

24 May 2013

Army Public Health Weekly Update

The Army Public Health Update is a collection of articles taken verbatim from public sources to offer awareness of current health issues and the media coverage given to them. The articles do not necessarily represent US Army Medical Department opinions, views, policy, or guidance, and should not be construed or interpreted as being endorsed by the US Army Medical Department.

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NOTICE:

There will be no Army Public Health Weekly Update next week. Publication will resume on 7 June.

Subscription or Comments

If you wish to be added to the APH Weekly Update mailing list, removed from the mailing list, or if you have comments or questions about the update, please **contact us**. We welcome your comments. Please feel free to share this update with others who may be interested.



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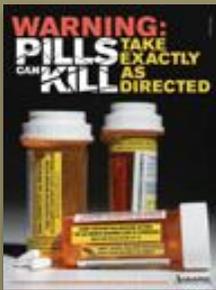


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Prescription Drug Abuse Poster

More 18–24 year olds die from accidental drug overdose than from motor vehicle accidents. A new poster warning against prescription drugs abuse is now available in the

[Health Information Products eCatalog.](#)



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U.S. MILITARY

Army releases April 2013 suicide information

23 May – The Army released suicide data today for the month of April 2013. During April, among active-duty soldiers, there were 11 potential suicides: one has been confirmed as a suicide and 10 remain under investigation. For March 2013, the Army reported 10 potential suicides among active-duty soldiers; six have been confirmed as suicides and four are under

Health Promotion Webinar Series

Health Promotion and Wellness will host its first webinar on 4 June at 3:15 pm ET. The topic will be The Resilience of Army Medics in Overcoming the Psychological Effects of Killing in Battle - *A webinar on the resilience of Army medics, how they cope with the psychological effects of war.*

You must register for the webinar. Once you've registered you will be sent the DCO link.

Register: You must create an account to get your login ID and password.

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site:

<http://phc.army.smil.mil>

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

investigation. For 2013, there have been 52 potential active-duty suicides: 22 have been confirmed as suicides and 30 remain under investigation. Updated active-duty suicide numbers for 2012: 184 (159 have been confirmed as suicides and 25 remain under investigation). [Defense.gov](#)

Other than honorable

21 May - A Gazette investigation shows an increasing number of soldiers, including wounded combat veterans, are being kicked out of the service for misconduct, often with no benefits, as the Army downsizes after a decade of war. [Gazette](#)

Sgt. John Russell gets life sentence for murder of 5 at clinic in Iraq

16 May - An Army judge on Thursday handed down the toughest sentence he could to a soldier who murdered five fellow service members at a Baghdad combat stress clinic four years ago. Sgt. John Russell will serve life without parole for shooting to death two care providers, two patients and an escort at the clinic in Baghdad's Camp Liberty on May 11, 2009... Russell's attorney, James Culp, had argued that the soldier suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and depression at the time of the killings. He had several frustrating encounters with psychiatrists at Camp Liberty and at nearby Camp Stryker in the days before he snapped and shot up the combat stress clinic. [Seattle Times](#)

Signs, symptoms, and ill-defined conditions, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2000-2012

April 2013 - ...The report documents that 3.5 percent of all hospitalizations of active component males resulted in discharge diagnoses of "chest pain," "abdominal pain," or "syncope and collapse" of unknown etiology. The finding is not surprising; the first two of these diagnoses were previously reported in the MSMR among the most frequent causes of emergency room visits in the active component. In a relatively young and healthy population such as U.S. military members, most chest pain is non-cardiac in nature and likely caused by gastroesophageal or musculoskeletal disorders. Of the 1.1 million ambulatory visits due to SSIC annually, approximately 30 percent are due to abdominal pain, chest pain and sleep disturbances. Since 2005, sleep disturbances have been the number one cause of SSIC visits among male service members. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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GLOBAL

4 germs cause most of infants' severe diarrhea

20 May - Just four germs are responsible for most of the severe and fatal diarrhea among the world's infants, according to a large new study. Diarrhea is a major killer of children,

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with an estimated 800,000 deaths each year; it has many causes, and doctors want to focus on the most common ones to bring death rates down. The study, financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and published by The Lancet, found that the most common causes were rotavirus; a protozoan called Cryptosporidium; and two bacteria, Shigella and a toxin-producing strain of E. coli. In some areas, other pathogens, including the bacteria that cause cholera, were also important. [New York Times](#)

New malaria test kit boosts elimination efforts worldwide

22 May - A new, highly sensitive blood test that quickly detects even the lowest levels of malaria parasites in the body could make a dramatic difference in efforts to tackle the disease in the UK and across the world... In two studies led by researchers in the UK and Switzerland, the new LAMP (loop-mediated isothermal amplification) test was compared to existing methods in London laboratories that deal with imported cases of malaria to the UK, and to diagnostic methods used in the field in Uganda, where malaria is a leading cause of illness and death... LAMP was faster than PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests, which require specialised laboratory equipment, costly reagents and advanced training. It was also more accurate than microscopic examination of blood slides, which require a trained specialist to identify the malaria parasites. [Infection Control Today](#)

New tracking of a patient's radiation exposure



21 May - ...[Intermountain Healthcare, a] Salt Lake City-based nonprofit group of 22 hospitals and 185 clinics is launching the first major system of its kind to measure and report patients' cumulative medical radiation exposure from tests that deliver the highest amount of radiation.

This includes CT scans, nuclear medicine scans and interventional radiology exams for the heart. In addition to educating doctors and patients about the risks and benefits of medical radiation, Intermountain will allow them to access their exposure data via its electronic health record. [Wall Street Journal](#)

Pfizer takes its shot at a vaccine for evasive superbug



23 May - Kathrin Jansen is a microbiologist with at least two breakthrough vaccines to her name: she brought the cervical cancer vaccine Gardasil to market for Merck and helped develop the \$4 billion a year pneumonia and meningitis vaccine Prevnar 13 for Pfizer. Jansen's next vaccine success

could come by taming the superbug MRSA, a drug-resistant bacterium that she has seen ravage a healthy man up close and personally... Pfizer's initial vaccine targeted three mechanisms key to staph's survival and ability to cause disease... [Jansen's team] added a fourth antigen, a protein that allows the bacterium to steal manganese - a key nutrient - from host cells. The result is a four-antigen vaccine that generates antibody responses at distinct points of the life cycle of the bug. [Reuters](#)

Scientists' goal: Even earlier early warnings

21 May - The recent outburst of deadly tornadoes highlights the scientific scramble to detect these violent seasonal storms more quickly to add precious minutes to warnings. An alert from the National Weather Service on Monday gave people in Moore, Okla., 16 minutes to take shelter before the tornado touched down and swept much of city off the map with its 200-miles-per-hour winds—about two minutes more than average, experts said. [Wall Street Journal](#)

SM-IV boss presses attack on new revision

17 May - A new edition of psychiatry's diagnostic guide "will probably lead to substantial false-positive rates and unnecessary treatment," charged the man who led development of the last version. To be released this weekend at the American Psychiatric Association's annual meeting, the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, or DSM-5, "introduce[s] several high-prevalence diagnoses at the fuzzy boundary with normality," according to Allen Frances, MD, who chaired the task force responsible for DSM-IV issued in 1994. Frances, now an emeritus professor at Duke University, wrote online in *Annals of Internal Medicine* that changes from DSM-IV will apply disease labels to individuals who may be unhappy or offensive but still normal. Such individuals would include those experiencing "the forgetfulness of old age" as well as children with severe, chronic temper tantrums and individuals with physical symptoms with no medical explanation. [MedPage Today](#)

Study finds vitamin C can kill drug-resistant TB

21 May— In a striking, unexpected discovery, researchers at Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University have determined that vitamin C kills drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB) bacteria in laboratory culture. The finding suggests that vitamin C added to existing TB drugs could shorten TB therapy, and it highlights a new area for drug design... About 650,000 people worldwide now have multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), 9 percent of whom have extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB). [EurekAlert](#)

UNFPA focuses on contraception for 222 million in developing world

21 May - [H]ow does the international community meet the massive unmet needs for contraception by over 222 million women in the developing world?" The U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA) points out that increased contraceptive use and reduced unmet needs for contraception are central to achieving three of the U.N.'s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – improving maternal health, reducing child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS – heading towards the 2015 deadline. [Inter Press Service](#)

WHO experts nix yellow fever vaccine booster

17 May – Yellow fever vaccination boosters, typically given 10 years after initial immunization, are no longer necessary, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today...

There is no treatment for yellow fever, so vaccination is the key strategy for protecting people. Of 600 million doses of the vaccine given since vaccination programs began in the 1930s, only 12 cases of post-vaccination yellow fever cases have been identified, the WHO said. All of the "vaccine failure" cases occurred within 5 years of vaccination, which suggests that immunity does not wane over time. [CIDRAP](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 19 (May 5-11, 2013), influenza activity remained low in the United States.

Viral Surveillance: Of 2,416 specimens tested and reported by collaborating laboratories, 124 (5.1%) 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: One pediatric death was reported.

Geographic Spread of Influenza: 1 state reported regional influenza activity. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Week 19, 17 specimens were tested from 11 locations. There were no viruses detected.
- To date this influenza season, 3,714 specimens have been tested from 81 locations of which 1,070 were positive for influenza A (949 A(H3N2), 111 A(H1N1)pdm09, five co-infections, and five A/not subtyped).
- To date this influenza season, 363 specimens were positive for influenza B. Of these, there were 14 B/Yamagata, two B/Victoria, and two B & enterovirus co-infections. The lineage is pending or unknown for 345 specimens.
- There have been 251 other respiratory viruses isolated (60 adenovirus, 91 RSV, 90 parainfluenza, and 10 enterovirus) cumulatively this season.
- From September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of 31 laboratory confirmed cases of human infection with nCoV, including 18 deaths.
- To date, a total of 131 laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus, including 32 deaths, have been reported to WHO. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

23 May – Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere ranges from minimal to low and in the southern hemisphere ranges from minimal to moderate. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week 20, ending 18May 2013:

- Influenza: No cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.
- Adenovirus: Sporadic adenovirus cases at basic training centers in 2013. FRI rates remain low in general.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Estimates reveal low population immunity to new bird flu virus H7N9 in humans

21 May - The level of immunity to the recently circulating H7N9 influenza virus in an urban and rural population in Vietnam is very low, according to the first population level study to examine human immunity to the virus, which was previously only found in birds. The findings have implications for planning the public health response to this pandemic threat. The study used a new, high throughput method that allows blood samples to be analysed for antibodies to multiple human and animal influenza viruses at the same time and is easier to standardise than previous techniques. However, the assay is yet to be validated clinically for the H7N9 virus, and the researchers caution that the results must be interpreted with care. [EurekAlert!](#)

GSK flu shot may raise adult narcolepsy risk: Finnish scientists

23 May - GlaxoSmithKline Plc's H1N1 pandemic flu shot may put adults at higher risk of developing narcolepsy, not only children as previous studies found, Finland's National Institute for Health and Welfare said on Thursday. [Reuters](#)

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

17 May - Since 8 May 2013, no new laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) have been reported to WHO by the National Health and Family Planning Commission, China. However, four additional deaths have been reported from previously laboratory-confirmed cases. To date, WHO has been informed of a total of 131 laboratory-confirmed cases, including 36 deaths. [WHO](#)

Study of H7N9 cases shows extent of severe disease

22 May - Researchers from China today published a detailed clinical analysis of 111 patients sickened in the country's H7N9 influenza outbreak that showed how severe patients' illnesses have been, with 77% admitted to intensive care units (ICUs)... Some of the findings echoed those from the earlier study. For example, 42% were 65 years old or older, males outnumbered females two to one, and many patients—in this case, 61%—had underlying medical conditions. Fever and cough were the most common symptoms, and though conjunctivitis has been a hallmark in people infected with other H7 strains, none of the study patients had the symptom. As with other patients with avian influenza, those with H7N9 illnesses didn't report sore throat or runny nose. [CIDRAP](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

China: New rice contamination reported

23 May - Authorities are investigating rice mills in southern China following tests that found almost half of the staple grain in one of the country's largest cities was contaminated with a toxic metal. The mills in Hunan province's Youxian county were ordered to suspend business and recall their products after samples showed excessive levels of cadmium, according to an official notice issued Tuesday by the county government. It said the mills had been operating legally and sourced their rice from local farmers. The announcement followed reports over the weekend that government inspectors discovered that 44.4 percent of rice and rice products tested this year in the southern city of Guangzhou in Guangdong province showed high levels of cadmium. The carcinogenic metal can seriously damage the kidneys and cause other health problems. [Miami Herald](#)

U.S.: GAO - APHIS needs to align its strategy with US biosecurity efforts

22 May - The US Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) needs to develop goals and measures to ensure that its approach to monitoring animal health meshes with the country's goals for early detection of biological

threats, the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) said in a report yesterday. APHIS has moved from a disease-specific approach to surveillance to a focus on monitoring the overall health of livestock and poultry. "APHIS has a vision for its new approach but has not integrated that vision into an overall strategy with associated goals and performance measures that are aligned with the nation's larger biosurveillance efforts," the GAO said in the report. APHIS has developed planning documents related to disease surveillance, but they focus primarily on processes and don't address outcomes necessary to reach goals, the GAO said. In addition, none of the documents indicates how APHIS efforts support national homeland security goals. The USDA agreed with the GAO's assessment, the report said.

[CIDRAP News Scan](#)

U.S.: Swine virus confirmed in Iowa, Indiana hog herds

20 May - Farms in two of the nation's leading pork producing states have tested positive for the potentially fatal porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV), U.S. pork industry veterinarian official said Monday. Three farms in Iowa and one Indiana operation have confirmed cases of the virus, said Dr Lisa Becton, director of swine health information and research for the National Pork Board. [Reuters](#)

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WELLNESS

Heartburn tied to throat cancer

23 May - Frequent heartburn increases the risk for throat cancer, a new study has found, and over-the-counter antacids may provide protection. Researchers studied heartburn incidence and medication use in 631 patients with squamous cell cancers of the throat and vocal cords who were not heavy smokers or drinkers, matching them with 1,234 healthy controls... After controlling for age, sex, race, smoking, alcohol consumption, HPV 16 infection, education and body mass index, they found that people who had reported a history of frequent heartburn were 78 percent more likely to have cancer than those who did not. Those with frequent heartburn who took antacids reduced their risk for cancer by 41 percent, compared with those whose heartburn was untreated. [New York Times](#)

Los Angeles voters approve limiting medical marijuana shops



22 May - Los Angeles, which has more storefront medical marijuana shops than any other U.S. city, will close hundreds of the dispensaries and hike taxes on those that will be allowed to remain under a ballot measure approved by a wide margin of voters. Nearly 63 percent of voters supported Proposition D, which will cap the number of medical pot dispensaries at 135, compared with 37 percent

opposed, according to preliminary results released on Wednesday, the day after the vote.

[Reuters](#)

NIH scientists discover molecule triggers sensation of itch

23 May - Scientists at the National Institutes of Health report they have discovered in mouse studies that a small molecule released in the spinal cord triggers a process that is later experienced in the brain as the sensation of itch. The small molecule, called natriuretic polypeptide b (Nppb), streams ahead and selectively plugs into a specific nerve cell in the spinal cord, which sends the signal onward through the central nervous system. When Nppb or its nerve cell was removed, mice stopped scratching at a broad array of itch-inducing substances. The signal wasn't going through. [NIH](#)

Schoolmates of suicide victims at higher risk

21 May - Teens who have a classmate die of suicide are more likely to consider taking, or attempt to take, their own lives, according to a new study... [Researchers] used data from a long-running national survey of more than 8,000 Canadian kids aged 12 to 17 years old. Students were asked about suicides of schoolmates, friends and their own thoughts of suicide, and researchers checked in with the kids two years later. By the age of 17, one in four kids had a schoolmate who had committed suicide, and one in five knew the deceased personally, according to results published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. For the 12- and 13-year-old adolescents exposed to a schoolmate's suicide, 15 percent reported thinking seriously about killing themselves and seven percent actually made an attempt, compared to 3 percent and 2 percent of unexposed kids, respectively. The effect persisted even if the schoolmate had died more than a year earlier. [Reuters](#)

Schools should make exercise 'core' subject, U.S. panel urges

23 May - U.S. schools need to boost efforts to get students moving, and make gym class as critical as other core subjects if they want to increase test scores as well as students' general well-being, a leading group of health advisers said on Thursday. The Institute of Medicine called for younger students to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day in school and older students 45 minutes, with at least half that time spent moving vigorously. [Reuters](#)

Study: Whole-cell pertussis vaccine far more protective than current vaccine

20 May - No-longer-used whole-cell pertussis (DTwP) vaccines better protected kids against pertussis (whooping cough) than acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccines during a large 2010-11 outbreak in California, according to a study today in Pediatrics. The study involved 10- to 17-year-olds who were born from 1994 to 1999 and received four doses of either pertussis vaccine during the first 2 years of life at Kaiser Permanente Northern California, some of whom received DTwP before it was discontinued in the 1990s because of adverse events.

The study included 138 children who had lab-confirmed pertussis, 899 who tested negative, and 54,339 matched controls. Researchers found that kids who received four DTaP doses had an almost six times higher risk of pertussis than those who received four DTwP doses. People who received mixed DTwP and DTaP vaccines had a nearly fourfold higher risk of pertussis than those who received all DTwP vaccines. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

Sugary drinks tied to kidney stone risk

22 May - Adults who drink at least one sugar-sweetened drink a day are slightly more likely to develop kidney stones than people who rarely imbibe them, according to a new study... They found that 159 out of every 100,000 people who drank a sugar-sweetened non-cola beverage, such as clear soda, less than once a week developed kidney stones, compared to 306 out of every 100,000 who drank soda daily. [Reuters](#)

Sunshine vitamin 'may treat asthma'

19 May - The amount of time asthma patients spend soaking up the sun may have an impact on the illness, researchers have suggested. A team at King's College London said low levels of vitamin D, which is made by the body in sunlight, was linked to a worsening of symptoms. Its latest research shows the vitamin calms an over-active part of the immune system in asthma... [Prof Catherine Hawrylowicz's] group investigated the impact of the vitamin on a chemical in the body, interleukin-17. It is a vital part of the immune system and helps to fight off infections. However, it can cause problems when levels get too high and has been strongly implicated in asthma. In this study, published in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, vitamin D was able to lower levels of interleukin-17 when it was added to blood samples taken from 28 patients. [BBC News](#)

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USAFRICOM

A fate worse than death for scores of African women

23 May – [I]n a culture where a woman's status and dignity is decided by her ability to provide a husband with multiple children, it can be a fate worse than death... An obstetric fistula occurs when a woman withstands days of obstructed labor, when a baby's head is constantly pushing against her pelvic bone during contractions -- preventing blood flow and causing tissue to die. This creates a hole, or a "fistula," between a woman's vagina and her bladder or rectum. Her baby is unlikely to survive. If the mother lives, she is unable to hold her urine and, in some cases, bowel content, Paluku Lussy says. A woman with a fistula, who is perpetually leaking urine and sometimes feces, is often rejected by her husband and shunned by her village because of her foul smell and inability to bear more children. [CNN](#)

Democratic Republic of Congo: Malaria overstretching healthcare

20 May - Gaps in the healthcare system in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are hampering the fight against malaria, a leading killer of children, say experts. Malaria accounts for about a third of outpatient consultations in DRC clinics, Leonard Kouadio, a UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) health specialist, told IRIN. He added, "It is the leading cause of death among children under five years and is responsible for a significant proportion of deaths among older children and adults." Kouadio continued: "Recent retrospective mortality surveys have revealed that in all regions of the country, the fever is associated with 40 percent of [deaths of] children under five." [IRIN](#)

Tunisian man dies of new coronavirus

21 May - A man has died of the novel coronavirus (NCoV) in Tunisia, in what is believed to be the first such case in Africa. Tunisia's health ministry said the 66-year-old had visited Saudi Arabia, which is badly affected by the virus... The Tunisian man, a diabetic, had been complaining of breathing problems since he returned from Saudi Arabia and he died in hospital in the coastal city of Monastir, AFP news agency reports. Two of his children also contracted the virus, but had responded to treatment, the health ministry said, in a statement... Cases have been detected in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Germany, the UK and France. [BBC News](#)

Wild poliovirus in the Horn of Africa

22 May -The Horn of Africa is currently experiencing an outbreak of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1). A four-month-old girl near Dadaab, Kenya, developed symptoms of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) on 30 April 2013. Two healthy contacts of the child tested positive for WPV1. They are the first laboratory confirmed cases in Kenya since July 2011. Investigation into this outbreak is ongoing. In addition, a case of WPV1 in Banadir, Somalia was confirmed on 9 May 2013... The risk to neighbouring countries is deemed as very high, due to large-scale population movements across the Horn of Africa and persistent immunity gaps in some areas. Dadaab hosts a major refugee camp, housing nearly 500 000 persons from across the Horn of Africa. [WHO](#)

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USCENTCOM

Pakistan: Gunmen attack polio vaccination team, kill policeman in Pakistan

20 May - Officials say gunmen have killed a policeman who was guarding a polio vaccination team in north-western Pakistan. Local government administrator Faramosh

Khan says the gunmen attacked the team on Monday in the town of Mamound in the Bajur tribal area, just as it had started a vaccination drive. [Straits Times](#)

Middle East: Novel coronavirus infection - update

23 May - The Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia has notified WHO of an additional laboratory-confirmed case of infection with the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). The fatal case was reported from Al-Qaseem region in the Central part of the country and is not related to the cluster of cases reported from Al-Ahsa region in the Eastern part of the country... The Saudi authorities are also continuing the investigation into the outbreak that began in a health care facility since the beginning of April 2013 in Al-Ahsa. To date, a total of 22 patients including 10 deaths have been reported from the outbreak. Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 44 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 22 deaths.

WHO has received reports of laboratory-confirmed cases from the following countries in the Middle East: Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). France, Germany, Tunisia and the United Kingdom also reported laboratory-confirmed cases; they were either transferred for care of the disease or returned from Middle East and subsequently became ill. In France, Tunisia and the United Kingdom, there has been limited local transmission among close contacts who had not been to the Middle East but had been in close contact with the laboratory-confirmed or probable cases. [WHO](#)

WHO expert concerned guest workers could spread coronavirus

21 May – A World Health Organization (WHO) expert has expressed concern that guest workers in the Middle East could carry the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) to India and the Philippines, according to a media report, while a few more details emerged about three Tunisian cases reported yesterday. Anthony Mounts, MD, the WHO's technical lead for MERS-CoV, said guest workers could bring the virus to their home countries, where it might spread widely before being detected, according to a report in the *Toronto Star*. [CIDRAP](#)

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USEUCOM

United Kingdom: £74m wasted on flu drugs destroyed because of poor record keeping

21 May - Taxpayers lost £74m when 6.5m doses of an anti-flu drug were written off as being past their shelf life because of poor record-keeping by the health service, the government's auditors have found. A total of £424m was spent in stockpiling 40m units of

Tamiflu between 2006-07 and 2012-13, despite question marks over the effectiveness of the drug, a National Audit Office memo says. Viruses are reported to have developed resistance to the drug in some cases. [Guardian](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Alabama officials probe respiratory illness cluster

22 May – Alabama health officials are investigating a cluster of severe respiratory infections from an unknown origin centered around the Dothan area and have asked the state's health providers to be alert for and report similar cases. In a press release yesterday the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) said seven people have been hospitalized with similar symptoms: fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Two of the patients have died. The ADPH said it and the Houston County Health Department are conducting the investigation and have consulted with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention... Tests on samples sent to the ADPH clinical lab revealed on May 17 the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus in one of the patients, who died the following day... Polymerase chain reaction flu panel testing on three other patients who were admitted yielded one H3 influenza positive. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S.: Deaths associated with Hurricane Sandy — October–November 2012

24 May - On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy hit the northeastern U.S. coastline. Sandy's tropical storm winds stretched over 900 miles (1,440 km), causing storm surges and destruction over a larger area than that affected by hurricanes with more intensity but narrower paths. To characterize deaths related to Sandy, CDC analyzed data on 117 hurricane-related deaths captured by American Red Cross mortality tracking during October 28–November 30, 2012. This report describes the results of that analysis which found drowning was the most common cause of death related to Sandy, and 45% of drowning deaths occurred in flooded homes. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Federal report recommends NPS policy changes after Yosemite hantavirus

21 May - Federal investigators probing the hantavirus outbreak blamed for three deaths at Yosemite National Park recommended on Monday that design changes to tent cabins and other privately run lodging first be reviewed by National Park Service officials... The report also recommended that the park service begin cyclical pest monitoring and inspections of all public accommodations. [Washington Post](#)

U.S.: Microbes in pool filter backwash as evidence of the need for improved swimmer hygiene

17 May - ...The detection of *E. coli* in over half of filter backwash samples indicates that swimmers frequently introduced fecal material into pools and thus might transmit infectious pathogens to others. The risk for transmission and recreational water illness (RWI) increases if swimmers introduce feces when ill with diarrhea. A single diarrheal contamination incident can introduce 107–108 *Cryptosporidium* oocysts into the water, a quantity sufficient to cause infection if a mouthful of water from a typical pool is ingested. Additionally, each person has an average of 0.14 grams of fecal material on their perianal surface that could rinse into the water if swimmers fail to take a pre-swim shower with soap. The 1) frequent occurrence of fecal contamination of pools documented in this study and 2) marked increase in the incidence of RWI outbreaks... underscore the need for improved swimmer hygiene.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Navajo confront an increase in new H.I.V. infections

19 March - A surge in H.I.V. infections on the Navajo reservation here has doctors and public health workers increasingly alarmed that the virus that causes AIDS has resurfaced with renewed intensity in this impoverished region. A report released last month by the federal Indian Health Service found that there were 47 new diagnoses of human immunodeficiency virus on the reservation in 2012, up 20 percent from 2011. Since 1999, new H.I.V. cases among Navajo are up nearly fivefold, the report found... That increase, Dr. Iralu said, can be partly attributed to the infection being detected earlier, thanks to years of H.I.V. education programs and more routine screening. But Dr. Iralu and other health workers also said the virus was now being transmitted from one tribal member to another, a disquieting trend. In past years, Navajo were thought to have contracted the disease mostly in cities and returned with it. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Oklahoma tornado tears massive path of death, destruction



20 May - Rescue workers raced against time and darkness Monday night looking for survivors after a powerful tornado blasted an area outside of Oklahoma City, leveling homes and leaving at least 51 people dead. At least 20 of the dead were children, including at least seven from Plaza

Towers Elementary School in Moore, which lay directly in the path of the monster storm's wall of wind. Seventy-five students and staff members had been huddled at the school when the tornado hit, CNN affiliate KFOR reported. As nightfall descended, determined searchers in hard hats dug in the debris for those possibly trapped, but authorities described the work as a recovery, not rescue, effort. [CNN](#)

U.S.: Sex trafficking laws toughen in TN after study

23 May - As sex trafficking has garnered newfound attention, Tennessee has developed one of the nation's most comprehensive anti-trafficking programs. An additional 12 new laws approved by lawmakers this year include harsher criminal penalties on traffickers, an extended window of time for prosecutors to bring charges and the creation of a state trafficking task force to study and respond to the issue. The measures amplify a wave of attention since a statewide study in 2011 documented incidents of sex trafficking.

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Bangladesh: Collapse blamed on shoddy materials



23 May - A government panel found substandard building materials among the reasons for a factory building collapse outside Dhaka last month that killed more than 1,100 people. The panel—formed to investigate the collapse of the Rana Plaza, which killed 1,127 people in one of the worst industrial accidents—also cited failure to comply with building regulations

and the use of heavy equipment on upper floors of the building as reasons for the disaster... In its 400-page report, the committee recommended that the owner of Rana Plaza, Sohel Rana, along with the owners of the five garment factories housed in the building, to be charged with "culpable homicide," for allegedly forcing employees to return to work on April 24 even though cracks had appeared on an exterior wall the previous day. [Wall Street Journal](#)

South Korea confirms its first illness from emerging tick-borne virus

22 May - South Korea has reported its first confirmed case and another suspected case of infection with an emerging tick-borne bunyavirus, called severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome (SFTS) virus, according to media reports from the country. The infection has previously been reported in China and Japan. A May 21 Yonhap news service story said the infection was confirmed in a 63-year-old woman who died in Seoul in August of last year. Four other patients tested negative for the virus, which is spread by *Haemaphysalis longicornis* ticks, according to the story. SFTS infection is also suspected to have caused the death of a 73-year-old farmer on Jeju Island on May 16, according to a May 17 story from the Arirang news service. Medical examiners said the man died of blood poisoning but that he also had traces of tick bites and had had clinical signs suggestive of SFTS infection, which causes high fever, vomiting, and diarrhea. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

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Belize: Death of babies linked to bacteria outbreak

23 May - The death of 12 babies at the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH), has been linked to the outbreak of enterobacter cloacae – an organism that is said to be responsible for major outbreaks in Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU) all over the world. In a release on Wednesday, Director of Medical Services at the hospital, Dr Adrian Coye noted that the organism is not a superbug. “The problem lies in the fact that it is very fastidious, difficult to clear and there is transmission by direct contact and also by indirect contact. So it can be on the skin of any of us right now in this room, on your clothing material, on stethoscopes, on IV drip stands, the surfaces in the clinical area, etc” he said. [Jamaica Observer](#)

Progress toward elimination of onchocerciasis in the Americas — 1993–2012

24 May - Onchocerciasis (river blindness) is caused by the parasitic worm *Onchocerca volvulus*, transmitted to humans by the bite of infected black flies of the genus *Simulium*, and is characterized by chronic skin disease, severe itching, and eye lesions that can progress to complete blindness. Currently, among approximately 123 million persons at risk for infection in 38 endemic countries, at least 25.7 million are infected, and 1 million are blinded or have severe visual impairment. Periodic, communitywide mass drug administration (MDA) with ivermectin (Mectizan, Merck) prevents eye and skin disease and might interrupt transmission of the infection... By the end of 2012, transmission of the infection... had been interrupted or eliminated in four of the six endemic countries in the WHO Americas Region. Thus, in 2013, only 4% (23,378) of the 560,911 persons originally at risk in the Americas will be under ivermectin MDA. Active transmission currently is limited to two foci among Yanomami indigenes in adjacent border areas of Venezuela and Brazil.

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