

23 May 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Hearing Loss and Healthy Aging: Workshop Summary

Being able to communicate is a cornerstone of healthy aging. People need to make themselves understood and to understand others to remain cognitively and socially engaged with families, friends, and other individuals. When they are unable to communicate, people with hearing impairments can become socially isolated, and social isolation can be an important driver of morbidity and mortality in older adults.

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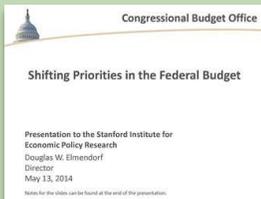
- Asia: Private hospitals in Asia –on call
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- Brazil: World Cup dengue fever risk predicted
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Shifting Priorities in the Federal Budget

According to a new report by the Congressional Budget Office, Shifting Priorities of the Federal Budget, 45 percent of the 2013 federal budget went to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.



U.S. MILITARY

Air Force to offer 3 years off for airmen to start families

15 May - The Air Force is planning to launch a pilot program later this year that would allow airmen to temporarily leave the service to start a family and return three years later. The Career Intermission Pilot Program would at first cover 20 officers and 20 enlisted airmen... If the program is a success, it could be expanded to include more airmen. [Air Force Times](#)

Ambulatory visits among members of the active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2013

April 2013 - During 2013, there were 20,199,687 reported ambulatory visits of active component service members. The crude annual rate (all causes) was 14,325 visits per 1,000 person-years (p-yrs); thus, on average, each service member had more than 14 ambulatory encounters during the year. The rate of documented ambulatory visits in 2013 was 4.3% higher than in 2011 and 58.3% higher than in 2004. In 2013, nearly half (46.4%) of ambulatory visits were for "other" (i.e., other contact with health services). This category (indicated by V-codes of the ICD-9-CM) includes health care not related to a current illness or injury. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#) (page 15)

Army developing air-cooled gas masks

14 May - Army engineers are designing a chemical-biological protective mask that will have its own built in fan. Service officials recognized how hot the current masks can make soldiers and want to offer masks that would have a fan blowing cool air on their faces when conditions get hottest. Scientists at the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center are leading the effort. [Kit Up!](#)

Four DARPA projects that could be bigger than the internet

20 May - ...The Rapid Threat Assessment, or RTA, program wants to speed up by orders of magnitude how quickly researchers can figure out how diseases or agents work to kill humans. Instead of months or years, DARPA wants to enable researchers to "within 30 days of exposure to a human cell, map the complete molecular mechanism through which a threat agent alters cellular processes," Prabhakar said in her testimony. "This would give researchers the framework with which to develop medical countermeasures and mitigate threats." [Defense One](#)

GAO: DOD countermeasures strong, but need more prioritization

16 May - The US Department of Defense (DoD) has made progress with developing new countermeasures against biological threats, but it isn't using a process it has in place for

The Ways of Water

The Ways of Water is an animated video that presents an overview of the many human interventions in the water cycle and looks at the benefits of some key water provision options including Direct Potable Reuse. The video is an easy-to-understand presentation of the urban water cycle and water purification.



prioritizing threats, according to a [report](#) yesterday from the Government Accountability Office (GAO)... The GAO said the program is developing or has obtained Food and Drug Administration approval for countermeasures against 10 of 19 threats to military troops. It added that, of 43 countermeasures, 13 involve technologies that enable them to be used against emerging or genetically modified biological threats. The DoD, however, doesn't use its own process for annually updating its list of biological threat priorities the GAO noted... The GAO praised the DoD's increased transparency with countermeasure development and its coordination with other branches of government, such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Homeland Security. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

IG: VA investigations expanded to 26 facilities

21 May - The number of VA facilities under investigation after complaints about falsified records and treatment delays has more than doubled in recent days, the Office of Inspector General at the Veterans Affairs Department said late Tuesday. A spokeswoman for the IG's office said 26 facilities were being investigated nationwide. Acting Inspector General Richard Griffin told a Senate committee last week that at least 10 new allegations about manipulated waiting times and other problems had surfaced since reports of problems at the Phoenix VA hospital came to light last month... Similar claims have been reported at VA facilities in Pennsylvania, Wyoming, Georgia, Missouri, Texas, Florida and elsewhere. [AP](#)

Natick takes protective eyewear into future



19 May - ...A warfighter's vision can be impacted by dust, sand, fog and changes in lighting. There are also outright threats from blast and ballistic fragmentation and lasers... Army researchers are taking ballistic fragmentation eye protection into the future. NSRDEC is working to incorporate new, lightweight, transparent nylon materials into protective goggles and spectacles. "The material is a significant improvement," Markey said. "We are looking at a 15 to 20 percent improvement in impact resistance." "And it is lighter weight," Kimball added... Lasers are an increasing threat to Soldiers. Battlefield lasers can cause flash blindness, corneal hemorrhaging, retinal lesions and burns, and possibly permanent blindness... Natick researchers... are working to provide [laser] protection in low light conditions, especially protection that will work better at night. Their goal is to make laser protection part of a single, multifunctional lens system. [Army.mil](#)

Sexual harassment, not assault, is focus of new DOD report

15 May - Active duty and National Guard troops reported nearly 1,400 incidents of sexual harassment in 2013, according to a Pentagon report on sexual harassment released Thursday — the department's first overall look at the issue... Of 1,366 reported incidents of

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sexual harassment among active duty troops and National Guard members, 806 were substantiated. Another 32.5 percent were not substantiated, and 11.5 percent were pending at the end of fiscal year 2013. Complainants were predominantly female enlisted members in pay grades E-1 to E-4. Offenders were predominantly men from the same unit as the victim, and slightly more than half were NCOs. The greatest number of incidents took place on military installations. Just over half of the substantiated allegations of sexual harassment were for crude and offensive behavior, or "offensive or embarrassing verbal or nonverbal behaviors of a sexual nature," according to the report. [Stars and Stripes](#)

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GLOBAL

At risk of HIV? Pop a pill for protection, says CDC

21 May- Half a million Americans should consider taking Truvada, a pill that prevents HIV infection. This is the upshot of updated clinical guidelines from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health bodies released last week... The CDC now says that doctors should consider prophylaxis for those with a sexual partner who is HIV-positive, people who don't always use a condom with partners of unknown HIV status, and for those with a sexual partner who has injected drugs in the last 6 months. It estimates that half a million US citizens meet these criteria. The guidance includes quarterly visits to the doctor to monitor for HIV infection and drug toxicity. [New Scientist](#)

Brain changes in college football players raise new concerns

21 May - The brains of college football players are subtly different from the brains of other students, especially if the players have experienced a concussion in the past, according to an important new brain-scan study that, while restrained in its conclusions, adds to concerns that sports-related hits to the head could have lingering effects on the brain, even among the young and healthy... As a group, the football players had less volume in the hippocampus, a part of the brain involved in memory and emotional processing, than did the nonplayers. Among the players who had no history of concussions, hippocampal volume was as much as 16 percent smaller than the control group's. And the difference in size was even more striking among the players who had experienced a confirmed concussion, whose hippocampal volume was about 25 percent smaller than in young men who'd never played. [New York Times](#)

Fake medicines worth \$31 million seized in global crackdown

22 May - Law enforcement agents have arrested 237 people worldwide in a 10-day crackdown on fake drugs, resulting in the seizure of counterfeit and unlicensed medicines worth 18.6 million pounds (\$31.4 million), Britain's healthcare watchdog said. The haul of 8.4 million doses of medicines included potentially harmful slimming pills, controlled drugs such as diazepam, anabolic steroids and anti-impotence pills... The crackdown also targeted 10,603 websites, leading them to be closed down or suspended through having their domain name or payment facilities removed. [Reuters](#)

Foreign doctors, nurses in Saudi Arabia could take MERS global

18 May - The biggest risk that Middle East Respiratory Syndrome will become a global epidemic, ironically, may lie with globe-trotting healthcare workers. From Houston to Manila, doctors and nurses are recruited for lucrative postings in Saudi Arabia, where MERS was first identified in 2012. Because the kingdom has stepped up hiring of foreign healthcare professionals in the last few years, disease experts said, there is a good chance the MERS virus will hitch a ride on workers as they return home... Healthcare workers "are at extremely high risk of contracting MERS compared to the general public," Adalja said. [VOA](#)

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

22 May - On 2 May 2014, the National IHR Focal Point for the United States of America notified WHO about the first laboratory confirmed case of MERS-CoV infection in the United States. ... Globally, 632 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV have officially been reported to WHO, including 193 deaths. [WHO](#)

Millions of newborn deaths reported



21 May - Despite five-and-a-half million newborn and stillborn baby deaths each year, investment in newborn health remains very low. That's one of the findings in a series of papers published in the medical journal *The Lancet*. The research also shows the vast majority of those deaths could be prevented. Lead researcher Joy Lawn said the research is the most accurate estimate yet on the number of deaths of newborns and stillbirths... Most of the deaths are in low and middle income countries. But rich nations, she said, are not immune. There are about 500,000 pre-term births in the United States every year. "The three leading causes around the world are pre-term births, birth complications -- so where women don't get the right care during labor. And babies that are full-term can

have damage and even die because of lack of care during labor – and then, thirdly, infections,” she said. [VOA](#)

Prostate cancer 'may be a sexually transmitted disease'



19 May - Prostate cancer may be a sexually transmitted disease caused by a common yet often silent infection passed on during intercourse, scientists say - but experts say proof is still lacking. Although several cancers are caused by infections, Cancer Research UK says it is too early to add prostate cancer to this list. The University of California scientists tested human prostate cells in the lab. They found a sex infection called trichomoniasis aided cancer growth. More research is now needed to confirm the link, they say in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. [BBC News](#)

Silently among us: Scientists worry about milder cases of MERS

16 May - Scientists leading the fight against Middle East Respiratory Syndrome say the next critical front will be understanding how the virus behaves in people with milder infections, who may be spreading the illness without being aware they have it... It is becoming increasingly clear that people can be infected with MERS without developing severe respiratory disease, said Dr David Swerdlow, who heads the MERS response team at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention... The CDC has a team in Saudi Arabia studying whether such mild cases are still capable of spreading the virus... They plan to test the family members of people with mild MERS, even if these relatives don't have any symptoms, to help determine whether the virus can spread within a household. [Reuters](#)

Time may not reduce brain effects of solvent exposure

21 May - Workers exposed to solvents on the job may experience memory and thinking problems decades later, according to a new study. Exposure to paints, degreasers, adhesives and glues is common in some occupations, and has been linked to problems such as memory loss, reduced cognitive processing speed and difficulty staying focused... “When we looked at those where the exposure happened a long time ago, 30 to 50 years before, we found that the effects of solvents on cognitive function didn’t necessarily fade away,” she said. The study also found that people who had the most exposure to solvents and were also exposed most recently had cognitive problems in areas classically associated with solvent exposure, but also other areas of cognitive function. [Reuters](#)

UN investigator: Unhealthy food taxes vital to fight obesity

19 May - Unhealthy diets pose a greater risk to global health than the increasingly regulated sale of tobacco and governments should move fast to tax harmful food products,

a United Nations investigator said on Monday... In a report to the rights council in 2012, de Schutter said a similar accord on food should include taxing unhealthy products, regulating food high in saturated fats, salt and sugar, and "cracking down on junk food advertising." That report also called for an overhaul on the system of farm subsidies "that make certain ingredients cheaper than others", and for support for local production "so that consumers have access to healthy, fresh and nutritious foods. [VOA](#)

Vaccines group seeks \$7.5 billion to protect 300 million children

20 May - The GAVI global vaccines alliance appealed on Tuesday for \$7.5 billion to help immunize another 300 million children against life-threatening diseases between 2016 and 2020 and save up to 6 million more lives. GAVI said the additional investments, which it hopes to get mainly from global health philanthropists and the governments of developed nations, could double the number of lives saved through GAVI-supported vaccines to an estimated 12 million. "We are faced with an historic opportunity to support countries to build sustainable immunisation programmes that will protect entire generations of children," the group's chairman, Dagfinn Hoybraten, said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 19 (May 4-10, 2014), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 3,381 specimens tested and reported during week 19, 342 (10.1%) were positive for influenza.
- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- **Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths:** Three influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- **Influenza-associated Hospitalizations:** A season-cumulative rate of 35.4 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported.
- **Outpatient Illness Surveillance:** The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.3%, which is below the national baseline of 2.0%. [FluView](#)

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

For week 19/2014:

- Low-intensity influenza activity was reported by 26 reporting countries.
- Of 86 sentinel specimens tested across 13 countries, seven (8%) were positive for influenza virus.
- Ten hospitalised, laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported, seven of which were admitted to intensive care units.

With influenza activity continuing to decline in all reporting countries after five months of active transmission, the 2013–14 influenza season is coming to an end. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week 19 ending 10 May 2014:

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values.
- *C. pneumoniae* found in recent FRI and pneumonia cases at Ft. Leonard Wood. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

Study: Anti-parasitic drug may help flu patients

20 May - An early clinical trial of a drug commonly used to treat parasitic infections cut the length of flu symptoms by about a day in patients who didn't have severe disease, a result that appears to be on par with neuraminidase inhibitors, the gold standard for treatment. The drug studied—nitazoxanide—has a different mechanism of action than neuraminidase inhibitors and could be useful alone or in combination with other drugs as an option for treating antiviral-resistant flu strains, according to the research team... Currently, the drug is licensed in the United States to treat *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia* infections, and it is widely used in Latin America for treating intestinal parasitic illnesses. [CIDRAP](#)

Study: School-based flu vaccination feasible but reimbursement problematic

21 May - School-based flu vaccination programs may be a good vehicle for moving toward universal coverage of children, but headaches regarding billing and reimbursement issues pose big administrative challenges, says a Colorado study published in *Academic Pediatrics*. The researchers evaluated vaccination clinics held in 19 elementary schools in the Denver

Public Schools from September 2010 to February 2011... About 30% (2,784 of 9,295) of the children in the population received at least one dose of vaccine; 39% (1,079 of the 2,784) of children needed a second dose and 80% of that group did receive both. The cost of implementing the program, minus the cost of the vaccine itself, amounted to \$24.69 per vaccination. Reimbursement from various public and private sources amounted to 62% overall for the vaccine costs and 19% overall for implementation costs. [CIDRAP Flu Scan](#) (first item)

WHO Influenza Update

19 May – Globally the northern hemisphere influenza season was at inter-seasonal levels in most countries. Influenza B virus continued to be the majority of late season detections in most regions.

- In North America, influenza levels were at inter-seasonal levels with some influenza B circulation still detected.
- In Europe, influenza activity was at inter-seasonal levels in most countries.
- In eastern Asia, influenza activity approached inter-seasonal levels in most countries with influenza B virus predominating.
- In tropical Asia, influenza activity continued to decline in most countries. In northern Africa and western Asia, influenza activity remained low in most countries, with influenza B the predominant virus detected.
- In the southern hemisphere, influenza activity is still low, although in some countries influenza-like illness (ILI) activity is slowly increasing. Influenza detections were still low.

[WHO](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

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

22 May - On 19 May 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of 4 additional laboratory confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus... At this time there is no indication that international spread of avian influenza A(H7N9) has occurred. [WHO](#)

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E. coli fears spark recall of 1.8 million pounds of beef

19 May - Federal authorities say a recall has been issued for 1.8 million pounds of ground beef that was shipped for use in restaurants. Detroit company Wolverine Packing issued the recall Monday; the Department of Agriculture says the beef may be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7. The USDA categorizes the recall as Class I, its most serious level, which means that there is "a reasonable probability that the use of the product will cause serious, adverse health consequences or death." Investigators say at least 11 people have been made ill by the recalled products in Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri and Ohio. [NPR](#)

Frozen rodents linked to 18-state Salmonella outbreak

20 May - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and its state health partners are investigating a *Salmonella* Typhimurium outbreak linked to frozen rodents used to feed pet snakes and other reptiles. So far 37 illnesses in 18 states have been reported since Jan 11, the CDC said in its outbreak announcement today. Of 32 patients with available information, 5 were hospitalized, and no deaths have been reported. Patient ages range from 1 to 69 years, and 59% of the patients are female. Illness onsets ranged from Jan 11 to Apr 23. The CDC said public health officials are using PulseNet, a national subtyping network, to identify other cases linked to the outbreak. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Using online reviews by restaurant patrons to identify unreported cases of foodborne illness - New York City, 2012–2013

23 May - While investigating an outbreak of gastrointestinal disease associated with a restaurant, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) noted that patrons had reported illnesses on the business review website [Yelp](#) that had not been reported to DOHMH. To explore the potential of using Yelp to identify unreported outbreaks, DOHMH worked with Columbia University and Yelp on a pilot project to prospectively identify restaurant reviews on Yelp that referred to foodborne illness. During July 1, 2012–March 31, 2013, approximately 294,000 Yelp restaurant reviews were analyzed by a software program developed for the project. The program identified 893 reviews that required further evaluation by a foodborne disease epidemiologist... Three previously unreported restaurant-related outbreaks linked to 16 illnesses met DOHMH outbreak investigation criteria; environmental investigation of the three restaurants identified multiple food-handling violations. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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Abolishing mammography screening programs? A view from the Swiss medical board

22 May - ...When we reviewed the available evidence and contemplated its implications in detail, however, we became increasingly concerned. First, we noticed that the ongoing debate was based on a series of reanalyses of the same, predominantly outdated trials... Second, ...[the] relative risk reduction of approximately 20% in breast-cancer mortality associated with mammography that is currently described by most expert panels came at the price of a considerable diagnostic cascade, with repeat mammography, subsequent biopsies, and overdiagnosis of breast cancers — cancers that would never have become clinically apparent... Third, we were disconcerted by the pronounced discrepancy between women's perceptions of the benefits of mammography screening and the benefits to be expected in reality. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Always hungry? Here's why

16 May – For most of the last century, our understanding of the cause of obesity has been based on immutable physical law. Specifically, it's the first law of thermodynamics, which dictates that energy can neither be created nor destroyed. When it comes to body weight, this means that calorie intake minus calorie expenditure equals calories stored. Surrounded by tempting foods, we overeat, consuming more calories than we can burn off, and the excess is deposited as fat. The simple solution is to exert willpower and eat less. The problem is that this advice doesn't work, at least not for most people over the long term. In other words, your New Year's resolution to lose weight probably won't last through the spring, let alone affect how you look in a swimsuit in July. More of us than ever are obese, despite an incessant focus on calorie balance by the government, nutrition organizations and the food industry. But what if we've confused cause and effect? What if it's not overeating that causes us to get fat, but the process of getting fatter that causes us to overeat? [New York Times](#)

Hookah use tied to exposure to cancer-causing compounds

16 May - People may think hookah is a safe alternative to cigarettes, but a new study shows hookah users are still exposed to cancer-causing compounds. Laboratory tests have suggested risks from hookah, also known as water pipes. But the new study published in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* is the first to link real-life hookah use to exposure to nicotine and other harmful chemicals, researchers said. [Reuters](#)

Study gives e-cigarettes edge in helping smokers quit

20 May - A large study in England has found that smokers trying to quit were substantially more likely to succeed if they used electronic cigarettes than over-the-counter therapies

such as nicotine patches or gum. These results offered encouraging but not definitive evidence in the contentious debate about the risks and benefits of these increasingly popular smoking devices. Researchers interviewed almost 6,000 smokers who had tried to quit on their own without counseling from a health professional. About a fifth of those who said they were using e-cigarettes had stopped smoking at the time of the survey, compared with about a tenth of people who had used patches and gum. [New York Times](#)

Texting improves link between sick teens and doctors

20 May - Adolescents with chronic diseases who were allowed to text their doctors were better equipped to manage their own healthcare and more likely to request help at the first sign of problems, a new study found... [Dr. Jeannie Huang], from the University of California, San Diego, said her study shows that using the Internet and cellphones to communicate with youths has the potential to get them earlier care and improve outcomes. Huang had frequently seen teens with chronic gastrointestinal problems wait a dangerously long time to seek care for symptoms. She and other doctors who treat adolescents with chronic illnesses say those delays are especially common as young adults move from being pediatric patients into adult medical practices. [Reuters](#)

The vegetables most Americans eat are drowning in salt and fat



21 May - Americans just don't eat as many fruits and vegetables as we should. And when we do, they're mainly potatoes and tomatoes — in the not-so-nutritious forms of french fries and pizza, according to a report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. According to the USDA, potatoes and tomatoes are the most popular source of vegetables Americans consume.

Americans eat 1.5 cups of vegetables daily, on average, the USDA finds. But the national nutrition guidelines recommend 2 to 3 cups a day for adults. And more than half our veggie intake comes from potatoes and tomatoes, whereas only 10 percent comes from dark green and orange veggies like spinach, carrots and sweet potatoes. [NPR](#)

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USAFRICOM

One Guinea prefecture still seeing new Ebola cases

21 May - Only one prefecture in **Guinea**—Gueckedou—has reported continued community transmission and deaths in the Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak there as of May 18, says an update from the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa. Gueckedou is the prefecture that has seen the most clinical cases (168, with 123 deaths)

during the outbreak, which began earlier this spring. The cumulative total for clinical cases stands at 253, with 176 deaths. Confirmed cases number 144 with 97 deaths—6 and 5 more, respectively, than reported in the last WHO update May 12... **Liberia** and **Sierra Leone** reported no new EVD cases. In **Liberia**, which has not seen a case since Apr 9, the EVD outbreak may be declared over tomorrow (May 22), says the WHO. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

South Sudan: Cholera outbreak in war-torn South Sudan

20 May - The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that at least nine people have died in a cholera outbreak in war-torn South Sudan where five months of civil war has left thousands homeless and disrupted food supplies and health services. WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic announced the deaths in the outbreak on Monday. An estimated 138 cases of the disease, which can kill in days if not treated, had been registered so far in and around the capital city of Juba. [VOA](#)

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USCENTCOM

Pakistan, Karachi: Measles patients with complications being admitted to CHK

22 May - A significant number of the measles cases being reported at the Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK) daily are rife with complications, Prof Dr Aisha Mehnaz, chairperson of the Dow University's paediatrics department, told The News on Monday evening. "We are admitting three to four cases of measles every day. Most of the children are unvaccinated and have developed complications such as pneumonia, ear infections and encephalitis," she said during an interview at her office. She said a large majority of the children were also severely malnourished, which only serves to further complicate matters and is a major reason for the grim mortality rate. [The News International](#)

Syria death toll reported to rise by 10,000 in less than 2 months



19 May - The death toll in the three-year Syrian conflict has risen to about 162,000, an increase of more than 10,000 in less than two months, according to an antigovernment monitoring group that is one of the few organizations still attempting to keep an exact count. The group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which is based in Britain and operates through a network of about 200 contacts across Syria, put the death toll at slightly more than

150,000 at the beginning of April. It says the current figure includes 53,978 civilians, among them 8,607 children. [New York Times](#)

United Arab Emirates: N.Y.U. apologizes to any workers mistreated on its Abu Dhabi campus

19 May - New York University issued an apology on Monday to any workers on its newly completed Abu Dhabi campus who were "not treated in line with the standards we set," after The [New York Times reported](#) widespread abuses among a labor force that numbered about 6,000 at its peak. The article described workers being arrested, beaten and deported to their home countries after striking over pay. Recruitment fees, of approximately a year's wages, were all but required, and laborers had to work overtime, sometimes seven days a week, to earn the base pay they were promised. Not one of the dozens of workers interviewed had his own passport. Some were living in filthy, crowded apartments. Those conditions are common to projects in the United Arab Emirates, where poor South Asian immigrants make up most of the work force. [New York Times](#)

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USEUCOM

Balkan Peninsula: After the Balkan floods - unity and compassion



20 May - During the last week, countries in the Balkans have experienced extremely heavy rain - the amount of rainfall expected over the period of three months, fell on the region in only three days, bringing about catastrophic floods. The rain has stopped, but the force of water has caused horrific destruction. **Bosnia** and **Serbia** have declared a state of emergency, and flooding has in recent days also reached eastern parts of **Croatia**. Entire cities are submerged. The [map](#) of the flooding shows that large parts of **Serbia** and a third of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** are under water; a territory larger than **Slovenia** is currently flooded. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, more than a million people live in the affected areas. The floods have caused not only infrastructural destruction. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced across the region... The number of victims has still not been released. As the water recedes, it is expected that more bodies will be found and the death toll will rise. [Al Jazeera](#)

Biggest public health challenge at London 2012 Olympics was reassuring politicians and the media that there were no health threats

21 May - In this Review, researchers led by Dr Brian McCloskey, who coordinated the Health Protection Agency's seven year preparations for the London 2012 Olympic Games, report that although no major public health incidents arose during the Games, the biggest challenge was reassuring the organizing committee, government, media, and the public that there were no health-protection concerns. The authors point out that although the overall risk of public health problems, including infectious disease outbreaks, at large-scale international sporting events is small, public health surveillance and response systems need to be ready to detect and respond much quicker than normal... According to Dr McCloskey, ..."Politicians and decision makers often seek reassurance that nothing is happening—this negative finding is not easily and reliably obtained from routine surveillance systems because they are not primarily designed to prove that nothing is happening." [RedOrbit](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: California is bracing for worst-ever wildfire season, Gov. Brown says

18 May - California is bracing for its worst-ever wildfire season which could cripple the state's economy, Gov. Jerry Brown said Sunday. Brown told ABC's "This Week" that the nearly dozen wildfires, which caused more than \$20 million in damage, mark only the beginning. Brown says the state has 5,000 firefighters on the job and has set aside \$600 million to battle the blazes, but worries that might not be enough... So far, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection has responded to more than 1,500 fires this year, compared with about 800 during an average year. Brown said his state is on the "front lines" of climate change, which is making California weather even hotter... Unusually high temperatures, low humidity and gusty winds set conditions last week for the string of wildfires that broke out in San Diego County. [Fox News](#)

U.S., Canada, Mexico agree to share health emergency communications

21 May - The U.S., Canadian, and Mexican governments formally agreed yesterday that during health emergencies they will share communications plans and statements with one another before releasing them to the public... "Infectious diseases are not limited by countries' borders, and neither are the ways through which we receive the news," Canadian

Minister of Health Rona Ambrose stated in the announcement. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

U.S.: CIA - Vaccination programs won't be used for spying

20 May - The White House has pledged that the CIA will no longer use vaccination programs as a cover for spying operations, three years after the agency used the ruse in Pakistan before the U.S. raid that killed Osama bin Laden. A White House spokesperson said President Barack Obama's top counterterrorism adviser, Lisa Monaco, responded to a letter from the deans of about a dozen prominent public health schools last week who were concerned the ruse could cause serious consequences to public health efforts. [VOA](#)

U.S. health insurers say Gilead hepatitis C drug too costly

20 May - - The leading U.S. health insurance trade group on Tuesday hit out at the extremely high cost of new specialty medicines, accusing drugmakers of taking advantage of the insurance system by pricing products at unsustainable levels. The latest salvo in the war on escalating U.S. healthcare costs came from AHIP - America's Health Insurance Plans - and targeted Sovaldi, the new \$84,000 hepatitis C treatment from Gilead Sciences Inc. "Sovaldi has shown tremendous results, and it's the kind of medical innovation we need to sustain. Unfortunately, the drug's maker has priced it at an astronomical level that is not sustainable for consumers, innovation, or society," AHIP said on its Coverage blog. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Measles, mumps outbreaks put Ohio at center of nationwide surge in vaccine-preventable illness

19 May - An outbreak of measles in the Amish community in central Ohio, which has now infected 83 people, has thrust the state into the national spotlight in a most unwelcome way: we are now host to the largest measles outbreak in the country since 1996. Add to that an ongoing mumps outbreak around Ohio State University that has infected more than 350 people, and you may begin to wonder if diseases like these, which are vaccine-preventable and no longer considered a major threat in this country, are winning the fight to make a comeback. [Plain Dealer](#)

U.S.: Pancreatic cancer second most deadly by 2030



19 May - By 2030, the top cancer killers in the United States will be lung, pancreas and liver, according to a new report published Monday in the American Association for Cancer Research's journal. Lung cancer is already the top killer overall, but pancreatic and liver cancer will surpass the cancers currently considered the second and third leading causes of death, researchers say. Right now, second most dangerous is breast cancer for women and prostate cancer for men; and third is colorectal cancer for both men

and women. Researchers looked at trends in cancer incidence and death rates between 2006 and 2010, and used that data -- combined with expected U.S. demographic changes -- to predict numbers for 2030. [CNN](#)

U.S.: Rabid kitten attacks Fort Hood resident

20 May - Fort Hood officials are warning of the danger of rabies after a resident was attacked by a rabid dark gray and white kitten Friday outside of a home on Central Drive and a rabid skunk was found on May 12 in a post motor pool. "At this time, there is one confirmed exposure and the victim has started post exposure rabies prophylaxis," Dr. John Kuczek, the officer in charge of the Fort Hood Veterinary Center said in a press release Tuesday. The post's Public Health Command and the Fort Hood Veterinary Center were urging residents Tuesday to avoid handling wild or stray animals and to make sure pets are vaccinated. [KWTX](#)

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USPACOM

Asia: Private hospitals in Asia –on call

17 May - ...The rise of [Asia's] middle classes is continuing... Rising incomes mean rising demand for health care... Governments are trying to meet this demand. Malaysia and Thailand already have broad public health-care systems. China, which boasts that it has extended basic medical coverage to 97% of its people, continues to make reforms. The Philippines is in the midst of a rapid expansion of insurance. Indonesia is in the first year of a plan to bring health coverage to the entire population by 2019. However, in many countries hospital beds are in short supply. Indonesia has only nine for every 10,000 people and the Philippines ten. America and Britain each have 29. And the quality of public hospitals varies greatly. Governments throughout the region say they will open more hospitals. But private operators think there will be a continuing shortfall for them to fill.

[Economist](#)

Australian children among least active in the world, report finds

21 May - Australian children are ranked as some of the least active in the world when it comes to physical exertion, according to a new report. The inaugural Active Healthy Kids Australia Report Card, compiled by researchers from Australian universities and endorsed by The Heart Foundation, found 80 per cent of children between the ages of five and 17 were not getting daily exercise. The national report card ranks the physical activity of Australian children against 14 other nations. [ABC News](#)

India, Kashmir: Typhoid breaks out in Kupwara

20 May - Typhoid is spreading out in frontier district Kupwara due to contaminated water being used by people from the nearby spring, the health authorities Tuesday said. An estimated 130 people in Koligam area of Block Sogam are infected with the contagious disease, which causes diarrhea and can be fatal, Public Health experts cautioned. [Rising Kashmir](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Brazil: World Cup dengue fever risk predicted

16 May - Scientists have developed an "early warning system" to alert authorities to the risk of dengue fever outbreaks in Brazil during the World Cup. The analysis, published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, estimates the chances of an outbreak of the mosquito-borne infection disease. They say the risk is high enough to warrant a high-alert warning in three venues - Natal, Fortaleza and Recife. [BBC News](#)

Haiti: Mosquito-borne breaking bone disease spreads

19 May - A mosquito-borne virus is spreading across the Caribbean. It's called Chikungunya. It's hardly ever fatal but it does hurt, causing severe joint pain. And public health officials expect the disease to eventually reach the U.S. Reporter Peter Granitz takes us to Haiti, the country with the most recent confirmed outbreak. [NPR](#)

Venezuela in sanitary alert out of malaria, dengue

21 May - Venezuela is on sanitary alert due to the outbreak of malaria, totaling 28,000 events thus far this year, in addition to almost 22,000 events of dengue, the Ministry of Health reported. Based on the latest bulletin issued by the ministry for the week of May 4-10, 2014 and posted on its website, the events of malaria sank to 28,153 versus 31,582 in 2013. However, the disease is ranked as epidemics. The main focus of the disease transmitted by plasmodium parasites is the southern part of Venezuela, particularly Bolívar state, where the situation is described as "alarming" by the ministry, Efe quoted. [El Universal](#)

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