

19 September 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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USAPHC has a new video on Ebola virus disease with information for service members deploying in response to the West African Ebola virus disease outbreak.



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**West Africa
Medical Threat
Briefing**

A medical threat briefing with information for those deploying to the area is available on AKO (password protected).



U.S. MILITARY

Poor fitness in military poses peril, report says

17 September - An increase in the number of overweight and out-of-shape service members who are unable to run long distances or perform physical tasks like push-ups poses a direct threat to the United States' ability to defend itself, a group of retired military leaders fighting for improved childhood nutrition said Wednesday. The group, called Mission: Readiness, released a report that found that about 12 percent of active-duty service members were obese based on height and weight, a number that has risen 61 percent since 2002. The report said the extra weight cost the military about \$1.5 billion annually in health care spending, as well as the expenses of replacing unfit soldiers, Marines, sailors and airmen. Service members who are out of shape are unlikely to be able to carry heavy equipment or engage in the prolonged physical activity needed in combat, members of the group said. [New York Times](#)

Vaginal yeast infections while deployed in Southwest/Central Asia, active component females, U.S. Armed Forces, 2008-2013

August 2014 - In field settings, female service members may not have adequate access to bathrooms, showers, laundry, or sanitary products necessary to maintain adequate feminine hygiene; therefore, service women may be at risk for vaginal yeast infections while deployed. During the 6-year surveillance period, nearly 3,000 U.S. military service women were diagnosed with at least one clinically significant yeast infection while supporting combat operations in Southwest/Central Asia. The crude overall incidence rate was 35.1 per 1,000 person-years (p-yrs). Overall incidence rates were higher among black, non-Hispanic service women, and among those in the Army and Air Force, in enlisted grades, and in communications/intelligence and motor transport occupations. The yearly rate of yeast infections was relatively stable from 2008 through 2010, then decreased in 2011 through 2013. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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GLOBAL

Dengue fever in Japan shows global spread through travel

15 September - When Japan identified its first local case of dengue in 70 years last month, it became the latest in a string of countries to battle the tropical fever. The most likely

White House Fact Sheet: U.S. Response to the Ebola Epidemic in West Africa

The Ebola epidemic in West Africa and the humanitarian crisis there is a top national security priority for the United States. In order to contain and combat it, we are partnering with the United Nations and other international partners to help the Governments of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Senegal respond just as we fortify our defenses at home. Every outbreak of Ebola over the past 40 years has been contained, and we are confident that this one can—and will be—as well.

importers of the disease: international travelers... The outbreak in Japan is an extension of the dengue pandemic that has moved around the world over the past 30 years to Europe, the U.S. and China, said Duane Gubler, professor of the emerging infectious diseases program at Duke University-National University of Singapore Graduate Medical School. Urbanization in developing nations and increased global travel have helped fuel the spread... There now are more than 50 to 100 million cases of dengue worldwide each year, and 3 billion people live in dengue endemic countries, according to the World Health Organization. [Bloomberg](#)

Maker of Hepatitis C drug strikes deal on generics for poor countries

15 September - The maker of one of the costliest drugs in the world announced on Monday that it had struck agreements with seven Indian generic drug makers to sell lower-cost versions of the medicine — a \$1,000-a-pill Hepatitis C treatment — in poorer countries. Gilead Sciences, the California-based drug maker, also said it will begin selling its own version of the drug in India and other developing countries at a fraction of the price it charges in the United States. The moves are intended to provide greater access to the medicine Sovaldi for most of the nearly 180 million infected worldwide with Hepatitis C who do not live in rich countries. Some 350,000 people die every year of Hepatitis C infections, most of them in middle- and low-income nations. [New York Times](#)

More birthdays for kids under 5 around the world

16 September - In 2013, 6.3 million children under the age of 5 died. That's a tragic statistic — yet it represents a 49 percent drop from 1990, according to data released Tuesday by the United Nations. [NPR](#)

The path forward on Ebola and other public health emergencies

15 September - By announcing his intention to appoint an Ebola “czar” in an effort to coordinate the US government’s response to the ongoing spread of this deadly disease in West Africa, President Obama is illustrating a shortcoming in our current biosecurity and the ability of our health system to respond to emerging infectious diseases... [The] CDC and WHO have expanded their reach to all aspects of health, including non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, depression, and diabetes. Attached to this enhanced reach are increased costs and manpower needs which, given limited resources, can compete with and directly impact the ability of these agencies, which the world expects to act effectively in responding to the infectious diseases that were once their core function... The appointment of a US Surgeon General with infectious disease expertise, a senior-level biosecurity/emerging infectious diseases coordinator and a prioritization of the WHO and CDC budgets and workforce to ensure the capability to perform core functions are the essential components of the path forward. [Forbes](#)

2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa

CDC resources for healthcare workers on the Ebola outbreak are available on its [What's New page](#).

The resources include: a healthcare preparedness checklist, safety training courses, specimen management, as well as guidance for on air medical transport for patients infected with the disease.



World hunger easing but 1 in 9 people undernourished: food agencies

16 September - The number of hungry people in the world has fallen sharply over the past decade but 805 million, or one in nine of the global population, still do not have enough to eat, three U.N. food and agriculture agencies said on Tuesday. The number of chronically undernourished people dropped by more than 100 million, equivalent to a country the size of the Philippines, according to a report by the United Nations food agency (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Food Programme (WFP). Government drives to improve nutrition have helped the developing world move towards a U.N. goal of halving the number of people suffering from hunger between 1990 and 2015, said the report entitled "The State of Food Insecurity in the World". [Reuters](#)

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

Can the U.S. Army degrade and destroy Ebola?

17 September - ... In what will amount to the largest humanitarian commitment since the American response to the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia, the White House announced late on Sept. 15 that an estimated 3,000 military personnel will deploy to the Ebola-ravaged West African nations, alongside a significant increase in civilian mobilization... This dramatic increase in U.S. commitment comes alongside beefed-up responses from several countries, largely focused on Sierra Leone. The Cuban government is sending 165 health professionals to that country; China is deploying 59 health workers; the U.K. government has promised to construct a 62-bed hospital in the country's capital, Freetown; and many other nations have promised other modest forms of assistance. The French government, on a significantly more modest level, has committed 20 experts in biological disasters to its former colony Guinea. At the behest of U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, the Security Council will hold an emergency meeting on the Ebola crisis on Thursday; it is only the second disease-focused gathering in the body's history. The first, organized by U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke under the Clinton administration in January 2000, focused on the then out-of-control HIV pandemic. [Foreign Policy](#)

Containing Ebola virus infection in West Africa

11 September - Ebola virus disease (EVD) is leaving a mark deeper and wider than ever before. The current outbreak now spans five countries in West Africa – Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone – with over 4,200 cases and 2,200 deaths reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) as of 6 September 2014. Unfortunately, with many cases either not reported or yet to show symptoms, the true number of infections is likely to be considerably higher. The first countries affected were among the world's poorest, areas

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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<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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where long periods of civil wars have battered health services and eroded public trust. As a result, the outbreak has spread to other countries, and continues to expand. What began as a local problem has turned into an international crisis. [Eurosurveillance](#)

Ebola poses a new challenge for U.S. military

17 September - President Barack Obama's plan to contain the Ebola outbreak presents the U.S. military with a logistical challenge with few precedents, one that it will be under pressure to execute quickly while ensuring that the 3,000 military personnel involved are protected from the deadly virus... The operation will require the military to fuse its experience in responding to natural disasters with its training in biowarfare to minimize the risks of Americans contracting the disease. Personnel will bring medical assistance and training, logistical expertise and engineering experience to set up 17 field hospitals with 100 beds each, more than tripling current capacity. "This is unprecedented as a public-health operation led by the U.S. military," Mr. Morrison said. A defense official said the Pentagon anticipates having the Ebola treatment units running "in the next several weeks." The official said the centers would be turned over to Liberia and staffed by local and international health-care providers, not U.S. military personnel. [Wall Street Journal](#)

Ebola — Underscoring the global disparities in health care resources

18 September – [Summary article by Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.] An outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) has jolted West Africa, claiming more than 1000 lives since the virus emerged in Guinea in early 2014. The rapidly increasing numbers of cases in the African countries of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone have had public health authorities on high alert throughout the spring and summer. More recent events including the spread of EVD to Nigeria (Africa's most populous country) and the recent evacuation to the United States of two American health care workers with EVD have captivated the world's attention and concern. Health professionals and the general public are struggling to comprehend these unfolding dynamics and to separate misinformation and speculation from truth. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Eight bodies found after attack on Guinea Ebola education team

18 September - Eight bodies, including those of three journalists, were found after an attack on a team trying to educate locals on the risks of the Ebola virus in a remote area of southeastern Guinea, a government spokesman said on Thursday. "The eight bodies were found in the village latrine. Three of them had their throats slit," Damantang Albert Camara told Reuters by telephone in Conakry... Guinea's Prime Minister Mohamed Saïd Fofana... said six people have been arrested following the incident, which took place on Tuesday in Wome, a village close to the town of Nzerekore, in Guinea's southeast, where Ebola was first identified in March. [Reuters](#)

Experts raise specter of more-contagious Ebola virus

12 September - Amid fears that West Africa's Ebola epidemic may spiral out of control, two experts are using the pages of leading newspapers to raise the specter of a mutant Ebola virus that could become airborne, and appealing for massive interventions to preclude that nightmare scenario. Michael T. Osterholm, PhD, MPH, wrote in a *New York Times* commentary today that the scale of the epidemic is offering the virus unprecedented opportunities to evolve toward greater transmissibility, which could give it the capability to spread worldwide. He is director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy, publisher of CIDRAP News. Richard E. Besser, MD, chief health editor at ABC News and a former acting director at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), wrote in the *Washington Post* last night that a more-contagious Ebola virus could threaten the United States. [CIDRAP](#)

Global response to Ebola marked by lack of coordination and leadership, experts say

11 September - More than six months into the worst Ebola outbreak in history, there is no clear sense of who is leading the international response, how funds are being collected and disbursed, which organizations are providing equipment and personnel, and when any of these efforts will make a significant difference in slowing the epidemic in West Africa. The confusion and lack of coordination have delayed shipments of desperately needed supplies; some of those being pledged now won't arrive for months. For example, a 62-bed facility that the British government on Monday promised to deliver will take eight weeks to be operational; the 25-bed field hospital the Pentagon has offered will take at least a month before it is up and running. The lagging response means that the relief effort is three to four months behind where it should be, given the seriousness of the epidemic, health experts say. [New York Times](#)

How do you catch ebola: By air, sweat or water?

12 September - ...The confusion surrounding this topic, he adds, is well-deserved, in part because health officials often try to simplify their messages. So they don't spend much time fleshing out "exceptions and extraordinary possibilities," he says. "As they simplify it, they start to sound like an absolute," Schmaljohn says. "And people are smart enough to disbelieve absolutes." He says to think about the methods of Ebola transmission as high-risk or low-risk. There's a high risk, for example, of catching Ebola if you shake hands with an infected patient and a very low one if that same person coughs or sneezes around you... The virus is most abundant in blood and diarrhea. In fact, a milliliter of blood typically carries about a million infectious particles. And in a controlled lab, just a small drop of blood from an infected monkey can be strong enough to kill a million of its companions, Schmaljohn says. A CDC study in 2007 found that Ebola is shed through other bodily fluids during the illness, such as saliva, breast milk and semen. In most cases, these fluids were not visibly contaminated by blood, but they still contained the virus. That study didn't look at sweat, but another one suggested that Ebola could be passed on through sweat. [NPR](#)

Online volunteers map uncharted Ebola zones to help save lives

18 September - ...[For] the Ebola crisis, citizens from all over the world are donating their time by going online to build maps for relief workers. Call it crowd-sourced cartography that can save lives. Roads or paths to remote villages through deep forest in West Africa, bridges and river crossings, school buildings that can be used as temporary clinics, an open field for a helicopter landing - all these are visible from satellite imagery and provide critical information for delivering aid. However, these details never made it onto official maps in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone - countries too poor to worry about whether there are accurate Google Maps loaded onto smartphones... Enter the collaborative Ebola project by the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT). OpenStreetMap is a project to create a free, open map of the world, built by volunteers through GPS surveying, aerial imagery, and public sources of geographic data. [Reuters](#)

Some airports have a new security routine: Taking your temperature

18 September - Airports in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are relying on a familiar tool to stop the spread of Ebola: the thermometer. Airport staff are measuring the temperature of anyone trying to leave the country, looking for "unexplained febrile illness," according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is advising these countries on their exit screening processes. Other countries that are far from the infected region are screening passengers arriving from West Africa or who have a history of travel to the region. Temperature takers include Russia, Australia and India. Travelers who exhibit an elevated fever, generally over 101.4 degrees Fahrenheit (though it varies by country), are stopped for further screening. That could mean a questionnaire or medical tests. [NPR](#)

U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps to help treat Ebola patients in Liberia

17 September - A team of specialized officers from the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps is being prepared to deploy to manage and staff a previously announced U.S. Department of Defense hospital in Liberia to care for health care workers who become ill from Ebola... Sixty-five Commissioned Corps officers, with diverse clinical and public health backgrounds, will travel to Liberia to provide direct patient care to health care workers. In addition to their professional expertise, these officers will undergo further intensive training in Ebola response and advanced infection control. blog.AIDS.gov

U.S. to begin Ebola hospital equipment lift to Liberia

17 September - The first planeload of hospital equipment in the U.S. military's battle against West Africa's deadly Ebola outbreak will arrive in Liberia on Friday, a senior administration official said on Wednesday... The plane is the first of 13 air shipments headed for Monrovia,

carrying equipment for a 25-bed hospital to be built in Liberia's capital. The facility will be staffed by 65 Americans who will treat healthcare workers infected while fighting the worst outbreak of the virus on record, according to Lindborg. The epidemic has killed nearly 2,500 people, about half those infected. [Reuters](#)

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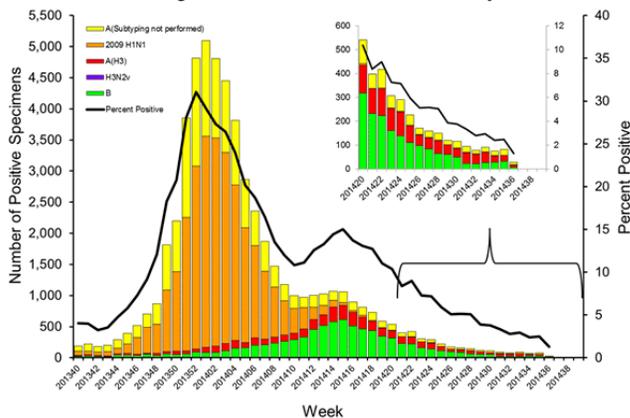
INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 36 ending September 6, 2014, WHO and NREVSS collaborating laboratories located in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. report to CDC the number of respiratory specimens tested for influenza and the number positive by influenza type and subtype.

[FluView](#)

Influenza Positive Tests Reported to CDC by U.S. WHO/NREVSS Collaborating Laboratories, National Summary, 2013-14



DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

During 3 - 30 August, results were finalized for 28 specimens from 17 locations. There were three specimens positive for influenza (one A(H3N2), one A(H3N2)v, and one B).

- USAFSAM sequenced an influenza A(H3N2)v, which was confirmed by CDC, and determined the HA and the NA were swine H3 while the matrix gene was human H1. These three genes matched the specimen collected by the Ohio Department of Health on 5 August. It was also found to be very similar to a specimen that was collected from a swine in Iowa in May.
- USAFSAM laboratories can detect enterovirus, and specimens can be forwarded to CDC for typing if necessary. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

Influenza vaccination coverage among health care personnel — United States, 2013–14 influenza season

19 September - The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that all health care personnel (HCP) be vaccinated annually against influenza. Vaccination of HCP can reduce influenza-related morbidity and mortality among both HCP and their patients. To estimate influenza vaccination coverage among HCP during the 2013–14 season, CDC analyzed results of an opt-in Internet panel survey of 1,882 HCP conducted during April 1–16, 2014. Overall, 75.2% of participating HCP reported receiving an influenza vaccination during the 2013–14 season, similar to the 72.0% coverage among participating HCP reported in the 2012–13 season. Coverage was highest among HCP working in hospitals (89.6%) and lowest among HCP working in long-term care (LTC) settings (63.0%). [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For Week 37 (through 13 September 2014):

Influenza: One case of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.

FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at CGTC Cape May. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

Study: Preseason antibodies influence immunity to H3N2, flu B, not H1N1

16 September - Increased homologous hemagglutination-inhibiting (HI) antibody titers are significantly associated with protection against both H3N2 and type B but not H1N1 influenza in people whose influenza immunity has been shaped by prior natural infection rather than vaccination, according to a study today in the *Journal of Infection*. Resistance to H1N1 is influenced more by age, the authors found. The researchers, from England, Australia, and Vietnam, carried out 3 consecutive years of surveillance for influenza-like illness (ILI) (ie, fever >38°C with cough or sore throat), in 940 individuals from 270 Vietnamese households (1,793 person-seasons) in which the residents had never received flu vaccine. The flu seasons covered, from 2007 to 2010, included recirculating flu strains, new antigenic variants, and H1N1 pandemic flu. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

U.S. lawmakers want to curb antibiotic use on farms

16 September - Two U.S. lawmakers are calling for action to rein in antibiotic use in livestock in response to a Reuters investigation showing how top U.S. poultry firms have been administering drugs to their flocks...[Reuters'] documents show that antibiotics were given as standard practice over most of the life of the chickens, not just when the birds are sick. In every instance of antibiotic use identified, the doses were at the low levels that scientists say are especially conducive to the growth of so-called superbugs -- bacteria that can gain resistance to conventional medicines used to treat people... The FDA has issued voluntary guidelines to regulate antibiotic use by producers of poultry and other livestock. The use of antibiotics rated medically important by the FDA for growth promotion is scheduled to be phased out by December 2016. [Reuters](#)

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WELLNESS

Dairy consumption linked to lower blood pressure and cardiovascular disease risk

15 September – ...[The] association between milk and risk for hypertension and CVD was examined... [Based] on nine studies with 57,256 individuals and 15,367 cases of hypertension, the analysis revealed that as total dairy, low-fat dairy and milk (just over two cups a day) consumption increased, the risk for high blood pressure decreased. Milk intake was not statistically significantly associated with risk of coronary heart disease, stroke and total mortality... These findings are further supported by a clinical trial by Daniel R. Machin, et. al. published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* in May 2014 that showed the addition of four servings of nonfat dairy per day to a routine diet lowered blood pressure in middle-aged and older adults. [EurekAlert](#)

Diet soda may alter our gut microbes and raise the risk of diabetes

17 September - Now, a new study published in the journal *Nature* introduces a new idea: Diet sodas may alter our gut microbes in a way that increases the risk of metabolic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes — at least in some of us. In the paper, researchers at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel describe what happened when they fed zero-calorie sweeteners, including saccharin, aspartame and sucralose, to mice. "To our surprise, [the mice] developed glucose intolerance," Weizmann researcher Eran Elinav tells us. Intrigued by the findings, Elinav and his colleague Eran Segal set out to determine whether this might

happen in people as well... [They asked volunteers] to start consuming the equivalent of 10-12 of those fake sugar packets during a one-week experiment. "What we find is that a subgroup [four of the seven people] developed significant disturbances in their blood glucose even after short-term exposure to artificial sweeteners," Elinav says. [NPR](#)

Exercise keeps blood pressure steady despite age

16 September - A progressively rising blood pressure trajectory is not an inevitable part of aging in men who remain active and maintain high levels of cardiorespiratory fitness, a prospective, population-based study found. The study included almost 14,000 men without high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, or cancer at baseline followed for three and a half decades. Men in the study who were categorized as having the lowest level of fitness, based on baseline treadmill tests, reached a systolic blood pressure (SBP) of >120 mmHg at approximately 46 years of age, compared with 54 years of age among those whose fitness levels were highest. Age-related diastolic blood pressure differences (DBP) were far more pronounced, with low-fitness men reaching >80 mmHg at approximately 42 years old compared with beyond age 90 in the highest fitness group. [MedPage Today](#)

F.D.A. panel weighs restrictions on testosterone drugs

17 September - An expert panel is considering whether the Food and Drug Administration should tighten rules for the \$2 billion testosterone industry and is expected to make its recommendations this afternoon at the conclusion of a hearing here. Once used by a small group of men for medical reasons, testosterone drugs are now being prescribed to millions of American men for symptoms that are largely related to aging, a pattern that has alarmed some medical experts. The F.D.A. has said that the benefits of such treatments for healthy, aging men are unproven, and that the drugs could even be risky. Men who take them have been found to have higher rates of heart problems in some studies. The agency is asking its expert panel what limits, if any, it should impose. The F.D.A. often takes the advice of such panels. [New York Times](#)

How likely is it that birth control could let you down?

13 September - Misuse and failure of birth control are major contributors to the millions of unplanned pregnancies in the United States each year. When failure rates of contraceptives are mentioned, they usually refer to a given year of use. Less understood is that the risk of failure is compounded over time. The longer any method of contraception is used, the greater the probability of unplanned pregnancy — the same way that any small risk, taken repeatedly, grows in likelihood. This is true for all contraception methods, even in the highly unlikely event that they are used perfectly, every time. [New York Times](#)

Select drugs cause most childhood poisonings

15 September - Almost all prescription medicines in the United States come in bottles with child-resistant caps. Still, more than 9,000 children younger than 6 are hospitalized annually for the accidental ingestion of prescription drugs; three-quarters of these are 1- and 2-year-

olds, a new study reports... The most often implicated medicines contained buprenorphine, used for treating narcotic addiction and sometimes as a pain reliever; and clonidine, a substance in medicines for high blood pressure, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and migraines, among other ailments. Opioid pain relievers like Vicodin and antianxiety drugs like Valium and Xanax accounted for about 28 percent of hospitalizations. [New York Times](#)

Sit less, live longer?

17 September - ...For the new experiment, the Swedish scientists recruited a group of sedentary, overweight men and women, all aged 68, and drew blood, in order to measure the length of telomeres in the volunteers' white blood cells. Then half of the volunteers began an individualized, moderate exercise program, designed to improve their general health. They also were advised to sit less. The other volunteers were told to continue with their normal lives, although the scientists urged them to try to lose weight and be healthy, without offering any specific methods. After six months, the volunteers all returned for a second blood draw and to complete questionnaires about their daily activities. These showed that those in the exercise group were, not surprisingly, exercising more than they had been previously. But they were also, for the most part, sitting substantially less than before. And when the scientists compared telomeres, they found that the telomeres in the volunteers who were sitting the least had lengthened. Their cells seemed to be growing physiologically younger. Meanwhile, in the control group telomeres generally were shorter than they had been six months before. But perhaps most interesting, there was little correlation between exercise and telomere length. [New York Times](#)

Multiple sclerosis risk tied to some oral contraceptives



16 September - Women using combined oral contraceptives containing norethindrone or levonorgestrel were substantially more likely to develop multiple sclerosis (MS) than those not on birth control pills, analysis of a large claims database indicated. Among some 4,300 women in Kaiser Permanente's Southern California system from 2008 to 2011, those whose most recent oral contraceptive contained norethindrone had a 57% higher risk of definite MS or clinically isolated syndrome (CIS) (odds ratio 1.57, 95% CI 1.16-2.12) compared with plan members who had no record of oral contraceptive use. [MedPage Today](#)

Sedentary lifestyle linked to depression

18 September - ...Based on dozens of studies covering hundreds of thousands of participants, Chinese researchers found that sedentary behavior was linked to a 25 percent higher likelihood of being depressed compared to people who were not sedentary. The research has limitations, Long Zhai, of Qingdao University Medical College in Shangong, and his coauthors write, but it suggests that physical activity would be a good prescription for preventing depression. "Although it was a thorough investigation of a relatively new research area, a number of unanswered questions still remain," said Megan Teychenne from

the Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia. Among these is "whether sedentary behavior increases the risk of depression; or whether it is that those with depression are just more likely to engage in sedentary behaviors such as computer use or television viewing," said Teychenne, who wasn't involved in the study. [Reuters](#)

Should we all take a bit of lithium?

13 September - ...Lithium is a naturally occurring element, not a molecule like most medications, and it is present in the United States, depending on the geographic area, at concentrations that can range widely, from undetectable to around .170 milligrams per liter. This amount is less than a thousandth of the minimum daily dose given for bipolar disorders and for depression that doesn't respond to antidepressants. Although it seems strange that the microscopic amounts of lithium found in groundwater could have any substantial medical impact, the more scientists look for such effects, the more they seem to discover. Evidence is slowly accumulating that relatively tiny doses of lithium can have beneficial effects. They appear to decrease suicide rates significantly and may even promote brain health and improve mood. [New York Times](#)

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USAFRICOM

Africa: Ebola is deadly but malaria steals more lives

17 September - ...To say that Ebola has wreaked havoc is an understatement. It is arguably the biggest public health concern at the moment - at least in places where it is raging. Yet the fear and panic generated by Ebola is making many lose sight of the fact that treatable diseases, such as malaria, remain the biggest killer diseases on the African continent...[The] World Health Organisation's most recent statistics on malaria suggest that every 30 seconds someone in Africa succumbs to the disease, which is transmitted through mosquito bites. "In 2012, 90 percent of the world's malaria deaths occurred in Africa and about 460,000 African children died before their fifth birthdays," the WHO 2013 malaria report said. "It is one of the causes of household poverty because it results in absenteeism from the daily activities of productive living and income generation. Malaria also continues to prevent many school children from attending school due to illness, diminishing their capacity to realise their full potential." ... Understandably the focus now is on Ebola. But when the disease is finally brought under control, Nigeria and many countries in Sub Saharan Africa will still be losing hundreds of thousands of people to malaria, and the disease will continue to keep others away from productive work. [Al Jazeera](#)

South African move on child trafficking

17 September - The announcement yesterday that parents would have another nine months to comply with new regulations for travelling into and out of South Africa with their children has been met with a collective sigh of relief. The new requirements, which had been due to come into effect on 1 October, state that parents, regardless of nationality, must produce unabridged birth certificates for children travelling with them and that one parent travelling with a child must have the written consent of the other parent or a court order granting them legal guardianship. When the regulations were announced in late May, South Africa's Home Affairs Ministry described them as "for the safety of children, including their protection from child trafficking, abduction and kidnapping". However, migration experts have questioned whether South Africa has a significant child trafficking problem and if it does, whether stricter regulations are the best way to deal with it. [IRIN](#)

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USCENTCOM

Pakistan floods affect 2.3 million

17 September - As the flood emergency deepens in Pakistan, now affecting nearly 2.3 million people, humanitarian teams have mobilized to work alongside local government authorities to assess needs in the worst-affected areas. Late monsoon rains earlier this month hit the mountainous areas of Gilgit-Balistan and Pakistani-administered Kashmir, unleashing a torrent of water flowing into Punjab's agricultural heartlands. Swollen rivers breached flood defences, sweeping away thousands of villages as the "super-flood" surged south, wreaking havoc throughout Punjab, the country's most populous province. The government's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) says 312 people have died, with 2,275,000 affected and nearly 1.7 million acres (687,965 hectares) of crops lost. Punjab Province declared a state of emergency as the flood spread through central areas, with Jhang District hit hardest. [IRIN](#)

Saudi Arabia reports new MERS case as Hajj nears

15 September - An additional case of MERS-CoV has been reported by Saudi Arabia's ministry of health (MOH) today, the latest in a small rash of cases recently from widely disparate areas of the country after a summer lull. The patient is a 76-year-old man from Najran, which is in the far south of the country near the border with Yemen. He had unspecified preexisting disease and is in intensive care, says the update. He is not a healthcare worker and did not have exposure to animals. Saudi Arabia has reported a total of 730 MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) cases, 302 of them fatal, since June 2012. No new deaths were reported today. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

Syria: Bad vaccine kills up to 50 children in Northern Syria

17 September - Spoiled or possibly sabotaged measles vaccine has killed as many as 50 children in insurgent-held areas of northwestern Syria, forcing a suspension of a large-scale vaccination campaign intended to stop the spread of measles, mumps, rubella and polio, volunteer medical organizations reported on Wednesday. The victims, some of them just infants, apparently all died on Tuesday, mostly concentrated in the cities of Jarjanaz and Sinjar in Idlib Province, an area controlled by forces opposed to President Bashar al-Assad. These opposition forces have sought to function as an interim government and provide basic health care services, including inoculations and vaccinations to children, given the collapse of Syria's public health care system since the civil war began more than three years ago. [New York Times](#)

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USEUCOM

Belgium: ECDC reports environmental spill of GSK poliovirus in Belgium

15 September - Concentrated live poliovirus solution was accidentally released into the environment by pharmaceutical company GSK in Belgium on Sep 2, according to a notice in this week's Communicable Disease Threats Report from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The 45-liter spill, caused by human error, occurred in Rixensart. According to the report, the liquid flowed directly to the Rosieres water-treatment plant and then, after treatment, into the river Lasne, which flows into the river Dyle, which in turn flows into the Escaut/Scheldt. Belgium's High Council of Public Health (HCPH) conducted tests of water and mud at the treatment plant and in the Lasne and Dyle rivers and found no presence of polio virus. Personnel at the plant, considered to be at increased risk, were given medical assistance and polio vaccinations. Booster doses of vaccine were recommended for people having exposure to water in the river Lasne since Sep 2. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fifth item)

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Canada: Military suicides outnumbered deaths in Afghanistan, new stats show

16 September - There were more suicides in the Canadian Forces since 2002 than combat deaths during Canada's Afghanistan mission, according to a report obtained by QMI Agency. In the 12 years that Canadians fought in Afghanistan, 158 Armed Forces members were killed. According to records obtained from the Department of National Defence, there were 178 Canadian Forces suicides in the same period. Due to standard military practice to issue only the numbers of suicides of full-time male soldiers — so the military can compare those statistics with the same age in the general population — previous numbers did not include female soldiers or reservists. This has allowed the government to state that the suicide rate of a full-time male members of the Armed Forces is no different than that of the average Canadian from a similar demographic. [Edmonton Sun](#)

Mexico: Tourists, locals in survival mode after Los Cabos hurricane; no power, water, food

17 September - Desperate locals and tourists were in survival mode in the resort area of Los Cabos on Wednesday, with electrical and water service still out three days after Hurricane Odile made landfall as a monster Category 3 storm. Looters stripped supermarkets of their food and other products, with some people fighting over goods. At least one supermarket decided to give away its merchandise. People pushed shopping carts full of goods that at times clogged the highway. Mexico's government continued to fly stranded tourists out of the area as the remnants of Odile drenched the northern state of Sonora and headed on a path forecast to take the rain into Arizona overnight. [CBS San Francisco](#)

U.S.: Health officials - Enterovirus cases confirmed in NY, NJ and Connecticut

17 September - The New York City area, New Jersey and Connecticut are seeing their first cases of the uncommon respiratory illness that has shown up in children in a dozen states. Health officials said Wednesday that a New York City child and a Long Island elementary school student have been diagnosed with enterovirus D68... Meanwhile, enterovirus D68 was identified in a specimen sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by a Philadelphia hospital where a New Jersey child was being treated... It is the first-ever enterovirus D68 case in the state. Connecticut also confirmed its first case of the illness Wednesday... Doctors also suspect a handful of children who are recovering at Maria Fareri Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center were stricken with the virus. [CBS New York](#)

U.S. needs better end-of-life care, which might cut costs: study

17 September - The United States needs to improve its medical care for people nearing death, a move that might cut rising healthcare costs, an Institute of Medicine (IOM) study said on Wednesday. The 507-page "Dying in America" study is aimed at opening a debate on how the U.S. healthcare system treats Americans nearing death and urges comprehensive care to improve the quality of life in their final days... Doctors need training in how to talk to patients about planning for their deaths since more than a quarter of U.S. adults have given little or no thought to about how they would like to die, the report said. That has occurred even though polls show that many Americans worry about the potential high costs of care near the end of life and do not want to be a burden on family members, the study said. One benefit of improved end-of-life programs could be lower healthcare spending in the United States, which reached \$2.8 trillion in 2012, the study said. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: North Dakota study finds Lyme disease ticks moving west

12 September - A survey conducted in North Dakota in 2010 found the ticks that carry Lyme disease bacteria (*Ixodes scapularis*, or deer ticks), marking their first known appearance in the state and showing that they are spreading westward, according to a study in the September *Journal of Medical Entomology*. The researchers collected 1,762 ticks through sampling at sites in nine counties around North Dakota in the early summer of 2010. Most of the ticks (82%) were *Dermacentor variabilis*, but 17% were *I. scapularis*, found in six eastern counties. In one county (Grand Forks), three *I. scapularis* ticks tested positive for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacterium that causes Lyme disease. Another eight ticks in the county were infected with *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*, which causes anaplasmosis. The report notes that Lyme disease cases were rare in North Dakota before 2007 but have increased somewhat since then, with most reported in eastern counties. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

U.S.: Pesticide levels in waterways have dropped, reducing the risks to humans

11 September - The development of safer pesticides and legal restrictions on their use have sharply reduced the risk to humans from pesticide-tainted rivers and streams, while the potential risk to aquatic life in urban waters has risen, according to a two-decade survey published on Thursday... While human-health hazards declined over 20 years, the share of streams whose pesticide levels posed a potential threat to aquatic life remained mostly steady: Between 60 and 70 percent of agricultural streams and roughly 45 percent of streams in mixed-use areas, registered levels above the benchmark for potential harm to aquatic life. Urban streams — the survey monitored 30 — were the glaring exception. There, the proportion of streams with pesticide levels above the aquatic-life benchmark soared from 53 percent in the first decade to 90 percent in the second, even as other pesticides

were phased out. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Severe respiratory illness associated with Enterovirus D68 – Multiple states, 2014

12 September - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working closely with hospitals and local and state health departments to investigate recent increases in hospitalizations of patients with severe respiratory illness. Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) has been detected in specimens from children with severe illness in Missouri and Illinois. Investigations into suspected clusters in other jurisdictions are ongoing. The purpose of this HAN Advisory is to provide awareness of EV-D68 as a possible cause of acute unexplained respiratory illness, and to provide guidance to state health departments and health care providers. Please disseminate this information to infectious disease specialists, intensive care physicians, pediatricians, internists, infection preventionists, and primary care providers, as well as to emergency departments and microbiology laboratories. [CDC](#)

U.S.: Waistlines 'grow an inch in a decade' in US

16 September - US waistlines are continuing to expand, despite obesity appearing to be reaching a plateau, data suggests. Research suggests the average adult waist size in the US increased by more than 1in (2.5cm) between 1999 and 2012. But figures for obesity as defined by body mass index (BMI) had changed little over the same period, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said... The researchers, led by Dr Earl Ford, analysed national data on nutrition and health in the US from 1999-2000 to 2011-12. [BBC News](#)

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USPACOM

China: Diabetes is a major public-health crisis in China

18 September - Type 2 diabetes in China has become a "major public-health crisis," with rates soaring over the past 3 decades, according to a new 3-part series dedicated to diabetes in China and published online in *Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology* on September 11. The number of people in China now living with diabetes — over 100 million — is greater than any other country in the world. As of 2013, 1 in 4 people with diabetes worldwide lived in China. Eleven percent of adults in China have diabetes, while 50% have prediabetes, putting them at risk for major health problems such as cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, and cancer. Moreover, many people with diabetes remain undiagnosed, untreated, or poorly controlled. Diabetes also poses a large economic threat to China. National healthcare expenses for diabetes rose from 1.96% of national healthcare expenditure in 1983 to 18.2% in 2007. [Medscape](#)

India: 150,000 stranded Kashmiris face disease outbreak after historic floods



15 September - ...Between 150,000 and 200,000 people are stuck in partially underwater buildings nearly two weeks after torrential rains caused major flooding in the Himalayan region of Kashmir and eastern Pakistan, according to local media reports. And the proximity of so many people to dirty, stagnant water is increasing fears that an outbreak of waterborne disease is on the horizon... The biggest risk of infection from flooding comes from water-borne diseases like typhoid fever, cholera, and hepatitis A, and basic diarrhoeal diseases, the WHO says. That's largely because when people are stranded in flooded areas, they can quickly lose access to clean drinking water. Local India-based news site Scroll reports that medical camps have been giving out chlorine tablets so that affected residents can purify their own water. [ThinkProgress](#)

Philippines: Measles cases in Central Visayas up a whopping 1,260%

16 September - Measles cases in Central Visayas from January to September 13 of this year reached 1,387 with 7 deaths, or 1,260 percent higher from the same period last year, the Department of Health in Region VII (DOH-7) said yesterday. Last year, only 102 measles cases were recorded for the entire Central Visayas region with no fatality, records released by the DOH's Regional Epidemiology Surveillance Unit (RESU) 7 showed... The rise in the number of measles cases in Cebu was also due to the coming in of calamity victims into Cebu from Bohol, Leyte and other affected areas. [Manila Bulletin](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Caribbean: Chikungunya outbreak total tops 700,000 infections

15 September - Health officials reported another big spike in the Caribbean region's chikungunya outbreak, much of it due to updated surveillance information from the Dominican Republic, the hardest-hit country, according to the latest report from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). PAHO also reported a tripling of outbreak deaths, to 113. Countries in the region reported 55,190 more cases than last week, lifting the overall total to 714,744 suspected and confirmed cases. Last week's increase is much larger than

the 1,088 new cases reported the week before. An update from the Dominican Republic accounts for 37,628 of the new cases. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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