

23 January 2015

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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## U.S. MILITARY

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### Incidence of *Campylobacter* infections among service members of the active and reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces and among other beneficiaries of the Military Health System, 2000–2013

December 2014 - ... During 2000-2013, incident cases of *Campylobacter* infection were diagnosed in 1,393 active component service members, 188 members of the reserve component, and 3,891 retirees and family members. Among members of the active component, incidence rates tended to be higher among females, those aged 40 years or older, members of the Army and Air Force, and officers. Incidence rates declined from 2002 through 2007 but have risen steadily since, especially from 2010 through 2013. Among retirees and family members, the highest numbers of cases were diagnosed among those aged 5 years or younger and those aged 75 years or older. Cases identified through RME reports (n=2,938) showed the highest numbers of cases in May–August, especially July, and that cases reported from Fort Shafter, HI, accounted for 20% of all cases. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

### Supreme Court allows lawsuits over burn pits, electrocutions

20 January - The Supreme Court is allowing lawsuits involving open-air [burn pits](#) in Iraq and Afghanistan and a [soldier's electrocution in a base shower](#) to move forward against two of the largest American military contractors, according to wire reports. The lawsuits were filed against KBR Inc. and Halliburton Co., which had filed appeals saying the lawsuits should be thrown out because the company was operating as an arm of the military in Iraq and Afghanistan. Two of the lawsuits include claims that troops suffered health problems related to their exposure to burn pits and toxic chemicals on American bases in Iraq and Afghanistan. Another claims that shoddy electrical work led to the electrocution death of Staff Sgt. Ryan Maseth, who was killed in a base shower in Iraq. [Stars and Stripes](#)

### Transcom to unveil isolation system for moving highly contagious patients

21 January - Gen. Paul Selva, the U.S. Transportation Command commander, is set to introduce the military's new Transport Isolation System, a module-based system designed to move people with highly contagious diseases and protect caregivers from infection. The U.S. Department of Defense plans to install the module system on transportation aircraft to fly patients with diseases such as Ebola and Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, to hospitals around the world for treatment. ... Transcom faced a big problem in 2014: the command could not safely evacuate patients infected with Ebola when the deadly epidemic

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had started in West Africa. ... The idea for an isolation module was fast-tracked into a design by the first week in November, with testing of the module in aircraft by early December, according to Selva. The new system will move two patients per module, Selva said. Four modules will fit in a C-17, while one module will fit in the much smaller C-130. [BND](#)

## Vet suicide prevention bill moves forward in Senate

21 January - ... The Clay Hunt SAV Act, named after a Marine vet who committed suicide in 2011, was passed by the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and now must pass a vote in the full Senate to become law. The House overwhelmingly passed the bill with 403 votes earlier this month. The bill calls for a one-stop Department of Veterans Affairs website with suicide prevention resources for veterans, incentives for more psychiatrists, and a review of current programs. "When you have 8,000 veterans a year committing suicide – which is more veterans than have died in all of Iraq and all of Afghanistan since we've been fighting – then you have a serious problem and this is emergency legislation that we need to pass to help our veterans," Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., who became the new committee chairman this month, said in a release. [Stars and Stripes](#)

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## GLOBAL

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## After Ebola, flu and drug resistance top pandemic threats

23 January - The worst-ever Ebola epidemic is waning, but after ravaging three West African nations and spreading fear from Dallas to Madrid, it has hammered home the message that the world needs a better detective system for emerging diseases. Risks posed by pandemic threats such as deadly strains of flu and drug-resistant superbugs have shot up the agenda of global security issues at this year's World Economic Forum in Davos as politicians and scientists grapple with the lessons from an Ebola outbreak that has killed more than 8,600 people. One thing is certain: more epidemics are coming and dense urban living, coupled with modern travel, will accelerate future infectious disease outbreaks. [Reuters](#)

## BPA plastics chemical poses no health risk, says European watchdog

21 January - The chemical bisphenol A, used to stiffen some plastic food containers, poses no health risk to consumers of any age, including unborn children, at current levels of exposure, Europe's food safety watchdog said on Wednesday. Some studies have suggested possible links to everything from cancer to heart disease to infertility to kidney and liver problems, prompting European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to re-evaluate the potential risks of BPA. ... It said that after weighing up "a significant body of new scientific information on its toxic effects", EFSA's expert panel concluded that high doses of BPA -- hundreds of

times above the TDI -- were likely to adversely affect the kidney and liver, and might also cause effects animals' mammary glands. But at current levels -- which it said were often three to five times lower than the TDI of 4 micrograms per kilogram of body weight per day -- it found "no consumer health risk from bisphenol A exposure". [Reuters](#)

## Brain recalls old memories via new pathways

20 January - People with anxiety disorders, such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), often experience prolonged and exaggerated fearfulness. Now, an animal study suggests that this might involve disruption of a gradual shifting of brain circuitry for retrieving fear memories. Researchers funded by the National Institutes of Health have discovered in rats that an old fear memory is recalled by a separate brain pathway from the one originally used to recall it when it was fresh. After rats were conditioned to fear a tone associated with a mild shock, their overt behavior remained unchanged over time, but the pathway engaged in remembering the traumatic event took a detour, perhaps increasing its staying power.

[NIH](#)

## Drugs in dirt: Scientists appeal for help



20 January - US scientists are asking the public to join them in their quest to mine the Earth's soil for compounds that could be turned into vital new drugs. Spurred on by the recent discovery of a potential new antibiotic in soil, the Rockefeller University team want to check dirt from every country in the world. ... On

their [Drugs From Dirt](#) website, they say: "The world is a big place and we can't get to all of the various corners of it. "We would like some assistance in sampling soil from around the world. If this sounds interesting to you - sign up." They want to hear from people from all countries and are particularly keen to receive samples from unique, unexplored environments such as caves, islands, and hot springs. [BBC News](#)

## Genetics of malaria drug resistance revealed

19 January - The genetics underpinning resistance to a frontline malaria drug, artemisinin, have been revealed, scientists say. In South East Asia, malaria parasites have developed tolerance to the treatment, and there are fears that this will spread. Now, in the largest genetic study to date, scientists have identified mutations in the parasite genome that are linked to resistance. ... Mysteriously, each time resistance has emerged, it has started in the same place - on the Cambodia-Thai border - before spreading across Asia and into Africa. Now this appears to be happening again with artemisinin, a drug that has transformed malaria treatment. Cases have been confirmed in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar, also known as Burma. [BBC News](#)

## Laws deny leprosy sufferers right to work, travel, marry: study

22 January - Leprosy sufferers worldwide face discriminatory laws affecting their right to work, travel and marry, according to an advocacy group which called upon governments to follow U.N. guidelines and abolish such legislation. Around 20 countries, including [India](#), Thailand and Nepal, have or continue to pass laws that discriminate against people with leprosy, the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) said ahead of World Leprosy Day on Sunday. There were more than 200,000 new leprosy cases reported worldwide in 2013, yet this number has shrunk by 20 percent since 2006, according to the World Health Organization. [Reuters](#)

## Parents who shun vaccines tend to cluster, boosting children's risk

20 January - Although vaccines are among the safest, most effective ways to protect children from major communicable diseases, some parents still doubt this. As a result, some choose immunization schedules that defy science or refuse to vaccinate altogether. If these parents were distributed randomly, their decisions would be less likely to harm others, especially babies too young for vaccination. But parents who use personal belief exemptions to avoid school vaccination requirements often live in the same communities, studies have found. And parents of children too young to go to school do, too, according to a study published Monday in the journal *Pediatrics*. These younger children face the highest risk of dying from whooping cough and other vaccine-preventable diseases. [NPR](#)

## Rocketing vaccine cost warning

20 January - The price of life-saving vaccines has skyrocketed leaving some countries struggling to fully immunise children, Medecins Sans Frontieres warns. A report by the charity says there has been a 68-fold increase in prices between 2001 and 2014. It accused the pharmaceutical industry of overcharging and highlighted cases where rich western countries were getting a better rate than poor ones. Industry said its pricing reflected the cost of manufacture. The medical charity's report says prices are now "prohibitively high" and were "calling into question the sustainability of immunisation programmes". [BBC News](#)

## Stem cell therapy may repair spinal cord injury; first surgery conducted in China

20 January - Scientists in China have devised a new technique to repair spinal cord injury. The Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) revealed on Saturday that they have successfully tested their regenerative stem cell treatment on a paralysed man. The patient, who was bedridden after his lower body got paralysed in an accident two months ago, underwent the surgery on Friday. During the four-hour long surgery, the doctors implanted mesenchymal stem cells and collagen complex (consisting collagen scaffold fibers or

collagen tubes) along with a protein called collagen binding brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), Xinhua news agency reported. The stem cells help tissue recovery, collagen complex restores connectivity and the protein aids the neurons to re-grow. [International Business Times](#)

## Study suggests way to fight Asian tiger mosquito

19 January - ... [The] University of Panama and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute analyzed the spread of the tiger mosquito since it was first detected in eastern Panama City in 2002. (Scientists think it may have crossed the ocean in freighters carrying tires, which hold freshwater puddles.) By 2013, it was common in half the country. Panama does a large amount of mosquito sampling for a relatively poor country. Patterns in the sampling suggested that mosquitoes had hitchhiked on vehicles using the Pan-American Highway rather than fanning out gradually to areas with warmer climates or with more people to feed on. After 2009, there may also have been a separate introduction from Costa Rica near that border, they said. Panama already sprays some vehicles to stop the spread of a cattle parasite known as a screwworm; the authors suggested expanding that program. In residential areas, they said, control efforts should target each species differently, because *A. aegypti* likes to rest inside houses while *A. albopictus* prefers bushes and trees. [New York Times](#)

## EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

### Ebola crisis: Mali says it has no more cases

18 January - Mali's health minister says the country is now free of the Ebola virus, after 42 days without a new case of the disease. "I declare this day... the end of the epidemic of the Ebola virus in Mali," said Ousmane Kone. The last Ebola-infected patient in Mali recovered and left hospital in early December. Latest figures show the three West African countries worst affected have all seen a decline in new Ebola cases. ... At its worst, there were 300 contact cases under investigation in the country. But the country has now "come out" of the epidemic, said Ibrahima Soce Fall, the head of the Malian office of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UMEER). The incubation period for Ebola is 21 days, and countries must be free of new cases for two consecutive incubation periods, 42 days, to be declared free of the virus. [BBC News](#)

### New fact sheets on Ebola from the CDC

- Recommendations for Managing and Preventing Cases of Malaria in Areas with Ebola  
[www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/malaria-cases.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/malaria-cases.html)
- Interim Recommendations for Ambulance Service Providers in West African Ebola-Affected Areas  
[www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/guidance-ambulance-service-providers.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/guidance-ambulance-service-providers.html)

- Interim Guidance for Cargo Ships: Monitoring Exposed Crew and Managing Suspected Cases of Ebola Onboard  
[www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/maritime/cargo.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/maritime/cargo.html)
- Algorithm for Emergency Medical Services and 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points  
[www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/ems-911-patients-with-possible-ebola.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/ems-911-patients-with-possible-ebola.pdf)
- Considerations for U.S Healthcare Facilities to Ensure Adequate Supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Ebola Preparedness  
[www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/healthcare-us/ppe/supplies.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/healthcare-us/ppe/supplies.html)
- Case Counts  
[www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/case-counts.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/case-counts.html)
- Interim Guidance for Ebola Virus Cleaning, Disinfection, and Waste Disposal in Commercial Passenger Aircraft  
[www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/prevention/cleaning-commercial-passenger-aircraft.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/prevention/cleaning-commercial-passenger-aircraft.html)
- Questions and Answers about Ebola and Food Safety in the United States  
[www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/transmission/qas-food-safety.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/transmission/qas-food-safety.html)
- 2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa - Cumulative Reported Cases Graphs  
[www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/cumulative-cases-graphs.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/cumulative-cases-graphs.html)
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Interim Guidance for Managers and Workers Handling Untreated Sewage from Suspected or Confirmed Individuals with Ebola in the U.S.  
[www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/prevention/faq-untreated-sewage.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/prevention/faq-untreated-sewage.html)

## Sierra Leone lifts Ebola quarantine measures amid progress

22 January - Sierra Leone's President Ernest Bai Koroma on Thursday removed Ebola district quarantine measures intended to curb the spread of the disease, declaring "victory is in sight" after a sharp drop in transmission. Since the worst outbreak on record began in West Africa over a year ago, Sierra Leone has recorded more than 10,340 cases, making it the country that has been hardest hit. But signs are growing that the tide is turning against the disease. ... Quarantine measures were previously in place in six of 14 districts in the poor nation of farmers, fishermen and diamond miners. [Reuters](#)

## US-built Ebola treatment centers in Liberia are nearly empty as outbreak fades

20 January – [As] the outbreak fades in Liberia, it has become clear that the disease had already drastically subsided before the first American centers were completed. Several of the U.S.-built units haven't seen a single patient infected with Ebola. It now appears that the alarming epidemiological predictions that in large part prompted the U.S. aid effort here were far too bleak. Although future flare-ups of the disease are possible, the near-empty Ebola centers tell the story of an aggressive American military and civilian response that

occurred too late to help the bulk of the more than 8,300 Liberians who became infected. Last week, even as international aid organizations built yet more Ebola centers, there was an average of less than one new case reported in Liberia per day. ... "A lot of people are evaluating the strategy based on what we know today, not what we knew at the time," said Maj. Gen. Gary Volesky, the top U.S. military officer in Liberia. [Stars and Stripes](#)

## U.S. health officials say Ebola treatment trial to start soon in Liberia

22 January - U.S. health officials said on Thursday that they are planning to start larger, decisive clinical trials in Liberia in the next two weeks to determine if two new Ebola treatments under development are safe and effective. ... The U.S. government and leading drugmakers have accelerated their efforts to bring a vaccine or treatment to market since the Ebola outbreak reached crisis proportions in West Africa last year. That includes speeding to human trials treatments that had only been tested in non-human primates. The treatments are advancing even as the World Health Organization said the epidemic in West Africa appears to be ebbing. [Reuters](#)

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### INFLUENZA

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

For Week 1:

- There was widespread influenza activity throughout NORTHCOM.
- Moderate to high influenza activity was seen for the majority of EUCOM. A substantial increase in ILI visits has been observed in weeks 53 and 01.
- In PACOM, influenza activity increased and was high in Japan and Hawaii. Moderate flu activity was seen in South Korea.
- In CENTCOM, influenza activity was high in Afghanistan. [AFHSC DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

## CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 1 (January 4-10, 2015), influenza activity remained elevated in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 26,204 specimens tested and reported by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System

(NREVSS) collaborating laboratories during week 1, 5,284 (20.2%) 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: Nineteen influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 4.4%, above the national baseline of 2.0%.
- Geographic Spread of Influenza: The geographic spread of influenza in Guam and 46 states was reported as widespread. [FluView](#)

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

During Surveillance Weeks 28 December 2014 - 10 January 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 53 & 1), a total of 437 specimens were collected and received from 58 locations. Results were finalized for 165 specimens from 44 locations. During Week 53, the laboratory identified 73 influenza A(H3N2), two influenza A/not subtyped and six influenza B. During Week 1, 44 influenza A(H3N2) and one influenza B were identified.

During Surveillance Weeks 4-17 January 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 1 & 2), a total of 673 specimens were collected and received from 74 locations. Results were finalized for 271 specimens from 54 locations. During Week 1, the laboratory identified 146 influenza A(H3N2), one influenza A(H3N2) & Coronavirus, six influenza A/not subtyped and four influenza B. During Week 2, 34 influenza A(H3N2), 22 influenza A/not subtyped and two influenza B were identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

## Flu News Europe

Week 02/2015

- The number of countries in the WHO European Region with increased influenza activity continued to rise in week 02/2015, particularly in the west and north, and the proportion of sentinel specimens testing positive for influenza virus increased to 28% from 16% and 17% in the previous two weeks.
- Although influenza activity remained low in most countries in the Region, 15 of 45 countries reported medium activity.
- Influenza A(H3N2) viruses continued to predominate in most countries, according to data from primary care, the numbers of laboratory-confirmed hospitalized cases and other information.

Season

- The influenza season is clearly underway, mainly in western and northern European countries: the overall proportion of influenza-positive sentinel specimens was above

10% for the fourth consecutive week, despite most countries' still reporting low intensity of influenza activity.

- Overall, influenza A(H3N2) viruses have been the predominant viruses detected across all surveillance systems, although some countries reported either influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 or influenza B virus. In addition, most of the A(H3N2) viruses characterized genetically belong to genetic subgroups containing viruses that have drifted antigenically compared to the A(H3N2) virus in use for the 2014–2015 northern hemisphere influenza vaccine.
- Ninety three A(H3N2) viruses, 20 A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses and four influenza B viruses tested since the start of the season showed susceptibility to the antivirals oseltamivir and zanamivir that are licensed in Europe.
- No indication of increased mortality has been reported in the European project for monitoring excess mortality for public health action. [Flu News Europe](#)

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

For the week ending 17 January 2015:

### Influenza

- Six cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.
- Increased influenza A/H3 activity at 3 recruit sites. A large proportion of cases were vaccinated.
- A/H3 cases also occurring among DoD dependents and civilians near U.S.-Mexico border. Very few cases had been vaccinated prior to illness.

FRI surveillance at eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated elevated FRI rates at Fort Leonard Wood, Lackland AFB, and CGTC Cape May. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

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

For the week ending 10 January 2014 (Week 1)

- Over the past week, influenza activity increased in Army MTFs. Non-AD populations were more affected. In the U.S., overall civilian influenza-like illness (ILI) activity decreased but remains above baseline.
- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week one were 45% higher than for the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: Five hospitalized influenza cases were reported to USAPHC in week one. To date, 18 cases have been reported during this influenza season: 5 AD SM and 13 non-AD beneficiaries.

- Viral specimens: During week one, 697 of 2267 (31%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens; 546 of 2002 (27%) specimens tested for influenza A were positive. SRMC reported the most influenza A-positive specimens (52%), followed by NRMC (21%), WRMC (14%), ERM (8%), PRMC (5%), and CENTCOM (0%). [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

## PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

### China: Human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus

19 January - On 13 January 2015, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of 15 additional laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus, including 3 deaths. ... WHO continues to closely monitor the H7N9 situation and conduct risk assessment. So far, the overall risk associated with the H7N9 virus has not changed. [WHO](#)

### Egypt reports 2 H5N1 deaths, 3 new cases

20 January- Egyptian health officials have reported the country's fourth and fifth deaths from H5N1 avian flu this year, Reuters reported today and yesterday. ... A new human case of H5N1 was also reported in a 36-year-old woman from the Cairo governorate who is currently hospitalized, according to an update yesterday from FluTrackers, an infectious disease news message board. Egypt's Ministry of Health and Population also confirmed four recent cases of H5N1, according to a Jan 18 Avian Flu Diary post. ... The new cases and deaths bring Egypt's H5N1 avian flu case total for this year to 20. Nine people are receiving treatment, 6 have recovered, and 5 have died, Reuters said. In related news, Egyptian authorities have created a Supreme National Committee on Bird Flu to address the recent surge in human infections, according to an Avian Flu Diary post today. [CIDRAP Flu Scan](#)

### Tests reveal H5N1 in Israeli turkeys, four countries report other strains

20 January - Animal health officials in five countries saw no let-up in highly pathogenic avian influenza detections in poultry and wild birds over the past few days, with H5N1 striking a turkey farm in **Israel**, marking the virus' first appearance in that nation in 3 years. **Taiwan** continued to grapple with dozens more outbreaks involving a novel H5N3 strain and the H5N2 strain, with **Japan** reporting another H5N8 outbreak and agriculture departments in the **United States** and **Nigeria** reporting H5 detections. [CIDRAP](#)

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## VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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### Jane Goodall: We need an Ebola vaccine for the world's chimpanzees and gorillas



21 January - ... Conservationists are attempting to draw the world's attention to one of the more overlooked consequences of the four-decade rise of the Ebola virus: It is estimated to have killed one-third of the world's combined population of chimpanzees and gorillas, according to the Jane Goodall Foundation. Ebola is just as

deadly to declining populations of gorillas and chimpanzees as it is humans — with up to a 90% mortality rate — putting further stress on many at-risk or endangered species.

Research has concluded it can take generations for populations of great apes to recover from a single Ebola epidemic — and given the unprecedented size of the current epidemic, the impact on primate populations could be severe. [.mic](#)

### U.S. research lab lets livestock suffer in quest for profit

19 January - ... It is widely accepted that experimentation on animals, and its benefits for people, will entail some distress and death. The Animal Welfare Act — a watershed federal law enacted in 1966, two years after the [U.S. Meat Animal Research Center] opened — aimed to minimize that suffering, yet left a gaping exemption: farm animals used in research to benefit agriculture. To close that loophole, more than two dozen companies and universities that experiment on farm animals have sought out independent overseers and joined organizations that scrutinize their research and staff — a step the center has resisted as far back as 1985, when a scientist wrote the director with a warning: “Membership may bring more visibility” to its activities, “which we may not want.” The center’s parent agency, the Agriculture Department, strictly polices the treatment of animals at slaughterhouses and private laboratories. But it does not closely monitor the center’s use of animals, or even enforce its own rules requiring careful scrutiny of experiments. [New York Times](#)

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## WELLNESS

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### Could promotion of expedited partner therapy reduce STI incidence?

18 January - It is estimated that each year, there are almost 20 million new cases of sexually transmitted infections in the US, with 50% of these occurring among people aged 15-24. ...

Expedited partner therapy (EPT) is the treatment of a sex partner of an individual diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) without a health care provider examining the partner first. Past studies have shown that EPT increases the rate of partner treatment and reduces the reinfection rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea - two of the most common STIs in the US. ... [Researchers] set out to see whether a public health program promoting EPT could increase treatment uptake and reduce infection rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea among women. ... [They] found that the proportion of patients receiving EPT from clinicians increased from 18.3% to 34% during each program, while the proportion of patients receiving EPT through commercial pharmacies rose from 25.2% to 44.9%. The incidence rates of both chlamydia and gonorrhea also fell during each program. [Medical News Today](#)

## E-cigarettes can churn out high levels of formaldehyde



21 January - Vapor produced by electronic cigarettes can contain a surprisingly high concentration of formaldehyde — a known carcinogen — researchers reported Wednesday. The findings, described in a letter published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, intensify concern about the safety of electronic cigarettes, which have become increasingly popular. ... "We simulated vaping by drawing the vapor — the aerosol — into a syringe, sort of simulating the lungs," Peyton says. That enabled the researchers to conduct a detailed chemical analysis of the vapor. They found something unexpected when the devices were dialed up to their highest settings. "To our surprise, we found masked formaldehyde in the liquid droplet particles in the aerosol," Peyton says. He calls it "masked" formaldehyde because it's in a slightly different form than regular formaldehyde — a form that could increase the likelihood it would get deposited in the lung. ... "We found this form of formaldehyde at significantly higher concentrations than even regular cigarettes [contain] — between five[fold] and fifteenfold higher concentration of formaldehyde than in cigarettes," Peyton says. [NPR](#)

## Have you had your measles shot? Maybe you need another

21 January - ... [Many] adults who were vaccinated for measles decades ago as children are now highly susceptible to the virus—perhaps as many as one in 10 of those who were immunized, infectious disease experts say. That's because as the years pass, people lose their original protections from childhood vaccines that come in the form of disease-battling antibodies and "memory cells" that attack infections if the body is ever again exposed, doctors say. ... That waning defense, years after childhood immunizations, holds true for measles, whooping cough and chicken pox, Laufer said. Amid the expanding measles outbreak, previously immunized adults should consider getting measles booster shots, said Dr. James Cherry, who specializes in pediatric infectious diseases at Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA in Los Angeles. [NBC News](#)

## NIH study reveals many Americans at risk for alcohol-medication interactions

16 January - 42 percent of U.S. adults who drink also report using medications known to interact with alcohol, based on a study from the National Institutes of Health released today. Among those over 65 years of age who drink alcohol, nearly 78 percent report using alcohol-interactive medications. Such medications are widely used, prescribed for common conditions such as depression, diabetes and high blood pressure. ... The resulting health effects can range from mild (nausea, headaches, loss of coordination) to severe (internal bleeding, heart problems, difficulty breathing). ... Older adults are at particular risk of experiencing alcohol-medication interactions. Not only are they more likely to be taking medications in general, but certain alcohol-interactive medications, such as diazepam (Valium), are metabolized more slowly as one ages, creating a larger window for potential interactions. [NIH](#)

## On painkillers and thinking about getting pregnant? Better talk to your doctor.

22 January - More than one-fourth of women who might become pregnant are getting prescriptions for opioid painkillers, such as Vicodin and Oxycontin, that can cause birth defects and other serious problems early in pregnancy, according to a report released Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These common opioid medications are typically prescribed to treat moderate to severe pain, and they can also be found in some prescription cough medicines. But taking them early in pregnancy is dangerous. "They're deadly, they're addictive, and they cause birth defects," said CDC Director Tom Frieden. ... Previous studies of opioid use during pregnancy suggest the medicines could increase risk of major defects of the baby's brain and spine, heart and abdominal wall. [Washington Post](#)

## The city might not be to blame for high asthma rates

20 January - Asthma affects children regardless of where they live and whether they are rich or poor. But scientists have long thought that living in poor urban neighborhoods adds an extra risk for this troublesome lung inflammation. A new study suggests that's not necessarily the case. ... Absolutely, lots of children in these poor neighborhoods had asthma, "But we also found that even more children had asthma in some poor suburban and medium sized towns in other regions of the country," [Dr. Corrine Keet] says. What's more, for children outside of the Northeastern states, "living in the inner city didn't seem to a risk factor at all for having asthma." When they dived in to isolate the actual risks, they found that poverty itself was an overwhelming factor, along with African American or Puerto Rican heritage. There's apparently a genetic component to asthma, though it's tough to tease out. Genetics may help explain why Hispanics from places other than Puerto Rico generally have lower rates of asthma, regardless of their income levels. [NPR](#)

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## Demedicalizing AIDS prevention and treatment in Africa

22 January - ... Close examination of the HIV epidemic [in Africa], however, reveals that all is not well. In South Africa, home to the world's largest ART program, for instance, 25% of patients who begin ART are lost to follow-up by a year later, and in 25% of treated patients, viral suppression is not achieved. In many countries, rates of retention in treatment are worsening, the incidence of HIV infection among young women remains shockingly high, men are tested and initiate treatment late in the course of infection and often not until they have advanced disease, public-sector facilities are overloaded with patients and plagued by medication stock-outs, and donor funding has flatlined for the past 6 years. Perhaps most important, the activist groups that have held governments, health systems, and the international community accountable are at best underfunded and at worst sidelined, jaded, and mute. South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign, which played a major role in ending denialism and starting the ART rollout in the country with the largest HIV-positive cohort, faces a major funding shortfall. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

## Sierra Leone emergency anti-malaria drive reaches 2.5 million people

22 January - Sierra Leone has given anti-malaria drugs to more than 2.5 million people in Ebola-affected areas and significantly reduced the number of patients with fever that might have been mistaken for Ebola, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Thursday. Malaria symptoms - fever, headache, aching joints - are similar to those of Ebola in its early stages, resulting in malaria patients going to Ebola treatment centers, putting pressure on health services and exposing themselves to infection. [Reuters](#)

## Tunisia: Phosphate fantasies



20 January - ... Phosphate is a globally valuable commodity, necessary for the manufacture of everything from fertilisers and detergent to wine and cosmetics. It has long been one of Tunisia's principle sources of export earnings, but the mining communities that deliver it have long-standing social and economic

grievances which they are not shy about raising. ... CPG [Compagnie des phosphates de Gafsa], the state-owned company that produces most of the country's phosphate, still makes big (though declining) profits, but has signally failed to invest in much-needed new equipment or infrastructure; unemployment in mining towns such as Metlaoui still stands at around 30 percent; and phosphate industry pollution - which for years has had a frightful effect on the health of local people - shows no sign of improving. [Al Jazeera](#)

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## USCENTCOM

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

16 January - Between 7 and 10 January 2015, the National IHR Focal Point of Oman notified WHO of 2 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, including 1 death. [WHO](#)

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

20 January - Between 6 and 9 January 2015, the National IHR Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) notified WHO of 5 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, including 1 death. ... Globally, WHO has been notified of 955 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 351 related deaths. [WHO](#)

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## USEUCOM

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### Belgium: The right to die in Belgium - An inside look at the world's most liberal euthanasia law

17 January - Belgium has the world's most liberal law on physician-assisted suicide, which is not just for the terminally ill. Patients with psychiatric conditions – and now, even children – can request euthanasia. Surveys in Belgium show overwhelming public support, and many doctors say it gives patients with constant and unbearable suffering a practical and humane way to die peacefully. But even in a country with a far-reaching acceptance, controversy still exists. [PBS Newshour](#)

### Europe's tuberculosis hub Britain seeks to wipe out the disease

18 January - Health authorities launched an 11.5 million pounds (\$17.4 million) plan on Monday to tackle Britain's persistent tuberculosis (TB) problem, seeking to wipe the contagious lung disease out altogether. Britain has one of the highest TB rates in western Europe and London is known as the continent's "TB capital". TB rates in the United Kingdom are nearly five times those in the United States. If current trends continue, England alone will have more TB cases than the whole of the U.S. in two years. [Reuters](#)

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## U.S.: Disneyland measles outbreak strikes in anti-vaccination hotbed of California

22 January - ... Now the measles that started at Disney has put California's Orange County, a hotbed of the anti-immunization movement, at the center of the worst measles outbreak in the state in 15 years, with 62 confirmed cases statewide since December, according to the Los Angeles Times. Additional cases that originated in California have spread to four other states and Mexico. The total infected is up to 70, including five Disney employees who have since returned to work. About a quarter of those who got sick had to be hospitalized. The outbreak in California is so alarming that, on Wednesday, state officials warned children under 12 and anyone not vaccinated or otherwise immune to avoid the Disney parks. ... The illness has since spread from the parks to 11 counties in California — and to Utah, Washington state, Colorado, Oregon and Mexico, according to official data. The greatest concentration by far, at least 20 cases, is in Orange County, which includes Disneyland and the Disney California Adventure Park, both in Anaheim. [Washington Post](#)

## U.S.: More older adults are reporting falls

21 January - Since the late 1990s, almost 30 percent more adults age 65 and older are likely to say they have had a recent fall, according to a new study. The rise – from 28 percent of seniors reporting a fall in 1998, to 36 percent in 2010 – may be due in part to increased awareness of fall risks, but it is not just a result of the population aging, study authors say. ... Cigolle noted that the findings were not influenced by gender, income, specific diseases or disability. "This increased self-reporting of falls was fairly pervasive across all categories, we didn't find an easy answer to explain why older adults are saying they're falling more," she said. ... "What it really was saying was that universally, patients that are 65 to 89 years old are really at a higher risk for falls," said Dr. Jessica Zwerling, a neurologist at Montefiore Medical Center in New York. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: States seek to ban powdered alcohol before it even hits stores

8 January - Lawmakers this year are looking to join a growing movement to preemptively prohibit "Palcohol." States across the country, both liberal and conservative, are finding common ground in stopping a powdered alcohol product before it gets started. Even before legislative sessions start, lawmakers are listing a ban of an as-yet-unapproved product called Palcohol among their top priorities. ... The product, developed by Arizona-based Lipsmark, dissolves in water. One serving, which fills about a third of a standard glass tumbler, is equivalent to a single shot of alcohol, according to its creator, Mark Phillips. [Governing](#)

## U.S.: Worker illness related to newly marketed pesticides — Douglas County, Washington, 2014

23 January - ... In this incident, all 20 farmworkers working in a cherry orchard became ill from off-target drift of a pesticide mixture that was being applied to a neighboring pear orchard. Sixteen sought medical treatment for neurologic, gastrointestinal, ocular, and respiratory symptoms. This event highlights the need for greater efforts to prevent off-target drift exposures and promote awareness about the toxicity of some recently marketed pesticides. Incidents such as this could be prevented if farm managers planning pesticide applications notify their neighbors of their plans. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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### USPACOM

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## China: WHO says chronic diseases kill 3 million annually in China

19 January - More than 3 million people are dying prematurely each year of chronic non-communicable diseases in [China](#), the World Health Organization said on Monday, calling on the country to step up efforts "to stop the tsunami of chronic disease". Chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) - such as lung cancer, stroke, heart disease and diabetes - accounted for 8.6 million deaths in China in 2012, the WHO said in a statement. The organization said prevalence of many key risk factors in China is "worryingly high". It said that over half of all men in the country are smokers, more than four in five adolescents do not engage in sufficient physical activity and around one in five adults have raised blood pressure. [Reuters](#)

## Fiji: Dengue cases rise

22 January - In a follow-up report on the dengue outbreak in Northern Fiji, health authorities are now reporting 48 lab-confirmed cases of dengue for the Northern Division this month. This is up from 17 cases reported in Macuata earlier this week. According to the Fiji Times, health officials said in response to the outbreak, "Already the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Australian Government have declared their interest to support the ministry's endeavors to control the dengue outbreak in the North." [Outbreak News Today](#)

## Fiji: Wainunu chiefs join campaign to stop spread of typhoid

22 January – Chiefs of Wainunu in Bua have joined the Health Ministry and other government officials in a campaign drive to prevent the spread of typhoid in the district.

Nadua Village in the district has been labelled a typhoid-hotspot area. Speaking on behalf of the chiefs, Tui Wainunu Ratu Orisi Baleitavea said they had quarantined the area and movement to and from the village was under scrutiny. ... So far, 24 confirmed typhoid cases have been recorded in Bua, 14 of which was from the Nabouwalu sub-divisional hospital and Wainunu Health Centre. [Fiji Times](#)

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## USSOUTHCOM

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### Argentina and Bolivia cooperate against dengue fever and chikungunya

16 January - Argentina and Bolivia coordinated joint actions to fight viral diseases such as dengue fever and chikungunya, especially in the border zone. ... They agreed to reinforce the bilateral communication by means of computer systems to surveillance the reporting capacity, control and detection of sprouts of the two diseases, or any viral disease reported. Argentina will transfer technology to Bolivia, and will help in the training of the Bolivian personnel. [Prensa Latina](#)

### Chikungunya cases jump by 12,000; Colombia and Guatemala hit hard

20 January - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported 12,294 cases of chikungunya in the Caribbean and Americas on Jan 16, bringing the outbreak total to 1,133,561. ... Cases continue to climb in Colombia, which reported 7,252 new cases, bringing its total to 90,481. Guatemala also reported a sharp rise in illness, with 5,155 new cases for an outbreak total of 27,014 cases. Canada reported 79 new imported cases of chikungunya, bringing its total number of cases, all imported, to 87. ... Puerto Rico, which had recently seen sharp increases in case numbers, reported a decrease of 4,239 last week, suggesting that more than 4,000 suspected cases were confirmed to be the result of another illness. Puerto Rico's outbreak total stands at 20,110. ... In related news, Jamaica's University Hospital of the West Indies in St. Andrew has observed an increase in Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) related to chikungunya virus infection. The hospital, which normally sees one GBS case per year, treated five cases of the post-viral paralytic syndrome from October to November 2014. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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