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Army Public Health Weekly Update

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U.S. Army Public Health Command



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U.S. MILITARY

Army post sets example in curbing suicides, preventable deaths

15 February - As military leaders struggle to reverse rising suicide rates within the force, Fort Bliss, Texas, is bucking the national trend, reporting a 30-percent drop last year and serving as a promising model for the Army and its sister services. Fort Bliss had the lowest suicide rate in the Army during 2012 — four confirmed and one still under investigation from its population of 33,000 soldiers. That's down from seven in 2011. Fort Bliss reported three other preventable soldier deaths last year, also the Army's lowest rate. This came at a time suicides increased in the overall Army and across the military as a whole, despite sweeping initiatives across the services and the Defense Department to stem them. So what's the magic formula at Fort Bliss, a sprawling post in Southwest Texas' high desert that became the new home to the 1st Armored Division last year? [Elites TV](#)

Fort Bliss leads Army installations with most HIV infections in past two years

20 February - Unprotected sex can be more difficult to discuss with soldiers than drunk driving, substance abuse, or mental health issues, said Fort Bliss spokesman Maj. Joe Buccino. But troubling new data prompted commanding general, Maj. Gen. Dana Pittard to break the silence. Thirteen soldiers were living with HIV on post in 2012, making Fort Bliss the installation with the most cases of HIV in the Army for a second year in a row, said Buccino. There were eleven soldiers living with HIV in 2011... "There are a number of commonalities among our Soldiers who have been affected," wrote Pittard. "All of our recent cases have been a result of men having unprotected sex with men. African-American and Latino Soldiers were affected disproportionately in far greater numbers. The majority of our HIV cases resulted from online solicitations for sex, particularly from the websites Craigslist, Grinder, and Adam for Adam." "Those websites have not been placed off limits," Buccino told ABC-7 Tuesday. [KVIA](#)

Functional fitness program reduces injuries

19 February - ...Three years ago, frustrated with the injuries Soldiers within his ranks were experiencing, Ivezaj, then a company commander for Company A, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, based at Fort Benning, Ga., researched workout programs to help his men train more effectively. Ivezaj read an article about Matt Wenning, a record-holding powerlifter from Ohio, and invited him to Georgia. "When I first saw him, he was bulky and muscular," he said. "We were lean and muscular. I didn't think this guy would be for us, but he showed us very quickly he was the right guy." Ivezaj said Wenning redesigned their gym, moving around equipment and introducing new methods for training, including weightlifting and cross-fit exercises. "He taught us 'functional fitness,'" Ivezaj said. "It gives us a base to strengthen parts of our bodies that we were seeing a lot of injuries -- knees and the lower back." Ivezaj brought this knowledge to Fort Carson, teaming with Col. James

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J. Mingus, 4th BCT commander, and implementing the Mountain Athlete Warrior, or MAW, program. "We want to train Soldiers like athletes," Ivezaj said. "We focus on the core and continue to punish (them) with workouts to prepare (them) for combat." [Military.com](#)

Helmet sensors help Army study brain injury

20 February - For six years, the U.S. Army has been using sensors embedded in soldiers' helmets to learn more about how service members sustain concussions and other brain injuries. The device resembles an Apple computer mouse and is designed by an Orange County company as an early warning system to document devastating injuries that aren't always visible. Known as HEADS, the gadget contains a sensor and data recorder that is glued into a soldier's helmet. The device sits dormant until a blow is detected, then it measures and records acceleration information. That data later is downloaded through a USB cable to offer medical experts a better understanding of what happened at the moment of impact. "It will hopefully someday help them to diagnose traumatic brain injuries, and help get guys medical attention when they need it, or learn how to make the helmets better," says mechanical engineer Steve Pruitt. [NBC News](#)

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GLOBAL

Illuminating insights

February - ...Working with a team led by injury prevention icon Susan Baker, MPH '68, [Holly Wilcox, PhD] teased apart various threads of the data to learn the specifics behind the 16 percent increase in suicides during the previous decade. Among the trends revealed in the November 22 *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*:

- Suicide by hanging rose by 52 percent—the greatest increase of any method. Rates rose by 19 percent for suicide by poisoning but remained flat for suicide by firearm, the predominant method for all ages.
- The rate of suicide among people ages 45 to 49 increased by 39 percent, the most of any age group.
- Rates for suicide among females increased faster than for males.
- Rates for whites, Asians and Native Americans rose by 20, 12 and 10 percent, respectively, while rates for blacks decreased by 6 percent.

... Baker explains that effective prevention strategies reduce access to the means that individuals use for suicide—availability of handguns, for instance. Innovations such as fingerprint recognition systems on firearms can be used to save many depressed teens, she adds. "Focusing on the means and methods of suicide is a logical and successful approach," concurs William Eaton, PhD, the Sylvia and Harold Halpert Professor and Chair in Mental Health. "Why? Because, although lots of people don't believe it, suicide is so often impulsive." [The Magazine of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#)

Lack of “lube” hurts HIV prevention

21 February - Safer-sex messaging on condoms is universal but the generally poor availability of lubricants, and awareness of them, is hindering HIV prevention, health activists warn. Some personal lubricant - or “lube” - has been shown to lower the risk of HIV transmission by decreasing the risk of condoms breaking. Despite preliminary proof of lube’s efficacy, far less of the product is procured and distributed than condoms, leading people to use alternative, sometimes harmful, substances during intercourse such as butter or petroleum jelly; oil-based lubricants weaken latex, making the condom more likely to break. [IRIN](#)

Man-made chemicals cited in health scourges: UN report



19 February - Man-made chemicals in everyday products are likely to be at least the partial cause of a global surge in birth deformities, hormonal cancers and psychiatric diseases, a U.N.-sponsored research team reported on Tuesday. These substances, dubbed EDCs, could also be linked to a decline in the human male sperm count and female fertility, to an increase in once-rare childhood cancers and to the disappearance of some animal species, they said. "It is clear that some of these chemical pollutants can affect the endocrinal (hormonal) system andmay also interfere with the development processes of humans and wildlife species," the report declared. [Reuters](#)

Mosquitoes ignore repellent Deet after first exposure

20 February - The widely used insect repellent Deet appears to be losing its effectiveness against mosquitoes, scientists say. Researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine say mosquitoes are first deterred by the substance, but then later ignore it. They say more research is needed to find alternatives to Deet, which was first developed by the US military. The research was carried out on *Aedes aegypti*, a species of mosquito that spreads dengue and yellow fever. The findings are published in the journal [Plos One](#). [BBC](#)

Nasal spray cancer vaccine shrinks head and neck tumors

14 February - A promising new vaccine - administered as a nasal spray - is being developed to treat head and neck cancers. It is one of a growing number of vaccines developed in the last few years to fight cancer. When a person develops cancer, the body mounts an immune response against the renegade cells but it is often too weak to halt their spread. So, to supplement radiation and chemotherapy treatment, scientists have been working to develop vaccines to boost the body’s natural defenses against the tumors. Two promising vaccines in late-stage human trials target prostate cancer and metastatic melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. [VOA](#)

New device treats brain injury by zapping nerves on the tongue



20 February - A new electronic device could treat brain damage by stimulating nerves on the tongue to send signals to the brain. The Portable NeuroModulation Stimulator, or PoNS, is named after part of the brain stem and aims to repair damaged neural connections. Developed by NeuroHabilitation with funding from the U.S. Army, the battery-powered device is targeted at... traumatic brain injury... The user bites down on the device while performing a 20- or 30-minute series of physical and cognitive exercises tailored to the patient's particular deficits. PoNS then stimulates nerve endings on the tongue in way that mirrors the exercises, hopefully allowing the brain to repair damaged neural connections. [Popsci](#)

New drug puts malaria under the pump

19 February - Researchers have discovered how a new class of antimalarial drugs kills the malaria parasite, showing that the drugs block a pump at the parasite surface, causing it to fill with salt. In work conducted at the Research School of Biology (RSB) at The Australian National University ([ANU](#)), and published in the latest edition of *Cell Host & Microbe*, Dr Natalie Spillman showed that the malaria parasite has at its surface a protein that serves as a molecular salt pump, pushing sodium ions out of the parasite. "It was within a week or two of our identification of the pump protein that a paper came out reporting the discovery of the spiroindolone antimalarials," Dr Spillman said. [All Africa](#)

Novel coronavirus infection, WHO update

16 February - The United Kingdom (UK) has informed WHO of another confirmed case of infection with the novel coronavirus (NCoV). This is the third case confirmed in the country this month and is in the same family cluster as the two recently confirmed cases. The latest confirmed case does not have recent travel history outside the UK. The case is recovering from mild respiratory illness and is currently well. The confirmation with NCoV in this case with no recent travel history indicates that infection was acquired in the UK. Although this new case offers further indications of person-to-person transmission, no sustained person-to-person transmission has been identified. The Health Protection Agency (HPA) is following up on all close contacts who may have been exposed to the recently confirmed cases. As of 16 February 2013, WHO has been informed of a total of 12 confirmed cases of human infection with NCoV, including five deaths. [WHO](#)

Study: Young malaria parasites resistant to anti-malarial drug

20 February - Juvenile malaria parasites may be much more resistant to the leading malarial drug than mature forms of the parasite, *Plasmodium falciparum*, according to a study yesterday in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. University of Melbourne researchers subjected parasites at various stages of development to short pulses of

artemisinin and found that immature parasites aged 6 to 20 hours post-cell-invasion were up to 100 times less sensitive to the drug than mature parasites. They also found, paradoxically, that a subgroup of the youngest of the parasites, 2 to 4 hours post-invasion, showed hypersensitivity to the drug. "We were surprised to find that juvenile parasites were up to 100 times less sensitive to the drug than mature parasites, and that in some strains the juvenile parasites showed a particularly high degree of resistance," said lead investigator Leann Tilley, PhD, in a University of Melbourne press release. She added that the findings might help explain how resistance to artemisinin develops. "In juvenile stages the parasite's digestive system is not yet active, which explains how this stage can avoid the effects of the drug," Tilley explained. She said she hopes the findings will provide a guide for changing the timing of the drug treatment regimen and for developing longer-lasting drugs. [CIDRAP](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

- In Week 6 (through 9 February 2013), Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) in the US and in PACOM decreased; Pneumonia & Influenza (P&I) incidence rates decreased in the US but increased in PACOM among Service Members (SMs). Overall, the incidence of influenza-related RME has decreased since Week 2.
- Influenza activity varied from low to moderate levels across the overseas DoD laboratory surveillance network except in Europe, where high level of influenza activity was detected with co-circulation of influenza A/H1, A/H3, and B.
- The influenza vaccination coverage for the DoD (Active Duty component only) is 96%. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 6 (February 3 - 9, 2013), influenza activity remained elevated in the United States, but decreased in most areas.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 7,608 specimens tested and reported by collaborating laboratories, 1,499 (19.7%) 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: Five pediatric deaths were reported.
- Influenza-Associated Hospitalizations: A cumulative rate for the season of 32.1 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported. Of reported hospitalizations, more than 50% were among adults 65 years and older.

- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 3.2%. This is above the national baseline of 2.2%. All 10 regions reported ILI above region-specific baseline levels. Eleven states and New York City experienced high ILI activity; 10 states experienced moderate activity; the District of Columbia and 13 states experienced low activity, and 16 states experienced minimal activity. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Week 6, 91 specimens were tested from 28 locations. There were 29 Influenza A viruses (25 A(H3N2) and 4 A(H1N1)pdm09); and 10 Influenza B viruses detected (see Table 1).
- To date, 2,556 specimens have been tested from 76 locations of which 880 were positive for Influenza A (799 A(H3N2), 72 A(H1N1)pdm09, two co-infections of A(H3N2) & B, one co-infection of A(H3N2) & A(H1N1)pdm09, one co-infection of A(H3N2) and Parainfluenza and five A/not subtyped); and 157 were positive for Influenza B (14 B/Yamagata, two B/Victoria, and 141 B/lineage undetermined). There have been 161 other respiratory viruses isolated (57 Parainfluenza, 42 Adenovirus, 53 RSV, and nine Enterovirus).
- Sequence analysis of specimens processed indicates a good match to the vaccine strains this season. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

In week 6/2013, 28 countries reported clinical information:

- Germany, Luxembourg and Sweden reported high-intensity and Belgium very high-intensity transmission, while 21 countries reported medium intensity and Cyprus, Poland and the UK reported low intensity.
- The geographic pattern of influenza activity was reported as widespread by 20 countries, regional by the UK (England and Scotland), local by Bulgaria, Greece, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and the UK (Northern Ireland) and sporadic by Poland. Twenty countries reported concomitantly high/medium-intensity transmission and wide geographic spread (Table 1, Map 2).
- Overall, the situation reported for week 6/2013 was similar to that observed in the three previous weeks, with most countries reporting medium-intensity transmission and wide geographic spread, and approximately 50% of countries reporting increasing trends. Increasing trends were reported by 13 countries and the UK (Northern Ireland) (Table 1, Map 2). Stable trends were reported by eight countries and the UK (England and Scotland) and decreasing trends by six countries. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Interim adjusted estimates of seasonal influenza vaccine effectiveness – United States, February 2013

22 February - Early influenza activity during the 2012–13 season enabled estimation of the unadjusted effectiveness of the seasonal influenza vaccine. This report presents updated adjusted estimates based on 2,697 children and adults enrolled in the U.S. Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness (Flu VE) Network during December 3, 2012–January 19, 2013. During this period, overall vaccine effectiveness (VE) (adjusted for age, site, race/ethnicity, self-rated health, and days from illness onset to enrollment) against influenza A and B virus infections associated with medically attended acute respiratory illness was 56%, similar to the earlier interim estimate (62%). VE was estimated as 47% against influenza A (H3N2) virus infections and 67% against B virus infections. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 16 February 2013:

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

WHO recommends new B strain for next season's flu vaccine

21 February - The World Health Organization (WHO) today recommended changing one of the three vaccine strains for the Northern Hemisphere's next flu season, based on the changing profile of circulating influenza B strains. An expert group that met in Geneva earlier this week suggested changing the B component of the vaccine, but sticking with the A/H3N2 and A/H1N1 components. [CIDRAP](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Cambodia, Egypt, China: Human H5N1, WHO

19 February - From 2003 through 15 Feb 2013, 620 laboratory-confirmed human cases with avian influenza A(H5N1) virus infection have been officially reported to WHO from 15 countries, of which 367 died. Since the last update on 16 Jan 2013, 10 new laboratory-confirmed human cases with influenza A(H5N1) virus infection were reported to WHO. Since 16 Jan 2013, Cambodia reported 7 [and a suspected 8th case -- see Avian influenza, human

(08): Cambodia (KC) susp. 20130218.1548448] new human cases with influenza A(H5N1) virus infection including 6 fatal cases...These cases do not seem to be linked epidemiologically, and most had contact with sick poultry in the village...Egypt has reported one new human case with influenza A(H5N1) virus infection in Behera Governorate. The A(H5N1) virus is also endemic in poultry in some areas of Egypt, and additional sporadic human cases are possible. On 10 Feb 2013, China reported 2 new human cases of influenza A(H5N1) virus infection. Both remain in critical condition. The cases come from the same province but do not seem to be epidemiologically linked. Neither had documented contact with sick or dead poultry...The last official report of A(H5N1) in poultry in mainland China was from Guangdong Province in September 2012. [ProMED-mail](#)

Germany: Low-path H5N1 outbreak hits duck farm

18 February - Veterinary officials in Germany today reported a low-pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza outbreak at a poultry farm in Brandenburg state, according to a report from the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). An Associated Press (AP) story said ducks were housed at the farm, which is located in the town of Seelow, about 40 miles east of Berlin near the border with Poland. The virus sickened 22 of the ducks, and authorities culled the remaining 14,500 to control spread of the disease. The source of the virus is unknown, according to the OIE report. Confirmation tests on samples from the ducks were done at the Friedrich-Loeffler Institute. Germany's last low-pathogenic H5 outbreak was in late December when the virus struck a farm in Schleswig-Holstein state, located in the northern part of the country. [CIDRAP](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Peanut Corp. officials indicted in salmonella outbreak

21 February - Several officials at the now-defunct Peanut Corp. of America knew their products may have harbored salmonella bacteria, but they covered up the evidence and sold the food anyway, alleged a 76-count federal indictment unsealed this week. Peanut butter, roasted peanuts and other items prepared at PCA's Blakely, Ga. plant were linked to a 2009 salmonella outbreak that sickened more than 700 people across 46 states and may have contributed to nine deaths. [Los Angeles Times](#)

TV special shows glory, trauma of military dogs



19 February - It's been almost seven months since a bomb exploded on a strip of dirt in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Leonard Anderson can only remember a reassuring voice. He has seen the ambush and its aftermath on film, though: The man behind the voice putting a tourniquet on Anderson's leg as a medic tended to the other, listening to his own cries for help and his dog's whines of worry. The blast that severely wounded the military dog handler was

captured on film by one of four camera crews that were embedded with front line troops last year. [AP](#)

Video - [CBS News](#)

Two more Salmonella outbreaks linked to turtles raise cases to 347

18 February - Two more Salmonella outbreaks tied to pet turtles have been added to the list of overlapping outbreaks under investigation, bringing the total to eight, with 347 cases in all, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported on Feb 15. That's 49 more cases than reported in the last update on Dec 6, 2012... In the outbreaks overall, 28% of patients have been hospitalized. Seventy percent of patients have been under 10 years old, 70% have reported exposure to turtles, and 44% have been Hispanic. A third of the patients reported buying pet turtles from street vendors, while 11% bought them from pet stores. Because of the Salmonella risk, the sale of pet turtles with shells less than 4 inches long has been banned since 1975. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S., Alaska: Campylobacteriosis, unpasteurized milk

18 February - The purpose of this Health Advisory is to inform you of a recent and potentially ongoing outbreak of *Campylobacter* infections that have been associated with consuming raw milk. *Campylobacter* infection is reportable by state regulations to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services' Section of Epidemiology (SOE). Since late January 2013, 4 people with confirmed *Campylobacter* infection and at least 1 person with probable infection reported consuming raw (unpasteurized) milk in the few days preceding illness. One infant with close contact to a confirmed case-patient is also suspected of having *Campylobacter* infection. All 6 reside on the Kenai Peninsula. The *Campylobacter* isolated from the 4 lab-confirmed cases are a match by molecular techniques (pulsed-field gel electrophoresis, or PFGE). This strain of *Campylobacter* has not been previously identified in Alaska. [ProMED-mail](#)

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WELLNESS

Acupuncture may be antidote for allergies



19 February - Acupuncture already helps to relieve pain in some patients, and the latest study hints that it might relieve sneezing and itchy eyes as well. Most patients plagued with sniffles brought on by seasonal allergies turn to antihistamines for relief, but when they don't get relief, some opt for alternative treatments like acupuncture, in which tiny needles inserted just under the skin at specific points in the body are used to reduce certain symptoms. In a

[study](#) published in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers examined 422 people who tested positive for pollen allergies and had allergic nasal symptoms such as a runny nose. The participants reported their symptoms as well as what medication and doses they used to treat them. [CNN](#)

Effects of bullying last into adulthood, study finds

20 February - Victims of bullying at school, and bullies themselves, are more likely to experience psychiatric problems in childhood, studies have shown. Now researchers have found that elevated risk of psychiatric trouble extends into adulthood, sometimes even a decade after the intimidation has ended. The new study, published in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry* on Wednesday, is the most comprehensive effort to date to establish the long-term consequences of childhood bullying, experts said. [New York Times](#)

Folic acid in early pregnancy cuts risk of autism



15 February - Babies born to women who take supplements of the B vitamin folic acid in early pregnancy are significantly less likely to develop autism, a developmental delay characterized by problems with communication and social interaction. The findings of a

large Norwegian study reinforce those of other researchers that folic acid supplements are important to a healthy pregnancy. Researchers at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health looked at health data on more than 85,000 children born between 2002 and 2008. The study asked the mothers to describe their food intake and all dietary supplements they took before and during their pregnancies. After the babies were born, investigators followed up with the children through the end of March 2012, looking to see how many developed a form of autism. [VOA](#)

Office workers beware: Sitting time associated with increased risk of chronic diseases

18 February - The more you sit, the higher your risk of chronic diseases. Kansas State University researcher Richard Rosenkranz, assistant professor of human nutrition, examined the associations of sitting time and chronic diseases in middle-aged Australian males in a study that is published in the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*. [Science Daily](#)

Popular workout booster draws safety scrutiny

15 February - ...Americans spent more than \$100 million on products containing DMAA in 2011, according to the *Nutrition Business Journal*, which monitors the dietary supplement industry. But the widespread use of products containing DMAA is raising widespread concern. "This is the most dangerous ingredient sold today in supplements in the United States," says Dr. Pieter Cohen, an internist at Harvard Medical School. Cohen says DMAA is a potent stimulant. It drives up heart rate and blood pressure, which means it can cause many health problems. "The common ones would be anxiety, panic attack, dehydration, and the

life-threatening ones would be bleeding strokes and death — sudden cardiac death," Cohen says. The Food and Drug Administration has received at least 60 reports of complications in people using DMAA, including at least two deaths. The U.S. military barred base stores from selling DMAA supplements after two soldiers died while taking them. DMAA was recently linked to the death of a British marathon runner. [NPR](#)

Too much coffee in pregnancy tied to smaller, later newborns, study says



18 February - The coffee or other caffeinated beverages a woman drinks during her pregnancy might up the odds for a low birth weight newborn or an extended pregnancy, a new study says. The researchers included data on nearly 60,000 Norwegian women. "As the risk for having a low birth weight baby was associated with caffeine consumption, pregnant women might be counseled to reduce their caffeine intake during pregnancy as much as possible," said lead researcher Dr. Verena Sengpiel, an obstetrician/gynecologist at the Sahlgrenska Academy of Sahlgrenska University in Goteborg, Sweden. She believes the findings should also spur a re-evaluation of current recommendations from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which advises that a pregnant woman's caffeine intake not exceed two cups of coffee per day. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.-wide salt reduction could prevent deaths: study

14 February - The United States could prevent up to half a million deaths over the next decade if Americans cut their salt intake to within national guidelines, according to a new study. That finding - which comes the week New York City announced success toward its goals of cutting salt levels by one-quarter by 2014 - is based on computer simulations using data from various studies on the effects of extra sodium on blood pressure and heart risks. The Institute of Medicine recommends most healthy people get 1,500 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day, with an upper limit of 2,300 mg. But the average American eats more like 3,600 mg each day, largely through processed food. [Reuters](#)

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USAFRICOM

Chad: Yellow fever

14 February - The Ministry of Health of Chad is launching an emergency mass-vaccination campaign against yellow fever from 22 February 2013, following laboratory confirmation of two cases in the country in December 2012. The two cases from Goz Beida and Guereda districts were laboratory confirmation by a WHO regional reference laboratory for yellow fever, Institut Pasteur in Dakar, Senegal. They were identified through the national surveillance programme for yellow fever, following intensive surveillance which was

triggered in response to the outbreak of yellow fever in neighbouring Sudan's Darfur region. The intensive surveillance in Chad also reported 139 suspected cases and 9 deaths.

[World Health Organization](#)

Kenya: New cases of dengue fever, kala-azar reported in Kenya's north



19 February - An outbreak of dengue fever and a suspected outbreak of kala-azar in northern Kenya are drawing attention to the need for improved health services in some of the country's most remote communities. Health officials report the dengue fever outbreak is taking place in Mandera District, along the Ethiopian and Somali borders. Local health workers say there have been some 300 cases since the outbreak began in January. Three suspected dengue deaths have been recorded, and there are fears that more cases have gone unreported. [IRIN](#)

Malawi's never-ending drug shortage problem

19 February - Malawi is again experiencing a crisis in the delivery of essential medicines, with understaffed clinics and erratic drug supplies preventing many dangerously ill patients from accessing treatment. Frequent drug shortages and stock-outs have [plagued](#) the country's health system in recent years. According to a 2012 [report](#) by the UK charity Oxfam, only 9 percent of local health facilities (54 out of 585) had the full Essential Health Package list of drugs for treating 11 common diseases. Additionally, clinics were often out of basic antibiotics, HIV test kits and insecticide-treated mosquito nets, and in many facilities, stocks of vaccines were dangerously low. According to news reports, public hospitals had run out of 95 percent of essential medicines by the end of January. [IRIN](#)

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USCENTCOM

Egyptian farmers fearful as locust threat looms

21 February - Scattered pockets of locusts in southern Egypt and northern Sudan are a threat to agricultural land, warns the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Countries along the Red Sea should remain on "high alert and make every effort to find and treat all infestations", it says. During January, immature locusts known as "hoppers" formed bands and swarms along the coastal plains of the Red Sea, increasing locust numbers significantly in southeastern Egypt, northeastern Sudan, Eritrea and Saudi Arabia, FAO said in its January bulletin. Despite "substantial" ground control operations in these countries, "more swarms are expected to form in northeast Sudan and southeast Egypt in the coming weeks," it added in a 17 February update on its website. [IRIN](#)

Syria: Typhoid breaks out in rebel-held eastern Syria, WHO

19 February - Typhoid has broken out in an opposition-held region of [Syria](#) due to people drinking contaminated water from the Euphrates River, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Tuesday. An estimated 2,500 people in northeastern Deir al-Zor province are infected with the contagious disease, which causes diarrhea and can be fatal, the [United Nations](#) agency said. "There is not enough fuel or electricity to run the pumps so people drink water from the Euphrates which is contaminated, probably with sewage," the WHO representative in [Syria](#), Elisabeth Hoff, told Reuters by telephone. The WHO had no confirmed reports of deaths so far from typhoid. [Reuters](#)

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USEUCOM

Israel: HIV among Israeli gay men up 55% since 2005

18 February - The number of new HIV infections among homosexual men is increasing, according to Health Ministry figures. There has been a 55% increase in HIV infections among homosexual men since 2005, though the pace of infection has moderated somewhat in the past few years. In 2011, there were 150 new HIV cases reported among homosexual men. This is true throughout the West, not just in Israel. [Haaretz.com](#)

Spain: Mumps

17 February - The mumps outbreak that is currently affecting some youngsters in Madrid may spread. Mumps is mild and not a "severe" disease, but there can be no room for complacency, said Dr. Antonio Alemany, Chief of Primary Care. Dr. Alemany stated that the outbreak had begun at the beginning of the month [February 2013] and that the outbreak is not restricted to Madrid. He stated that it represents a new cycle of the disease, which tends to occur every 3-6 years. He said that people "are more or less protected," depending on the immunogenic capability of the vaccines they might have received. Dr. Alemany explained that vaccines used in Spain before 1999 had a 50.5 percent antigen content [protective capacity?], whereas those vaccines used more recently, particularly those manufactured "using more advanced technology," have a "much higher protection capacity," between 88 and 90 percent. Dr. Alemany recognized that children vaccinated before 1999 have a 50.5 percent likelihood of being protected, meaning that "they do not have a complete defense" against the disease as a consequence of the characteristics of that particular vaccine they had received. [ProMED-mail](#)

U.K.: 'Bionic legs' for military amputees



19 February - Injured military personnel who have legs amputated are to be given the most up-to-date prosthetic limbs after the government set aside £6.5m for them. The micro-processor limbs, known as "bionic legs", will be available to service personnel who have been wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan and will offer them greater stability and mobility. The move is expected to benefit about 160 members of the armed forces. The Help for Heroes charity said the money would help "transform lives". Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said it was a top priority to give troops the best possible care and support. [BBC](#)

U.K.: HIV increase in gay men caused by fall in condom use

15 February - A fall in the proportion of gay and bisexual men using condoms is behind the rise in HIV infections in those groups in the UK, say researchers. Wider use of anti-retroviral drugs has helped to stop a sharper rise, a study by the Health Protection Agency (HPA) and a number of universities found. They found a 26% rise, from 1990-2010, in the proportion of men who have sex with men who did not use condoms. The report said the figures showed it was vital to promote safe sex. Rates of HIV have been rising in recent years with latest figures showing cases among men who have sex with men (MSM) in the UK reaching an all-time high. [BBC](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Drug overdose deaths up for 11th consecutive year

19 February – Drug overdose deaths rose for the 11th straight year, federal data show, and most of them were accidents involving addictive painkillers despite growing attention to risks from these medicines. "The big picture is that this is a big problem that has gotten much worse quickly," said Dr. Thomas Frieden, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which gathered and analyzed the data. In 2010, the CDC reported, there were 38,329 drug overdose deaths nationwide. Medicines, mostly prescription drugs, were involved in nearly 60 percent of overdose deaths that year, overshadowing deaths from illicit narcotics... As in previous recent years, opioid drugs — which include OxyContin and Vicodin — were the biggest problem, contributing to 3 out of 4 medication overdose deaths. [AP](#)

U.S.: Invasive cancer incidence, 2009

22 February - Cancer is a leading cause of illness and death in the United States, and many cancers are preventable (1). Surveillance of cancer incidence can help public health officials target areas for cancer control efforts (2) and track progress toward the national cancer

objectives set forth in *Healthy People 2020* (3). This report summarizes the most recent invasive cancer incidence rates by sex, age, race, ethnicity, primary site, and state of residence using data from U.S. Cancer Statistics (USCS) for 2009. USCS includes incidence data from CDC's National Program of Cancer Registries (NPCR) and the National Cancer Institute's (NCI's) Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) program and mortality data from the National Vital Statistics System (4). In 2009, a total of 1,476,504 invasive cancers were diagnosed in the United States, an annual incidence rate of 459 cases per 100,000 persons. Cancer incidence rates were higher among men (524) than women (414), highest among blacks (473) and lowest among American Indian/Alaska Natives (273), and ranged by state from 387 to 509. Populations defined by state of residence, race, or ethnicity with high rates of cancer might benefit most from targeted cancer prevention and control efforts. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S. kids consuming fewer calories, report finds

21 February - Finally, some good news in the war on childhood obesity: Kids in the United States now consume fewer calories each day than they did 12 years ago, according to a new government report. Even better, between 1999 and 2010, most boys and girls between 2 and 19 years old began getting more of their daily calories from muscle-building proteins and fewer from carbohydrates, which can easily spur weight gain when eaten to excess, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report found. [U.S. News and World Report](#)

U.S. plans billion-dollar project to study the brain

18 February - An unprecedented, 10-year study of the human brain is expected to be unveiled by the Obama administration as early as next month, *The New York Times* reported Monday. President Barack Obama cited the need for brain research in his State of the Union address last week, and the *Times* reported Monday that scientists, government agencies and private foundations expect to team up in an effort to reveal the mysterious inner workings of the brain's chemistry. The project is known as the Brain Activity Map project, the news report said, and the ultimate goal is to create a detailed map of the brain, which is composed of billions of neurons, and to better understand mental illnesses and brain disorders such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and autism. The U.S. National Institutes of Health-sponsored research might even lead to breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, the newspaper reported. [Medline Plus](#)

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China: After cleanup, water still unfit to drink



20 February - China aims to spend \$850 billion to improve filthy water supplies over the next decade, but even such huge outlays may do little to reverse damage caused by decades of pollution and overuse in Beijing's push for rapid economic growth... Over the five years to 2010, the country spent 700 billion yuan (\$112.41 billion) on water infrastructure, but much of its water remains undrinkable. The environment ministry said 43 percent of the locations it was monitoring in 2011 contained water that was not even fit for human contact. "The reason why they have achieved so little even though they have spent so much on pollution treatment is because they have followed the wrong urbanization model - China is still putting too much pressure on local resources," said Zhou Lei, a fellow at Nanjing University who has studied water pollution. [Reuters](#)

Papua New Guinea: Bednet indifference threatens progress on malaria

15 February - Papua New Guinea (PNG) could face an upsurge in malaria cases due to overly relaxed attitudes to the use of bednets, health experts warn. "Sometimes I use it, sometimes I don't," Susan Kake, 45, said outside her hut in Masumave, a village of 2,000 largely subsistence farmers in PNG's remote Eastern Highlands Province. "If I'm going to get it, I'm going to get it." The country has made progress in stemming the disease's spread in the past few years, but such fatalism is worrying. [IRIN](#)

South Korea: As families change, Korea's elderly are turning to suicide



16 February - Even with the explosive growth of suicides in South Korea, the case of the 78-year-old widow was shocking enough to merit attention in the recent presidential election and hand-wringing in the news media. Rather than quietly taking her life at home as many South Koreans do, the woman staged her death as a final act of public protest against a society she said had abandoned her. She drank pesticide overnight in front of her city hall after officials stopped her welfare checks, saying they were no longer obligated to support her now that her son-in-law had found work...The woman's death is part of one of South Korea's grimmest statistics: the number of people 65 and older committing suicide, which has nearly quadrupled in recent years, making the country's rate of such deaths among the highest in the developed world...The number of suicides among other adults and teenagers also surged, though those deaths are generally attributed to the stress of living in a highly competitive society rather than the changes in the family structure that are driving the elderly to despair. [New York Times](#)

Argentina: Brucellosis outbreak detected in farms bordering Argentina

17 February - The Livestock Service (SAG) detected the presence of reactants cattle *Brucella abortus*, the causative agent of bovine brucellosis in surveillance monitoring in three farms bordering Argentina, in the province of Ultima Esperanza. In this situation, the Magallanes SAG consolidation measures enacted in the properties affected, vaccination and sampling consisting of 100% of susceptible animals, animal movement restrictions, identification and elimination with only destination slaughterhouse. [El Magallanews](#)

Paraguay - Dengue toll nears 15,000

21 February - So far in 2013, Health Surveillance confirmed 14,518 dengue cases and 23,917 remain as suspects, out of a total of 39,486 notifications. The Ministry of Health said on Thursday that of the 1362 notifications in the dengue surveillance system, 936 of them are from Central department (68%), 146 of Amambay (10.7%), 138 of Asunción (10.1%), and 52 High Paraná (3.8%). Significantly, of the number of notifications to date, 858 (63%) patients' symptoms began this week (SE8). [Color ABC](#)

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