

20 June 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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How your body beats the heat

This chart from the Washington Post address several questions:

What happens as you acclimatize?

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- Brazil takes advantage of World Cup crowds to test for HIV
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U.S. MILITARY

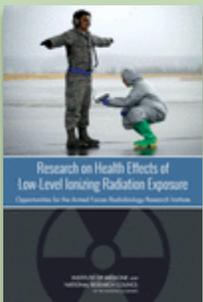
Army cuts down on 'super-sized' chow portions

15 June - ...Garrison dining facility staffs are being retrained to shrink meat portions, cut salt in recipes and emphasize larger side dishes of vegetables. The idea is to eliminate "the super-sized portions, the piece of beef hanging over the plate, or the plate becoming a

Research on Health Effects of Low-Level Ionizing Radiation Exposure: Opportunities for the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute

The Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute (AFRRI) is a Department of Defense (DoD) support agency established in 1961. AFRRI is focused on the prevention, assessment, and treatment of injuries from ionizing radiation exposure through research to better understand health effects. The institute also provides education to inform medical and emergency response to radiation exposure incidents.

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, AFRRI's parent organization, asked the IOM to summarize the state of scientific research about the health effects of exposure to low-dose ionizing radiation exposure, examine workforce projections and needs, and identify opportunities for AFRRI to contribute to the field.



trough," explained Priscilla Dolloff-Crane, a food service specialist at the Joint Culinary Center of Excellence in Fort Lee, Virginia. "It's filling, but not excessive." A high-protein main course, said Dolloff-Crane, is still the underlying the approach to menus, but the sides — the starches, fruits and veggies — "those will take up two-thirds of the plate." This is just one of several measures the Defense Department has launched to bring a healthier balance to cafeteria menus. The service is also rewriting the DoD recipe book in an effort to make dining facility options lower in salt and fat. [Army Times](#)

Army's search for better soldier gear continues amid budget cuts



18 June - The Army hopes to equip soldiers in the coming years with lighter body armor, sleeker helmets, wearable health sensors, and eyewear that instantly transitions from light to dark. The new gear — currently in development under an Army project called "soldier protection system" — is intended to satisfy troops' long-standing complaints about equipment weight and functionality...

Funding for SPS was \$25.1 million in 2013, and dropped to \$22.9 million in 2014. For 2015, the program's budget will plummet to \$7.5 million. Army officials insist the program is not in jeopardy. "We are fully funded," said Lt. Col. Frank Lozano, who served as product manager of soldier protective equipment until June... PS has five components: new head protection, ballistic combat eyewear, a modular combat vest, lighter hard armor plates and a soldier sensor system. The sensors would monitor soldiers' health and identify potential brain injuries. What is different about SPS, Lozano said, is that the Army is not buying individual pieces of equipment in isolation. "The key is the integration and synchronization between systems." [National Defense](#)

Injuries associated with combat sports, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2010–2013

May 2014 - During the 4-year surveillance period, there were 12,108 cases of injuries associated with combat sports among active component service members; the overall incidence rate was 21.0 per 10,000 person-years (p-yrs). The rates were higher among service members who were male, Hispanic, in the youngest age groups (i.e., those younger than 30 years of age), in the Army, junior enlisted, and in combat-specific occupations. The rate among recruit/trainees (779.4 per 10,000 p-yrs) was more than 165 times the rate among all other active component service members (nonrecruits) (4.7 per 10,000 p-yrs)... Of those cases identified outside of the deployed setting (n=12,087), 79.6% were injuries associated with martial arts, 13.3% with wrestling, 6.3% with boxing, and 0.6% with unspecified activities. The incidence rate increased from 2010 to 2012, and then remained relatively stable in 2013. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

The Current State of Obesity Solutions in the United States

For the first time in decades, promising news has emerged regarding efforts to curb the obesity crisis in the United States. Obesity rates have fallen among low-income children in 18 states, the prevalence of obesity has plateaued among girls, regardless of ethnicity, and targeted efforts in states such as Massachusetts have demonstrably reduced the prevalence of obesity among children.

Yet major problems remain. Diseases associated with obesity continue to incur substantial costs and cause widespread human suffering. Moreover, substantial disparities in obesity rates exist among population groups, and in some cases these disparities are widening. Some groups and regions are continuing to experience increases in obesity rates, and the prevalence of severe obesity is continuing to rise.



VA chief: More vets wait 30 days for appointment

18 June - About 10 percent of veterans seeking medical care at VA hospitals and clinics have to wait at least 30 days for an appointment — more than twice the percentage of veterans the government said last week were forced to endure long waits, the acting veterans affairs secretary said Wednesday. Sloan Gibson said the higher number of veterans waiting 30 days or more is revealed in a report due out Thursday. He called the increase unfortunate, but said it was probably an indication that more reliable data was being reported by VA schedulers, rather than an actual increase in veteran wait times. "I don't like that we've got more veterans waiting, but at least we're getting better data" as the VA seeks to address widespread problems of long patient waiting times and falsified records to mask frequent long delays, Gibson said. [AP](#)

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GLOBAL

Abnormal brain iron levels 'may be a biomarker of ADHD'

17 June – ...[A] new study published in the journal Radiology details a biomarker of ADHD that is identified through a brain imaging technique, which researchers say could help prevent misdiagnosis... Using [an MRI] technique, the researchers measured the brain iron levels of 22 children and adolescents with ADHD, alongside 27 children and adolescents without the condition. Of participants with ADHD, 12 had never received psychostimulant medication for their condition... The study results revealed that the 12 patients with ADHD who did not have a history of psychostimulant medication had much lower brain iron levels, compared with the remaining ADHD patients who had used psychostimulants and the healthy children and adolescents. In fact, the team found that ADHD patients who had a history of psychostimulants had similar brain iron levels to the healthy patients, indicating that psychostimulant medication may normalize brain iron levels. [Medical News Today](#)

Bacteria implicated in stress-related heart attacks

11 June - Stress has long been thought to trigger heart attacks, but the mechanism is unknown. Now, researchers think that bacteria could play a role. A study published today in mBio suggests that stress hormones can break up mats of bacteria growing on the fatty plaques in arteries, releasing the plaques and causing strokes or heart attacks. Researchers have suspected for years that bacteria infect the plaques of hardened arteries. The plaques form a surface on which bacteria can attach and grow in masses called biofilms, held together in a scaffold... Plaques in blood vessels are normally stable, but if they break up and enter the bloodstream, they can trigger blood clots that lead to heart attacks or strokes. [Scientific American](#)

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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.

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Bionic pancreas shows promise for type 1 diabetes

16 June - The "bionic pancreas" -- a device that uses a sophisticated computer program working in concert with several diabetes management devices -- successfully managed blood sugar levels in its first real-world trials on adults and children with type 1 diabetes. What may be even more important is that the device took away the constant monitoring that's required with type 1 diabetes... The current version of the bionic pancreas had two insulin pumps -- one that delivered small doses of insulin and the second for glucagon. The device also included a smartphone with an app that contained the computer program to control the pumps. The phone also wirelessly communicated with a continuous glucose monitor that constantly reported blood sugar levels. [WebMD](#)

IDSA updates guidelines on skin and soft-tissue infections

19 June - With skin and soft-tissue infections (SSTIs) on the rise, the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) has updated its guidelines for managing them, stressing that many infections heal on their own or can be treated without antibiotics. SSTIs prompt more than 6 million visits to doctors' offices each year, and emergency room visits due to such infections jumped from 1.2 million in 1995 to 3.5 million in 2005, fueled in large part by methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), the IDSA said in a press release today... The guidelines include a chart to help physicians quickly diagnose and treat an SSTI on the basis of whether it is purulent and on its severity. In general, the IDSA said, doctors should be most concerned when a patient with an SSTI—purulent or non-purulent—has a fever above 100.4°F, a high white blood cell count, a rapid heart rate, or rapid breathing, or is immunocompromised. [CIDRAP](#)

In single gene, a path to fight heart attacks

18 June - Two major studies by leading research groups published on Wednesday independently identified mutations in a single gene that protect against heart attacks by keeping levels of triglycerides — a kind of fat in the blood — very low for a lifetime. The findings are expected to lead to a push to develop drugs that mimic the effect of the mutations, potentially offering the first new class of drugs to combat heart disease in decades, experts say. Statins, which reduce LDL cholesterol, another cause of heart disease, became blockbusters in the late 1980s. Since then, there have been no major new drugs approved for lowering heart disease risk. [New York Times](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 23, 5.7 % of all deaths reported through the 122-Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to Pneumonia and Influenza. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 6.6% for week 23. [FluView](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week 23 ending 7 June 2014:

- Influenza: One case of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/untyped) among US military basic trainees.
- *C. pneumoniae* found in recent FRI and pneumonia cases at Ft. Leonard Wood
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were moderately elevated at CGTC Cape May. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

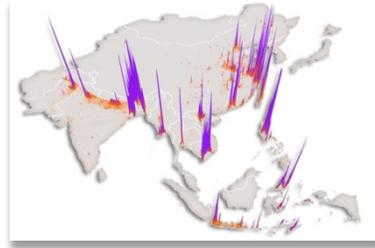
WHO Influenza Update

16 June - Globally influenza activity was low.

- In North America and Europe, overall influenza activity was at inter-seasonal levels.
- In eastern Asia, influenza activity approached inter-seasonal levels in most countries with influenza A(H3N2) and influenza B virus predominating.
- In southern and south-eastern Asia, influenza activity continued to decline.
- In northern Africa and western Asia, influenza activity remained low.
- In the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained low, although some countries in the temperate zone of South America showed increases in ILI activity with slight increase in influenza detections. [WHO](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Bird flu 'danger zones' mapped



17 June - The "danger zones" in Asia which are vulnerable to a deadly bird flu have been mapped by scientists. The virus, called H7N9, has infected 433 people mostly in China and has killed 62. The study, published in *Nature Communications*, showed parts of Bangladesh, India and Vietnam could easily sustain the virus. The research group said those areas should

monitor poultry to ensure any threat is detected. [BBC News](#)

Human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus – update

18 June - On 16 June 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of one additional laboratory-confirmed case of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus. The patient is a 42 year-old man from Jiangmen City, Guangdong Province. He became ill on 25 May, was admitted to a hospital on 31 May and died on 5 June. The patient had no exposure to live poultry... The overall risk assessment has not changed. [WHO](#)

Study: Visiting live-bird markets tied to H7N9 risk

16 June - Visiting a live-poultry market more than tripled the risk of H7N9 avian flu infection, while keeping backyard poultry did not elevate the risk at all, according to a case-control study in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. Researchers from both the Chinese and US CDC analyzed data on 89 lab-confirmed H7N9 case-patients and 339 matched controls. They found that 55% of patients and 31% of controls reported any contact with live poultry. In addition, 67% of patients and 35% of controls had visited a live-poultry market, for an adjusted odds ratio (OR) of 3.4. In contrast, backyard poultry were not associated with an increased H7N9 risk... The authors conclude, "China should consider permanently closing live poultry markets or aggressively pursuing control measures to prevent spread of this emerging pathogen." [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

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U.S.: Deadly pig virus cases in U.S. projected to surge after summer

19 June - U.S. veterinarians are warning that outbreaks of a deadly pig virus will climb this autumn after a summertime hiatus, likely killing another 2.5 million pigs over the next 12 months and amplifying an increase in pork prices. Concerns persist about the expected jump in infections of Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv) despite assurances from U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on Wednesday that the nation is likely "on the other side" of the disease due to approval of the first vaccine directly available to farmers. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: *E. coli* outbreak linked to raw clover sprouts sickens 17

17 June - Seventeen people in five states have been sickened by *Escherichia coli* after eating clover sprouts, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). That's up from the 10 cases reported by the CDC in late May. No deaths have been linked to the *E. coli* outbreak, the CDC says, but nearly half of those sickened were hospitalized. Three cases were identified in Idaho, one in Michigan, two in Montana, one in Utah and 10 in Washington state. The CDC said the source of the *E. coli* outbreak is likely Evergreen Fresh Sprouts, LLC of Idaho. Twelve of the patients whom health officials interviewed reported eating raw clover sprouts from the company in the week before they became ill. [Food Safety Magazine](#)

Washing chicken 'spreads infection'

15 June - Consumers are being warned to stop washing raw chicken as doing so increases the risk of food poisoning. An online survey of 4,500 UK adults by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) found 44% washed chicken before cooking. But it warns this spreads campylobacter bacteria onto hands, work surfaces, clothing and cooking equipment, through the splashing of water droplets. Campylobacter affects about 280,000 people in the UK each year but only 28% in the FSA survey had heard of it. Only a third of them knew that poultry was the main source of the bacteria. [BBC News](#)

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WELLNESS

A bolder effort by big tobacco on e-cigarettes

17 June - Electronic cigarettes, promoted as a healthier alternative to tobacco, are getting powerful new backers with an unhealthy reputation: big tobacco companies... A subsidiary of Reynolds American, which is known for Camel cigarettes, plans to announce on Tuesday that it will start distributing its Vuse e-cigarettes nationwide on June 23. NuMark, a subsidiary of Altria, known for Marlboro cigarettes, plans to follow suit by year-end with MarkTen, as signs emerge showing that e-cigarettes are nipping into sales of cigarettes. Both companies join Lorillard, which owns the nation's dominant e-cigarette brand, Blu eCigs... Concerns about marketing of e-cigarettes, and whether the ads appeal to children, have prompted a Senate hearing planned for Wednesday. The Food and Drug Administration recently proposed guidelines for regulating e-cigarettes, but did not propose any restrictions on marketing, drawing criticism from some public health groups. Marketing of cigarettes is heavily restricted, with TV ads forbidden. [New York Times](#)

Antidepressant warnings tied to suicide attempts in youths

18 June - A move by U.S. health officials to warn the public of an increased risk of suicidal thoughts among young people taking antidepressants was actually associated with an increase in suicide attempts, suggests a new study. It could be that doctors avoided prescribing those medications after media reports of the warnings and children and teens with depression went untreated, researchers suggest in the medical journal BMJ. [Reuters](#)

Caffeine affects boys and girls differently after puberty



16 June - ...Researchers from the University of Buffalo found that after puberty, boys and girls experience different heart rate and blood pressure changes after consuming caffeine. Girls also experience some differences in caffeine effect during their menstrual cycles... They found that caffeine lowered the heart rates of kids past puberty by about 3 to 8 beats per minute. After puberty, Boys experienced a slightly greater increase in blood pressure than girls. In addition, Researchers also found that girls had varied responses to caffeine during their menstrual cycles. "The data on the girls' menstrual cycles does suggest that the cardiovascular response to caffeine changes along with hormonal fluctuations during menstruation," Temple told the Examiner. [University Herald](#)

e-Cigarette research: Smokin' hot, controversial

17 June - Three new studies from the Institute for Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois, in Chicago, show that e-cigarettes are increasing in popularity, that they are becoming increasingly available in stores frequented by youth, that regulation of these

products is lagging behind their growing use, and that they are highly sensitive to price increases... The availability of e-cigarettes increased from 3% in 2010 to 7% in 2011 and to 31% in 2012, the authors note. These products tend to be more widely available in stores that derive a higher proportion of revenue from tobacco product sales, they add... A second study examined state laws governing e-cigarettes and found a variable and changing landscape. Currently, e-cigarettes are not regulated by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), although the FDA has indicated that it intends to regulate them as a tobacco product, not as a drug or delivery device... [e-Cigarettes are] now a \$2 billion industry in the United States and a \$3 to \$4 billion industry worldwide, he said. [Medscape](#)

More protein in diet may lower stroke risk

13 June - Getting more protein in your diet, though not red meat, may reduce your risk for stroke, a review of studies found. Scientists reviewed seven prospective studies involving more than 250,000 people and found that after adjusting for various stroke risks and for other nutrients consumed, those who had the highest consumption of protein had a 20 percent decreased risk for stroke compared with those with the lowest. Each increase of 20 grams per day in protein — about the amount in a 3-ounce serving of chicken or fish or a cup of beans — was associated with a 26 percent decrease in risk, a dose-response relationship that further strengthens the association. [New York Times](#)

Senate panel scolds TV's Dr. Oz over diet claims

17 June - A U.S. Senate panel probing bogus diet product ads took celebrity doctor Mehmet Oz to task on Tuesday for touting weight-loss products on his syndicated television show. Missouri Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill, the chairwoman of the Commerce subcommittee on consumer protection, said Oz had a role in perpetuating weight-loss fraud through his show. "I don't get why you need to say this stuff because you know it's not true," McCaskill said at the hearing, a follow-up to a Federal Trade Commission crackdown in January on fraudulent diet products. She said Oz's promotion tended to boost sales and prompted scam artists to sell questionable products using deceptive ads. [Reuters](#)

Staring at screens all day changes your eyes, study finds

16 June - Office workers who spend long hours looking at computer screens have changes in their tear fluid similar to people with the disease known as dry eye, according to a study from Japan. The protein MUC5AC, secreted by cells in the upper eyelid, makes up part of the normally occurring mucus layer, or "tear film," that keeps the eye moist. But study participants with the most screen time had MUC5AC levels nearing those of people with diagnosed dry eye... "When we stare at computers, our blinking times decreased compared to reading a book at the table," he told Reuters Health by email. People staring at screens also tend to open their eyelids wider than while doing other tasks, and the extra exposed surface area in addition to infrequent blinking can accelerate tear evaporation and is associated with dry eye disease, he said. [Huffington Post](#)

Too much sitting tied to risks for certain cancers

16 June - ...A new study suggests that people who spend the bulk of their day sitting -- whether behind the wheel, in front of the TV or working at a computer -- appear to have an increased risk for certain kinds of cancers. Previous studies have tied too much time spent sedentary to a variety of health problems, including heart disease, blood clots, a large waistline, higher blood sugar and insulin, generally poor physical functioning, and even early death. For the new study, researchers zeroed in on 43 studies that specifically looked at the link between sitting and nearly 70,000 cases of cancer... Being sedentary did not appear to be linked to every kind of cancer. Scientists found no relationship between sitting and breast, ovarian, testicular or prostate cancers, or cancers of the stomach, esophagus and kidneys, or non-Hodgkin lymphoma. The bad news was that there did seem to be a consistent relationship between hours spent sitting and an increased risk for colon and endometrial cancers. [Web MD](#)

With blood pressure, lower is not always better

18 June - In treating people with high blood pressure, most experts believe that the lower the better. But a new study suggests that there are limits beyond which there is no benefit. High blood pressure increases the risk for cardiovascular disease, and current guidelines advise a maximum systolic blood pressure (the top number) of 140. Still, some doctors believe a reading below 120 is even more beneficial. The observational study, published online in JAMA Internal Medicine, involved 4,480 people. In the 22 years covered by the study, there were 1,622 heart attacks and other serious cardiac problems. Cardiac events were more common in people whose blood pressure exceeded 140, and particularly among those with readings over 160. But there was no difference in the risk for heart failure, stroke or heart attack between those in the normal range (120 to 140) and those with a level below 120. [New York Times](#)

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USAFRICOM

Morocco: With MERS threat, Morocco advises against Hajj

18 June- Morocco's health minister has advised Muslims in his country not to go on pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia this year, given the threat of MERS-CoV, according to an Agence France-Presse (AFP) report today. The minister, Lahoucine Louardi, issued the advice yesterday, the same day the World Health Organization (WHO) said MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) remains a serious concern, particularly in view of the large number of pilgrims expected to go to Saudi Arabia this summer and fall, AFP reported.

WHO experts said the disease is not an international health emergency, however. Last week the Moroccan health ministry advised the sick and the frail to postpone trips to Saudi Arabia, the story said. But yesterday in a speech to parliament, Louardi broadened the warning, saying, "We advise pilgrims not to travel to the Holy Sites." A source at the health ministry confirmed the recommendation. [CIDRAP](#)

South Sudan: Mothers give birth safely amid South Sudan's conflict



May/June 2014 - When the gunshots started in Lanyi town last December, Wilma Avowa... feared for her two pregnant neighbors, both of whom were due to deliver soon.... A volunteer home health promoter for the past 18 months, Avowa, 58, had stored in her bag three doses of

misoprostol—a drug that helps prevent postpartum hemorrhage—along with an educational flip chart and two "Mama Kits," the basic essentials needed to assist in a birth, including a sterile blade, a small plastic sheet, soap, gloves and ligatures. Avowa had been trained to use misoprostol as part of a life-saving initiative supported by USAID. Postpartum hemorrhage is the leading cause of maternal deaths in most of the developing world. And South Sudan has the highest rate of maternal deaths in the world—2,054 per 100,000 live births, according to the U.N. Development Program. [USAID Frontlines](#)

West Africa Ebola outbreak grows by 47 cases, 14 deaths

18 June - More Ebola virus disease (EVD) cases and deaths in three West African nations have made the outbreak the largest and deadliest since the first Ebola outbreak in Africa in 1976, with 528 confirmed or suspected infections, 337 of them fatal, according to an update today from the World Health Organization (WHO). Of the 47 new cases, 31 were reported in Sierra Leone, with infections and deaths also reported in a highly populated area near Liberia's capital, Monrovia, according to the report... The 528 illnesses reported so far in the region, of which 364 have been lab-confirmed, have topped a 2000 outbreak in Uganda in which 425 illnesses were reported, and the 337 deaths reported so far outpaces the 280 reported in a 1976 outbreak in Zaire. [CIDRAP](#)

West Africa: Ebola virus disease - update

18 June –**Guinea:** Between 14 and 16 June 2014, a total of 7 new cases and 5 new deaths were reported from Gueckedou (4 cases and 5 deaths) and Boffa (3 cases and 0 deaths). This brings the cumulative number of cases and deaths reported from Guinea to 398 (254 confirmed, 88 probable and 56 suspected) and 264 deaths.

Sierra Leone: Between 15 and 17 June 2014, a total of 31 new cases and 4 new deaths were reported from Kailahun (29 cases and 4 deaths), Kono (1 case), and Western (1 case). This brings the cumulative number of cases and deaths reported from Sierra Leone to 97 (92

confirmed, 3 probable, and 2 suspected) and 49 deaths.

Liberia: Between 11 and 16 June 2014, a total of 9 new cases and 5 new deaths were reported from Lofa (6 cases and 0 deaths) and Montserrado (3 cases and 5 deaths). This brings the cumulative number of cases and deaths reported from Liberia to 33 (18 confirmed, 8 probable, and 7 suspected) and 24 deaths. [WHO](#)

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USCENTCOM

Conflicts in Kyrgyzstan foreshadow water wars to come

17 June - ...Central Asia is divided into water-rich upstream and water-poor downstream states. The fact that Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the upstream countries, have the two weakest economies in the region might be seen as nature's way of offsetting material poverty with ecological abundance. Still, the balance of resources in Central Asia is far from a happy one. Currently some Kyrgyz lawmakers are toying with the idea of cutting the flow of water to semi-arid Uzbekistan, the nation with the region's largest population and standing army, after Uzbekistan cut gas supplies to Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Osh in April... In 2012 Uzbekistan's president, Islam Karimov, warned that moving forward with these plans without regard for downstream states like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan could lead to a full-blown war. [Creative Time Reports](#)

Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – update

16 June - On 12 and 13 June 2014, the National IHR Focal Point of Saudi Arabia notified WHO of 2 additional laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Globally, 701 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 249 related deaths have officially been reported to WHO. [WHO](#)

Saudi Arabia: Over 25% of recent Saudi MERS patients were health workers

13 June - The World Health Organization (WHO) offered some new information today on 402 MERS-CoV cases reported in Saudi Arabia over the past 2 months, revealing that more than a quarter of the patients were healthcare workers, more than half of whom had mild symptoms or none at all. In its latest MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) summary, the WHO also said the general transmission pattern hasn't changed despite the surge of cases in April and early May. [CIDRAP](#)

Syria: 'Systematic' chemical weapons use in Syria



18 June - Chemical weapons such as chlorine have been used in a "systematic manner" in Syria, according to an initial report by a team from the world's watchdog investigating alleged attacks there. The report has not been publicly released, but the United States delegate to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

(OPCW) quoted from it at an OPCW meeting on Tuesday, according to a copy of the statement seen by AFP. Evidence uncovered by the fact-finding mission, which came under attack while probing the allegations, supports the conclusion that "toxic chemicals, most likely pulmonary irritating agents such as chlorine, have been used in a systematic manner in a number of attacks." [Yahoo! News](#)

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USEUCOM

Cyprus: Typhus outbreak probed

18 June - Health officials are investigating a suspected outbreak of typhus after three officials from the Department of Antiquities reportedly contracted the bacterial disease while excavating an ancient burial site in the Nicosia District. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, archaeologist George Filotheou confirmed that on June 2 the three officials were excavating an archaeological site near Denia Village when they developed high fevers. They were immediately rushed to Nicosia General Hospital where they were administered medication and later released. However, they were admitted again on Monday and are currently being kept under medical supervision. [In Cyprus](#)

France: Schistosomiasis in Corsica

13 June - According to the European Centre for Disease Control 6 people were infected with schistosomiasis on the island of Corsica (France). All of the travelers were exposed to the freshwater in the Cavu River and had not traveled to other areas where schistosomiasis is known to occur. CDC recommends that travelers to the island of Corsica avoid exposure to freshwater to prevent schistosomiasis. [CDC](#)

United Kingdom: Dementia is 'one of greatest enemies of humanity' – PM

19 June - A "big, bold global push" is needed to beat dementia, David Cameron has told a summit in London. He pledged to accelerate progress on dementia drugs, by increasing

funding and making new drugs more accessible. The prime minister was speaking to an audience of 300 experts who have pledged to find a cure by 2025. He wants a team of experts to report back to him by October on how drugs companies can be encouraged to develop new dementia medicines. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: \$1,000-a-pill Sovaldi jolts US health care system

17 June - Sovaldi, a new pill for hepatitis C, cures the liver-wasting disease in 9 of 10 patients, but treatment can cost more than \$90,000. Leading medical societies recommend the drug as a first-line treatment, and patients are clamoring for it. But insurance companies and state Medicaid programs are gagging on the price. In Oregon, officials propose to limit how many low-income patients can get Sovaldi. Yet if Sovaldi didn't exist, insurers would still be paying in the mid-to-high five figures to treat the most common kind of hepatitis C, a new pricing survey indicates. Some of the older alternatives involve more side effects, and are less likely to provide cures... The cost of this breakthrough drug is highlighting cracks in the U.S. health care system at a time of heightened budget concerns. [Washington Post](#)

U.S.: California whooping cough epidemic hits infants hardest

17 June- California health experts say people around infants should be vaccinated to protect themselves and the little ones from whooping cough. Babies have been hard hit by the current epidemic. The California Department of Public Health says two-thirds of hospitalizations from pertussis have been among infants less than four months old. Two infants have died... The State reports there have already been more reported cases of whooping cough this year than were reported in all of 2013... The highest rates of pertussis this year are in Northern California's Sonoma, Marin and Napa counties, with high numbers in San Diego. [Capital Public Radio](#)

U.S.: Can claims data crack the health care cost riddle?

17 June - Nearly a decade before the Affordable Care Act, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and a few other states began creating all-payer claims databases (APCDs). Acting as trusted third parties, they required all commercial insurance carriers within their borders to hand over their claims data, including the prices paid... Designed to shed light on the disparate prices doctors and hospitals charge for the same procedures, APCDs have been used by consumers deciding where to go for arthroscopic knee surgery, for example. The pricing and quality data has also been used by insurance companies and large employers to design cost-effective benefit plans. State officials have used APCDs to inform

health policy development and measure results. Critics question whether these complex state databases are worth the effort. Consumer advocates, large employers and most economists argue they are. [USA Today](#)

U.S.: C.D.C. details anthrax scare for scientists at facilities

19 June - As many as 75 scientists from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may have been exposed to live anthrax bacteria after potentially infectious samples were moved to laboratories that thought they were no longer dangerous, a spokesman for the federal health agency said Thursday. None of the potentially infected scientists have any symptoms, but a number of them are being treated with antibiotics "out of an abundance of caution," the spokesman, Thomas Skinner, said. The lapse occurred sometime from June 6 to June 13. Workers in three labs who were not wearing appropriate protective gear moved and experimented with samples of the highly infectious bacteria that were supposed to have been deactivated, the agency said. It added in a statement that procedures used in two of those laboratories in Atlanta, where the C.D.C. is based, may have "aerosolized the spores," essentially pushing active parts of the bacteria into the air. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Companies seek approval for meningococcal serogroup B vaccines

17 June - Novartis and Pfizer today announced that they have submitted applications to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for marketing approval of their vaccines against *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup B infection. The FDA had granted each company breakthrough therapy designations for their vaccines, Pfizer in March and Novartis in April. Both companies are seeking indications for use in those aged 10 to 25. Currently, there is no vaccine in the United States approved for use against serogroup B, which accounted for about 40% of *N meningitidis* infections in the country in 2012. Though antibiotics can be used to treat infections, the disease is fatal for about 10% to 15% of patients, and 11% to 19% of survivors have complications that cause long-term disability, according to the statement from Pfizer. Outbreaks involving serogroup B occurred on some college campuses in 2013, and nearly 30,000 doses of the Novartis vaccine (Bexsero) were provided to students and staff at Princeton University and the University of California at Santa Barbara under an FDA investigational new drug designation in response to the events, according to the Novartis statement. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

U.S.: Health-risk behaviors among teens-the good news and the bad

13 June - Cigarette smoking among U.S. high school students has dropped to the lowest level in more than 20 years, according to an analysis of the 2013 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey published in *MMWR*. Since 1991, when the biannual surveys began, there have been substantial reductions in the percentage of teens who smoke cigarettes (28% to

16%), drink alcohol (51% to 35%), and have been in a physical fight (43% to 25%) among other behaviors. Despite these improvements, marijuana use increased (15% to 23%). In 2013, many teens texted or emailed while driving (41%), did not use a condom during sexual intercourse (41%), and never or rarely wore a helmet while riding a bicycle (88%). Notably, nearly half of teens were trying to lose weight, and nearly half of cigarette smokers had tried to quit in the past year. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

U.S.: Stunned Neb. town devastated by twisters; 2 dead



17 June - The tiny northeast Nebraska town of Pilger was digging out from tragedy Tuesday, a day after at least two people were killed and dozens more were injured when tornadoes roared through parts of the state. All the residents of Pilger — the town's website claims a population of 378 — evacuated their homes, many leaving for shelters in nearby towns. "More than half of the town is gone — absolutely gone," Stanton County Commissioner Jerry Weatherholt said. "The co-op is gone, the grain bins are gone, and it looks like almost every house in town has some damage. It's a complete mess." [USA Today](#)

U.S.: West Nile virus and other arboviral diseases — United States, 2013

20 June - Arthropod-borne viruses (arboviruses) are transmitted to humans primarily through the bites of infected mosquitoes and ticks. West Nile virus (WNV) is the leading cause of domestically acquired arboviral disease in the United States. However, several other arboviruses also cause sporadic cases and seasonal outbreaks of neuroinvasive disease (i.e., meningitis, encephalitis, and acute flaccid paralysis). This report summarizes surveillance data reported to CDC in 2013 for WNV and other nationally notifiable arboviruses, excluding dengue. Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia reported 2,469 cases of WNV disease. Of these, 1,267 (51%) were classified as WNV neuroinvasive disease, for a national incidence of 0.40 per 100,000 population. After WNV, the next most commonly reported cause of arboviral disease was La Crosse virus (LACV) (85 cases), followed by Jamestown Canyon virus (JCV) (22), Powassan virus (POWV) (15), and eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEEV) (eight). WNV and other arboviruses continue to cause serious illness in substantial numbers of persons annually. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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China: The hungry and forgotten



14 June - ... China used to have more undernourished people than anywhere in the world except India: about 300m, or 30% of the population in 1980. Economic growth has pulled half of them out of poverty and hunger. But that still leaves about 150m, mainly in the countryside. Out of 88m children aged six to 15 in the poorest rural areas, around a third suffer from anaemia because of a lack of iron, according to survey data. Iron deficiency can stunt brain development, meaning many of these children will grow up ill-equipped to better their lot. "They are far behind compared with urban kids," says Lu Mai, secretary-general of China Development Research Foundation (CDRF), a government-run charity. Mr Lu and other experts have been prodding the government to do more. The state subsidises school lunches for 23m children in the 680 poorest counties, as well as nutritional supplements for hundreds of thousands of babies. It is not enough. Even where children get the calories they need—as most do in rural China—they are not being fed the right things. In one study of 1,800 infants in rural Shaanxi province in China's north-west, 49% were anaemic and 40% were significantly hampered in developing either cognitive or motor skills. [Economist](#)

Myanmar: Yangon at most risk from dengue fever

18 June - Yangon is the focal point of dengue fever infections this year, accounting for more than half of all cases recorded so far, but health officials say the number of cases is well down on 2013. Myanmar's largest city has had 600 cases so far, while three people have died from the mosquito-borne disease, according to the Ministry of Health's Dengue Program. The data, collected from clinics and hospitals across the country, showed that 1100 people have been infected so far this year and four patients have died. [Myanmar Times](#)

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Brazil takes advantage of World Cup crowds to test for HIV

13 June - Brazilian health officials handed out condoms to World Cup fans in Sao Paulo on Friday and took advantage of festivities in the city to test people for HIV. "We can't miss an

opportunity like this," said Ivone De Paula, Sao Paulo state's coordinator for sexually transmitted disease prevention. "The fact that it's the Cup lightens the mood a bit. People say 'Hey I'm going to watch the game, I'm having fun, why not get tested too?'" The program, part of the UNAIDS "Protect the Goal" HIV/AIDS prevention program, provides rapid HIV testing and counseling, as well as free condoms and emergency retroviral drugs. It is also being offered in 11 other cities across Sao Paulo state where visiting World Cup teams are based. De Paula expected the program to conduct about 300 rapid HIV tests outside Friday's Fan Fest, where a giant screen displayed the Cameroon vs Mexico match. Many were getting tested for the first time ever, she said. [Reuters](#)

Caribbean chikungunya cases top 170,000

16 June - The number of chikungunya cases in parts of the Caribbean continued to surge last week, pushing past 170,000 cases, with the first cases confirmed in El Salvador, west of the main outbreak area, and more imported cases detected in the United States and other countries. The outbreak has grown to 170,566 suspected or confirmed cases of the mosquito-borne disease, which is 35,139 higher than the 135,427 cases reported the previous week, according to a Jun 13 report from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The number of deaths remained the same, at 14. Over the past few weeks, most new cases are suspected infections reported from the Latin Caribbean countries, such as the Dominican Republic, where suspected cases rose from 52,976 to 77,320 last week. Guadeloupe and Martinique also reported thousands of new cases, but no new case totals were given for Haiti, another country that has recently been hard hit by the outbreak.

[CIDRAP](#)

Uruguay set to allow doctors to prescribe cannabis

18 June - Uruguay, which recently passed a law making it the first country to legalize the production and sale of cannabis, will also allow doctors to prescribe the drug to treat certain medical conditions, the country's health minister said on Wednesday. "It will mainly be used to alleviate pain, as in the case of cancer, as well as convulsions or epilepsy," Susana Muniz told Reuters, adding that it could also be prescribed to help those addicted to harder narcotics kick the habit. [Reuters](#)

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