

20 February 2015

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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## After Combat

In the spring issue of the *Magazine of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health*, find out how two doctoral students unearthed critical data on thousands of undocumented brain injuries among combat veterans.



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## U.S. MILITARY

### Chronic stress may put TBI caregivers at risk for illness

18 February - Women caring for partners with traumatic brain injury (TBI) experience enough grief and stress to put their own health at risk, according to a small study of U.S. veterans' wives and girlfriends. Anger, blame and grief for the loss of the man they once knew were linked to elevated inflammation levels that raise the women's risk for chronic disease, researchers say, and not being able to turn to their loved one for support only makes things worse. ... [Women] could be finding it particularly difficult to cope because they are relatively young, still working and raising children. ... Researchers analyzed data on 40 women. ... Based on the women's' responses, Saban's team found that caregivers who felt 35 percent more anger than average in the group also had 25 percent more [inflammation-promoting] tumor necrosis factor. [Reuters](#)

### Influenza A(H3N2) outbreak at transit center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, 2014

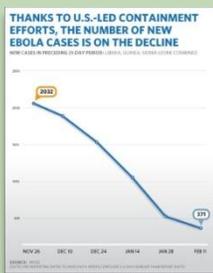
January -2015 - In February 2014, the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine Epidemiology Consult Service provided support in response to a moderate outbreak of influenza at the Transit Center at Manas (Kyrgyzstan). A total of 215 individuals presented with influenza-like illness symptoms from 3 December 2013 through 28 February 2014. There were 85 specimens positive for influenza (18 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 65 influenza A(H3N2), one influenza A/not subtyped, and one influenza B); six specimens were positive for other respiratory viruses (one human metapneumovirus, two parainfluenza, and three rhinovirus/enterovirus) and eight specimens were negative. Twenty-two of the specimens that were positive for influenza were sequenced and were not remarkably different from the strains seen during routine surveillance for the 2013–2014 season or from specimens collected at other deployed sites. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

### New rules on narcotic painkillers cause grief for veterans and VA

18 February - New federal rules that make it harder to get narcotic painkillers are taking an unexpected toll on thousands of veterans who depend on these prescription drugs to treat a wide variety of ailments, such as missing limbs and post-traumatic stress. The restrictions, adopted last summer by the Drug Enforcement Administration to curb a national epidemic of opioid abuse, are for the first time, in effect, forcing veterans to return to the doctor every month to renew their medication, although many were already struggling to get appointments at overburdened VA health facilities. And even if patients can get

#### FACT SHEET: Progress in Our Ebola Response at Home and Abroad

The White House released a fact sheet, providing an update on progress in U.S. Ebola response at home and abroad.



**These amazing  
'Hero Dogs' can  
change veterans'  
lives**

These amazing dogs have extraordinary skills that can have a life-changing impact on their human companions.



appointments, the new rules pose an additional hardship for many who live a good distance from the health centers. [Washington Post](#)

## Obama signs veteran suicide prevention bill

12 February - President Obama signed a veteran suicide prevention bill into law Thursday, calling on all Americans to "reach out and do more with and for our veterans." ... The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act will help the Department of Veterans Affairs study new strategies for suicide prevention and give student loan incentives to recruit psychiatrists to work with veterans. [USA Today](#)

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### GLOBAL

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## Biodefense aims to simulate human bodies by linking mini "organs on chips"

17 February - Each year, the US government spends hundreds of millions of dollars stockpiling countermeasures for potential biological, chemical and radiological warfare agents. For ethical reasons, many of these treatments have never been tested in humans. Now, the US military and civilian science agencies are supporting the development of the next best thing for tests: miniature human organs on plastic chips. ... With support from the US Food and Drug Administration, he is adapting his 'bone marrow on a chip' to study the effects of harmful radiation and experimental remedies. ... A common way to form a model organ is to seed cells into channels in a small plastic chip and then feed them with nutrient-rich fluid that flows through the system to mimic blood. The devices can be used individually or connected to other types of organs-on-chips to approximate a biological system, or—eventually—perhaps an entire human body. [Scientific American](#)

## Evaluation of border entry screening for infectious diseases in humans

February 2015- In response to the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) pandemic of 2003 and the influenza pandemic of 2009, many countries instituted border measures as a means of stopping or slowing the spread of disease. The measures, usually consisting of a combination of border entry/exit screening, quarantine, isolation, and communications, were resource intensive, and modeling and observational studies indicate that border screening is not effective at detecting infectious persons. Moreover, border screening has high opportunity costs, financially and in terms of the use of scarce public health staff resources during a time of high need. ... We conclude that outbreak-associated communications for travelers at border entry points, together with effective communication

## Protecting Children: Influenza Updates for Clinicians

Date: Thursday, February  
26, 2015

Time: 2:00 - 3:00 pm (ET)

Dial In Number:  
888-810-4792 (U.S. Callers);  
630-395-0368  
(International Callers)

Passcode: 7545982

### Webinar

A recent analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found influenza A (H3N2) viruses are the predominant strain this year, and a little more than half of samples analyzed were found to be antigenically different (drifted) from the H3N2 vaccine strain. During this COCA Webinar, clinicians will learn about the current state of flu activity related to children, the importance of continued vaccination despite the mismatch and low vaccine effectiveness, and strategies for using antiviral therapy early to prevent and treat influenza.

with clinicians and more effective disease control measures in the community, may be a more effective approach to the international control of communicable diseases. [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#)

## Fatal accidents as a global health crisis

16 February - ... Worldwide, road injuries kill more people than AIDS. Falls kill nearly three times as many people as brain cancer. Drowning claims more lives than mothers dying in childbirth. Both fire and poisonings have many times more fatal victims than natural disasters. In 2013, the combined death toll from all unintentional injuries was 3.5 million people. Only heart disease and stroke were greater killers. [There are] huge variations among countries that are economic peers. This is actually encouraging news: It means that some countries have figured out a much better way to curb accidental deaths — and that other countries might be able to follow suit. In France and Spain, according to the study's authors, people die from transport injuries at roughly the same rate, but the French are twice as likely to die from falls, even when you adjust for the country's older population. In Britain and the United States, deaths from falls are almost equivalent, but Americans are twice as likely to die from poisonings, again adjusted for age differences. Why? [New York Times](#)

## Inflammatory bowel disease transmitted by maternal bacteria

18 February - Your mother's DNA may have determined your eye color, but some traits that you thought came from her may instead have come from the DNA of bacteria she passed on to you soon after birth, a new study finds. The study found that a mother mouse can pass along to her offspring a susceptibility to intestinal disorders, such as inflammatory bowel disease, by way of a gut-residing bacterium called *Sutterella*, the researchers reported in the journal *Nature* on Feb. 16. ... This new finding, however, is the first identification of a specific trait that an offspring can inherit — in this case, a deficiency of a blood protein called immunoglobulin A, or IgA, which is the source of the bowel condition — caused by a specific bacterium that can be transferred from the mother to her offspring. IgA helps the body fight infection. [Scientific American](#)

## Mass treatment with single-dose azithromycin for yaws

19 February - Mass treatment with azithromycin is a central component of the new World Health Organization (WHO) strategy to eradicate yaws. Empirical data on the effectiveness of the strategy are required as a prerequisite for worldwide implementation of the plan. ... The prevalence of active and latent yaws infection fell rapidly and substantially 12 months after high-coverage mass treatment with azithromycin, with the reduction perhaps aided by subsequent activities to identify and treat new cases of yaws. [The] results support the WHO strategy for the eradication of yaws. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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## NIH-funded research lays groundwork for next-generation prosthetics

9 February - Three groups of researchers who have received support from the National Institutes of Health will obtain funding from the President's BRAIN Initiative to improve artificial limb technology. The new awards will be funded and administered by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and will build on the fundamental discoveries that were made possible by NIH support. ... The new awards are part of Hand Proprioception and Touch Interfaces (HAPTIX), a DARPA program to enhance neural prosthetics by improving their ability to realistically sense touch and movement. "The BRAIN Initiative provides a wonderful platform for collaboration between NIH and DARPA as well as other federal agencies to work towards the common goal of improving the lives of wounded service members." [NIH](#)

## NIH-sponsored HIV vaccine trial launches in South Africa

19 February - A clinical trial called HVTN 100 has been launched in South Africa to study an investigational HIV vaccine regimen for safety and the immune responses it generates in study participants. This experimental vaccine regimen is based on the one tested in the U.S. Military HIV Research Program-led RV144 clinical trial in Thailand -- the first study to demonstrate that a vaccine can protect people from HIV infection. The HVTN 100 vaccine regimen was designed to provide greater protection than the RV144 regimen and has been adapted to the HIV subtype that predominates in southern Africa. The results of the HVTN 100 trial, expected in two years, will help determine whether or not this vaccine regimen will be tested for efficacy in a large future study in South Africa. [NIH](#)

## Paper test quickly detects Ebola, dengue and yellow fever

18 February- Researchers in the US have developed a silver nanoparticle-based paper test to simultaneously detect dengue, yellow fever and Ebola. This could provide a cheap and reliable diagnosis for all three diseases, that's as quick as a home pregnancy test. The Ebola epidemic in West Africa underscores an urgent need for rapid diagnostics; quick identification and patient isolation can benefit the sick and the healthy. However, dengue, yellow fever and Ebola all initially manifest as a fever and headache, so are easily mixed up. Now, this huge problem has a tiny solution – an 8×3cm lateral flow test. Lee Gehrke and his team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard Medical School adapted the traditional single marker lateral flow test to diagnose several diseases at once. It costs \$2, takes 10 minutes, and there is no need for a power supply, trained specialist or expensive equipment. [Scientific American](#)

## EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

### Ebola-hit nations struggle with local resistance, unreported cases

18 February - Ebola activity stabilized in West Africa last week, with the case increase slowing in Guinea and more signs in Sierra Leone that the steep drop over the past several weeks has leveled off, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today in its weekly epidemiology report on the epidemic. All three countries are still grappling with incidents of community resistance, the agency said. And in Guinea and Sierra Leone a fair number of Ebola cases aren't detected until someone has died from the disease in the community, a sign that illnesses aren't always being reported, which poses a serious threat of ongoing disease transmission. Overall, 128 newly confirmed Ebola cases were reported in the three countries last week, lifting the total of confirmed, probable, and suspected cases in the three countries to 23,218. The number of deaths has reached 9,365. [CIDRAP](#)

### Ebola survivor comic book to be distributed to Liberian schools



6 February - The Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3) is supporting the printing and distribution in Liberian schools of a comic book featuring a fictional soccer star that survived Ebola. Plans call for distributing 3,500 copies in schools along with a teacher guide, as well as selling it commercially.

Developed by a team of graphic artists and storytellers in Liberia, the Ebola edition of "Tabella Tee – International Soccer Star" chronicles the latest turn in Tee's inspiring life. The comic book details how Ebola is transmitted by having Tee consider how he was infected in the first place. It then lists signs and symptoms of Ebola as Tee describes his own illness and his hesitancy to seek help. He eventually uses the national hotline number in Liberia to get the help he needs. As a survivor, Tee experiences some stigma when he returns to his community, but he is welcomed after his family learns he is no longer infectious. The engaging visuals and story were designed to educate as well as entertain readers. [Health Communication Capacity Collaborative](#)

### Liberia schools reopen after 6-month Ebola closure

16 February - Students in Liberia began returning to the classroom Monday after a six-month closure during the Ebola epidemic that left thousands dead in this West African country. In the capital, lines formed outside entrances where returning students' temperatures were being taken. Ebola's main symptom is a high fever, and only those who are sick can spread the deadly virus to others. Deputy Education Minister Remses Kumbuyah said more than 5,000 kits were distributed to schools that included thermometers and chlorine for hand-washing. "They should wash their hands in chlorine and they should ensure that there is no touching while on campus," the minister told The

Associated Press. "We are asking all the school administrators to ensure that a classroom should not have more than 45 or 50 students." [Stars and Stripes](#)

## Sierra Leone locks down part of capital after spike in Ebola cases

13 February - Sierra Leone has locked down a neighborhood in the capital Freetown following a spike in Ebola cases, in a setback for the country hardest-hit by the virus, an official in the government response team said on Friday. Health workers were deploying to carry out house-to-house searches in Aberdeen, a district on the tip of the Freetown peninsula where dense slums lie a stone's throw away from upscale restaurants and hotels popular with foreigners. "There was a sudden spike in the number of cases. It's effectively a quarantine there which would typically last 21 days," said OB Sisay, director of the situation room in the National Ebola Response Centre. [Reuters](#)

## U.S. bringing home almost all troops sent to Africa in Ebola crisis

11 February - The U.S. military is bringing home all but 100 troops sent to West Africa 10 months ago to support efforts to battle the Ebola epidemic, the Pentagon announced Tuesday in a press release. "At the height of the epidemic, there were 2,800 DoD [Department of Defense] personnel deployed to West Africa," Pentagon press secretary Rear Adm. John Kirby said. "Given the success of the U.S. response to the crisis, the majority of DoD personnel in West Africa will now return home. "Today, around 1,500 of them are already back to their duty stations and nearly all will return by April 30. All have or will undergo established controlled monitoring procedures." Kirby said about 100 military service members will remain in West Africa to support the 10,000 civilian responders who remain. [CNN](#)

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### **INFLUENZA**

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

For Week 5:

- NORTHCOM: Flu remains widespread throughout most of the United States.
- EUCOM: High influenza activity was seen in Italy and Germany.
- PACOM: Influenza activity was high in Hawaii and was moderate in South Korea.

- CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Flu activity was minimal to low. ILI and P&I activity decreased but was above baseline. [AFHSC DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

## CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 5 (February 1-7, 2015), influenza activity decreased, but remained elevated in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 21,340 specimens tested and reported by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories during week 5, 3,174 (14.9%) 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: Eleven influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- Influenza-associated Hospitalizations: A cumulative rate for the season of 44.1 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 3.8%, above the national baseline of 2.0%. All 10 regions reported ILI at or above region-specific baseline levels. [FluView](#)

## China: Guangdong man with H7N9 brings global case total to nearly 600

18 February - An additional case of H7N9 avian flu in China's Guangdong province has been reported to Hong Kong's Centre for Health Protection (CHP), according to a machine-translated statement posted today by FluTrackers, an infectious disease news message board. ... The total number of H7N9 cases globally now stands 598, according to a case list maintained by FluTrackers. The CHP statement puts the total cases from mainland China at 575, with the largest number in Guangdong (164) and Zhejiang (156) provinces. [CIDRAP Flu Scan](#) (first item)

## China: H5N1 virus strikes tigers in Chinese zoo

16 February - The highly pathogenic H5N1 avian flu virus recently infected eight tigers at a zoo in southern China, killing two of them, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The zoo is in Nanning in the autonomous region of Guangxi, which borders Vietnam, says a Feb 12 FAO notice. The illness in the tigers was first noted on Feb 5, and the virus was identified on Feb 12. Yesterday's China's agriculture ministry indicated that no sick poultry had been found in the Nanning area, according to a machine translation of a statement posted today by the blog Avian Flu Diary. [CIDRAP Avian Flu Scan](#) (fourth item)

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

- During 25 January - 7 February 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 4 & 5), a total of 628 specimens were collected and received from 63 locations. Results were finalized for 368 specimens from 53 locations. During Week 4, the laboratory identified 150 influenza A(H3N2), one influenza co-infection (A(H3N2) & influenza B & Adenovirus & Rhinovirus/Enterovirus), one influenza A/not subtyped, and 11 influenza B. During Week 5, 63 influenza A(H3N2) and eight influenza B were identified.
- Mismatched H3N2 flu viruses continue to predominate across the country, hitting elderly people hard. The flu-associated hospitalization rate among people 65 and older last week is the highest rate recorded since CDC began tracking that data in 2005. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

## Egypt: H5N1 infects 6 more in Egypt, one fatally

16 February - The H5N1 avian flu virus has sickened six people in Egypt over the past 4 days, one fatally, according to official sources. ... Egypt has had a gush of H5N1 cases this winter, and it's unclear how many cases and deaths have been recorded. The health ministry's statements have been irregular and difficult to reconcile with media reports and periodic updates from the World Health Organization (WHO). A running list kept by FluTrackers, which bases its total on official sources, notes that the new cases lift the country's total so far this year to 59 cases, which include 18 deaths. [CIDRAP Avian Flu Scan](#) (first item)

## Flu News Europe

Week 06/2015

- The influenza season is well under way, particularly in western and central countries of the WHO European Region.
- For week 06/2015, 20 countries reported increasing influenza activity.
- Of 2625 sentinel specimens, 1331 (51%) tested positive for influenza virus with positive detections being made in all 33 countries that reported virological data.
- Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2) and type B viruses continued to circulate in the Region, with A(H3N2) predominating.
- Excess all-cause mortality among elderly people (aged  $\geq 65$  years), concomitant with increased influenza activity and the predominance of A(H3N2) viruses, has been observed in recent weeks in Belgium, France, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (England, Scotland and Wales). Across all countries, a pooled analysis shows a higher level of mortality among elderly people than in the four previous seasons (see the European project for monitoring excess mortality for public health action (EuroMOMO – <http://www.euromomo.eu>)).

- Most of the A(H3N2) viruses characterized so far show antigenic differences from the virus included in the 2014–2015 northern hemisphere influenza vaccine. A reduction in the effectiveness of the A(H3N2) component of the vaccine may therefore be expected, which in turn may contribute to the excess mortality reported among elderly people in six European countries. The vaccine is still expected to provide some cross-protection against A(H3N2) viruses, which may reduce the likelihood of severe outcomes, such as hospitalization or death, in some cases. The A(H1N1)pdm09 and B components of the vaccine are likely to be effective.
- The circulation of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) has decreased across the Region, following peak activity during the first two weeks of 2015. [Flu News Europe](#)

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

For the week ending 14 February 2014:

### Influenza

- One case of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.
- Moderate influenza A/H3 activity at several recruit sites. A large proportion of cases were vaccinated.
- A/H3 cases also occurring among DoD dependents and civilians near US-Mexico border. Low proportion of cases had been vaccinated prior to illness.

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](#)

## Study: Antibodies in flu-vaccinated people may protect against H7N9

18 February- Researchers found that antibodies in samples taken from people who had received seasonal flu vaccine protected against H7N9 avian flu in cell culture and mice, according to a study yesterday in the Journal of Clinical Investigation. US researchers selected 83 antibodies that were isolated from 28 vaccinated people and that reacted with H3N2, a common seasonal flu strain. When tested, at least 7% of the antibodies reacted against rare H7 strains, even though H7 strains are not included in seasonal flu vaccines. Of these, three antibodies appeared to completely neutralize H7N9 in cell culture. [CIDRAP Flu Scan](#) (third item)

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

For the week ending 7 February 2015 (Week 5)

- Overall, the percentage of specimens testing positive for influenza has decreased each week for the last four weeks. The number of specimens submitted for testing also

declined each week.

- Influenza-like illness (ILI) activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week five were 5% higher than for the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: 10 hospitalized influenza cases were reported to USAPHC in week five; 4 in Active Duty (AD) service members (SM) and 6 in non-AD beneficiaries. 5 of the cases were vaccinated. To date, 57 cases have been reported during this influenza season: 12 AD SM and 45 non-AD beneficiaries.
- Viral specimens: During week five, 735 of 2424 (30%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens; 498 of 2025 (25%) specimens tested for influenza A were positive. SRMC and ERMC reported the most influenza A-positive specimens (both at 31%), followed by NRMCM (18%), PRMC (13%), WRMC (8%), and CENTCOM (0%).

[USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

## WHO Influenza Update

9 February - Globally influenza activity remained high in the northern hemisphere with influenza A(H3N2) viruses predominating so far this season. Antigenic characterization of most recent A(H3N2) viruses thus far indicated differences from the A(H3N2) virus used in the influenza vaccines for the northern hemisphere 2014-2015. The vast majority of influenza A(H3N2) viruses tested to date this season were sensitive to neuraminidase inhibitors.

- In North America, the influenza activity seemed to have peaked. Influenza A(H3N2) virus predominated this season.
- In Europe, the influenza season is well under way, particularly in western and central countries in the WHO European Region. Influenza A(H3N2) was the dominant virus detected this season.
- In northern Africa and the middle East, influenza activity due to influenza A(H3N2) and B seemed to have peaked but increasing activity with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 was reported by Algeria, and Iran.
- In the temperate countries of Asia, influenza activity appeared to have peaked in northern China, but was still increasing in Japan and the Republic of Korea. Influenza A(H3N2) virus predominated so far.
- In tropical countries of the Americas, influenza activity was low in most countries of the Caribbean, Central America and in the tropical countries of South America.
- In tropical Asia, influenza activity increased in south China; China Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and India.
- In the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels. [WHO](#)

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## Australia: Frozen berry Hep A outbreak spreads

18 February - The number of Australians who have caught Hepatitis A after eating frozen berries has risen to 14 and spread to four states. The Australian Department of Health says it is coordinating a national health response to the outbreak. Children at several schools across the country may have been served contaminated berries. The berries' distributor, Patties Foods, has recalled four of its products over the outbreak. Raspberries packaged in China appear to be the common link, the company said. But Australia's Chief Medical Officer, Prof Chris Baggoley, told a press conference on Wednesday the source of the virus was still unconfirmed. However, he said the berries were the only common link for all cases.

[BBC News](#)

## *Campylobacter* causes the most raw milk outbreaks

18 February - *Campylobacter* is the source of most raw milk outbreaks, according to a new study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The study, which found raw milk outbreaks are on the rise, compared data from the two-year periods 2007-2009 and 2010-2012. ... In every year from 2007 to 2012, *Campylobacter* was the source of the majority of raw milk outbreaks, accounting for 81 percent of them overall. *E. coli* caused the second most with 17 percent, Salmonella was third with 3 percent and *Coxiella burnetii* was responsible for 1 percent. Three of the outbreaks in the study had multiple bacterial sources.

[Food Poisoning Bulletin](#)

## Canadian cow with BSE born after feed precautions

18 February - A Canadian beef cow infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy was born on an Alberta farm in 2009, two years after the federal government imposed tougher animal feed restrictions, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency said on Wednesday. Canada confirmed its first case of BSE, also called mad cow disease, since 2011 on Friday. The CFIA has said no part of the animal reached the human food or animal feed systems.

[Reuters](#)

## FDA warns people with peanut allergies to consider avoiding ground cumin

20 February - People with severe allergies to peanuts should be extra cautious not to consume food with cumin powder or ground cumin (e.g., as a spice or as an ingredient in seasoning mixes), the FDA warned on Thursday. Some products containing cumin have tested positive for undeclared peanut protein.

[NEJM Journal Watch](#)

## Outbreak of *Salmonella* Newport infections linked to cucumbers — United States, 2014

20 February - In August 2014, PulseNet, the national molecular subtyping network for foodborne disease surveillance, detected a multistate cluster of *Salmonella enterica* serotype Newport infections with an indistinguishable pulse-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) pattern (*Xba*I PFGE pattern JJPX01.0061).<sup>\*</sup> Outbreaks of illnesses associated with this PFGE pattern have previously been linked to consumption of tomatoes harvested from Virginia's Eastern Shore in the Delmarva region and have not been linked to cucumbers or other produce items. ... [Evidence] suggests that cucumbers were a source of *Salmonella* Newport infections in this outbreak. The epidemiologic link to a novel outbreak vehicle suggests an environmental reservoir for *Salmonella* in the Delmarva region that should be identified and mitigated to prevent future outbreaks. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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### WELLNESS

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## 9-valent HPV vaccine effective

18 February - A vaccine targeting nine cancer-causing strains of human papillomavirus (HPV) -- rather than two or four -- was highly effective in preventing disease, researchers reported. The investigational vaccine contains four HPV strains associated with most malignancies -- those already in the currently licensed quadrivalent vaccine -- as well as five others also associated with the disease but not included in any vaccine, according to Elmar Joura, MD, of the Medical University of Vienna, in Austria, and colleagues. [MedPage Today](#)

## Forget barefoot; new trendsetter in running shoes is cushioning



16 February - Athletes who spent the past few years embracing or scorning barefoot running can now consider whether increasingly popular "maximalist" shoes — with their chunky, heavily cushioned soles — are the sport's new wonder product. Some dismiss the shoes as gimmicky, or just silly-looking. Others, including injury-prone joggers and

Olympians, are apostolic converts. ... Solutions for injury prevention, on the extremes of the athletic footwear spectrum, have reached panacea-like proportions in recent years. The rise of maximalism counters the fall of minimalism, particularly the barefoot running movement. ... "People are frustrated, and we're told so often there's a magic shoe that will stop our injuries," said Jay Dicharry, a biomechanist in Bend, Ore., and author of "Anatomy for Runners." "But that's just not true." [New York Times](#)

## Gradual smoking cessation may be possible with nicotine addiction pill

18 February - A nicotine addiction pill can help smokers quit gradually when they can't go cold turkey, a study finds, suggesting that it may be time to revisit practice guidelines that focus primarily on immediate cessation. Smokers who took the pill, sold as Chantix in the U.S. and Champix elsewhere, were much more likely to quit after cutting back on cigarettes than smokers who didn't use the drug, the study found. "This allows us to reach a much broader population of smokers who aren't willing to quit abruptly or set a quit date, and it shows that people can quit without going cold turkey," said lead study author Dr. Jon Ebbert, a professor in primary care and internal medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. [Reuters](#)

## Inactive seniors can see heart gains with light exercise

19 February - Sedentary, elderly people with limited mobility can improve their cardiovascular health simply by moving more, even if their exercise intensity levels remain very low, researchers suggested. Activity that fell well below the threshold for moderate-intensity exercise appeared to lower cardiovascular risk, and increased sedentary time was associated with greater predicted risk, reported Thomas W. Buford, PhD, of the University of Florida Institute on Aging in Gainesville, and colleagues in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*. [MedPage Today](#)

## Knowing what's in your supplements

12 February - ... Experts say that there is no guarantee that supplements will do what they say they do, or that they are safe or won't interact with any medications you may be taking. But there are several steps people can take to give themselves some reassurance that at least some of the supplements they buy actually contain what they advertise on the label – and nothing else. For one, you can look for products that receive a seal of approval from the United States Pharmacopeial Convention, ... NSF International, ... ConsumerLab.com, and Lab Door. ... Although companies are required to follow an established set of manufacturing practices, policing the industry has been a special challenge for the federal government because the [Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act] essentially created an environment in which companies operate on the honor code. ... "The honor system isn't working," John Bradley, the editor in chief of Nutrition Business Journal, wrote in an editorial last week. "The best way forward for the nutritional supplements industry will be to accept at least a bit more oversight. [New York Times](#)

## Military physical training: It's a problem bigger than obesity, with no easy solutions

18 February - At first glance, the recent introduction of new physical training programs in the Army and Marine Corps appears to be in response to emergent challenges to warfighter physiology both in basic training and combat. The military widely acknowledges the

growing problem of overweight recruits becoming overweight service members, and it is now coming to grips with the high rate of musculoskeletal injuries resulting from physical training. But while the USMC's new High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT) program and the Army's training doctrine in the revised FM 7-22 intend to address the issues of injury and body composition, they approach both issues as symptoms of a much deeper problem. "We have 18 and 19-year-old kids coming into basic training that can't skip or perform a forward roll," says Frank Palkoska, Chief of the US Army's Physical Fitness Training School. "They have not learned the motor patterns to execute these basic movements. It's very difficult to get a person through an obstacle course when they're starting so far behind, and ten weeks isn't enough to get them up to speed." [Foreign Policy](#)

## Nationwide study reports shifts in Americans' use of natural products

10 February - A nationally representative survey shows that natural product use in the United States has shifted since 2007, with some products becoming more popular and some falling out of favor. Overall, natural products (dietary supplements other than vitamins and minerals) remain the most common complementary health approach. ... Survey highlights:

-- Fish oil was the top natural product among adults.

-- Adults' use of fish oil, probiotics or prebiotics, and melatonin increased between 2007 and 2012.

-- Adults' use of glucosamine/chondroitin, echinacea, and garlic decreased between 2007 and 2012.

-- Fish oil was the top natural product among children. This is a change from 2007, when echinacea was first.

-- Melatonin was the second most used natural product by children in 2012. Its use increased substantially from 2007 to 2012. [NIH](#)

## Smoking and mortality — beyond established causes

12 February - Mortality among current smokers is 2 to 3 times as high as that among persons who never smoked. Most of this excess mortality is believed to be explained by 21 common diseases that have been formally established as caused by cigarette smoking and are included in official estimates of smoking-attributable mortality in the United States. However, if smoking causes additional diseases, these official estimates may significantly underestimate the number of deaths attributable to smoking. We pooled data from five contemporary U.S. cohort studies including 421,378 men and 532,651 women 55 years of age or older. ... Overall, approximately 17% of the excess mortality among current smokers was due to associations with causes that are not currently established as attributable to smoking. These included associations between current smoking and deaths from renal failure, intestinal ischemia, hypertensive heart disease, infections, various respiratory diseases, breast cancer, and prostate cancer. Among former smokers, the relative risk for

each of these outcomes declined as the number of years since quitting increased. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

## The EdibleRx: Cholesterol limits out of fashion

18 February - Old-school: That's the latest word about the [upcoming recommendations of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee \(DGAC\)](#). Limiting cholesterol has been in the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for more than 2 decades despite very little evidence tying dietary cholesterol to high levels of blood cholesterol, especially LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels, and heart disease. It was one of those things that was probably figured to make sense: if high levels of blood cholesterol were bad, then eating foods high in cholesterol was probably also unwise. Better to limit such foods. Well, scientific evidence seems to have taken the lead here, as it should have all along (although the recommendation about dietary cholesterol may very well not make the 2015 version of the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans). [MedPage Today](#)

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### USAFRICOM

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## A map of hunger in 2015 - where to watch

17 February - Food shortages are often portrayed as random – the result of freak weather conditions or short-term political crises. Yet they are often deeply predictable – while short-term trends can exaggerate the impact, most of the causes are structural. Last week the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS Net) released its latest forward-looking analysis of food needs in key countries. The data track not just which countries are likely to have food shortages this year but when they are likely to occur. IRIN's interactive map highlights countries that are particularly prone to crisis. Click on a country to see how many people are at risk, the level of crisis and when the potential lean season is. See the map [here](#). [IRIN](#)

## Uganda confirms typhoid outbreak

19 February - Uganda's Health Ministry on Thursday confirmed an outbreak of typhoid in the East African country. "We would like to inform the general public that there is an outbreak of Typhoid in Kampala and in some parts of the neighbouring Wakiso and Mukono districts," Jane Ruth Aceng, director-general of health services, told reporters. She said the first Typhoid infection had been reported on Feb. 6. "So far, two people are confirmed to have died of the disease, while 11 more deaths are still being investigated," Aceng said. She added that a total of 142 people had so far been found with symptoms of typhoid. According to the Health Ministry, 20 to 30 more people have complained of typhoid-like symptoms, including fever, abdominal pain and cough. [World Bulletin](#)

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## Kyrgyzstan: Islamic anti-vaxxers

5 February - All but declared dead a few years ago, measles is back in Kyrgyzstan -- and God is largely to blame. ... What sets the anti-vaxxer community apart in Kyrgyzstan, a predominantly Muslim country, is that there is one overarching reason for opting out of inoculations -- religion. Nearly 70 percent of the 6,400 people who sought vaccination exemptions in 2014 did so on religious grounds, according to the Bishkek-based National Center for Immunization and Disease Prevention. ... Just two years ago, fresh off a 2012 that saw no cases of measles, the Kyrgyz Health Ministry boasted that "children are no longer dying of measles!" ... After more than 200 cases were recorded in 2014, more than 3,400 confirmed cases and nearly 1,000 suspected cases have been recorded as of February 5 of this year. ... This time it was measles, but [the CIDP head] expresses fear that other preventable diseases -- such as tetanus and diphtheria, which she says have not been seen in Kyrgyzstan "in many years" -- could be a source of future outbreaks. Meningitis and polio -- which broke out in neighboring Tajikistan in 2010 -- are also on the radar, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to announce plans to introduce new vaccines to Kyrgyzstan's vaccination schedule in 2015. [Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty](#)

## Saudi Arabia: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

16 February - Between 5 and 7 February 2015, the IHR National Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (SAU) notified WHO of 5 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection. ... The IHR National Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also notified WHO of the death of 1 previously reported MERS-CoV cases. ... Globally, WHO has been notified of 983 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 360 related deaths. [WHO](#)

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## Dying Dutch: Euthanasia spreads across Europe

12 February – ... [Doctor-assisted] euthanasia ... is booming in the Netherlands. In 2013, according to the latest data, 4,829 people across the country chose to have a doctor end their lives. That's one in every 28 deaths in the Netherlands, and triple the number of people who died this way in 2002. The Dutch don't require proof of a terminal illness to allow doctors to "help" patients die. Here, people can choose euthanasia if they can convince two physicians they endure "unbearable" suffering. ... Other countries are now edging closer to the Dutch model. On February 6, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down a ban on

physician-assisted suicide, joining Luxembourg, Belgium and Switzerland on the list of Western countries where euthanasia is fully legal. ... In France, lawmakers are debating a bill that would give doctors the right to place patients into a deep, painless and permanent sleep. In the U.K., legislators are now considering an "assisted dying bill" that would legalize euthanasia for the first time. [Newsweek](#)

## Germany in push to encourage antibiotics development

18 February - Germany is looking to encourage the development of more powerful antibiotics against the growing threat of drug-resistant superbugs, the country's pharmaceutical industry association said on Wednesday. The health ministry in Berlin is to hold talks later this year with Germany's pharma lobby VFA, which will propose loosely modeling any new rules for antibiotics on the so-called orphan drug status that is awarded to experimental treatments of rare diseases, VFA's chairman Hagen Pfundner said. One of the biggest deterrents for drugmakers is that any new, more powerful antibiotics would need to be used sparingly because overuse could give rise to even more resistant bacteria, he said. "When you develop, produce and market an antibiotic that is not supposed to be used in the first place unless all other existing therapies have failed, you need a special regulatory environment," said Pfundner, who is also head of Swiss drugmaker Roche's German unit, speaking at a media gathering. [Reuters](#)

## Norway and Scotland report wound botulism in heroin users

17 February - Norway and Scotland reported 23 cases of *Clostridium botulinum* wound infections in people who inject heroin, according to a risk assessment yesterday from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Norway reported 8 cases, and Scotland reported 6 confirmed and 9 probable cases of wound botulism among heroin users from Dec 2014 to Feb 10. Officials from the ECDC and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction traced the infections to contaminated heroin bought in Oslo and Glasgow. Most heroin users with wound botulism had used an intramuscular injection, while one patient reported smoking the drug. The ECDC said that the risk of the contaminated batch of heroin affecting other countries is unknown and depends on the stage of heroin distribution where contamination occurred. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

## United Kingdom: HPV vaccine linked to less-risky behavior

12 February - Contrary to concerns that getting vaccinated against human papilloma virus (HPV) will lead young people to have more or riskier sex, a new study in England finds less risky behavior among young women who got the HPV vaccine. ... It's possible that getting vaccinated led to better education about sexual health, Sadler and her colleagues write in the *Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care*. Sadler and other experts say it's also possible that young women who are already less likely to take risks are the ones who are more likely to get vaccinated. [Reuters](#)

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## Canada: Total confirmed cases of measles in Ontario reaches 17 patients

18 February - A sixth case of measles has been diagnosed in Niagara Region, bringing to 17 the total number of cases of the highly infectious disease confirmed in Ontario since the end of January. The latest ill patient is an unvaccinated female who is connected to the first person in Niagara to have been diagnosed with the measles earlier this month, as are all the cases that have been confirmed there so far. ... One of the Niagara patients, a 14-year-old girl, attended a Christian youth event called "Acquire the Fire," at the Queensway Cathedral in Toronto on Feb. 6 and 7, prompting a warning for more than 1,000 participants to be on the lookout for the symptoms of measles, including fever, dry cough, runny nose and a telltale rash that begins on the face and moves down the body. [Globe and Mail](#)

## U.S.: Bias, black lives, and academic medicine

18 February - ... What are the systemic biases within academic medical centers, and what do they have to do with black lives? ... First, there is evidence that doctors hold stereotypes based on patients' race that can influence their clinical decisions. Implicit bias refers to unconscious racial stereotypes that grow from our personal and cultural experiences. ... Although explicit race bias is rare among physicians, an unconscious preference for whites as compared with blacks is commonly revealed on tests of implicit bias. Second, despite physicians' and medical centers' best intentions of being equitable, black-white disparities persist in patient outcomes, medical education, and faculty recruitment. In the 2002 report Unequal Treatment, the Institute of Medicine [found] that for almost every disease studied, black Americans received less effective care than white Americans. These disparities persisted despite matching for socioeconomic and insurance status. Minority patients received fewer recommended treatments for diseases ranging from AIDS to cancer to heart disease. And racial gaps in health care outcomes have persisted. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

## U.S.: How poverty and mental illness are putting more people behind bars

16 February - A new report finds that more Americans than ever are spending time in jail. The Vera Institute of Justice showed that, in the past two decades, despite a drop in the crime rate, the number of people going to jail has increased dramatically. In addition, those behind bars are staying longer. Some 62 percent of them have not yet been convicted of a crime, and three-quarters of those jailed now are brought in for nonviolent offenses. The report also finds that a disproportionate number of those in jail suffer from mental illness. ... In the past few decades, we have increasingly arrested more and more people, not only for felonies or serious charges, but also for misdemeanors. And we are also seeing more people who are being arrested being put in jail, so there is a general reflex within the criminal

justice system still to rely on confinement. [PBS News Hour](#)

## U.S.: Measles outbreak — California, December 2014–February 2015

20 February - ... As of February 11, a total of 125 measles cases with rash occurring during December 28, 2014–February 8, 2015, had been confirmed in U.S. residents connected with this outbreak. Of these, 110 patients were California residents. Thirty-nine (35%) of the California patients visited one or both of the two Disney theme parks during December 17–20, where they are thought to have been exposed to measles, 37 have an unknown exposure source (34%), and 34 (31%) are secondary cases. Among the 34 secondary cases, 26 were household or close contacts, and eight were exposed in a community setting. Five (5%) of the California patients reported being in one or both of the two Disney theme parks during their exposure period outside of December 17–20, but their source of infection is unknown. In addition, 15 cases linked to the two Disney theme parks have been reported in seven other states: Arizona (seven), Colorado (one), Nebraska (one), Oregon (one), Utah (three), and Washington (two), as well as linked cases reported in two neighboring countries, Mexico (one) and Canada (10). [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## U.S.: Superbug linked to 2 deaths at UCLA hospital; 179 potentially exposed

18 February - Nearly 180 patients at UCLA's Ronald Reagan Medical Center may have been exposed to potentially deadly bacteria from contaminated medical scopes, and two deaths have already been linked to the outbreak. The Times has learned that the two people who died are among seven patients that UCLA found were infected by the drug-resistant superbug known as CRE — a number that may grow as more patients get tested. The outbreak is the latest in a string of similar incidents across the country that has top health officials scrambling for a solution. [Los Angeles Times](#)

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### USPACOM

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## China: China's 'blood famine' drives patients to the black market

16 February - China's rising demand for healthcare is exposing a chronic shortage of an essential commodity: blood. With hospital blood supplies tight, desperate patients are turning to agents known as "blood heads", who sell certificates that give patients access to state blood banks, creating a black market at the heart of the healthcare system. ... The blood "famine", as it has been dubbed, is an unintended consequence of China's attempts

to restore faith in the nation's scandal-stained blood supply and encourage people to donate. In the late 1980s and 1990s, local officials urged farmers to sell their blood and plasma, and an earlier generation of blood heads sold this to hospitals and blood banks. Tens if not hundreds of thousands contracted HIV through unhygienic practices in the process. [Reuters](#)

## Cook Islands: Chikungunya in the Cook Islands

11 February - Local transmission of chikungunya virus has recently been reported in the Cook Islands. Local transmission means that mosquitoes in the area have been infected with chikungunya and are spreading it to people. CDC recommends that travelers to the [Cook Islands](#) protect themselves from mosquito bites. Some travelers may be more likely to get chikungunya, have severe disease, or be at higher risk for other reasons. CDC advises travelers in high-risk groups to discuss their travel plans with their health care provider. [CDC](#)

## Indonesia, Philippines: Unearthing toxic conditions for impoverished gold miners



17 February - In Indonesia and the Philippines, children can earn a few dollars a day mining artisanal gold under dangerous conditions. Workers are also exposed to poisonous mercury when they process the precious metal. ... Small, artisanal gold mines can be found on every continent, often in remote regions of unstable countries. Indonesia is one of the world's leading suppliers of this precious metal. The Philippines also produces tons of gold, much of it ripped from the earth by hands like these. Parents don't choose this life for their children, but there's no other option. ... These children spend their days crushing the rocks that miners like Duku and Yoyo chisel from the earth. They sift through the ore, looking for sparkling gold residue no bigger than a grain of sand. It's tedious, but the worst is still ahead. Liquid mercury, one of the most dangerous heavy metals on the planet, is used throughout the processing of gold ore. ... Mercury is an immediate public health issue because it's toxic. It's one of the most potent neurotoxins out there. ... The final step in processing the gold begins with a spark. The tiny balls of mercury-encased gold dust are blasted with an acetylene torch, releasing vapors that are pure poison. Unprotected workers breathe it all in. The danger reaches well beyond here. Charlita Balwiss spent nearly a decade as a health inspector in the town of Diwalwal, Philippines, where small-scale gold mining is a way of life. She became ill from the mercury smoke. ... She estimates 50 percent of the townspeople have shown symptoms of mercury poisoning. [PBS News Hour](#)

## Malaysia: Dengue count nears 20,000, PM Najib warns public to take precautions



17 February - During the 44 day period from Jan. 4 to Feb. 16, 2015, Malaysia has recorded nearly 20,000 dengue fever cases, or an average of more than 439 cases daily. Of the 19,349 reported dengue cases this year, about 58 percent or 11,167 cases were reported from Selangor alone. The dengue fever fatality count remains at 44 from January 1 to February 7. This compares to 17 dengue related deaths during the same period in 2014. The increase in cases and deaths has prompted Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak on Tuesday to urge people to take precautions against dengue fever. [Outbreak News Today](#)

## Myanmar: Resistant strain of malaria spreads across Myanmar, nears India

19 February - A strain of malaria resistant to the most effective current treatment has spread across Myanmar and has nearly reached the Indian border, a study published Friday says. The senior author, Charles Woodrow of the Mahidol-Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit in Bangkok, said researchers had confirmed the presence of resistant parasites at Homalin, Sagaing Region, just 25 kilometers from India. ... Researchers fear the parasites will follow the trajectory of previous drug-resistant strains that eventually migrated all the way to Africa, ruining the current opportunity to eradicate malaria. [VOA](#)

## Thailand: Public health ministry concerned over smog in 9 northern provinces

15 February – The Ministry of Public Health has instructed provincial public health offices in nine provinces to closely monitor effects of smog caused by forest fires on health. Public Health Minister MD Ratchata Ratchatanawin said the nine provinces were in the upper northern region, including Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Lampang, Lamphun, Mae Hong Son, Phayao, Phrae, Nan and Tak. All hospitals in the provinces were told to prepared medical equipment and medicine for people affected by smog. The hospitals would dispatch rapid response teams to the areas with smog patients in order to assist them and reduce hazardous air pollutants, said the minister. The local people are urged to not burn forests, grass, weeds or garbage in order to help decrease pollution in the air. 150,000 face masks have been handed out to people in the nine provinces. [Thai Visa News](#)

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## Chikungunya cases rise by more than 5,000

16 February - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported 5,397 new cases of chikungunya in the Caribbean and Americas on Feb 13, bringing the outbreak total to 1,206,669. The new total includes 1,176,216 suspected and 27,136 confirmed locally acquired cases and 3,317 imported cases. French Guiana reported the largest increase, with 2,220 new cases, bringing its outbreak total to 18,499. French Guiana also reported its first death, and the outbreak fatality total now stands at 182. El Salvador reported 1,119 new cases, bringing its outbreak total to 138,774. Colombia, which has seen dramatic case increases over recent months, reported no new cases. Bolivia reported its first 13 locally acquired cases of chikungunya, all confirmed. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

## Haiti: Carnival parade accident in Haiti kills at least 20

17 February - A high-voltage cable that fell on a parade float in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince on Tuesday caused a stampede that killed at least 20 people on the second day of Carnival celebrations. Video from the scene shows sparks coming from an overhead power line after a float with hip-hop group Barikad Crew passed underneath it. The singer, known by his stage name Fantom, who had touched the wire was expected to survive. The accident caused revelers to run from the float, killing at least 20 people, reported the Associated Press. A doctor at the General Hospital said most of those killed appeared to have been trampled by the panicked crowd. [PBS News Hour](#)

## Haiti: Update on progress in selected public health programs after the 2010 earthquake and cholera epidemic — Haiti, 2014

20 February - ... Progress in Haiti remains fragile. For example, although there have been significant accomplishments and improvements in both rural and urban settings, there remains a great shortfall in the resources required for water and sanitation infrastructure and services to eliminate cholera in Haiti, as outlined in the country's 10-year national plan. There has been slow and limited progress in restoring the physical health infrastructure. For many programs, the financial resources that were made available following the earthquake were needed simply to maintain key programs, with a focus on human resources and commodities; funding sources for ongoing, essential public health programs remain uncertain. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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