

1 November 2013

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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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## **Military Website Teaches Parenting Skills**

A new website from the Defense Department is helping parents communicate with their children.

[MilitaryParenting.org](http://MilitaryParenting.org) is a free, online course that gives a “boot camp” approach to the basics of parenting.

“The demands of parenting are difficult, especially for a military parent,” said Dr. Pam Murphy, psychologist for the parenting website at the National Center for Telehealth & Technology. “It’s a daily challenge for them to stay close and connected with their children with the frequent separations and hazards of a military lifestyle.”



### **WELLNESS**

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## U.S. MILITARY

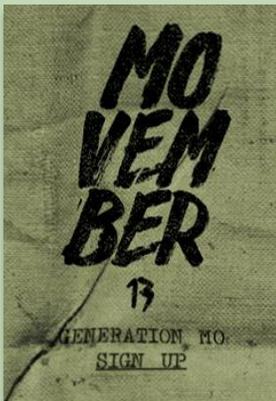
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### It's Movember Again!

Often it's the funds raised by a charity that are most remembered, but at Movember the awareness raised through the power of the moustache is equally important.

The growth of a new moustache prompts a conversation, which in turn generates awareness and educates people on the health issues men face.

Awareness and education then prompts people to take action and change behavior, which is changing and saving lives today.



## Army researcher looks for cold facts

28 October - Maj. David DeGroot, Ph.D., ...the field investigation team leader for the Injury Prevention Program... U.S. Army Public Health Command... began his quest to discover why the human body cools down faster under certain circumstances when he was a research physiologist... at Natick Soldier Systems Center... DeGroot built upon the 1999 study by USARIEM's John Castellani, Ph.D. [who] found that exposure to cold air after exercise led to a faster rate of decline in core temperature, higher skin temperature, and higher rate of heat transfer through the skin. "The follow-up question to John Castellani's 1999 study was, what mechanism was responsible for the increased skin heat flux and accelerated body core temperature decline that he reported when cold exposure was preceded by active heating, (such as) exercise in an immersion pool?" DeGroot said... "Based on the available data, we conclude that active vasodilation over-rode a competing vasoconstrictor signal and resulted in higher skin blood flow," DeGroot said. "Using these data, researchers might be able to develop pharmacological agents to maintain the vasoconstrictor response to cold and thereby reduce the risk of hypothermia." [Army.mil](#)

## Around the Army: Stop using OxyElite Pro

30 October - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Food and Drug Administration published guidance for the public to stop using any dietary supplement labeled as OxyElite Pro. This was done in response to more than two dozen cases of acute hepatitis in Hawaii that are linked with this product since April. The Office of the Surgeon General posted this warning to the Army Public Health Command's website, Facebook page, Twitter feed and provided it to the ACOM Surgeons and are currently working with the Navy, Air Force and DOD to implement a broader warning because many Soldiers may not have seen these warnings. We will also be participating in an investigation with the CDC, FDA and Hawaii Department of Health and other Services on the acute hepatitis and liver failure of individuals who may have taken OxyElite Pro, said Lt. Gen. Patricia Horoho, Army Surgeon General and commander of U.S. Army Medical Command. As a precaution, the DOD has ordered the removal of any OxyElite Pro products from installations, typically the GNC concessions. No Soldiers or Army Family members have been identified as injured by this product to date, but the OTSG will continue to evaluate health outcome data.

[The Bayonet](#)

## Many vets given psychiatric drugs without diagnosis

31 October - Nearly one-third of U.S. veterans who are given psychiatric medications by their doctors do not have a diagnosed mental health problem, according to a new study. Older vets between ages 65 and 85 were the ones most commonly prescribed psychotropic drugs without a formal diagnosis, and were least likely to be receiving mental health treatment, researchers report in the American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry. The findings

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are important because such drugs can pose serious health risks. "Psychiatric medications can save lives, but they can also cause harm," said Ilse Wiechers, a psychiatrist at Yale School of Medicine and lead author of the study. [Reuters](#)

## Menorrhagia, active component service women, U.S. Armed Forces, 1998-2012

September 2013 - Menorrhagia (excessive menstrual bleeding) is relatively common among women of reproductive age and may be caused by a wide range of different conditions. Menorrhagia symptoms can interfere with work and quality of life and may result in iron deficiency anemia due to chronic blood loss. This analysis of active component service women of the U.S. Armed Forces found that, during the surveillance period of 1998 through 2012, the crude incidence rate of menorrhagia was 6.2 cases per 1,000 person years. Annual incidence rates rose steadily throughout the period. Compared to their respective counterparts, rates were highest in women who were aged 40 to 49 or were of black, non-Hispanic ethnicity. Among women with menorrhagia whose records documented co-occurring conditions, the most common such conditions were uterine disorders (e.g., fibroids) and ovarian cysts. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

## Missing eye shields put deployed troops at risk



28 October - Nearly two years after the services committed to including eye shields in the individual first aid kits of combat troops, the devices remain largely absent from the kits even though eye injuries continue to account for 10 to 15 percent of the war's wounded. The metal shields, which create a protective vault over the wounded eye to guard against further damage, are carried by Army medics and Navy corpsmen. However, it's often a buddy -- another soldier -- who is first on the scene to provide care... Often, a soldier will apply a bandage over the wounded eye, inadvertently setting the stage for worse damage, he said... Absent an eye shield, he said, troops should use the ballistic eyewear issued to them as a vault cover for the eye, and wrap any bandages over that. Even a knee pad can work in a pinch so long as it is secured and does not touch the wounded eye, he said. [Military.com](#)

## With more addicted soldiers, military expands treatment options

29 October - For thousands of service members who use opiates to manage chronic pain from war injuries, the road to dependence and addiction can be paved with compassion. Whether that comes in the form of caregivers providing extra pills to help alleviate pain or medical professionals increasing the dose of powerful pain medications like Oxycontin, the reality is that pain management can be a slippery slope to addiction. Now some compassion may come from the Department of Defense, which will begin next month to allow the use of opiate replacement therapies – methadone is the most well-known among them – for long

## 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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term treatment of opiate addiction. Previously, such therapies were available only for short-term detox. [KUOW](#)

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## GLOBAL

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### How does a tick do its dirty work?

29 October - ...When seen with an electron microscope, a tick's mouth has what look like twin saws (chelicerae) flanking an appendage (a hypostome) that appears to be the kind of long, barbed sword that a villain in a video game might favor. And a short video is even scarier — particularly as the creature's ability to bore down and settle in may well afflict anyone who spends time outdoors. Such a video, published Tuesday with a research paper in the [Proceedings of the Royal Society B](#), was made to help scientists understand how the tiny ticks that carry Lyme disease bacteria cut into the skin and then manage to hang on for the days it takes for them to fill up on blood. [New York Times](#)

### NIH Scientists develop candidate vaccine against respiratory syncytial virus

31 October - An experimental vaccine to protect against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), a leading cause of illness and hospitalization among very young children, elicited high levels of RSV-specific antibodies when tested in animals, according to a report in the journal *Science*... In the United States, RSV infection is the most common cause of bronchiolitis (inflammation of small airways in the lungs) and pneumonia in children less than one year old and the most common cause for hospitalization in children under five. Worldwide, it is estimated that RSV is responsible for nearly 7 percent of deaths in babies aged 1 month to 1 year; only malaria kills more children in this age group. [NIH](#)

### UN: For millions of adolescents, pregnancy can be dangerous



30 October - A new report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) finds millions of adolescent girls suffer serious long-term health and social consequences from pregnancy. Globally, the U.N. agency estimates 7.3 million girls under 18-years-old give birth, including two million girls younger than 14. Giving birth to a baby should

be a happy moment in the life of a woman. But, for millions of adolescents around the world, early pregnancy and childbirth results in serious health problems, social exclusion and even death. [VOA](#)

## Violence, chaos let polio creep back into Syria and Horn of Africa

30 October - Global efforts to eradicate polio have made impressive progress over the past decade. Last year there were only 223 cases anywhere in the world. But armed conflict and chaos are making it tough for the world to wipe out the virus completely. Polio has re-emerged in war-torn Syria after more than a decade, the World Health Organization reported Tuesday... Over in the Horn of Africa, an outbreak has ballooned into more than 190 cases. The outbreak's epicenter is Somalia, where fighting and violence have kept vaccinators from reaching hundreds of thousands of kids in the past few years. Health officials... have launched massive emergency vaccination campaigns in both regions to try to protect millions of children against the crippling virus. But polio infections in Somalia have already spread to Kenya, South Sudan and Ethiopia... The [Ethiopian] vaccinators are poorly paid, Abdulahi says — the equivalent of about \$30 a month... The Ethiopian government even had to deploy special security details to travel with the vaccination teams in some parts of the country along the Somali border. [NPR](#)

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### INFLUENZA

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## Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

25 October:

#### **Northern Command**

Electronic Surveillance: Influenza activity appears to be low and comparable to past influenza seasons.

Laboratory Surveillance:

- 8 flu positive lab results since week 40 (2 A/H1, 1 B, 1 AB, and 4 A not subtyped).
- In weeks 40 and 41, flu activity is low with the predominate subtype being H3N25.
- Among recruits in week 41, influenza activity is low. Only 1 case of H1N1 was reported.

RMEs: 2 hospitalized cases were reported in week 42.

#### **Southern Command**

Laboratory Surveillance: None reported.

RMEs: (None to report)

#### **Central Command**

Electronic Surveillance: Influenza activity (TMDS data) appears to be low and comparable to past influenza seasons.

Laboratory Surveillance: None reported.

RMEs: (None to report)

#### **Africa Command**

Laboratory Surveillance: Local national population surveillance, week 41: influenza activity is low and is comparable to past seasons.

RMEs: (None to report)

### **European Command**

Electronic Surveillance:

- ILI activity decreased approximately 39% from week 40 to week 41. Compared to the same period last year, ILI is lower.
- Influenza activity appears to be low and comparable to past influenza seasons.

Laboratory Surveillance:

- There have been 2 flu positive lab results since week 40 (1 A/H3 and 1 A not subtyped).
- Activity is low. Only 1 case was reported in weeks 40-41 (H3N2).

RMEs: (None to report)

### **Pacific Command**

Electronic Surveillance: Influenza activity appears to be low and comparable to past influenza seasons.

Laboratory Surveillance:

- There have been 2 flu positive lab results since week 40 (1 A/H1 and 1 A/H3).
- For weeks 40 and 41, low flu activity reported. Among US service members 2 samples were tested: 1 was positive for H3N2 from Japan and 1 was negative from Guam.
- Local national surveillance: moderate activity this season. Of 88 samples tested, 29% were positive (from Thailand, Cambodia and Philippines). H3N2 was the predominate subtype (approximately 50%).
- RMEs: (None to report) [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

## **CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report**

During week 42 (October 13-19, 2013), influenza activity remained low in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 3,513 specimens tested and reported by collaborating laboratories during week 42, 135 (3.8%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths: Two influenza-associated pediatric deaths that occurred during the 2012-2013 season were reported. [FluView](#)

## **DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program**

From 13 - 19 October 2013 (Surveillance Week 42):

- 38 specimens were received from 21 locations. Test results for Week 42 were all pending as of 19 October 2013. Culture results take 10 days to complete.
- Cumulative results were finalized for 61 specimens from 33 locations. There were three specimens positive for influenza (one A(H1N1)pdm09, one A(H3N2), and one B/lineage unknown). Other respiratory pathogens identified were two adenovirus, one coronavirus, one human metapneumovirus, six parainfluenza, 30 rhinovirus/enterovirus, and four Mycoplasma pneumonia.
- Of 61 ILI cases, 33 are service members (54%), 19 are children (31%), and nine are spouses & other beneficiaries (15%). There are no unknown beneficiary types. The median age of ILI cases with known age (n=61) is 23 (range 0, 60) and 21 (34%) of these specimens are from ILI cases 18 years of age or younger.

- During the 2013-2014 influenza surveillance year, USAFSAM will be testing all influenza A/B PCR negative specimens on the FilmArray® Respiratory Panel. The FilmArray® is able to detect 20 respiratory pathogens. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

During week 42/2013 there was low influenza activity in Europe:

- All 27 reporting countries experienced low intensity of clinical influenza activity.
- Sporadic activity was reported by three countries.
- Of 327 sentinel specimens tested by 19 countries, 2 (0.6%) were positive for influenza virus
- Ireland and the UK have reported five hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases since week 40. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

## Google.org: Flu Trends

30 October - Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere ranges from minimal in Bulgaria to moderate in Russia and Mexico. In the southern hemisphere, indicated flu activity ranges from minimal to low. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

## Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 26 October 2013:

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

## USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 19 October 2013 (Week 42):

- Influenza-like illness (ILI) activity is low in both Army and civilian populations.
- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 42 were 34% lower than for the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: One hospitalized influenza case was reported to USAPHC in week 42, the only case reported to date during this influenza season for Army MTFs.
- Acute Respiratory Disease at BCT sites: ARD rates remain low; rates did not change significantly at any sites during week 42.

- Viral specimens: During week 42, 53 of 462 (11%) laboratory specimens tested were positive for respiratory pathogens. RSV accounted for 34% of positive specimens. The majority of influenza A-positive specimens were submitted by MTFs in SRMC. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

## PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

### High pH1N1 hospitalization rates in Canadian First Nations populations

30 October - The risk of hospitalization for pneumonia and influenza (P&I) during the 2009 flu pandemic was disproportionately increased over baseline for residents of First Nations communities in British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario, say findings of a study yesterday in *BMC Public Health*... Overall admissions for P&I during the pandemic increased by about 10% in British Columbia and Manitoba and 33% in Ontario during the pandemic, but admissions among First Nations residents increased by an average of 45% in all three provinces. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

### Market closures dramatically cut cases of new China bird flu: study



31 October - China should close live poultry markets in big cities to disrupt the spread of a new strain of bird flu that resurfaced there earlier this month, scientists said, after a previous shutdown was found to have slashed the number of human cases. In a study published in *The Lancet* medical journal on Thursday, researchers from Hong Kong and China said that while closing markets during the height of the first outbreak of H7N9 in April may have been costly, it reduced human infections dramatically and should be done again if cases rise as feared. The findings - of a more than 97 percent reduction in the daily number of human cases of the new H7N9 strain after the markets were closed compared with before - should give policymakers confidence that the economic costs of shutting markets is balanced by significant health gains. [Reuters](#)

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## FDA proposes FSMA rule on safety of animal food

25 October - The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today issued a proposed rule under the 2011 FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) for improving the safety of food for animals... The rule would require producers of animal feed and pet food to develop formal plans and establish procedures to prevent foodborne illness in both animals and people. They would also need plans for correcting any problems that might arise. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

## FDA report says 12% of imported spices tainted



31 October - A draft of a federal government risk study to assess contamination in spices found that about 12% of shipments were tainted with pathogens such as Salmonella or filth that included insect parts or animal hair... The United States imports most of its spices, except for dehydrated onions. About 86% of US households use spices, and usage has increased steadily since 1966, according to the report... The FDA team identified 14 foodborne outbreaks linked to spices from 1973 to 2010... Ten of the outbreaks involved *Salmonella enterica* subtypes. Pepper spices—black, white, red, and unspecified—were implicated in nine of the outbreaks. [CIDRAP](#)

## National monument to military working dogs dedicated at Lackland

28 October - For Larry Chilcoat, Monday's dedication of the Military Working Dog Teams national monument at Lackland Air Force Base was long overdue. "These incredible warriors have saved countless American lives since they were first officially recognized by the U.S. military in World War II," said Chilcoat, an Air Force veteran who partnered with a German shepherd named Geisha during the Vietnam War... Lackland is home to the Department of Defense Military Working Dog Program and is where the U.S. Armed Forces has been training its military working dog teams since 1958... It is the world's largest training center for military dogs and handlers and home to the largest veterinary hospital for military working dogs. The founder and inspiration for the national monument is John C. Burnam, a highly decorated Vietnam infantry veteran scout dog handler. [Stars and Stripes](#)

## Taiwan detects more U.S. beef with banned feed additive

29 October - Taiwan detected cattle feed additive zilpaterol in U.S. beef, the third such incident in less than a month in Asia, heightening concerns across the region over banned animal growth drugs... There is zero tolerance for feed additives such as zilpaterol in much

of Asia and Europe due to concerns about the side effects of such drugs, which are used to add muscle weight to animals. Feed additives have been the focus of attention since a video appeared in the United States in August showing animals struggling to walk and with other signs of distress after taking a growth drug. [Reuters](#)

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## WELLNESS

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### Are you okay? You smell like cytokines.

29 October - Nurses and hospice workers say they can smell the final approach of death. Not with sudden death, but with the slow march toward the grave, the body's systems begin to shut down and metabolism changes, so that breath and skin and fluids give off a distinctive odor that signals the end is near... Scientists... are reporting the first evidence that disease not only smells but can be detected in chemical cues of the body's frontline immune response... The body odors of those injected with [lipopolysaccharide] LPS, who had mounted an early immune response, smelled much more intense and much more unpleasant. Their odors also smelled less healthy, though that effect was much less powerful. These findings suggest that humans can indeed tell the difference between the smells of sick and healthy people. Importantly, this test was just four hours after the immune activation—way too early to detect any overt signs of sickness. [Association for Psychological Science](#)

### Baby's HIV 'cure' might signal new approach

24 October - The so-called "Mississippi baby" might be the forerunner of a new approach to treating infants born with HIV, researchers reported. The child, whose mother was HIV-positive, was started on triple-drug therapy 30 hours after birth, according to Deborah Persaud, MD, of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and colleagues. After about 18 months of therapy, she was lost to follow-up for several months, during which time she did not get antiretroviral therapy... When care resumed at 23 months, there was little or no sign of HIV and there has been no viral rebound up to the age of 30 months, the researchers reported. Usually, if antiretroviral therapy is stopped, HIV in the so-called reservoir -- cells or tissues that harbor quiescent virus -- resumes replicating and viral loads swiftly reach previous levels. This case suggests that very early therapy might "interfere with either the quantities or qualities of persistent reservoirs of replication-competent virus," Persaud and colleagues argued. [MedPage Today](#)

### Breast milk donated or sold online is often tainted, study says

21 October - A cottage industry has sprung up facilitating the sale and donation of human breast milk on the Internet, but a study published Monday in the journal *Pediatrics* confirms

the concerns of health professionals over this unregulated marketplace. The report found that breast milk bought from two popular Web sites was often contaminated with high levels of bacteria, including, in a few instances, salmonella. The amounts detected in some samples were sufficient to sicken a child... The researchers found that 64 percent of the samples from milk-sharing sites were contaminated with staph, 36 percent with strep, and almost three-quarters with other bacterial species. Three of the samples contained salmonella. Seventy-four percent of the samples would have failed milk bank criteria.

[New York Times](#)

## Firm in outbreak probe has history of run-ins with FDA



25 October - USPlabs, the supplement company at the center of an outbreak investigation, has a history of run-ins with federal regulators and is headed by an industry leader with a criminal history... USPlabs CEO Jacob Geissler, who serves on the board of the American Herbal Products Association, declined interview requests. He was indicted on a controlled substance charge involving possessing thousands of pills containing anabolic steroids in 2003, court and police records show. In 2004, a judge put him on 10 years' community supervision, until May 2014. Geissler would still be under supervision if a judge hadn't granted his petition in 2009 for early termination. [USA Today](#)

## Genetics may play a role in chronic pain

25 October - Researchers at the Duke University Medical Center have discovered a collection of gene variants that may indicate which people are more likely to suffer chronic pain of various forms. Researchers collaborated with the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center and analyzed blood samples from 49 service members, all of whom had amputated limbs. Some of the service members suffer persistent phantom pains in their absent limbs. After completing full gene maps for each service member they found several gene overlaps in those that suffer the phantom pains. "Persistent phantom pain after amputation is a serious problem with no effective treatments. By identifying these 'pain genes,' we may be able to discover the reasons why pain occurs and predict which patients are more likely to have it. In the future, we hope to discover the biology of persistent pain and develop ways to combat it," the researchers said. [RTT News](#)

## Quit smoking? It's probably Monday

28 October - If you are thinking of quitting smoking, it is probably Monday. Researchers monitored Google search queries from 2008 to 2012 in English, French, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. Almost every week, queries about smoking cessation peaked on Mondays... Though the reasons remain unknown, Dr. Ayers said, it may be that antismoking advertising should concentrate on the times when people are most likely to be thinking of quitting. This kind of information, he said, "has immediate import for how we manage public health interventions." [New York Times](#)

## The long list of health apps features few clear winners

30 October - ...Most of the 16,257 legit health apps aren't used much, with half of all Android health apps downloaded fewer than 500 times, according to a report from the IMS Institute for Health Informatics... The most popular apps are lifestyle apps — calorie counters and exercise trackers like [MyFitnessPal](#). Just 159 of the apps use sensors to measure a person's health status, the report concludes... Another problem: Most health apps don't do much... Only about 2,000 apps let users enter data to do things like track their health. And fewer than 2,000 apps dealt with specific a health issue like diabetes or anxiety. Mental health was the most popular topic, with 558 apps. [NPR](#)

## What's your 'fitness age'?

31 October – [R]esearchers at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim have developed a remarkably low-tech means of precisely assessing aerobic fitness and estimating your “fitness age,” or how well your body functions physically, relative to how well it should work, given your age... VO2 max has been shown in large-scale studies to closely correlate with significantly augmented life spans, even among the elderly or overweight. In other words, VO2 max can indicate fitness age. In order to figure out how to estimate VO2 max without a treadmill, the scientists combed through the results to determine which of the data points were most useful. [T]he researchers found that putting just five measurements — waist circumference; resting heart rate; frequency and intensity of exercise; age; and sex — into an algorithm allowed them to predict a person's VO2 max with noteworthy accuracy, according to their study. See their [online calculator](#). [New York Times](#)

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### **USAFRICOM**

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## Uganda: New index highlights levels of HIV stigma

30 October - Uganda is launching its first-ever "stigma index," quantifying the degree and types of stigma suffered by people living with HIV/AIDS. The organization publishing the report hopes that bringing the issue to light will help create policies to fight discrimination, and eventually conquer it. The index was launched Tuesday by the National Forum of People Living with HIV/AIDS Networks in Uganda, or NAFOPHANU. Based on a survey of over 1,000 HIV positive people across the country, it found that the most common forms of stigma are gossip, verbal insults and threats. NAFOPHANU's Margaret Happy said this type of stigma can create shame and guilt, and often prevents people from accessing treatment. She added that stigma does not stop at verbal abuse. "Eleven percent of the respondents revealed that they were forced to undergo sterilization because they were tested HIV positive. Over 21 percent of the respondents revealed that they lost their jobs because of

being HIV positive," she said. A further 41 percent said they were excluded from family activities, and 20 percent had been physically assaulted because of their HIV status. [VOA](#)

## Zimbabwe takes aim at 'neglected tropical diseases'

28 October - The government of Zimbabwe, with help from U.N. agencies and Western donors, is trying to eliminate so-called "neglected tropical diseases" that affect mainly children... Mashonaland Central province is one of the areas most affected by such diseases. Statistics showing that in some areas, as much as 90 percent of the children have these water-borne diseases, such as bilharziasis... [O]pen defecation and the absence of adequate safe drinking water could undermine this program, which was funded by about \$5 million from U.N. agencies and Western donors. The money was spent on drugs that were given to the Zimbabwean government for distribution to clinics and hospitals. According to the U.N., nearly 70 percent of rural households in Zimbabwe do not have modern sanitation facilities, and about 40 percent of them practice open defecation. [VOA](#)

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### USCENTCOM

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## Pakistan: New dengue cases continue to surface

28 October - The total number of dengue patients reached 8,837 as 33 new dengue cases surfaced in Swat on Sunday. According to the district health office, the total number of patients includes 6,073 males and 2,764 females. Additionally, 29 new patients were admitted at Saidu Teaching Hospital (STH). [The Express Tribune](#)

## Qatar: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) - update

29 October - WHO has been informed of an additional laboratory-confirmed case of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection in Qatar. The patient is a 23-year-old man who was identified as a close contact of a previously laboratory-confirmed case as part of the epidemiological investigation. He is a worker in the animal barn owned by the previously laboratory-confirmed case. The man developed mild symptoms of illness and is in good condition. Preliminary investigations revealed that he did not recently travel outside the country. Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 145 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 62 deaths.

[WHO](#)

## Saudi Arabia, Oman: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – WHO update

31 October - WHO has been informed of an additional four laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). These include the first laboratory-confirmed case from Oman and three additional laboratory-confirmed cases from Saudi Arabia...Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 149 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 63 deaths.

[WHO](#)

## Syria: U.N. confirms polio outbreak in Syria

29 October - United Nations officials confirmed an outbreak of polio among children in Syria on Tuesday, lending urgency to plans for vaccination campaigns there and in nearby countries to try to halt the spread of the disease. Tests confirmed polio in 10 out of 22 children in Deir al-Zour Province in northeastern Syria who became ill this month, Oliver Rosenbauer, a spokesman for the World Health Organization, said. Results of tests on the other 12 children are expected soon, he added. "With population movements, it can travel to other areas, so the risk is high of spread across the region," Mr. Rosenbauer said... With thousands of refugees fleeing daily from Syria's civil war to neighboring countries, they are also intensifying immunization efforts in six countries, including Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, which have taken in more than two million Syrian refugees, as well as Egypt and Israel. Most of the affected children in Syria are under two years old, Mr. Rosenbauer said, underscoring the impact of 31 months of conflict on Syria's health infrastructure. [New York Times](#)

[New York Times](#)

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## USEUCOM

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## St. Jude Day storms: 13 dead as hurricane-force winds batter Britain, France, Germany

28 October - A savage coastal storm powered by hurricane-force gusts slashed its way through Britain and western Europe on Monday, felling trees, flooding lowlands and snarling traffic in the air, at sea and on land. At least 13 people were reported killed. It was one of the worst storms to hit the region in years. The deadly tempest had no formal name — and wasn't officially classified as a hurricane due to a meteorological standard — but it was dubbed the St. Jude storm (after the patron saint of lost causes)... "The core of powerful winds marched relentlessly east, raking northern France and the Low Countries before slamming into northern Germany, Denmark, and southern Sweden. That latter phase in particular was exceptionally intense, with a 105-mph gust in extreme northern Germany and

many many places gusting over 85 mph in the surrounding area." ...At least thirteen storm-related deaths were reported, most victims crushed by falling trees. Germany had six deaths, Britain had five and the Netherlands and Denmark had one each. One woman was also missing after being swept into the surf in France. [Weather Channel](#)

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## **USNORTHCOM**

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### **Mexico: Cholera update**

28 October -The Ministry of Health in Mexico has reported an additional five cases of infection with *Vibrio cholerae* O1 Ogawa toxigenic. The five cases occurred in the geographic zone of la Huasteca, an area where urbanization, availability of drinking water and basic sanitation services are limited. From 9 September to date, a total of 176 confirmed cases, including one death, of infection with *Vibrio cholerae* O1 Ogawa toxigenic has been reported in the country... Eighty-nine of the total confirmed cases are women and 87 are men. Fifty-seven cases have been hospitalized. [WHO](#)

### **U.S. athletes still reluctant to admit head injuries, report**

31 October - Many young athletes still do not admit when they have suffered a head injury despite increased awareness about the risks of concussions in children and teenagers, U.S. health advisers said on Wednesday, urging sports leagues and government agencies to take more action. Various groups have tried to raise awareness about the seriousness of brain injuries, and sports leagues have implemented rule changes aimed at preventing them. Professional leagues, including the National Football League, are also wrestling with the issue amid complaints from some players about long-term impacts on the brain. [Reuters](#)

### **U.S.: Cancellation of health care plans replaces website problems as prime target**

29 October - After focusing for weeks on the technical failures of President Obama's health insurance website, Republicans on Tuesday broadened their criticism of the health care law, pointing to Americans whose health plans have been terminated because they do not meet the law's new coverage requirements. In the weeks since the health marketplaces opened, insurance companies have begun sending notices to hundreds of thousands of Americans in the individual insurance market informing them that their existing plans will soon be canceled. In many of those cases, the insured have been offered new plans, often with better coverage but also at higher prices. [New York Times](#)

## U.S.: Comorbidity in adults with epilepsy – United States, 2010

1 November - In this study, many U.S. adults with epilepsy (especially those with active epilepsy) reported cardiovascular, respiratory, and other disorders and various types of pain, consistent with other U.S. and international reports. These disorders might result from shared disease mechanisms (e.g., migraine or stroke), social disadvantages associated with chronic disease (e.g., risk-factor clustering), treatment side effects (e.g., weight gain), or shared genetic, environmental, or other factors. Adults with epilepsy also report higher rates of smoking and physical inactivity, which increase risk for heart disease and respiratory disorders. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## U.S.: FDA outlines plan to combat drug shortages

31 October - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration released a strategic plan for preventing drug shortages on Thursday and proposed a rule to require drug and biotechnology companies to promptly notify the agency of potential disruptions to the supply of medically important drugs... Most drug shortages are the result of quality control problems. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Health chief Sebelius apologizes for botched website

30 October - Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius apologized to Americans Wednesday for the troubled rollout of the national health care law and its dysfunctional website. "You deserve better," Sebelius said as she began her testimony to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. "I apologize. I'm accountable to you for fixing these problems." ...Jeffrey Zients, a former White House budget deputy, said the site will be fixed by Nov. 30. Sebelius' prepared testimony says HHS has updated the website's technology with new code and help from experts inside and outside of government. [USA Today](#)

## U.S.: Mosquitoes known to carry dengue, yellow fever seen in California

30 October - A tropical mosquito known to carry potentially fatal diseases such as dengue and yellow fever has been detected in California, raising concerns among public health officials and prompting intense efforts to eradicate the insect. No illnesses associated with the mosquito, known by the scientific name *Aedes aegypti*, have been reported since it first appeared in California's Central Valley in June, and none of the specimens trapped and tested has been found to be infected. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Texas abortion law hospital privilege requirement blocked

28 October - A new Texas law requiring abortion doctors to affiliate with local hospitals puts a "substantial obstacle" in the path of women seeking the procedure, a federal judge ruled, blocking its enforcement. The measure "does not bear a rational relationship to the legitimate right of the state in preserving and promoting fetal life or a woman's health," U.S. District Judge Lee Yeakel in Austin said today. The provisions, part of a larger piece of legislation passed in July, were to take effect tomorrow. The state immediately appealed the ruling, and a spokeswoman said the issue may be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. Similar measures have been blocked by provisional courts in Alabama, Mississippi, Wisconsin and North Dakota. [Bloomberg](#)

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### USPACOM

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## Australia: Queensland authorities battling worst measles outbreak in decades

31 October - Queensland Health says the state is experiencing its worst measles outbreak in years, with 30 cases now confirmed. The disease has now spread to four prisoners and one staff member at the Woodford Correctional Centre, north of Brisbane. Authorities suspect another three prisoners and one staff member also have the disease. [ABC News](#)

## China: Doctor stabbed to death in Zhejiang in latest hospital attack

25 October - A man unhappy with the results of an operation on his nose stabbed a doctor to death and wounded two others on Friday, state media reported, in at least the third such attack in a week in which China promised to improve hospital security... China spent 719.9 billion yuan (US\$120 billion) on health care last year, a 12 per cent increase from the previous year, in recognition of official concern about a key driver of social resentment. But hospitals are frequently overwhelmed with patients, and doctors are badly paid leading to corruption and a suspicion that staff are more interested in making money by prescribing unnecessary drugs and treatment than tending the sick... The Health Ministry this week announced plans to provide better security at hospitals, saying that last year seven people were killed and 28 injured in assaults on medical staff. [South China Morning Post](#)

## China to monitor link between smog and health

28 October- China's Health Ministry will set up a national network within five years to provide a way of monitoring the long-term impact of chronic air pollution on human health,

state media said on Monday. The network will gather data on PM2.5, or particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 micrometers, in different locations around the country, the report said, citing a ministry statement. "The document noted that the absence of a long-term, systematic monitoring system has prevented the country from uncovering the link between air pollution and human health," the report said. [Reuters](#)

## India: Study finds much drug resistance in effluent from pharma plants

Researchers studying wastewater from pharmaceutical plants in India found that 86% of bacterial strains they tested were resistant to at least 20 antibiotics, with one strain resistant to 36, according to a study yesterday in *PLoS One*. The team in 2007 collected samples from a wastewater treatment plant near Hyderabad, India, that receives effluent from 90 regional bulk drug manufacturers. They identified 93 different bacterial strains and tested them against 39 antibiotics from 12 different classes. [CIDRAP](#)

## Indonesia: Acid attacks intensify gang fights

28 October - 'Tawuran' - a tradition of student brawling - has become increasingly violent with the use of acid... High school students have gathered before and after class to hack and beat each other, often fatally, since the early 1990s. Public buses containing students from rival schools are often attacked, with innocent bystanders regularly becoming entangled in the violence. Spiked bats and machetes are common weapons of choice, but the use of acidic solution - in three reported high school incidents since the start of October - is a disturbing development. Four students from Muhammadiyah Technical College (SMK), central Jakarta, sustained neck burns after being attacked by 10 students on motorcycles with an acid solution on October 11... Responding to the string of incidents, Jakarta Deputy Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama announced recently the introduction of a compulsory "home study" period between 7pm and 9pm - effectively a curfew. Critics say the measures - to be trialed in Jakarta this month - are unlikely to affect student brawls that usually occur in the daytime. [Al Jazeera](#)

## Japan: Fukushima radiation traced in Pacific seafood

25 October - ...Just offshore from the Fukushima plant, scientists from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in the United States are working alongside their Japanese counterparts, monitoring radiation levels. Among them is senior marine chemist Ken Buesseler. "That radiation is moving across the Pacific, but it gets much, much lower even short distances offshore," he said. Buesseler said a bigger concern is the accumulation of isotopes in marine life. Earlier this year, cesium isotopes from Fukushima were found in tuna caught off California. "The tuna that were caught off San Diego with the Fukushima cesium isotopes, they were 10 to 20 times lower than they had been off Japan. Now the new releases, the leak from the tanks - they're changing in character. Strontium 90 has become of more concern because it's a bone-seeking isotope. That will stay in fish much longer," he said. TEPCO, the owner of the Fukushima plant, is building an underground frozen wall to

prevent contaminated water leaking into the sea. It is also testing a system to decontaminate the water. [VOA](#)

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**USSOUTHCOM**

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## Venezuela: Warning that malaria epidemic is not controlled

October 26 - The La Red Defendamos la Epidemiología Nacional, warned that the malaria epidemic is not controlled in the country and that failure case records it difficult to analyze the trend and the evolution of the disease , reports Notitarde Through a press release, the organization states that to be an aggregate of 61,000 cases , representing an increase of 74.3 % over the prior year period, when the figure was 35,000, is evidence that the expectation of reducing the number of cases and disease transmission has not been met , particularly in the parishes of the municipality Sifontes Bolivar State , which is the most affected area with the highest number. [Entorno Inteligente](#)

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