

18 May 2012

Army Public Health Weekly Update

The Army Public Health Update is a collection of articles taken verbatim from public sources to offer awareness of current health issues and the media coverage given to them. The articles do not necessarily represent US Army Medical Department opinions, views, policy, or guidance, and should not be construed or interpreted as being endorsed by the US Army Medical Department.

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Contents

U.S. MILITARY

- Army to review its handling of psychiatric evaluations
- Does brain injury link NFL players, wounded warriors?
- "Military importance": What does it mean and can it be assessed objectively?

GLOBAL

- 'Good' cholesterol may not actually be that good
- Maternal deaths plunged over 2 decades, to about 287,000 in 2010, U.N. reports
- New model for predicting vaccine efficacy and safety
- Non-communicable diseases cause most deaths worldwide
- Popular antibiotic may raise risk of sudden death
- Report says insecticide resistance could threaten progress against malaria
- U.S. HIV aid has prevented 741,000 deaths: study

INFLUENZA

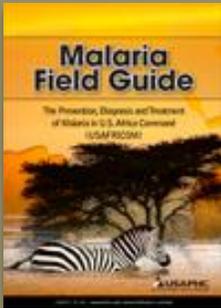
- Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary
- CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview
- Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- 10 infected with campylobacter from raw milk in California
- 209 sickened with clostridium at church dinner
- Another illness added to salmonella outbreak tied to dog food
- Ephemeral fever, bovine – international spread

TG 336 - Malaria Field Guide

This technical guide (TG) is for medical personnel in USAFRICOM covers the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of malaria in tactical field-care situations. It is now available in the **Health Information Products eCatalog**.



WELLNESS

- Avoid sunscreens with potentially harmful ingredients, group warns
- Coffee linked to lower death risk
- Dieting for dollars (or maybe a movie ticket)
- Doctors, insurers are key to fighting obesity
- More batteries to blame for kids' ER visits
- New study reconfirms paper towels are most hygienic method to dry hands after washing
- Sex, age may affect athletes' concussion recovery
- What to eat and drink when you exercise

USAFRICOM

- East Africa: Malaria, artemisinin resistance
- Ghana: Airdrops to fight schistosomiasis
- Nigeria: Where is the money to help poisoned children?

USCENTCOM

- Dubai: DHA announces results of survey on fruit and vegetable consumption
- Egypt: The dual epidemics quietly ravaging public health

USEUCOM

- United Kingdom: Large city hospitals 'breed and spread' MRSA
- United Kingdom: Only one in five eats five a day, poll suggests

USNORTHCOM

- U.S.: Alaska targets an old foe – tuberculosis
- U.S.: CDC cuts lead-poisoning limit for kids
- U.S.: New Hampshire ranks 2nd for most Lyme disease cases
- U.S., New York City: Investigation of viral hepatitis infections possibly associated with health-care delivery, 2008–2011
- U.S.: Over-the-counter HIV tests backed by panel
- U.S. sets 2025 goal to tame Alzheimer's
- U.S.: Taking Truvada to prevent H.I.V. also comes with risks
- U.S.: Washington State faces pertussis epidemic

USPACOM

- Australia: Pain expert calls for GP opiates ban
- India: Chikungunya
- India: Concerns mount over India's role in incubating drug-resistant bacteria

USSOUTHCOM

- Haiti: Cholera vaccination drive in Haiti progressing

Health United States, 2011

The *Health, United States* series presents an annual look at national trends in health statistics. The report contains a Chartbook that assesses the Nation's health by presenting trends and current information on selected measures of morbidity, mortality, health care utilization, health risk factors, prevention, health insurance, and personal health care expenditures. This year's Chartbook includes a Special Feature on Socioeconomic Status and Health.



U.S. MILITARY

Army to review its handling of psychiatric evaluations

16 May - The **Army** said Wednesday that it had ordered a service-wide review of how its doctors diagnose psychiatric disorders, indicating that complaints about unfair diagnoses at a sprawling base in Washington State have been echoed on installations around the country. The review, announced jointly by the Army secretary, John M. McHugh, and chief of staff, Gen. **Raymond T. Odierno**, will focus on whether consistent and accurate diagnoses are being issued by the disability evaluation system, which determines whether injured soldiers are fit to remain on duty. **New York Times**

Does brain injury link NFL players, wounded warriors?



16 May - The same dementia-like disease found in the brain tissue of several National Football League players has shown up in the brains of four U.S. veterans exposed to improvised explosive devices and other head trauma, according to new research. The suggestion made by the research is that a common thread binds those exposed to traumatic brain injury, whether it occurs on the football field or in the war theater... Two of the military cases, and a group of mice studied concurrently by researchers, suggest that a single IED exposure could instigate the cluster of abnormal protein in the brain that characterizes the disease, called chronic traumatic encephalopathy. **CNN**

“Military importance”: What does it mean and can it be assessed objectively?

April - ...Given the challenges of setting military medical priorities during periods of declining resources, increasing demand for services, and worldwide political and military instability, it is reasonable to wonder how or if “military importance” might be better integrated into decision making. **Medical Surveillance Monthly Report**

[top of page...](#)

GLOBAL

'Good' cholesterol may not actually be that good



17 May - A new study finds 'good' cholesterol may not be as good for you as previously thought. Up until now, doctors have believed HDL cholesterol, long considered the healthy type of cholesterol, could potentially protect a person from coronary heart disease. However, a study published Wednesday in *The Lancet* has found that raising levels of HDL cholesterol may not have any effect on heart disease risk after all. "It's been assumed that if a patient, or group of patients, did something to cause their HDL levels to go up, then you can safely

**CDC Vital Signs
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Food Safety**

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Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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assume that their risk of heart attack will go down," said senior author Sekar Kathiresan, director of preventive cardiology at MGH and associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, in a press release. "This work fundamentally questions that." Using databases of genetic information, the researchers found people who were genetically predisposed to have higher levels of HDL cholesterol had no difference in heart disease risk than those who were not predisposed. [Fox News](#)

Maternal deaths plunged over 2 decades, to about 287,000 in 2010, U.N. reports

16 May - The number of women dying from **pregnancy** and childbirth has dropped sharply in the last two decades, according to a report by a consortium of United Nations agencies set to be released on Wednesday. Maternal deaths fell to about 287,000 in 2010, the report said. The decline is attributable to increases in **contraception** and in antiretroviral drugs for mothers with **AIDS**, and to greater numbers of births attended by nurses, doctors or **midwives** with medical training. The agencies said the deaths had fallen by 47 percent from the United Nations' 1990 estimate of 543,000, but the organization has been revising its historical estimates in response to skeptical research by a rival group of epidemiologists at the University of Washington. [New York Times](#)

New model for predicting vaccine efficacy and safety

14 May - Vaccine testing and development is an extremely lengthy and complex process that costs billions of dollars every year. In an effort to dramatically improve the speed and success of vaccine research and development, researchers have created an innovative biomimetic model of the human immune system known as the MIMIC® system. An article in the inaugural issue of Disruptive Science and Technology describes this artificial human immune system which can facilitate faster, more effective vaccine development. "Our goal is to increase the likelihood of success within the clinic— to make better drugs and vaccines and get them into the marketplace and to the patients faster," says William Warren, PhD, head of the VaxDesign Campus at Sanofi Pasteur. "This in vitro human immune system enables us to measure vaccine efficacy earlier and more predictably." The MIMIC® platform represents a truly disruptive technology for the study of vaccines and other biologics with immunomodulatory potential, as it provides a novel in vitro model for evaluating human immune responses against candidate drugs, adjuvants, and vaccines. It has shown game-changing advantages over conventional approaches to safety and efficacy testing. [Infection Control Today](#)

Non-communicable diseases cause most deaths worldwide



16 May - The World Health Organization reports almost two-thirds of all global deaths are due to heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other non-communicable diseases. The World Health Statistics Report provides information on the state of health in 194 countries. Non-communicable diseases are not just a problem of wealthy countries. The World Health Organization says

Links

[A-Z Index](#)

[About USAPHC](#)

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

[Medical Surveillance
Monthly Report](#)

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

[Request USAPHC Services](#)

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[USAPHC Homepage](#)

[USAPHC Training](#)

[Contact USAPHC](#)

they mainly affect people in poorer countries, of whom half die before they reach the age of 70. Cardiovascular diseases are the most common cause of death, followed by cancers. Data from 194 countries show one in three adults worldwide has elevated blood pressure, a condition that causes around half of all deaths from stroke and heart disease. In many African countries, it notes, as much as half the adult population has high blood pressure.

[VOA](#)

Popular antibiotic may raise risk of sudden death

16 May - A new study finds that a widely used antibiotic, [azithromycin](#), may increase the likelihood of sudden death in adults, especially those who have heart disease or are at high risk for it. The increased odds of death are small, but significant enough that the authors of the study say doctors should consider prescribing a different drug, like [amoxicillin](#), for high-risk patients who need antibiotics. People at high risk include those with [heart failure](#), [diabetes](#) or a previous [heart attack](#), and those who have undergone bypass surgery or have had stents implanted. In such patients, the drug may cause [abnormal heart rhythms](#) that can be fatal. Just how the drug might disrupt heart rhythm is not known, the researchers said.

[New York Times](#)

Report says insecticide resistance could threaten progress against malaria

15 May - Global health groups today unveiled a strategy to battle emerging insecticide resistance in malaria-carrying mosquitoes, a problem they say could be minimized or reversed now before resistance becomes established in mosquito populations. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Roll Back Malaria Partnership described a five-part plan to tackle insecticide resistance, based on a 2011 request from the World Health Assembly. The group that wrote the 132-page report consulted with more than 130 stakeholders, according to a statement today from the WHO. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S. HIV aid has prevented 741,000 deaths: study

16 May - The United States foreign aid program that sends billions of dollars to African countries for HIV treatment and prevention has cut the number of people dying for any reason in those nations, a new study suggests. Researchers had previously shown that the initiative -- the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR -- had prevented deaths from AIDS. But it was unclear if more people in those countries were only dying of tuberculosis or malaria instead, researchers explained. According to the new findings, about 741,000 deaths were averted in 2004 through 2008 in the 12 African countries with PEPFAR programs, such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. "There were concerns that there's been this shift in physicians and nurses (toward HIV clinics) to the detriment of other public health concerns," said lead researcher Dr. Eran Bendavid, an infectious diseases specialist from Stanford University in California. But, he said, "We can't find evidence of unintended harms - or benefits. More or less we find that PEPFAR seems to have been very effective at reducing deaths, probably mostly HIV-specific deaths." [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

10 May 2012:

- This is the final issue of the DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary for the 2011-2012 season.
- The overall influenza activity remains low to moderate with predominantly influenza A/H3 & B in overseas DoD laboratory surveillance networks, except in Southeast Asia & Central Africa where no influenza activity is detected.
- The influenza activity level within the MHS continues to decrease from previous weeks. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 18 (29 April – 5 May), influenza activity declined nationally and in most regions, but remained elevated in some areas of the United States. [FluView](#)

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

During week 19 (7-13 May 2012), all reporting countries but Slovakia reported low intensity. No or only sporadic geographic spread was reported by all reporting countries, except Latvia and Luxembourg, which reported local spread, and the Netherlands (widespread activity). [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 12 May 2012:

Adenovirus

- Vaccination against types 4 and 7 adenovirus was instituted at all basic training centers by mid-November 2011 (week 45).
- FRI rates and the proportion of FRI cases positive for adenovirus have decreased markedly since vaccine was reintroduced.
- Type 14 adenovirus is present at MCRD Parris Island.
- A MSMR paper on the initial impact of adenovirus vaccine resumption was recently published.

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](#)

[top of page...](#)

10 infected with campylobacter from raw milk in California

11 May - At least 10 people infected with *Campylobacter* in California reported drinking Organic Pastures raw milk prior to becoming ill, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) said Thursday. Raw milk, raw skim milk (non-fat), raw cream and raw butter produced by the Fresno County dairy have been recalled and are subject to a quarantine order imposed by California State Veterinarian Dr. Annette Whiteford. Whiteford issued the quarantine order after *Campylobacter* was detected in Organic Pastures raw cream, according to a news release. "Consumers are strongly urged to dispose of any Organic Pastures products of these types remaining in their refrigerators, and retailers are to pull those products immediately from their shelves," public health officials wrote in the statement. According to CDPH, six of the 10 people sickened are under 18. All 10 range in age from nine months to 38 years old; median age is 11.5 years. None of those sickened have been hospitalized. The outbreak cases reside in Fresno, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Luis Obispo and Santa Clara counties. Mark McAfee, Organic Pastures owner, says he believes the test results are incorrect and has requested a hearing with the California Department of Food and Agriculture. [Food Safety News](#)

209 sickened with clostridium at church dinner

12 May - 209 people have fallen ill with *Clostridium* infection in an outbreak that occurred at a church dinner in Canada's Prince Edward Island on April 28, according to the province's Chief Public Health Officer. Public health officials have tested roast beef and gravy left over from the event and believe the *Clostridium* bacteria grew on the beef from being held at improper temperatures following cooking. Most victims recover from *Clostridium* illness within 24 hours. Those infected with the bacteria are not contagious. The Public Health Office reminded those who prepare foods for public events to review and adhere to proper food preparation, handling and temperature control requirements. Last summer, the Minnesota state legislature passed a so-called "Church Lady Law," a set of health standards for events such as church potlucks and bake sales, and has been successful in educating groups on how to cook safely for crowds. [Food Safety News](#)

Another illness added to salmonella outbreak tied to dog food

13 May - At least 15 individuals in 9 states have been infected with *Salmonella* Infantis linked to dry dog food, according to an outbreak update by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The number of ill persons in each state is as follows: Alabama (1), Connecticut (1), Michigan (1), Missouri (3), North Carolina (3), New Jersey (1), Ohio (2), Pennsylvania (2), and Virginia (1). One new ill person was reported from Pennsylvania. DC said there is also one person in Canada linked to the outbreak. Among the 10 patients with available information, 5 were hospitalized, which is an unusually high hospitalization rate.

No deaths have been reported. Public health officials have linked multiple brands of dry dog food produced by Diamond Pet Foods at a single manufacturing facility in South Carolina to some of the human Salmonella infections. "Consumers should check their homes for recalled pet food products and discard them promptly," said CDC. "People who think they might have become ill after contact with dry pet food or with an animal that has eaten dry pet food should consult their health care providers." [Food Safety News](#)

Ephemeral fever, bovine – international spread

15 May - Bovine ephemeral fever virus (BEFV) is an economically important arbovirus of cattle. The main routes of its transmission between countries and continents are not completely elucidated. This study aimed to explore BEFV transmission in the Middle East. A phylogenetic analysis was performed on the gene encoding the G protein of BEFV isolates from Israel from 2000 and 2008 with isolates from Turkey (2008), Egypt (2005), Australia (1968-1998) and East Asia (1966-2004). [ProMED-mail](#)

[top of page...](#)

WELLNESS

Avoid sunscreens with potentially harmful ingredients, group warns



16 May - Twenty-five percent of 800 tested sunscreens are effective at protecting your skin without the use of potentially harmful ingredients, according to [the 2012 Sunscreen Guide](#) released Wednesday by the Environmental Working Group. "The results are slightly

better than previous years, but it continues to surprise us that we can recommend such few products," said Nneka Leiba, an Environmental Working Group senior analyst. To make the watchdog group's safe list, sunscreens must be free of oxybenzone, retinyl palmitate (a type of vitamin A), not have SPF above 50 and protect against UVA and UVB sunrays. [CNN](#)

Coffee linked to lower death risk



16 May - Java lovers, take heart. A large prospective study suggests that – far from being bad for your health – that steaming cuppa is actually associated with a lower risk of death. Analysis of a large prospective study of more than 400,000 people found that men who drank four to five cups of coffee daily reduced their risk of death over a 13-year period by 12%, while women's risk dropped by 16%, according to Neal Freedman, PhD, of the National Cancer Institute, and colleagues. The inverse associations were seen for deaths due to heart disease, respiratory disease, stroke, injuries and accidents, diabetes, and infections, but not for deaths due to cancer, the researchers found. [MedPage Today](#)

Dieting for dollars (or maybe a movie ticket)

12 May - BACK in 1999, Michael Paolini, an inventor at I.B.M. in Austin, Tex., was having lunch at a Ruby Tuesday's with some fellow engineers when the group decided that too many burgers and fries were translating into thicker waistlines. It was time to lose weight. But, being engineers, they weren't just going to hit the StairMaster. They decided to build a computer program to make shedding pounds as geekily fun as playing Xbox, but with an added incentive: the opportunity to win cash. The idea for this program, which recently won patent approval, was simple: participants would be rewarded for eating well and discouraged from eating poorly. So a salad for lunch could mean winning 50 cents. Pecan pie? Forget it. The invention is an example of how gamification — applying game techniques and psychology to influence behavior in the real world — is affecting the health arena. Eventually, I.B.M. hopes to license the system to companies or insurers as they seek to improve employees' well-being. [New York Times](#)

Doctors, insurers are key to fighting obesity

16 May - Doctors assess patients' breathing, heart rate and blood pressure routinely at office visits. Soon, they may be adding body mass index to that list too. Tracking this measure — an indicator of whether someone is obese or overweight — as if it were a vital sign at medical checkups is among a new set of strategies recommended for battling obesity, a concern that some experts predict will affect 42 percent of adults by 2030. Although professional medical societies have said for years that physicians should monitor patients' body mass index, most doctors fail to do so. For example, a [2006 survey](#) of family physicians found that fewer than half checked BMIs for children over the age of 2, even though 71 percent knew this has been recommended. [MSNBC](#)

More batteries to blame for kids' ER visits

14 May - The number of kids treated in emergency rooms after swallowing batteries -- or lodging them in their noses and ears -- has almost doubled over the past 20 years, a new study suggests. Most of those ER trips are due to button batteries, coin-shaped batteries that have become ubiquitous in toys, remote controls and hearing aids and represent a shiny temptation to curious toddlers. Those batteries carry extra risks, experts said, because if kids swallow them, they can become lodged in the esophagus and start an electrical current flowing through the tissue -- without kids showing any signs of immediate injury. [Fox News](#)

New study reconfirms paper towels are most hygienic method to dry hands after washing

11 May - Cascades Tissue Group emphasizes that paper towels are the most hygienic choice when it comes to drying hands. A recent study conducted by the Bradford Infection Group, the University of Bradford and Dyson Limited reported that "rubbing with paper towels appeared to be the best means of reducing bacterial loading on the fingertips." These findings correlate with the results of an earlier study conducted by the University of Westminster, London. That study found that when participants used paper towels to dry

their hands, the number of all types of bacteria on the hands was reduced by up to 77 percent, and that air dryers actually increased the number of most bacteria on the hands – up to 254 percent more for warm air dryers and 42 percent more for jet air dryers. In addition to examining the bacteria on users' hands, the study also looked at the potential contamination of other users and the washroom environment. The study found that the jet air dryer was capable of blowing microorganisms up to six-and-a-half feet away, potentially contaminating users and the washroom. Traditional warm air dryers spread microorganisms less than one foot away, while paper towels showed no significant spread of microorganisms. [Infection Control Today](#)

Sex, age may affect athletes' concussion recovery



17 May - Female and high school athletes may need more time to recover from a concussion than their male or college counterparts, a new study finds. Researchers found that of 222 young athletes who suffered a concussion, female athletes tended to have more symptoms than males. They also scored lower on tests of "visual memory" -- the ability to recall information about something you've seen. Meanwhile, high school athletes fared worse on memory tests than college players, and typically took longer to improve. For parents, coaches and athletes, the key message is to have patience with concussion recovery, according to lead researcher Tracey Covassin, an assistant professor at Michigan State University in East Lansing. [Reuters](#)

What to eat and drink when you exercise

17 May - "Diet and exercise" is a phrase that goes hand-in-hand with losing weight. But what you eat or drink before, during and after your workout is key to the weight loss process. Whether you run marathons, bike to work or walk around your neighborhood a few times a week – if you really want to optimize your workout, it's time to check in on your diet. It's all about moderation and balancing your food groups: protein and carbs, fruits and veggies, experts say. So how do they all work together?... [CNN](#)

[top of page...](#)

USAFRICOM

East Africa: Malaria, artemisinin resistance

14 May - A strain of the malaria parasite *Plasmodium falciparum* that is resistant to artemisinin, one of the most powerful anti-malarial drugs, has been found in East Africa. The strain tested positive in blood samples from foreigners who had travelled in Kenya and Tanzania and 9 other African countries. This particular strain had been found at the border of Thailand and Myanmar and had been predicted to be spreading to India and then Africa as resistance to other antimalarial drugs has done before. The results, according to the

researchers from St George's, University of London, indicate that either the strain has spread to East Africa or the other African countries, or the local parasite has developed resistance. Although malaria control efforts have been scaled up in the region, the researchers say their findings are a further warning that the best weapons against malaria could be rendered obsolete. [ProMED-mail](#)

Ghana: Airdrops to fight schistosomiasis

15 May - At the Kpong airfield, a few kilometres from Lake Volta in northern Ghana, Patricia Mawuli, pilot and co-founder of Medicine on the Move (MoM), a local NGO, is preparing her plane for takeoff. She is one of four health workers who fly weekly to isolated communities around the lake to raise awareness of the dangers of schistosomiasis, also called bilharzia. Schistosomiasis is a parasitic disease caused by a flatworm that enters the skin and is found in infected water. Snails - common in Lake Volta - often act as an intermediary host for the worms before they get into humans, where they eat away at the internal organs. The symptoms include fever and passing blood in urine and faeces, and are often detected very late. Bilharzia can stunt children's growth and affect their cognitive development. Classified as a neglected tropical disease by the World Health Organization, some 200 million people across Africa, Asia and South America are thought to be infected, but less than 15 percent are being treated, according to Lester Chitsulo, a research scientist in the Neglected Tropical Diseases department of the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO is trying to help governments put in place more effective prevention programmes by training community health workers like Mawuli, pushing hygiene and public health awareness, and negotiating drug donations with major suppliers. [All Africa](#)

Nigeria: Where is the money to help poisoned children?



15 May - Aid organizations and rights groups are putting more pressure on the Nigerian government to release a promised US\$5.4 million in aid for lead-poisoned children, but government officials keep ducking the issue. Last week Nigerian and international specialists, aid workers, scientists, ministers from Zamfara State in northwestern Nigeria and local cultural leaders gathered at an international conference in the capital, Abuja, to map out a collective plan to clean up poisoned sites, test and treat affected residents - mostly children - and put in place safer mining practices. Over 400 children have died and an estimated 10 times that number have been contaminated by acute lead poisoning in the state of Zamfara [since 2010](#), when international health NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) learned of what its Nigeria head, Ivan Gayton, referred to as "one of the worst, if not the worst, lead-poisoning crisis ever." In November 2011 the federal government committed US\$5.4 million to help the poisoned children, but none of this money has been released, and the delay has not been explained, said MSF. [IRIN](#)

[top of page...](#)

Dubai: DHA announces results of survey on fruit and vegetable consumption

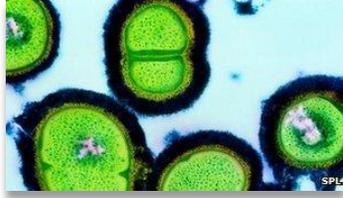
16 May - United Arab Emirates, Dubai, May 16, 2012: The Dubai Health Authority announced today key statistical results on fruit and vegetable consumption among the residents of the Emirate of Dubai. The results highlight the extent to which the population of Dubai consumes fruits and vegetables on a regular basis to keep themselves healthy. The results highlight the direct link between education, income and the consumption of fruits and vegetables. The aim of the survey is to gauge the current situation and accordingly advocate through educational and awareness programs the need to consume sufficient fruits and vegetables to remain healthy and stay free from lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease. The results are part of the overall Dubai Household Health Survey (DHHS), which is a comprehensive survey of 5,000 households that was jointly conducted in 2009 by the DHA and the Dubai Statistics Centre. As part of the survey, respondents were asked to jot down details of their daily intake of fruit and vegetable. Laila Al Jassmi, CEO of Health Policy and Strategy Sector at the DHA said, "The results of the preventive health behavior section of the overall Dubai Household Health Survey is of key importance as it provides us a complete statistical break-down of the extent to which our population consumes fruits and vegetables. [Zawya](#)

Egypt: The dual epidemics quietly ravaging public health

14 May - A combination of avian flu and foot and mouth disease risk destroying the protein supply, eroding public trust, and further destabilizing the Arab world's most populous country... Egypt's public health infrastructure barely functions. The sorts of social services that groups like the Muslim Brotherhood have provided over many years fall far short of what is needed to combat the current crisis... Ground zero for Egypt's public health emergency is Libya, where last year, in the midst of civil war, foot and mouth disease swept through the country, killing more than 10 percent of its sheep and cattle. Smugglers subsequently brought infected sheep across the Libyan border, setting off a foot and mouth disease (FMD) wildfire that Egyptian officials have been unable to slow. Within four weeks, FMD killed thousands of cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats, camels, and other livestock across Egypt... Egypt is also in the sixth year of avian influenza H5N1 epidemic. Despite vaccination and control efforts, the deadly H5N1 virus, which swept into Egypt from Asia, persists. Given the popularity of home-raised chickens in the country, where many households, rural and urban, possess flocks, controlling the infection would be a daunting undertaking for any government. [The Atlantic](#)

[top of page...](#)

United Kingdom: Large city hospitals 'breed and spread' MRSA



14 May – Hospitals in large cities are the breeding grounds of the superbug MRSA which then spreads to other hospitals as patients are transferred, researchers believe. The Edinburgh University team made the discovery by tracking MRSA's movements using its genetic code as a tag. In the study, the infection started its journey in large city centre hospitals - in London and Glasgow - and then spread to smaller local hospitals. The work appears in the journal PNAS. [BBC News](#)

United Kingdom: Only one in five eats five a day, poll suggests

13 May - Just one in five Britons eats the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, a poll for World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) suggests. The Department of Health first launched its five-a-day campaign in 2003. But the WCRF says its survey of more than 2,000 UK adults shows people still find achieving that goal difficult. It is urging people to eat "just one more portion" for a healthier diet, which would increase cancer protection. [BBC News](#)

[top of page...](#)

U.S.: Alaska targets an old foe – tuberculosis



17 May - ...Last July, [Dr. Michael] Cooper came to Anchorage for a position with Alaska's Health Department. His new job: to lower the state's high rate of tuberculosis — in 2011, the highest rate in the United States. Cooper is learning from his mistakes. He's focusing part of his efforts on educating other doctors and nurses in Alaska about tuberculosis. That starts with explaining why the TB rate is so high. "We experienced probably the highest rates of TB back in the early 20th century found anywhere in the world at the time," he says. Many Alaska Natives were living in crowded conditions that allowed TB to spread easily... Until 1950, TB was the No. 1 cause of death in Alaska. That legacy means that a large number of Alaskans still carry the bacteria that can cause the disease. They have no symptoms and they aren't contagious, but full-blown TB can flare up at anytime and then spread. [NPR](#)

U.S.: CDC cuts lead-poisoning limit for kids

16 May - ... The public health honchos agreed with an expert panel that recommended in January that anything greater than 5 micrograms per deciliter of blood for kids 5 and younger should be considered dangerous. That's half the current standard and represents the first reduction since 1991. With that change, the number of kids in the U.S. who would be considered to have lead poisoning that needs medical attention would rise to nearly a half-million, almost double the number before the change. [NPR](#)

U.S.: New Hampshire ranks 2nd for most Lyme disease cases

14 May - New Hampshire is ranking high on a very serious health problem - it has the second most cases of Lyme Disease in the country, and health officials are concerned that the numbers could rise. Dr. Julia Greenspan, Founder of Greenhouse Naturopathic Medicine in Amherst, NH and Member of ILADS, the International Lyme and Associated Disease Society, joined "The Morning Show" to discuss the growing problem. Dr. Greenspan treats people of all ages with a particular focus on tick-borne disease, women's health, naturopathic pediatrics, environmental medicine, and natural cancer support. She shared the following: In the Northeast, ticks were a part of our life as kids. People pulled them without a second thought. Right now there are more ticks thus more infected ticks. Ticks are nature's dirty needle and if an infection is not treated early enough it can be a devastating disease. [NECN.com](#)

U.S., New York City: Investigation of viral hepatitis infections possibly associated with health-care delivery, 2008–2011

18 May - ...Over many years, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) developed a systematic approach to guide investigation and public health response to case reports of acute HBV or HCV infection in patients whose infection was potentially associated with health-care delivery. In this approach, the least resource-intensive investigation components are conducted for each case, and decisions to expand the investigation to more resource-intensive components are guided by the likelihood that a single case report represents a cluster of health-care-associated infections (HAIs). This report describes the DOHMH approach in the context of two single case reports. Components of this approach might be useful to other health departments that are developing their own approaches to this type of investigation. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Over-the-counter HIV tests backed by panel



16 May - Over-the-counter HIV tests that would allow people to check in the privacy of their homes if they have the virus have moved a step closer in the US. A panel of experts said the OraQuick In-Home HIV Test was safe and effective and its potential to prevent infections outweighed

the risk of false results. The Food and Drug Administration will decide this year whether to approve it. The 20-minute test is 93% accurate for positive results and 99.8% for negative, the manufacturer said. [BBC News](#)

U.S. sets 2025 goal to tame Alzheimer's

15 May - The US says it will seek an effective treatment for Alzheimer's by 2025, as it faces an ageing population and spiralling health costs. Health Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced the goal as part of the first National Alzheimer's Plan. An additional \$50m will be added to research funding during 2012. About 5.4 million Americans have Alzheimer's or related dementias, a number expected to reach 16 million by 2050, at a cost of \$1tn (£625m). In addition, the plan calls for better training of doctors in a bid to better recognise the symptoms of the disease, increased support for care-givers and public awareness of the disease, as well as better data tracking. [BBC News](#)

U.S.: Taking Truvada to prevent H.I.V. also comes with risks

14 May - A panel of advisers to the [Food and Drug Administration](#) took a historic step last week when [they recommended](#) that the agency for the first time approve a drug that healthy people can take once a day to prevent [H.I.V.](#) infection. Such a pill has long been a goal of research, something that might help stem a global epidemic that is still causing two million new worldwide cases each year, including 50,000 in the United States. But the panel members worried about how to make sure doctors and patients would use the drug correctly. Otherwise, they said, the potential harm could be huge — not just to those taking the pill, but also to their sexual partners. Approval of the first H.I.V. preventive has tangled experts in complicated scientific and psychological issues and brought sometimes furious debate. One side says people are so unlikely to use the drug properly that it is irresponsible and dangerous to let them have it. The other side calls that argument paternalistic and says people who are motivated to protect themselves should be given the tools to do so. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Washington State faces pertussis epidemic

14 May - Pertussis infections have reached epidemic proportions in the state of Washington, officials there said, with more than 10 times as many cases this year as were counted by early May in 2011. The state's health department has recorded 1,284 cases of pertussis, familiarly known as whooping cough, through May 5. Last year, 128 cases were reported through the first 18 weeks... By far, the highest infection rates have been in

children and teens. Infants younger than 12 months and children 10 to 13 years old have had rates approaching 1 per 1,000. Among the 86 infants infected, 23 were hospitalized. Most of those admissions were in infants younger than 3 months. A CDC report last June indicated that only 9 states had lower rates of pertussis vaccination among children entering kindergarten in 2009 than Washington's 91.6%. Moreover, the state had the nation's highest rate of parent-signed exemptions from vaccination for kindergartners, at 6.2%. [MedPage Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

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Australia: Pain expert calls for GP opiates ban

14 May – Australian GPs should be banned from prescribing opioid drugs such as oxycodone because of the risks of addiction and overdose, a visiting US pain medicine specialist says. Associate Professor of Anaesthesiology at the University of Colorado Daniel Bennett said if Australia wanted to cut rising prescription drug abuse, GPs should have to refer patients with pain to pain medicine specialists who could screen them for addiction and prescribe opioids more safely if required. This would reduce the risk of addiction in patients with legitimate need and cut overprescribing that resulted in redirection of the drugs to the illicit drug market. "If you responsibly prescribe, you will minimise access to the drugs," he told the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists conference. Abuse of prescription drugs has soared in Australia over the past decade as doctors have increasingly prescribed opioids to people for musculoskeletal and other problems. In 2010, Australia's illicit drug reporting system found that regular injecting drug users were increasingly using prescription drugs such as oxycodone and morphine, with many reporting the drugs were easy to obtain. [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)

India: Chikungunya

14 May - Chikungunya [virus] is suspected to have resurfaced in Ganjam district with many persons in Boxipalli village exhibiting symptoms of the mosquito-borne viral disease. It will be confirmed after medical tests, doctors said on Saturday [12 May 2012]. "Doctors and para-medical staff led by district malaria officer (DLO) went to the affected village on Saturday. They treated patients and collected blood samples for diagnostic tests," said S K Patnaik, chief district medical officer [CDMO] of Ganjam. MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] (Gopalpur) Pradip Panigrahi asked the CDMO to deploy a medical team in the affected village till the disease is controlled. The disease was reported from this fishing village 2 days ago. The number of those affected has increased to a dozen with 2 more suffering from fever on Saturday, the CDMO said. Last month, 9 chikungunya cases were confirmed in Golabandh [in the Balangir district, Orissa state]. "Out of the 22 blood samples tested in Golabandh last month, 9 were found to be positive," the CDMO said. The situation in Golabandh is now normal, he added. [ProMED-mail](#)

India: Concerns mount over India's role in incubating drug-resistant bacteria



16 May - Medical research is once again pointing to India as a dangerous crucible of bacterial strains that resist many forms of antibiotic treatment. Cheap, under-regulated antibiotics and a severe shortfall of sanitation infrastructure fuel the problem. Medical experts warn India remains at the forefront of what the World Health Organization calls "the post-antibiotic era," in which a wide range of infectious bacteria evolve past the ability of even potent medicines to treat them. [VOA](#)

[top of page...](#)

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Haiti: Cholera vaccination drive in Haiti progressing

15 May - The first phase of a pilot campaign to vaccinate 100,000 Haitians against cholera has been completed, the American Red Cross said in a statement posted on ReliefWeb yesterday. The first of two doses of vaccine was administered to 50,000 adults and children older than 9 years in the Artibonite region, which absorbed the brunt of the 2010 cholera epidemic, the organization said. The campaign goal is to provide two doses to 100,000 people in targeted rural and urban areas. "From everything I've seen, there is no one who was eligible for the vaccine who didn't want it," said Djencia Eresa Augustin, a cholera surveyor for Partners in Health, the Boston-based nonprofit group that's leading the project. Vaccination teams were planning to give second doses to adults this week, and they will start vaccinating children under age 9 in the last week of May, the Red Cross said. The organization said it is contributing \$1 million to the \$1.3 million project. The oral vaccine, Shanchol, is 65% to 75% effective for up to 3 years, the statement said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

[top of page...](#)

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

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