

1 March 2013

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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Malaria Prevention while Staying in a Malarious Area

This new video suggests ways to protect yourself from malaria by preventing mosquito bites. The use of window screens, insecticide, bed nets, DEET, permethrin-treated clothing and anti-malarial medication are discussed.



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- Brazil: African-ancestry babies get less prenatal care
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- Paraguay: Dengue - 27 deaths in 2013 and 783 cases in one day

Smartphone Apps to Enable Biosurveillance

The U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command's Edgewood Chemical Biological Center (ECBC) has teamed with the University of California, La., to support the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) design and build modular add-on devices for Android smartphones, which will improve the ease, accuracy and consistency of biosurveillance.

With U.S. Soldiers and other deployed personnel in many underdeveloped areas, it is increasingly important to have compact, lightweight and inexpensive equipment that is capable of detecting and analyzing harmful agents or diagnosing disease and quickly sending the results to a response team. These applications and hardware add-ons would enable Soldiers to use a device they already carry to quickly and accurately collect and analyze data with a clear yes/no capability, essential archived evidence and GPS tracking. **Stand-To!**

U.S. MILITARY

Ironhorse integrates "Go for Green"

26 February - When asked what a Soldier is you'll get a lot of the same common answers: hero, warrior and service member. As true as all those are, what people may not realize is nutrition plays an important role in the life and activities of a Soldier. In order to help promote Army health and nutrition, the Joint Culinary Center of Excellence (JCCoE) designed a program known as "Go For Green" in 2010. According to the JCCoE, "the 'Go For Green' program is a nutritional recognition labeling system providing the Soldier with a quick assessment of the nutritional value of menu offerings and food products in the dining facility." The 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, is not exempt from this program. [MHS](#)

Military medical experts urge caution on dietary health supplements

25 February - In an effort to adopt a healthier lifestyle, many people reach for nutrient-rich vitamins, energy drinks and dietary supplements to pursue the goal of total wellness. But there are health risks attached to taking dietary supplements, especially for those with pre-existing conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes. While there is no single federal banned list of dietary supplements or ingredients, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has found that many dietary supplements—especially weight-loss, bodybuilding, and sexual-enhancement products—may contain ingredients that could be harmful. In some cases, ingredients in supplements may produce unwanted results in urinalysis testing as well. The Department of Defense Human Performance Resource Center, [OPSS: Operation Supplement Safety](#) webpage offers online information for the military community about the safety of energy drinks and answers frequently asked questions. More information related to dietary supplements and drug testing is also available. [Health.mil](#)

Report: No link between deployment, suicide in military

22 February - A study released Friday has found that demographics and the ending of a relationship—and not deployment status—are most closely associated with suicides in the Army National Guard. Between 2007 and 2010, 294 members of the Army National Guard committed suicide. The suicide rate for members of the National Guard was higher than that of members of the active Army (1 in 3,225 National Guard committed suicide, compared to 1 in 4,000 for the Army.) The suicide rate in the general population is 1 in 5,000... "Primary risk factors associated with having committed suicide among the 2007-2010 [National Guard] suicide cases were age (young), gender (male), and race (white)," according to the report. People who fall into that group are also most likely to commit suicide in the general population. [U.S. News and World Report](#)

Solve the Outbreak

A new app by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lets you get clues, analyze data, solve the case, and save lives!

Do you quarantine the village? Talk to people who are sick? Ask for more lab results? The better your answers, the higher your score - and the more quickly you'll save lives. You'll start out as a Trainee and can earn badges by solving cases, with the goal of earning the top rank: Disease Detective.

More information



Trauma sets female veterans adrift back home

27 February - ... Even as the Pentagon lifts the ban on women in combat roles, returning servicewomen are facing a battlefield of a different kind: they are now the fastest growing segment of the homeless population, an often-invisible group bouncing between sofa and air mattress, overnighting in public storage lockers, living in cars and learning to park inconspicuously on the outskirts of shopping centers to avoid the violence of the streets. While male returnees become homeless largely because of substance abuse and mental illness, experts say that female veterans face those problems and more, including the search for family housing and an even harder time finding well-paying jobs. But a common pathway to homelessness for women, researchers and psychologists said, is military sexual trauma, or M.S.T., from assaults or harassment during their service, which can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. [New York Times](#)

Two more divers killed at Aberdeen Proving Ground

26 February - Two Navy divers died in the Super Pond at Aberdeen Proving Ground on Tuesday, less than a month after the death of another diver at the same location. Officials at the Army base in Harford County released few details late Tuesday about the incident, which occurred about 2:30 p.m. at the Unexploded Ordnance Range pond. The man-made body of water is also known as the Super Pond... A Harford County emergency response source said the divers were in cardiac arrest when they surfaced and had been working in the pond on air hoses, not self-contained breathing units, and were tethered to each other. The two divers were from Joint Base Little Creek-Fort Story in Virginia Beach, Va., the Associated Press reported. The incident came less than a month after the death of a diver at the Super Pond. George H. Lazzaro Jr., an engineering technician in the Firepower Directorate of the Aberdeen Test Center, died Jan. 30 while doing routine maintenance on the test infrastructure. [Baltimore Sun](#)

Update: Malaria, U.S. Armed Forces, 2012

January - U.S. service members are at risk of malaria when they are assigned to endemic areas (e.g., Korea), participate in operations in endemic areas (e.g., Afghanistan, Africa) and visit malarious areas during personal travel. In 2012, 38 service members were reported with malaria, fewer than in any of the past nine years. Nearly two-thirds of cases were presumably acquired in Afghanistan (n=24) and seven cases were considered acquired in Africa. The majority of cases were caused by *P. vivax* and nearly one-third were reported as "unspecified" malaria. Malaria was diagnosed/reported from 25 different medical facilities in the United States, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Germany, and Korea. The relatively low number of cases in 2012 reflects at least in part the drawdown of troops serving in Afghanistan.

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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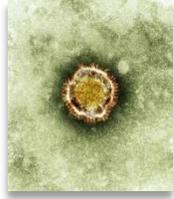
That Guy Buzzed Free Mobile Game

That Guy Buzzed is a FREE action-style game developed for mobile devices and tablets including the iPhone, iPad, and Android. The game aims to educate the junior enlisted about the consequences of binge drinking by using an entertaining, engaging approach.

That Guy Buzzed emphasizes the concept of personal control when it comes to drinking alcohol.



Analysis: Emerging deadly virus demands swift sleuth work



27 February - The emergence of a deadly virus previously unseen in humans that has already killed half those known to be infected requires speedy scientific detective work to figure out its potential... The virus, which belongs to the same family as viruses that cause the common cold and the one that caused Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), emerged in the Middle East last year and has so far killed seven of the 13 people it is known to have infected worldwide... "At the moment we just don't know whether the virus might actually be quite widespread and it's just a tiny proportion of people who get really sick, or whether it's a brand new virus carrying a much greater virulence potential," said Wendy Barclay, a flu virologist, also at Imperial College London...[R]ecent evidence from a cluster of cases in a family in Britain strongly suggests NCoV can be passed from one person to another and may not always come from an animal source. [Reuters](#)

Blood vessels 'sniff' gut microbes to regulate blood pressure

26 February - Researchers at The Johns Hopkins University and Yale University have discovered that a specialized receptor, normally found in the nose, is also in blood vessels throughout the body, sensing small molecules created by microbes that line mammalian intestines, and responding to these molecules by increasing blood pressure. The finding suggests that gut bacteria are an integral part of the body's complex system for maintaining a stable blood pressure. [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)

Firm starts trial of vaccine against staph toxin listed as bioterror agent

27 February - Maryland firm announced yesterday the launch of a phase 1 clinical trial of a vaccine to counter staphylococcal enterotoxin B (SEB), a potential bioterrorism agent. Integrated BioTherapeutics (IBT), based in Gaithersburg, Md., aims to enroll 28 volunteers to test the safety and immunogenicity of the vaccine, called STEBVax, which contains an attenuated form of SEB. The trial is sponsored by the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and is being conducted at the University of Maryland. SEB is one of several toxins that are released by *Staphylococcus aureus* and are listed as common causes of food poisoning. The company described the toxin as a "superantigen," because it can trigger an intense inflammatory response leading to toxic shock. SEB is listed by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a Category B biological agent, meaning it is moderately easy to disseminate and can cause moderate morbidity and low mortality. "SEB is a biowarfare threat to the US, and the superantigens can be critical factors affecting the outcome of *Staphylococcus aureus* infections," said IBT President M. Javad Aman in a press release. He said the trial marks "the first time a vaccine for such a potent toxin is being tested in humans." [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site:

<http://phc.army.smil.mil>

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

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Now hear this: Stanford researchers identify forerunners of inner-ear cells that enable hearing

26 February - Researchers at the Stanford University School of Medicine have identified a group of progenitor cells in the inner ear that can become the sensory hair cells and adjacent supporting cells that enable hearing. Studying these progenitor cells could someday lead to discoveries that help millions of Americans suffering from hearing loss due to damaged or impaired sensory hair cells. "It's well known that, in mammals, these specialized sensory cells don't regenerate after damage," said Alan Cheng, MD, assistant professor of otolaryngology. (In contrast, birds and fish are much better equipped: They can regain their sensory cells after trauma caused by noise or certain drugs.) "Identifying the progenitor cells, and the cues that trigger them to become sensory cells, will allow us to better understand not just how the inner ear develops, but also how to devise new ways to treat hearing loss and deafness." [EurekAlert](#)

Pain can be a relief

22 February - When something causes less pain than expected it is even possible for it to feel pleasant, a new study reveals. These findings may one day play a key role in treating pain and substance abuse. If you accidentally kick your toe against a doorframe you are probably going to find it very painful. As a purely intellectual experiment, imagine purposefully kicking a doorframe hard enough to potentially break your toe. When it turns out your toe has been battered but not broken, the pain may be interpreted more as a relief. "It is not hard to understand that pain can be interpreted as less severe when an individual is aware that it could have been much more painful. Less expected, however, is the discovery that pain may be experienced as pleasant if something worse has been avoided," explains Siri Leknes, Research Fellow at the Department of Psychology at the University of Oslo. [Research Council of Norway](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

- In Week 7 (through 16 February 2013), Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) and Pneumonia & Influenza (P&I) incidence rates decreased in all regions. The proportion of all outpatient visits due to ILI increased and is well-above baseline in EUCOM non-active duty beneficiaries.
- Across the overseas DoD laboratory surveillance network, influenza activity varied from low to moderate levels except in Europe and Southeast Asia, where high levels of influenza activity were detected with co-circulation of influenza A/H1, A/H3, and B.

- The influenza vaccination coverage for the DoD (Active Duty component only) is 96%.
[AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 7 (February 10 - 16, 2013), influenza activity remained elevated in the United States, but decreased in most areas.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 8,144 specimens tested and reported by collaborating laboratories, 1,371 (16.8%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was above the epidemic threshold.
- Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths: Fourteen pediatric deaths were reported.
- Geographic Spread of Influenza: Twenty-two states reported widespread influenza activity; Puerto Rico and 21 states reported regional influenza activity; the District of Columbia and 6 states reported local influenza activity; 1 state reported sporadic influenza activity; Guam reported no influenza activity, and the U.S. Virgin Islands did not report. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

During Week 7, 111 specimens were tested from 34 locations. There were 25 Influenza A viruses (20 A(H3N2) and five A(H1N1)pdm09); and 16 Influenza B viruses detected.

To date, 2,754 specimens have been tested from 79 locations of which 987 were positive for Influenza A (869 A(H3N2), 94 A(H1N1)pdm09, two co-infections of A(H3N2) & B, one co-infection of A(H3N2) & A(H1N1)pdm09, one co-infection of A(H3N2) and Parainfluenza and six A/not subtyped); and 206 were positive for Influenza B (14 B/Yamagata, two B/Victoria, and 190 B/lineage undetermined). There have been 176 other respiratory viruses isolated (59 Parainfluenza, 43 Adenovirus, 65 RSV, and nine Enterovirus).

Sequence analysis of specimens processed indicate a good match to the vaccine strains this season. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

- In week 7/2013, 19 of the 29 countries reporting indicated concomitantly high/medium-intensity transmission and wide geographic spread. Ten countries reported decreasing trends, the first time since the beginning of influenza transmission for five of them.
- The proportion of influenza-positive cases among sentinel specimens remained high (52%) but continued to decrease, as first observed in the previous week.
- Since week 40/2012, an even distribution of influenza virus types has been observed, 50% each for type A and type B viruses. Among influenza A viruses, an increasing proportion of A(H1)pdm09 over A(H3) has been reported since week 52/2012.

- For week 7/2013, 78 hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported by five countries (Belgium, France, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain), 48 (62%) tested positive for influenza type A and 30 (38%) for type B.

Influenza activity remained substantial in week 7/2013 across Europe but an increasing number of countries reported indications of declining transmission. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

27 February – Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere ranges from low in Bulgaria and Poland to intense in Russia and in the southern hemisphere ranges is minimal but low in Chile.

[Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 23 February 2013:

- Influenza: There has been an increase in influenza activity at basic training centers from mid-January into February
- Adenovirus: Type 14 adenovirus cases continue at MCRD Parris Island, though FRI rates remain low
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 16 February 2013 (Week 7)

- Civilian Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) activity persisted, but was decreasing in many areas. CDC reported the proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza was above the epidemic threshold but continued to decrease.
- Influenza cases: Five dependent hospitalized influenza cases were reported to USAPHC in week 7. 75 hospitalized cases have been reported during this influenza season, 67 in dependents and 8 in Active Duty.
- Acute Respiratory Disease at BCT sites: While ARD rates remain low at all Army BCT sites, surveillance testing in week 7 detected influenza at Ft. Jackson (2/5 were A/H3).
- Viral specimens: During week 7, 420 of 1554 (27%) laboratory specimens tested were positive for respiratory pathogens. Influenza A accounted for 37% of positive specimens. Most of the influenza positive specimens were from SRMC (28%); 19% were from ERMC, and 18% from WRMC. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Cambodian man dies from H5N1 infection

26 February – An official from Cambodia's health ministry said today that a 35-year-old man died yesterday from H5N1 avian flu, marking the country's ninth case and eighth death from the disease so far this year, according to news reports. Ly Sovann, deputy head of the health ministry's disease surveillance bureau, told Agence France-Presse (AFP) that the man was from Kampong Cham province and died last night at a Phnom Penh hospital. Sovann said the man had eaten two sick ducks before he became ill earlier this month. In all nine cases this year, the patients had contact with poultry or poultry deaths were reported in their area before they got sick. The man's case, if confirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO), would raise the country's total number of H5N1 cases to 30, including 27 deaths. [CIDRAP](#)

Two thirds of early 2009 pandemic cases in Victoria, Australia, were in school kids

26 February – Two thirds of early-pandemic cases in Victoria state, Australia—where the 2009 H1N1 (pH1N1) pandemic spread first in that country—were in school-aged children, and limited, short-term school closures appeared to have no impact, according to a study yesterday in PLoS One. Australian researchers studied records from the first 1,000 lab-confirmed pH1N1 cases reported in the state from May 20 to Jun 5, 2009. Two thirds of the patients were age 5 to 17 years old, with cases in 203 schools. One school accounted for nearly 8% of the 1,000 cases, but it was not closed until 9 days after the first identified patient had symptoms. [CIDRAP](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Germany investigates possible organic egg fraud

25 February - German authorities are investigating possible large-scale fraud by organic egg producers amid increased concern over food industry practices following Europe's horse meat scandal. The northern state of Lower Saxony, a major agricultural hub, has launched probes of some 150 farms suspected of wrongly selling eggs produced by hens kept in overcrowded conditions under the organic label. Two other states are investigating a further 50 farms. [Reuters](#)

IKEA takes meatballs off Europe menus after horsemeat found

25 February -Sweden's IKEA stopped nearly all sales of meatballs at its furniture store cafeterias across Europe after tests in the Czech Republic on Monday showed some

contained horsemeat. The vast majority of IKEA's meatballs are made by Sweden's Familjen Dafgard, which said on its website that it was investigating the situation and would receive further test results in coming days. [Reuters](#)

Rats: Scratch and sniff landmine detection



25 February- When the first of Apopo's furry and four-legged HeroRats were released into a landmine-ridden field of Mozambique, there was understandable skepticism among the various government officials in attendance... But as the gigantic rodents (bigger than New York City sewer rats) stuffed into tiny harnesses began to sweep back and forth on ropes between their human handlers, stopping every so often to scratch and point out a landmine, it didn't take long for the crowd to be convinced... [S]ince Apopo's rats launched into action in 2006, they've successfully cleared more than 6 million square meters of Mozambique's countryside, uncovering 2,406 landmines, 992 bombs, and 13,025 small arms and ammunitions. [BBC](#)

U.S.: Multiple multistate outbreaks of human Salmonella infections linked to live poultry in backyard flocks

25 February - Salmonella infections don't just come from contaminated food—they can come from contact with animals, too. Many Salmonella infections occur in people who have contact with certain types of animals. In 2012 there were two records involving outbreaks of human Salmonella infections linked to live poultry:

1. Eight outbreaks were reported which was more than any year in history and these outbreaks resulted in more than 450 illnesses –and-
2. The largest outbreak of human Salmonella infections linked to backyard flocks in a single year occurred. [CDC](#)

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WELLNESS

Bad sleep 'dramatically' alters body



25 February - The activity of hundreds of genes was altered when people's sleep was cut to less than six hours a day for a week. Writing in the journal PNAS, the researchers said the results helped explain how poor sleep damaged health. Heart disease, diabetes, obesity and poor brain function have all been linked to substandard sleep. What missing hours in bed actually does to alter

health, however, is unknown. So researchers at the University of Surrey analysed the blood of 26 people after they had had plenty of sleep, up to 10 hours each night for a week, and compared the results with samples after a week of fewer than six hours a night. More than 700 genes were altered by the shift. Each contains the instructions for building a protein, so those that became more active produced more proteins - changing the chemistry of the body. [BBC](#)

Healthy older women advised against taking calcium

25 February - Healthy older women should not take calcium and vitamin D supplements to prevent fractures, according to a final recommendation issued Monday by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. In healthy adults, lower doses of calcium and vitamin D seem to be ineffective. As for higher doses, it's still up in the air, the government group said. The new recommendations do not apply to people who are known to be vitamin D-deficient or who already have osteoporosis, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) noted.

[Medline Plus](#)

Mediterranean diet shown to ward off heart attack and stroke

25 February - About 30 percent of heart attacks, strokes and deaths from heart disease can be prevented in people at high risk if they switch to a Mediterranean diet rich in olive oil, nuts, beans, fish, fruits and vegetables, and even drink wine with meals, a large and rigorous new study has found. The findings, [published](#) on The New England Journal of Medicine's Web site on Monday, were based on the first major clinical trial to measure the diet's effect on heart risks. The magnitude of the diet's benefits startled experts. The study ended early, after almost five years, because the results were so clear it was considered unethical to continue. The diet helped those following it even though they did not lose weight and most of them were already taking statins, or blood pressure or diabetes drugs to lower their heart disease risk. [New York Times](#)

Nicotine may increase risk of Alzheimer's disease

21 February - The first scientific study to look at the role of cigarette smoke in the development of Alzheimer's disease finds it may trigger or worsen the condition in older people who are at risk for this most common form of senile dementia. Alzheimer's disease is usually a condition of old age. Experts say people who live long enough - generally into their 70s, 80s and 90s -- are at significantly increased risk of developing the neurodegenerative disease, which not only robs people of their memories but also of their mobility. Alzheimer's is incurable and leads eventually to death. Now, a new study suggests cigarette smoking may trigger or hasten the development of dementia. The research only involved mice, but the findings offer human tobacco smokers another compelling reason to kick the habit. [VOA](#)

Nutritionist explains how energy drinks adversely affect heart health

26 February - ... What do energy drinks do to our heart health? Energy drinks may contain large amounts of caffeine and other stimulants, as well as ingredients that vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. Although the caffeine content in cola beverages is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the caffeine content in energy drinks is not... The FDA is investigating serious adverse effects associated with energy drinks based upon reports of possibly related deaths and heart attacks... Heart-related problems are the most common events, possibly because the stimulants in energy drinks/shots increase heart rate and raise blood pressure. The appealing, soft drink-like taste of energy drinks can also lead to over-consumption and ingestion of a surplus of stimulants. Use of alcohol and drugs can aggravate the problem by masking the symptoms of excess stimulants. [Health.mil](#)

Police and firefighters at higher risk for mental disorders following traumatic events

26 February - Police, firefighters and other protective services workers who are repeatedly exposed to traumatic events and are new to their profession are at greater risk of developing a psychiatric disorder, according to a new study led by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The researchers also found that protective services workers do not appear to have a higher prevalence of mental health problems than workers in other occupations... "Our findings suggest that exposure to diverse types of traumatic events among protective services workers is a risk factor for new onset of psychopathology and alcohol use disorders," said Christopher N. Kaufmann, MHS, lead author of the study and a doctoral student in the Bloomberg School's Department of Mental Health. [EurekAlert](#)

Screening might avert many lung cancer deaths: study

27 February - The National Lung Screening Trial, published in 2010, found 20 percent fewer deaths from lung cancer in a group of people at highest risk for the disease when they were screened annually with CT scans, a form of high-resolution X-ray that can spot suspicious lung nodules. Based on the 8.6 million Americans who would fall into that high-risk category because of a decades-long history of smoking, researchers at the American Cancer Society say in a new study that 12,000 fewer people a year would die of lung cancer if national screening were put in place. [Reuters](#)

Study: Volunteering may improve cardiovascular health

26 February - In an inventive attempt at countering the increasing prevalence of heart disease, a new study in JAMA Pediatrics evaluates the impact of volunteering not on the recipients of good will, but on those donating their time... "The volunteers who reported the greatest increases in empathy, altruistic behaviour and mental health were the ones who also saw the greatest improvements in their cardiovascular health." Caring more about others was directly related to reduced markers of inflammation, and increased altruistic

behavior (above and beyond what was required for the study) was related to reduced cholesterol. Greater self-esteem did not appear to have a physical effect. [Atlantic](#)

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USAFRICOM

Chad: Yellow fever

24 February - Following the emergence of yellow fever cases in the town of Goz Beida in Chad, a vaccination campaign against the disease was launched in the close by Djabal camp for Sudanese refugees in the east of the country. Djabal's health official Adam Hassan told Radio Dabanga the campaign was launched on Thursday [21 Feb 2013] and it will last for 4 days and target 17 375 residents. He added the vaccines are provided by Medecins Sans Frontieres and urged Djabal's population to "rush" to vaccination centers. The town of Goz Beida is located about 2 kilometers [slightly more than one mile] from Djabal camp.

[ProMED-mail](#)

Democratic Republic of Congo: Measles epidemic affects thousands

27 February - A measles epidemic has affected tens of thousands of children in northern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), overwhelming health facilities, says medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). "Most health centres are either not functional, out of medical stocks or inaccessible for the majority of the population. Many children die in their villages because the health facilities cannot provide adequate care," Anja De Weggheleire, MSF Medical Coordinator in DRC, told IRIN via email... Since March 2012, MSF says it has treated more than 18,000 patients and vaccinated 440,000 children in DRC's Equateur and Orientale provinces... MSF officials said they counted 35 dead children in one of the villages they visited. [allAfrica](#)

Madagascar: Tropical cyclone Haruna hits southwestern Madagascar

25 February - National disaster authorities and aid agencies are struggling to reach remote areas of Madagascar's southwestern coast where thousands of people are thought to have been made homeless by Tropical Cyclone Haruna, which made landfall on 22 February as a powerful category two cyclone. According to the country's National Disaster Risk Management Office (BNGRC), over 17,000 people have been affected by the storm, with 13 reported deaths and about 1,500 houses destroyed or flooded. Speed boats and traditional boats were mobilized over the weekend to rescue people stranded in trees and on rooftops.

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Afghanistan: Girls give more than their hands in marriage



26 February – In Afghanistan, the maternal mortality rate is on the rise; hospitals are filling up with anemic women and girls; and in over 200 districts, high schools are devoid of even a single female pupil. These issues are not unrelated -- they are all products of a grave social problem in this country of 35 million people: early

child marriages. According to Sadia Fayeque Ayubi, head of the reproductive health department at the ministry of public health, early marriage (of girls younger than 16 years) is illegal in Afghanistan yet girls as young as 13 are frequently married, often to much older men. [Inter Press Service](#)

Pakistan policeman killed while protecting health workers

26 February - A Pakistani policeman has been shot dead while protecting a polio vaccination team in the country's tribal region of Waziristan, bringing the death toll for such attacks to 11 since December. Reports say gunmen opened fire on a polio team near the northwestern town of Mardan on Tuesday. The local Taliban faction has banned polio vaccinations in the area, alleging the operation is a cover for espionage. There have also been rumors that the vaccinations are an attempt to sterilize Muslim children. According to UN figures 19 health workers including polio outreach workers were killed last year in Pakistan. Polio cases have risen sharply in Pakistan in recent years, reaching a high of 198 cases in 2011. [VOA](#)

Syria: Diseases spreading as WASH systems collapse

21 February - ...The rural area near the Turkish border has seen a growing number of infections in recent weeks, Abdurrahman told IRIN. "There is no running water, so people drink from the wells or the rivers." The only alternative is buying water from tankers, which is very costly. "You have to pay about US \$35 to fill up the tank on your roof. This is why poor people are having a problem." After two years of conflict in Syria, waterborne diseases are on the rise, compounding a growing humanitarian crisis. Typhoid, an infection caused by salmonella bacteria, has been reported, in addition to hepatitis A, a highly contagious viral liver disease. [IRIN](#)

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Greece: Panic in pharmacies as hundreds of medicines run short

27 February - Greece is facing a serious shortage of medicines amid claims that pharmaceutical multinationals have halted shipments to the country because of the economic crisis and concerns that the drugs will be exported by middlemen because prices are higher in other European countries. Hundreds of drugs are in short supply and the situation is getting worse, according to the Greek drug regulator. The government has drawn up a list of more than 50 pharmaceutical companies it accuses of halting or planning to halt supplies because of low prices in the country. More than 200 medicinal products are affected, including treatments for arthritis, hepatitis C and hypertension, cholesterol-lowering agents, antipsychotics, antibiotics, anaesthetics and immunomodulators used to treat bowel disease. [Guardian](#)

Russia: Putin signs law banning smoking in public

25 February - Smoking in public places will be banned in Russia after President Vladimir Putin signed a tough new bill into law. Under the new legislation, smoking in restaurants, long-distance trains and housing block entrance halls will be illegal. The government has made reducing smoking one of the cornerstones of its bid to improve public health. Russia has one of the highest smoking rates in the world, with more than four in 10 Russians considered smokers... The law "On protecting the health of citizens from the danger of passive smoking and the consequences of the use of tobacco" will come into force in stages, beginning on 1 June. [BBC](#)

United Kingdom: Gonorrhoea cases soar 25 pct in England as superbugs take hold

27 February - Gonorrhoea cases have soared by 25 percent in the past year in England as superbug or drug-resistant strains of the sexually transmitted infection (STI) take hold worldwide, British health officials said on Wednesday. Nearly 21,000 new cases had been diagnosed in 2011, with more than a third of cases in gay men and more than a third in people who have had gonorrhoea before, the UK Health Protection Agency (HPA) said in a statement. Effective treatment with antibiotics has been compromised by growing resistance, it said, noting "a drift towards decreased susceptibility" of gonorrhoea infections to drugs called cephalosporins which are normally recommended as treatment. [Reuters](#)

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U.S.: Los Angeles health officials concerned about TB outbreak on skid row

22 February - Los Angeles County health officials have asked for federal assistance to analyze and contain an outbreak of tuberculosis within the city's homeless population, a spokeswoman for the county agency said on Friday. Los Angeles County Health Department spokeswoman Mabel Aragon said the agency is still in the process of confirming the number and type of TB cases in the county. "The CDC is helping us with surveillance and statistic gathering," she said... The Los Angeles Times reported that health workers have identified about 4,650 people who were probably exposed to a persistent outbreak of the contagious disease on downtown Los Angeles' skid row. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Metastatic breast cancer rising in patients younger than 40

26 February - Diagnosis of metastatic breast cancer in women younger than 40 has increased 2% a year, every year, from 1976 to 2009, according to a study published Tuesday in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The increase was seen in women aged 25 to 39 of all races and ethnicities, living in both rural and urban areas. It's a devastating diagnosis, particularly because a woman younger than 40 who is diagnosed with breast cancer is more likely to have an aggressive form of the disease and face lower survival rates. But for perspective, the overall population of women who are affected still remains small. [CNN](#)

U.S.: Poll, many Americans don't see their kids as overweight

25 February - Many American parents fail to see that their children are overweight or obese, a new poll finds. Only 15 percent of parents said their children are a little or very overweight, but national statistics suggest that 32 percent of kids are overweight or even obese, according to the researchers. In addition, only 20 percent of children in the survey had a parent who was worried that his or her child will be overweight as an adult. However, an estimated 69 percent of American adults are overweight, including 36 percent who are obese and 6 percent who are extremely obese. The poll results suggest that many parents underestimate their children's current risk for being overweight or obese, and how that risk could continue to affect them as adults, the researchers said. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: Secondary and tertiary transmission of vaccinia virus after sexual contact with a smallpox vaccinee — San Diego, California, 2012

1 March - On June 24, 2012, CDC notified Public Health Services, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, of a suspected case of vaccinia virus infection

transmitted by sexual contact... The patient reported two recent sexual contacts: one with a partner who recently had been vaccinated against smallpox and a later encounter with an unvaccinated partner... The vaccinee did not experience vaccine-associated complications; however, the secondary and tertiary patients were hospitalized and treated. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Study says too many Americans still drink too much



24 February - On any given day in the United States, 18 percent of men and 11 percent of women drink more alcohol than federal guidelines recommend, according to a study that also found that 8 percent of men and 3 percent of women are full-fledged "heavy drinkers." That means the great majority of

Americans stay within the advised limit of two drinks a day for men and one for women, according to the study that appeared in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*. "And in fact, most adults don't drink at all on any given day," said lead author Patricia Guenther, a nutritionist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. [Reuters](#)

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China: Coal mine death rate plunges

25 February - ...The coal mine safety situation in Shanxi, the country's second largest region in terms of coal output after Inner Mongolia, has improved dramatically. In 2012, 83 miners were killed during their work, a death rate of 0.091 in producing 1 million tons of coal, according to the Shanxi Provincial Coal Industry Department. The figure was below 139 in 2010 and 202 in 2009. The absolute death tolls nationwide have also plunged. In 2012, some 1,300 coal miners died, according to the State Administration of Work Safety. That was down from 1,973 in 2011, 2,433 in 2010 and 2,631 in 2009. An official surnamed Liu from the general office of the Shanxi Provincial Coal Industry Department told the *Global Times* that the province has been trying to clean up its notorious reputation for mining deaths. Illegal mining procedures have been cracked down on nearly to the point of extinction, Liu said. [Global Times](#)

India: Fighting TB with fingerprints

26 February - Health specialists in India are using fingerprint technology to make sure tuberculosis sufferers receive proper treatment for the deadly lung infection... Making sure patients complete treatment is crucial. Stopping can cause the lung infection to morph into a deadlier version called multiple drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), which is much more difficult and costly to treat. India is estimated to be home to 100,000 such cases... [Dr.

Shelly] Batra is using biometric technology to ensure TB patients are completing their drug regimen. Her organization has centers in nearly every corner of the city, where the fingerprints of patients and counselors are recorded as proof of interaction. Those who do not show up to take their medication are sent reminders and tracked down. The monitoring system has already made a difference and cut the default rate in half. [VOA](#)

Japan, Fukushima: 'Small increased cancer risk'



28 February - People living near the damaged Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan have an increased risk of developing some cancers, the World Health Organization says. The increased risk is limited to communities and some emergency workers exposed to radiation after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, analysis shows. For those living in the rest of Japan there is no health risk, it said. Experts stressed the increased lifetime risk of cancer remained small. The report is part of an ongoing assessment by international experts on the fallout from severe damage to the Fukushima Daiichi plant. [BBC](#)

Thailand reports over 5,000 dengue fever cases since the beginning of the year

28 February - The Thailand Department of Disease Control is reported a heavy dengue fever season since January and health officials fear that the Kingdom could exceed 100,000 cases in 2013. Since January 1, 2013, health officials report 5,700 dengue fever patients with four fatalities. This is a five times increase from the same time period in 2012... In 2012, the Thailand Health Ministry reported 74,250 dengue cases with 79 fatalities, representing a proportion of 116 patients in 100,000 people. [Global Dispatch](#)

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Brazil: African-ancestry babies get less prenatal care

26 February - Low birth weights are more prevalent among Brazilians with African ancestry and may be attributed to less use of prenatal care facilities and where those ethnic groups live, according to a new study. The study from researchers at the University of Iowa and health analysts in South America also suggests that infants of African ancestry, alone or mixed, were more likely to be born prematurely than those born of European-only stock. The findings could help policymakers decide how best to bridge the difference in infant health among non-European-ancestry races in South America's largest and most populous country. [Iowa Now](#)

Haiti: UN rejects damage claim for Haiti cholera victims

21 February - The United Nations rejected a claim for damages on behalf of more than 5,000 Haitian cholera victims and their families on Thursday, citing diplomatic immunity. The claim was filed in November 2011 by the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, a Boston-based human rights group that contended the U.N. and its peacekeeping force are liable for hundreds of millions of dollars for failing to adequately screen peacekeeping soldiers. It cited studies suggesting that the disease was inadvertently brought to Haiti by a U.N. battalion from Nepal, where cholera is endemic. A local contractor failed to properly sanitize the waste of a U.N. base, and the bacteria leaked into a tributary of one of Haiti's biggest rivers, according to one study by a U.N.-appointed panel. Cholera has sickened nearly 500,000 people and killed over 7,750 people since the outbreak began in October 2010, according to the Haitian government. [U.S. News and World Report](#)

Paraguay: Dengue - 27 deaths in 2013 and 783 cases in one day

26 February - The dengue epidemic, which remains without control in Paraguay, accumulates 27 deaths so far this year and reported only Monday 783 suspected cases, said the Ministry of Public Health. The official bulletin of that entity added that the vast majority of people assisted reside in the capital and in neighboring Central department, common situation in the past few months. A total of 386 people remain hospitalized in Asuncion while 383 others were admitted to the Central department said, 36 of them in intensive care. [Prensa Latina](#)

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

