide toll in the world's most-affected country to 68, with 189 people infected. The Saudi health ministry, which announced the death, said five health workers - two women and three men - and three other people had been infected by MERS in Jeddah. The announcement came days after panic over the spread of the virus among medical staff led to the closure of the emergency room at the city's main public hospital. [Al Jazeera](#)

Tackling autism in the Middle East

15 April - Treatment for autism in the region has progressed, but lack of awareness and support services remains a challenge... The WHO said the global median rate of autism prevalence has been estimated at 62 per 10,000, although some studies have placed it substantially higher. And for the Middle East, it may be an even bigger concern. Autism is one of many mental disorders that can be affected by living in a volatile environment - which is the case in much of the Middle East... "For example, 37.4 percent of Iraqi schoolchildren were estimated to be suffering from mental disorders; 54.4 percent of Palestinian boys and 46.5 percent of Palestinian girls were estimated to have emotional and behavioural disorders." Although autism-specific statistics on the Middle East are lacking, WHO estimates place the 12-month prevalence of mental disorders for the region between 11-40 percent, well above the global average of 4.3-26.4 percent. [Al Jazeera](#)

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UK drug company Glaxo 'paid bribes to Polish doctors'

13 April - UK drug company GlaxoSmithKline is facing a criminal investigation in Poland for allegedly bribing doctors, BBC Panorama has discovered. Eleven doctors and a GSK regional manager have been charged over alleged corruption between 2010 and 2012. A former sales rep said doctors were paid to promote GSK's asthma drug Seretide. The company said one employee had been disciplined and it was co-operating with investigations. If the allegations are proved, GSK may have violated both the UK Bribery Act and the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. It is illegal for companies based in either country to bribe government employees abroad. [BBC News](#)

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U.S.: About 12 million U.S. outpatients misdiagnosed annually –study

17 April - Roughly 12 million adults who visit U.S. doctors' offices and other outpatient settings, or one in 20, are misdiagnosed every year, a new study has found, and half of those errors could lead to serious harm. The study by a team of Texas-based researchers attempted to estimate how often diagnostic errors occur in outpatient settings such as doctors' offices and clinics, as exact figures don't exist... To explore the issue, researchers combined data from three past studies to generate a sample pool of about 3,000 medical records. Their analysis found a misdiagnoses rate of just over 5 percent, which when extrapolated to the 80 percent of U.S. adults that receive outpatient care every year, comes to 12 million people. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: GuLF STUDY gears up for second round of health exams

11 April - Researchers at the National Institutes of Health, leading the largest health study ever conducted on the potential health effects of an oil spill, are encouraging participants to stay involved in this long-term project. All participants are being contacted for telephone interviews to update their health status. Those living within 60 miles of Mobile, Ala., and New Orleans also will be invited to take part in a second comprehensive health exam. Preliminary observations from the first health exam indicated that clean-up workers were about 30 percent more likely to have moderate to severe depression than residents who did no clean-up work. Results were similar for anxiety. [NIH](#)

U.S.: Northern states have higher *E coli* O157 isolation rates

14 April - Northern states appear to have higher rates of *Escherichia coli* O157 than southern states do, and young children appear to be infected most often, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published today in *Epidemiology & Infection*. The team analyzed data from 1996, when public health labs first began reporting on the pathogen, through 2011. The authors found a national isolation rate of 0.84 per 100,000 population, but the rate varied from 0.43 in southern states to 1.52 in northern regions. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

U.S., Ohio: Mumps outbreak jumps to 212 cases in central Ohio, mostly at OSU

15 April - A mumps outbreak in central Ohio has grown to more than 200 confirmed cases, public health officials said Monday. A total of 212 cases of the contagious viral illness, with 132 of those linked to Ohio State University, have been reported. That includes 96 students and 13 staff members. Those infected range in age from 9 months to 70 years old, local health agencies said. The cases span from early January to late last week. [Plain Dealer](#)

U.S.: Secret drugs, agonizing deaths

13 April – Facing a critical shortage of lethal injection drugs, prison officials in a number of states have recently engaged in an unseemly scramble to obtain new execution drugs, often from unreliable and even illegal sources. Not only does this trend raise serious questions about the constitutionality of executions, it also undermines the foundations of our democratic process. In the name of security, states are now withholding vital information about their death penalty procedures... [I]n the past year, Georgia, Missouri, Tennessee and other states have expanded the reach of their secrecy laws to include not just the execution drugs used, but even the pharmacies that supply them. These laws hide the information necessary to determine if the drugs will work as intended and cause death in a humane manner. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: West Nile virus and Lyme disease spread across the U.S.

1 May - Warm weather brings bugs—and the pathogens they carry. West Nile virus, transmitted by mosquitoes, has spread from only three U.S. states in 2000 to 48 states in 2012, and human cases have climbed from 21 to 5,674. Lyme disease was concentrated in the Northeast in 2000, but cases of the bacterial infection have also picked up across the country. The total U.S. number has fallen from a peak of 29,959 in 2009, however, in part because people have gotten into the habit of checking themselves and their pets for ticks. Those illnesses can cause fever and other serious symptoms. But another, more deadly mosquito-borne disease, dengue, has recently begun to rise in the U.S. In 2013 the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention recorded three cases of the virus in Texas and 20 cases in Florida. Puerto Rico, which is not listed, is a hotspot: 8,148 people there tested positive last year. [Scientific American](#)

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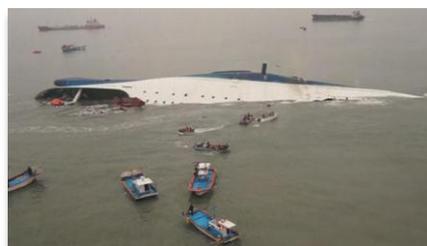
China: 16% of China's soil is polluted

17 April - A nationwide investigation has shown that as much as 16 percent of China's soil contains higher-than-permitted levels of pollution, the environment ministry said on Thursday. China is desperate to tackle the impact of rapid industrialization and urbanization on its food supplies, with the aim of maintaining self-sufficiency and reducing its dependence on grain imports amid soaring demand. The Ministry of Environmental Protection said in a notice posted on its website (www.mep.gov.cn) that its long-awaited soil survey involved samples taken across 6.3 million square kilometers (sq km) of land, two-thirds of the country's total... The ministry found that 82.8 percent of the contaminated samples contained toxic inorganic pollutants, including cadmium, mercury, arsenic, chromium and lead. [Scientific American](#)

Japan, South Korea to discuss comfort women' almost 70 years after World War II

16 April - Every single week for the past 22 years, a group of elderly South Korean women has camped outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, enduring the heat and humidity of the region's monsoonal summer and the sub-zero temperatures of the brutal Korean winter... They want an apology for being forced into sexual slavery as so-called "comfort women" by the Japanese military before and during World War II -- an apology that numerous Japanese governments insist has already been publicly given more than two decades ago. It has been almost 70 years since the end of World War II and yet this issue still has the power to derail relations at the very top of these two countries. [CNN](#)

South Korea: Nearly 300, mostly teens, missing after South Korean ferry sinks



16 April - Fears rose Thursday for the fate of 287 passengers still missing more than 24 hours after their ferry flipped onto its side and filled with water off the southern coast of South Korea. A coast guard official said the death toll was now confirmed at nine, but that is expected to rise

sharply because the missing have now spent more than a day either trapped in the ferry or in the cold seawater. There were 475 people aboard - many of them high school students on a class trip. Divers, helicopters and boats continued their search Thursday for survivors, but the high number of people unaccounted for - possibly trapped in the ship or floating in the chilly water nearby - raised fears that the death toll could increase drastically. [CBS News](#)

Tonga: Ten thousand infected in Tonga's first chikungunya outbreak

16 April - There's a major epidemic of the mosquito-borne chikungunya virus in Tonga, with more than ten thousand people affected. It's the first time Tonga has seen an outbreak of the virus, which causes acute fever and joint pain... Speaker: Dr Siale Akau'ola, director, Ministry of Health, Tonga: It's a major outbreak as you have rightly mentioned, this is the first time for Tonga to have chikungunya in the country. It has been going on for at least a month now, but I think we feel that we are at its peak now. I think we are plateauing off and we are hopeful that it will start to go down within the coming few weeks. [Radio Australia](#)

Vietnam: Measles-related death toll rises to 108 in 3 large hospitals in Vietnam's capital alone

16 April - A total of 108 deaths have been caused so far this year by measles and its related complications among Vietnamese children in three large hospitals in capital Hanoi alone, instead of 25 deaths as in earlier report by Vietnam's Ministry of Health (MoH), local media reported on Wednesday. [Xinhua](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Chikungunya cases in the Caribbean approach 25,000

15 April - The Caribbean chikungunya outbreak grew by 5,149 cases in the past week, reaching 24,831 cases, according to an update yesterday from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). That's up from 19,682 cases a week ago. Martinique continues to report the largest numbers, with 13,500 suspected (up from 11,400) and 1,284 confirmed or probable cases, the ECDC said. Guadeloupe for the first time reported the second-most cases, with 3,690 suspected and 942 confirmed or probable cases. The French side of St. Martin is third, with 2,910 suspected and 791 confirmed or probable cases. Also reporting cases are Dominica, 764 suspected and 81 confirmed cases; St. Barthelemy, 444 suspected and 135 confirmed or probable cases; the Dutch side of St. Martin, 224 confirmed cases; French Guiana, 25 confirmed locally acquired and 15 imported cases; Anguilla, 14 confirmed cases; British Virgin Islands, 7 confirmed cases; and Aruba, St. Lucia, and St.

Kitts/Nevis, each with 1 confirmed case. Of those areas, Dominica reported the heftiest increase, up from 487 cases last week. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Chile surveys damage from massive blaze

15 April - Chileans on April 14 surveyed the smoking remains of homes charred in a fire in the historic port of Valparaíso, the city's worst-ever blaze that killed 15 people, mainly in poor neighborhoods. Pockets of the massive blaze remained active days after it erupted on April 12, with the inferno so far having consumed 2,500 homes and left 11,000 homeless, according to Interior Minister Rodrigo Penailillo. [InfoSurHoy](#)

Guatemala makes progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS

14 April - Four of every 10 people infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in Central America live in Guatemala, according to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The Ministry for Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS) reported 30,871 cases from January through August 2013, 3,893 more than what was reported during all of 2012... The country's most remarkable progress has been in the number of tests, as 77,000 were conducted last year, and it's expected that 200,000 will be carried out in 2014, according to the MSPAS' HIV/AIDS Program. Additionally, anti-retroviral medication coverage reaches 65% of cases, compared to 56% in 2011. [InfoSurHoy](#)

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