

20 September 2013

Army Public Health Weekly Update

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U.S. MILITARY

ABLE earplugs could protect against bomb blasts

15 September - Sometimes it's the simplest ideas that have the biggest impact, and Dan Simon is hoping his will prevent the hearing damage suffered by thousands of military personnel — the top reported service disability in the war on terror. Simon, an engineer at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab in Laurel, and several of his colleagues have modified a generic set of rubbery, orange earplugs to develop an inexpensive "Anti-Blast Earplug." Simon says the device, which the team has tentatively named the ABLE, allows wearers to hear normally until there's an explosion, such as those created by an improvised

explosive device, or IED, the signature weapon of the enemy in Afghanistan and Iraq. [Stars and Stripes](#)

Active surveillance for asymptomatic colonization with multidrug-resistant gram-negative bacilli among injured Service members

August 2013 - In response to the high rates of colonization and infection by multidrug-resistant gram-negative bacilli (MDR GNB), many military treatment facilities (MTFs) have implemented additional infection control practices, such as active surveillance cultures for asymptomatic colonization. Results of surveillance cultures (June 2009 - May 2012) collected from patients at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (Landstuhl RMC), Germany, and three U.S. MTFs were analyzed to evaluate trends in MDR GNB colonization over time and across facilities. At Landstuhl RMC, 6.6 percent of patients were colonized on admission with MDR GNB compared to 12.4 percent of patients admitted to the participating U.S. MTFs. *Escherichia coli* was the predominant organism, representing 82.4 percent of MDR isolates at Landstuhl RMC and 67.1 to 83.3 percent at U.S. MTFs. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Air Force report: Biggs Airfield bunker radiation 7 times acceptable level

15 September - Radiation levels detected at an old Biggs Airfield bunker were nearly seven times higher than established acceptable safe levels, according to a U.S. military report obtained under the Freedom of Information Act... During a site visit in June, the Air Force inspectors took alpha and beta particle readings in a storage igloo or bunker (Building 11507)... Inspectors said they found high levels of uranium activity concentration levels at location "Painted 3." "This level is in excess of the acceptable maximum level in (Atomic Energy Commission) Regulatory Guide 1.86 for uranium isotopes," the report said... "The radioactivity of the painted site on the floor of Building 11507 was estimated in the report to be contaminated at a level almost seven times greater than is considered acceptable," said John Walton, an expert at the University of Texas. [El Paso Times](#)

Elite Army units to stop taking anti-malarial drug

19 September - The top doctor for Green Berets and other elite Army commandos has told troops to immediately stop taking mefloquine, an anti-malaria drug found to cause permanent brain damage in rare cases. The ban among special operations forces is the latest development in a long-running controversy over mefloquine. The drug was developed by the Army in the 1970s and has been taken by millions of travelers and people in the military over the years. As alternatives were developed, it fell out of favor as the front-line defense against malaria, a mosquito-borne disease that international health officials say kills roughly 600,000 people a year. The new prohibition among special operations forces follows a July 29 safety announcement by the Food and Drug Administration that it had strengthened warnings about neurologic side effects associated with the drug. The FDA added a boxed warning to the drug label, the most serious kind of warning, saying

neurologic side effects like dizziness, loss of balance and ringing in the ears may become permanent. [Military.com](#)

For wounded vets, climbing half dome only half the mission

14 September - Timmy O'Neill is guiding Steve Baskis through ancient yellow pines that almost touch the sky. They're hiking all day to base camp in California's Yosemite National Park, 2,000 feet up in Little Yosemite Valley. Taking Baskis by the hand, O'Neill traces the distant ridge of Half Dome, a bald rock rising almost a mile from the valley floor. That's tomorrow's challenge. Baskis can't actually see the peak. Four years ago, a bomb blast in Iraq took his eyesight. So O'Neill is guiding Baskis along the trail, providing directions and warning him away from steep drops. When they reach the base camp, O'Neill guides Baskis right into the Merced River for a bracing dip. Much of the nation marked the 12th anniversary of Sept. 11 with the reading of victims' names or moments of silence. But Baskis and a group of 18 fellow veterans commemorated the date in a less solemn way — by climbing two peaks at Yosemite. [NPR](#)

High rate of spinal injuries among troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan

16 September - Spinal injuries are present in 1 out of 9 U.S. military personnel sustaining combat injuries in Iraq or Afghanistan -- a much higher rate than in previous wars... Spinal injuries were more likely to occur in Afghanistan than Iraq, and in Army personnel than in members of other service branches. The highest rate of spinal trauma occurred in the Iraq War "surge" year of 2007. Spinal injuries caused by gunshot wounds were more frequent in Iraq than Afghanistan. "The 11.1 percent rate of spinal injuries...represents the highest published statistic for Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other American conflict," Dr Schoenfeld and coauthors write. The rate of spinal injuries is perhaps 10 times higher than in the Vietnam War. The researchers suggest that, at any other time in history, most soldiers with spinal trauma were injured so severely that survival would have been impossible. [Science Daily](#)

Military researchers advance treatment studies for PTSD, depression

16 September - What if a single needle prick cured post-traumatic stress? Or an ancient remedy stopped suicide ideation? Or virtual reality replaced traditional therapy? What may seem like far-fetched ideas now could become viable treatment options not too far into the future. These are just a few of the cutting edge approaches military researchers are exploring to better treat post-traumatic stress and suicidal ideation that Robert McLay, research director for the Naval Medical Center, San Diego, shared during the 2013 Warrior Resilience Conference held in Washington, D.C., in August. "It sounds like fantasy," McLay said. "But this stuff looks really promising." [MHS](#)

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GLOBAL

Scientists create blood test that distinguishes between viral and bacterial infections

19 September - According to the results of a Duke University Medical Center study – published September 18 in the journal *Science Translational Medicine* in an article entitled, “A Host-Based RT-PCR Gene Expression Signature To Identify Acute Respiratory Viral Infection” – researchers have developed a blood test that exhibits 90 percent-plus accuracy in distinguishing between viral and bacterial infections when tested in people with respiratory illness. The blood test looks for a specific genetic signature that an infected person’s immune system expresses in response to the virus. The discovery demonstrates a possible method to diagnose the source of illnesses that medical professionals have long had difficulty identifying. The researchers at Duke Medicine are hopeful that the technology will now move closer to clinical use, as it could provide patients with quicker diagnoses and appropriate treatments. [Science Recorder](#)

Study: Poor hospital care harms 40 million worldwide



19 September – A [new study](#) has found that more than 40 million people worldwide are harmed by poor hospital care each year. Researchers said most of the unsafe medical care occurs in low- and moderate-income countries.

Researchers poured over data contained in 4,000 studies looking for instances of substandard hospital care around the world. Ashish Jha, a professor of health policy at Harvard University School of Public Health in Boston, helped lead the study. “Well, you know, we’ve had suspicion for some time that unsafe care, medical errors, adverse events, bad things that happen to patients when they go to the hospital, are a substantial problem,” he stated. Jha and colleagues from the World Health Organization in Geneva and RTI International in Durham, North Carolina, found that almost 26 million cases of unsafe medical care occur in hospitals in developing countries. The remaining 16.8 million instances of harm occur in the West. [VOA](#)

Suicides rose worldwide after 2008 economic crisis: study

18 September - Effects of the 2008 global economic crisis could be to blame for increased suicide rates in the United States and other countries, according to a new study. Researchers analyzed data from 54 countries and found a marked rise in suicides in the wake of the economic meltdown. The increase occurred mainly in men and in countries with higher levels of job losses. An estimated 5,000 more male suicides occurred worldwide than would normally have been expected in 2009, according to the study. The overall suicide rate among men rose 3.3 percent that year, with increases mainly in the 27 European countries

(4.2 percent) and 18 North and South American countries (6.4 percent) included in the study, according to the findings, which were published online Sept. 17 in the journal *BMJ*.

[MedlinePlus](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 36 (ending September 7, 2013):

- No additional novel influenza A virus infections have been reported to CDC during week 36. A total of 18 H3N2v cases have been reported this summer.
- During week 36, 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 6.1% for week 36.
- Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths: Three new influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported to CDC during week 36. [FluView](#)

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

For weeks 35–36/2013 (26 August – 8 September 2013):

- All seventeen countries providing clinical data reported low-intensity influenza activity.
- Three countries tested fifteen sentinel specimens, none of which was positive for influenza virus.
- Since week 21/2013, six hospitalised confirmed influenza cases have been reported by two countries. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

20 September – Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere ranges from minimal to high (Russia) and in the southern hemisphere ranges from minimal to high (New Zealand). [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 14 September 2013:

- Vaccination against types 4 and 7 adenovirus was instituted at all basic training centers

by mid-November 2011 (week 45). FRI rates and the proportion of FRI cases positive for adenovirus have decreased markedly since vaccine was reintroduced. Sporadic adenovirus cases at basic training centers in 2013. FRI rates remain low in general.

- 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](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

FAO issues avian flu warning



17 September - Avian flu continues to pose serious health threats to both human and animal health, especially as the flu season approaches. That's the warning issued Monday by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. The FAO is calling on the international community to be vigilant for any signs of H5N1 and the new H7N9 avian flu. The former has been around for years, but H7N9 was first reported in China only last April. About 130 human infections were confirmed. Many of those patients had reported contact with poultry. Most had severe respiratory illness. Forty-four people died. FAO senior animal health officer Ian Douglas said timing of the warning is important. [VOA](#)

NIH begins testing H7N9 avian influenza vaccine candidate

18 September - Researchers at nine sites nationwide have begun testing in humans an investigational H7N9 avian influenza vaccine. The two concurrent Phase II clinical trials... are designed to gather critical information about the safety of the candidate vaccine and the immune system responses it induces when administered at different dosages and with or without adjuvants, substances designed to boost the body's immune response to vaccination.... Although no H7N9 influenza cases have been reported outside of China and the virus has not demonstrated sustained person-to-person transmission, there is concern that it could mutate to pose a much greater public health threat. [NIH](#)

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E. coli cases would be cut by cow jabs, scientists say



16 September - The number of human cases of a dangerous strain of E. coli could be cut by 85% if cattle were vaccinated, say Scottish scientists. There are often more than 1,000 cases of E. coli O157 across the UK each year. The infection can cause severe kidney damage and in some instances can be deadly. The researchers said there would be a big question about who paid for any vaccination campaign. E. coli O157 is spread through contaminated food, contact with cattle or through animal droppings. However, the cattle themselves do not feel sick. In around one in 10 human cases, the toxins released by the bug cause haemolytic-uraemic syndrome (HUS), which damages the kidneys. [BBC News](#)

Harvard study finds food expiration labels are misleading

18 September - Americans throw out billions of pounds of food every year because they falsely believe "sell-by" and "best-before" dates on package labels indicate food safety, researchers have found. A study published Wednesday by Harvard Law School and the Natural Resources Defense Council found that dates printed on packaged foods, which help retailers cycle through stocked products and allow manufacturers to indicate when a product is at its peak freshness, are inconsistent. They confuse consumers, leading many to throw out food before it actually goes bad. "The labeling system is aimed at helping consumers understand freshness, but it fails - they think it's about safety. And (consumers) are wasting money and wasting food because of this misunderstanding," said co-author Emily Broad Lieb, who led the report from the Harvard Law School's Food Law and Policy Clinic. [Reuters](#)

Hungary identifies anthrax infection; sheep farm quarantined

16 September - An infection of the deadly anthrax disease has been identified in sheep at a farm in Jaszladany, a village 120 kilometers east of Budapest, the agriculture ministry said on Monday. Authorities found last week that one sheep in a herd of 210 heads died of anthrax, a disease which can spread to humans. The farm was placed under quarantine, the ministry said in a statement. "Humans have not got the disease yet so we don't have that problem," said Endre Kardevan, Secretary of State in the ministry, in a video published on the government's website. [Reuters](#)

Massachusetts oyster industry is reeling after bacterial contamination

17 September – Massachusetts' thriving oyster industry is being hit hard by a medical riddle, after a string of unexpected food poisonings forced the state to shut down its beds for the

first time ever. The perpetrator is the *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* bacterium — a microbe in the same family as cholera — that causes abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever, and chills, although it is rarely fatal. Symptoms usually appear within 24 hours after eating poorly cooked or uncooked shellfish. Although *Vibrio* has been around Massachusetts since the 1960s, fishermen have been shocked by the current outbreak. The bacterium is typically a problem during the summer in the Northeast, as the temperature rises in the waters near the shore where the oyster beds are located. However, 50 confirmed cases have been made in Massachusetts in 2013, which is nearly double last year's total of 27. [Medical Daily](#)

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WELLNESS

'Build up slowly' for barefoot runs



12 September - Careful readjustment is vital for anyone taking up barefoot running, sports scientists have warned. An overview of research was presented at the British Science Festival in Newcastle. Claims that running without footwear might improve technique and result in fewer

injuries have led to many runners taking it up. Dr Mick Wilkinson, from Northumbria University, also claimed that it was best to start off on hard surfaces. He told a press conference that when he made the transition to barefoot running, he started on soft surfaces and gradually moved to harder ones such as concrete, but that if he could do it again, he would start off on hard concrete. [BBC News](#)

Hormone therapy risks may vary by weight, other factors

18 September - For a woman contemplating taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT), the increase in breast cancer risk she faces may depend on her individual body type, race and ethnicity, according to new U.S. research. In a large new study of women on HRT, slim and normal-weight women with dense breast tissue saw a nearly 50 percent increase in breast cancer risk, while women who were black or overweight with less-dense breast tissue showed no risk increase at all. [Reuters](#)

HSV vaccine linked to lower viral shedding

14 September - A therapeutic vaccine for herpes simplex type 2 (HSV-2) virus reduced viral shedding and had an acceptable safety profile, researchers reported here... Patients who received the 30 mcg or 100 mcg of vaccine also had greater time to first recurrence at a median of 60 days and no recurrence at the time of the presentation, respectively, versus 45 days, though these differences failed to reach significance. [MedPage Today](#)

Studies confirm colon cancer screening reduces deaths

18 September - There's new evidence that regular screening for colon cancer has long-term benefits. Testing for blood in the stool reduced the risk of death from colorectal cancer by as much as 32 percent and it seemed to keep the death rate low even after testing stopped, according to one study. A second found that getting a regular colonoscopy, where a tube is put in the colon to look for and - in some cases - remove abnormal growths, was linked to a 68 percent reduction in risk. It also confirmed that, if no growths are found, people can safely wait 10 years for their next test. But the findings do not compare the relative merits of the two methods, even though that may be tempting, wrote Drs. Theodore Levin and Douglas Corley in an editorial in the New England Journal of Medicine, where the studies appear. [Reuters](#)

Synthetic marijuana prompts Colorado health investigation

15 September - More than 150 people are now believed to have been sickened by synthetic marijuana in Colorado, which legalized recreational use of real pot last November. Three people may have died. State and federal investigators are scrambling to identify the exact source of the illnesses. The state health department has named about a dozen illicit products, often sold as "incense," that it believes are responsible for at least some of the illnesses... Hospital emergency departments across the state are reporting victims coming in with "agitation and delirium, confusion," says Dr. Tista Ghosh, Colorado's acting chief medical officer. Some have acted very aggressively toward staff and required restraints. "We're also seeing unresponsiveness, extreme sleepiness, seizures." Several people have required treatment in intensive care units. [NPR](#)

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USAFRICOM

Ethiopia cuts child mortality by two-thirds



13 September - The United Nations Children's Fund, or UNICEF, says Ethiopia has achieved one of the Millennium Development Goals of reducing child mortality by more than two-thirds. Ethiopia reduced its under-five mortality rate by 67 percent between 1990 and 2012, meeting the target for one of the Millennium Development Goals on child survival. The announcement came after UNICEF released its latest report on child survival Friday. [VOA](#)

Horn of Africa: Four more polio cases reported in outbreak

16 September - In an update to the polio outbreak sweeping across the Horn of Africa, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative has reported four new cases wild poliovirus 1 (WPV1) last week. Of the four new cases, three from Somalia and one from Kenya. The total number of WPV1 cases for 2013 in the Horn of Africa is 179 (163 from Somalia, 14 from Kenya and one from Ethiopia). The polio outbreak in Somalia began with its first case in April. These are the first wild poliovirus cases reported in Somalia since 2007. Both Nigeria and Pakistan, two of the three remaining polio endemic countries, reported new polio cases during the same week. [The Global Dispatch](#)

South Africa: Strategic plan for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases 2013-17

19 September - Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading causes of mortality globally, causing more deaths than all other causes combined, and they strike hardest at the world's low and middle-income populations. While in South Africa the HIV and AIDS and TB epidemic still predominate in terms of both morbidity and mortality, with the rise in urbanisation, industrialisation and economic transition and health services that are not always adequately equipped to deal with the issues, many more people are becoming ill and dying from NCDs. The NCD epidemic can be prevented through reduction of the underlying risk factors, early detection and timely treatments. In 2011 there was extensive global focus on NCDs culminating in the United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting of Heads of State and Governments and the adoption of the Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of NCDs. Perhaps most importantly the UN declared that NCDs were not only a Health but a Development concern requiring a whole of government and whole of society approach. [All Africa](#)

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USCENTCOM

Pakistan: How smartphones became vital tools against dengue

16 September - ...Two years ago, an estimated 20,000 people in and around the city of [Lahore](#) contracted the deadly tropical disease. This year, the region has recorded just a few dozen cases of dengue fever, which usually involves a high fever, horrible headache, and severe bone and joint pain. What triggered the sharp decline in dengue cases? Fortuitous weather patterns may have helped to keep the mosquito population low. But many leaders also credit a mobile phone app — and the public health [campaign](#) that uses it. "We pull up the trash, put it in the basket, tie up the bag and take it away," says sanitation worker Tanvir

Channa. He says that he doesn't often think about his role in combating a deadly epidemic. "Whatever I do, it's just to provide for my kids," the thin 30-year-old says. To make sure workers like Channa don't skip out on their tasks and allow the dengue mosquitoes to breed, they're followed by an investigator who uses a smartphone to their progress. In this case, it's a tall man in plaid shirt named Mohammad Saleem Taqi. [NPR](#)

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

19 September - WHO has been informed of an additional 18 new laboratory-confirmed cases including three deaths with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection in Saudi Arabia. The patients are reported from Hafar Al-Batin, Medina and Riyadh. Their ages ranging from three to 75 years old. These cases were announced by the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia on 1, 5, 8, 10 and 11 September 2013. Additionally, in Qatar, a previously laboratory-confirmed patient with MERS-CoV died on 6 September 2013. Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 132 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 58 deaths. [WHO](#)

Syrian hospitals at 'breaking point' as medics flee



16 September - A group of 50 doctors, including Nobel Prize winners, say Syria's health system is at breaking point as medics are forced to flee the fighting. The signatories to the [letter in The Lancet](#) say it is "arguably one of the world's worst humanitarian crises since the end of the Cold

War." According to the Violations Documentation Centre, 469 health workers are currently imprisoned. Some 15,000 doctors have left Syria, says the Council on Foreign Relations. Of the 5,000 physicians in Aleppo before the conflict started, only 36 remain. "Makeshift clinics have become fully fledged trauma centres, struggling to cope with the injured and sick" According to the World Health Organization, 37% of Syrian hospitals have been destroyed and a further 20% severely damaged. "Makeshift clinics have become fully fledged trauma centres, struggling to cope with the injured and sick," says the letter. It warns that horrific injuries are going untended; women are giving birth with no medical assistance; men, women, and children are undergoing life-saving surgery without anaesthetic; and victims of sexual violence have nowhere to turn to. [BBC News](#)

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USEUCOM

Austria: Holy water unsafe to drink

18 September - Holy water at religious shrines and churches in Austria is often contaminated with fecal matter and bacteria, researchers have found, advising the faithful

not to drink it, especially in hospital chapels. Scientists at Vienna University medical school's Institute of Hygiene and Applied Immunology came to the conclusion after analyzing the water quality at 21 "holy" springs and 18 fonts at churches and chapels at various times of year. Only 14 percent of the water samples from holy sources showed no fecal contamination, and none of the springs could be recommended as a source of drinking water, the study presented to a conference in Vienna this week found. The springs held not only fecal contamination - likely the result of poor hygiene - but many also had agricultural nitrates and bugs that can cause inflammatory diarrhoea. [Reuters](#)

Israel: Insidious reintroduction of wild poliovirus, 2013

19 September - Israel was certified as polio-free country in June 2002, along with the rest of the World Health Organization European Region. Some 11 years later, wild-type polio virus 1 (WPV1) was isolated initially from routine sewage samples collected between 7 and 13 April 2013 in two cities in the Southern district. WPV1-specific analysis of samples indicated WPV1 introduction into that area in early February 2013. National supplementary immunisation with oral polio vaccine has been ongoing since August 2013. [Eurosurveillance](#)

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USNORTHCOM

Mexico: Chaos as floods submerge Mexico's Acapulco, death toll rises

17 September - Mexico's famous beach resort of Acapulco was in chaos on Tuesday as hotels rationed food for thousands of stranded tourists and floodwaters swallowed homes and cars after some of the most damaging storms in decades killed at least 55 people across the country. Television footage showed Acapulco's international airport terminal waist deep in water and workers wading out to escape floods that have prevented some 40,000 visitors from leaving and blocked one of the main access routes to the city with mud. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Colorado flooding - Residents return, but some find no home

17 September - More people were told to evacuate their homes in northeastern Colorado on Tuesday as residents of the flood-stricken towns north of Denver returned to battered neighborhoods, with some of them finding no house to call home... Runoff from last week's floods along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains is now rushing down the South Platte, which runs from south of Denver into Nebraska. The National Weather Service warned counties in Nebraska would start to see the river overflow its banks by Wednesday. State emergency management officials later Tuesday revised the statewide death toll from eight to six. "The two missing and presumed dead individuals from Larimer County are now listed

under missing numbers to more accurately reflect their status," officials said. Rescuers were still plucking hundreds of stranded residents from homes cut off by last week's flooding on Tuesday. Authorities in Boulder County airlifted 215 people to safer ground on Monday, while Larimer County saw 420 people evacuated, according to officials there. [CNN](#)

U.S.: Deadly amoeba found for first time in municipal water supply

15 September - A 4-year-old child who died of a rare brain infection in early August has led Louisiana health officials to discover that the cause is lurking in the water pipes of St. Bernard Parish, southeast of New Orleans. It's a type of single-celled amoeba called *Naegleria fowleri*, about a tenth the width of a human hair. Some call it a "brain-eating" amoeba, although it does its damage by causing a devastating immune reaction rather than by actually devouring brain tissue. Officials are pumping more chlorine into the municipal water supply to kill the bugs and advising the parish's 40,000 residents how to avoid infection. They say the risk is tiny. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Drug-resistant 'superbugs' deemed urgent threats, U.S. report

16 September - Antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea, a diarrhea-causing superbug and a class of fast-growing killer bacteria dubbed a "nightmare" were classified as urgent public-health threats in the United States on Monday. According to a new report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), at least 2 million people in the United States develop serious bacterial infections that are resistant to one or more types of antibiotics each year, and at least 23,000 die from the infections. "For organism after organism, we're seeing this steady increase in resistance rates," Dr Thomas Frieden, director of the CDC, said in a telephone interview. "We don't have new drugs about to come out of the pipeline. If and when we get new drugs, unless we do a better job of protecting them, we'll lose those, also." [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Estimated percentages and characteristics of men who have sex with men and use injection drugs

20 September - Male-to-male sex and illicit injection drug use are important transmission routes for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Of all new HIV infections in 2010, 80% were among men, of which 78% were among men who have sex with men (MSM), 6% among male injection drug users (IDU), and 4% among men who have sex with men and inject drugs (MSM/IDU). MSM/IDU might have different prevention needs from men who are either MSM or IDU, but not both. A combination of effective, scalable, and evidence-based approaches that address male-to-male sex and injection drug use behaviors might reduce HIV infections among MSM/IDU... Across surveillance systems, MSM/IDU accounted for 4%–12% of MSM and 11%–39% of male IDU. Risk reduction programs and interventions targeted toward male IDU populations might be more effective if they also incorporate messages about male-to-male sex. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Gun violence is public health crisis

18 September - Gun violence in the United States has claimed the lives of more than 30,000 men, women and children in recent years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Doctors and public health specialists say gun violence is at epidemic levels, calling it a major public health threat. [VOA](#)

U.S. health exchange launch still on track for October 1

18 September - The public health exchanges being created as part of the U.S. healthcare reform law will open on October 1 as planned, a spokesman for the agency that oversees them said on Wednesday, denying a Wall Street research report saying that a delay could be imminent. "This report is totally false. Open enrollment in the Health Insurance Marketplace will begin on October 1," a spokesman for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Hospital-acquired MRSA infection rates falling

16 September - Tough-to-treat staph infections that patients can pick up while in the hospital fell by nearly 30 percent in the last decade, according to U.S. health officials. The biggest drop, of more than 50 percent, was seen in hospital-acquired infections, while rates of the drug-resistant infections not linked to hospitals or other healthcare settings barely changed... [O]verall, there were about 80,500 methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) infections in the U.S. in 2011, compared to about 111,300 in 2005. [Reuters](#)

U.S., Ohio: Toxic algae, municipal water

16 September - The 2000 residents of Ottawa County's Carroll Township who were told to avoid their tap water last weekend [7-8 Sep 2013] can thank one person -- not any one of America's thousands of state and federal health laws -- for sparing them from sickness, possibly even death. Henry Biggert, the township's water plant superintendent since it went online in 1998, knew he had to act fast when he saw microcystin, the potentially lethal toxin in Lake Erie's harmful, blue-green algae, known as *Microcystis*, spike to a level beyond plant capability 5 Sep 2013. He took the unprecedented action of shutting down the plant and flushing out the system, the 1st time a publicly owned water-treatment facility in Ohio did that because of an impending threat by an algae-related toxin. The decision he made a few years ago to test for the toxin once a week during algae blooms was voluntary.

[ProMED-mail](#)

U.S.: Teenagers are getting more exercise and vegetables



16 September - Teenagers are exercising more, consuming less sugar and eating more fruits and vegetables, a trend that may be contributing to a leveling off of obesity rates, a new study shows. The findings suggest that aggressive anti-obesity messages aimed at children may be starting to make a difference, albeit a small one. The

study was published in the journal [Pediatrics](#) on Monday. Still, most teenagers were falling short of federal recommendations, which call for children to get at least an hour of physical activity daily, a central message of Michelle Obama's signature "Let's Move" campaign. The new data showed that most children engaged in an hour of exercise fewer than five days a week and spent more than two hours a day watching television, chatting online and playing video games. [New York Times](#)

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India: Over 300 dengue cases in September in Delhi

17 September - Over 300 cases of dengue have been detected in September in the national capital, marking an increase of more than 100 per cent than last month's figure of 142. First two weeks of September have registered 304 cases, taking the total of dengue cases so far in the city to 466 in 2013, according to a Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) report released yesterday... Malaria cases meanwhile have fallen to 8 so far this month against 28 in August. [India TV](#)

Indonesia: How mercury poisons gold miners and enters the food chain



17 September - ...Although mercury use in small-scale gold mining in Indonesia is illegal, miners still use it to extract gold from the rock or soil. Fahrul [Raji] isn't a miner, but he has a gold shop in Kereng Pangsi. Every day miners bring him the fruits of their labour - usually a pea-sized piece of amalgam that is mercury mixed with gold. Fahrul burns it, and the mercury evaporates leaving the gold behind. But the fumes are highly toxic, which is why smelters like Fahrul often show more severe signs of mercury poisoning than miners who use it in the field. "Mercury is a neuro-toxin," Bose-O'Reilly explains. "It affects the cerebellum, which is the part of the brain that helps you move properly, and co-ordinate your movements. Mercury also harms the kidneys and other organs, but the neurological damage it does is irreversible." ... There are an estimated 10-15 million unregulated gold miners around the world, operating in 70 countries. Artisanal small-scale gold mining (ASGM) is the largest source of mercury pollution in the world after the burning of fossil fuels. And in Central Kalimantan the effects of this unregulated industry on the environment have been devastating. Around Kereng Pangsi, the miners have cleared virgin forest once home to orang-utans and hornbills. What is left is a lunar-like landscape, its pools polluted with mercury. [BBC News](#)

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Brazil: NDM-1 carrying enterobacteriaceae

18 September - Rio de Janeiro State reported the 1st cases of contamination by bacteria carrying the NDM-1 gene. These bacteria nullify the effects of almost all antimicrobial agents, including those which are more used to fight infections by multiresistant microorganisms. The cases were reported in [the pediatric ward of] HemoRio, the referral institution for treatment of patients with hematological diseases, and in hospitals in Campos dos Goytacazes in northern Rio de Janeiro State, and Duque de Caxias in the Baixada [region in the southeastern part of the state]. [No deaths have been recorded]. Rio de Janeiro is the 2nd state in the country to identify the superbug. Rio Grande do Sul had 5 cases reported in May [2013]. [ProMED-mail](#)

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