

25 April 2014

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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## Gulf War and Health, Volume 9: Long-Term Effects of Blast Exposures

The use of IEDs in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has led to an injury landscape different from that in prior US wars. The signature injury of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars is blast injury. Numerous US soldiers have returned home with devastating blast injuries and they continue to experience many challenges in readjusting to civilian life.

Gulf War and Health, Volume 9 draws conclusions regarding the strength of the evidence of an association between exposure to blast and health effects. The report also includes recommendations for research most likely to provide VA with knowledge on how to prevent blast injuries, how to diagnose them effectively, and how to manage, treat, and rehabilitate victims of battlefield traumas in the immediate aftermath of a blast and in the long term.



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- Chikungunya cases still increasing in some Caribbean areas
- Chile: Authorities on alert for new synthetic drugs
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- U.N. struggles to stem Haiti cholera epidemic

## Prescription Take-Back Day: 4/26/14

The National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day aims to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs, while also educating the general public about the potential for abuse of medications.

[Locate a collection site near you](#)



## U.S. MILITARY

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### A fatal wait: Veterans languish and die on a VA hospital's secret list

24 April - At least 40 U.S. veterans died waiting for appointments at the Phoenix Veterans Affairs Health Care system, many of whom were placed on a secret waiting list. The secret list was part of an elaborate scheme designed by Veterans Affairs managers in Phoenix who were trying to hide that 1,400 to 1,600 sick veterans were forced to wait months to see a doctor, according to a recently retired top VA doctor and several high-level sources... There's an "official" list that's shared with officials in Washington and shows the VA has been providing timely appointments, which Foote calls a sham list. And then there's the real list that's hidden from outsiders, where wait times can last more than a year. "The scheme was deliberately put in place to avoid the VA's own internal rules," said [Dr. Sam] Foote in Phoenix... The VA requires its hospitals to provide care to patients in a timely manner, typically within 14 to 30 days, Foote said. [CNN](#)

### IOM: Military psychological interventions lack evidence



16 April - ...The DOD systematically screens military personnel for psychological disorders during active duty and offers many prevention programs to reduce the onset and severity of psychological problems. For example, the Army's Re-engineering Systems of Primary Care Treatment in the Military, or RESPECT-MIL, is a primary care treatment model that screens soldiers for depression and PTSD at every visit to a primary care provider... Many resilience and prevention programs

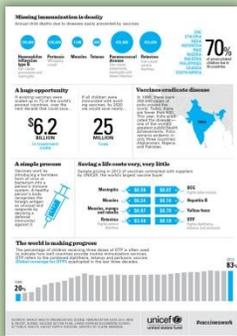
intended to maintain soldiers' mental health lack scientific evidence to prove they are effective, according to a new report from the Institute of Medicine... [T]he IOM committee advised the DOD to pay greater attention to prevention strategies proven effective in civilian communities, such as limiting the availability and raising the price of alcohol on military bases to curb abuse and restricting access to personal firearms to prevent suicide and domestic homicide. Instead, many of the military's substance-abuse prevention efforts rely on campaigns, Internet tools, or in-person events with no proof they work, and the DOD does not have a policy on personal firearm access among individuals at risk of suicide. [Journal of the American Medical Association](#)

### Robotic exoskeleton helps get vets back on their feet

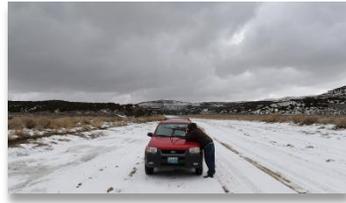
21 April - Several bio-tech companies are developing exoskeletons that give people superhuman abilities. These robotic suits are also doing something simpler: They're helping people who are paralyzed, including many veterans, stand up and walk. As Erin Toner of WUWM reports, the technology helps improve patients' mental and physical health, but it's far from changing their lives entirely. [NPR](#)

**Vaccines Work.  
These 8 Charts  
Prove It.**

In honor of World Immunization Week, which begins this Thursday, UNICEF crunched the numbers on vaccines around the globe.



**‘Ugh, I miss it.’**



19 April – Transitioning from military to civilian life, and from camaraderie to isolation... “The lonely process of overcoming combat” was what one doctor called it as he prescribed Winters the latest in a series of anti-anxiety medications. But what the doctor didn’t seem to understand was that this was the place Winters was failing

to overcome — the America where he felt discouraged and detached, and where his transition seemed like a permanent state. [Washington Post](#)

**Update: Exertional rhabdomyolysis, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2009-2013**

Among active component U.S. service members in 2013, there were 378 incident episodes of rhabdomyolysis likely due to physical exertion or heat stress (exertional rhabdomyolysis). The annual incidence rates of Exertional rhabdomyolysis increased 33 percent during 2009-2013. In 2013, the highest incidence rates occurred in service members who were male; younger than 20 years of age; either Asian/Pacific Islander or black, non-Hispanic; members of the Marine Corps and Army; recruit trainees; and in combat-specific occupations. Incidence rates were higher among service members with homes of record from the Northeast compared to other regions of the United States. Most cases of exertional rhabdomyolysis were diagnosed at installations that support basic combat/recruit training or major ground combat units of the Army or Marine Corps. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#) (page 14)

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**GLOBAL**

**Antibody study hints at MERS-CoV in African camels**



22 April - Dromedary camels in widely separated parts of Africa were exposed to the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) or a closely related virus well before the first human case was detected, researchers from the Netherlands and Africa reported yesterday. The discovery of MERS-CoV-like antibodies in camels in Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ethiopia expands the geographic range of the virus beyond the Middle East and raises the possibility of unrecognized human cases in Africa, according to the findings, published in an early online report from

## May 2<sup>nd</sup> is Scurvy Awareness Day

Scurvy is a condition caused by a lack of vitamin C in the diet. Signs of scurvy include tiredness, muscle weakness, joint and muscle aches, a rash on the legs, and bleeding gums.

Scurvy still exists although it is very rare in countries where fresh fruits and vegetables are readily available. Scurvy can be prevented by ingesting 30 mg of vitamin C per day.

[See the FAQs for more information](#)



Emerging Infectious Diseases. Also today, researchers reported that a MERS-CoV virus collected from a camel in Qatar was able to infect and grow in human cells in a laboratory culture, adding further support for the view that camels are a source of human MERS-CoV infections. The information was in a report that Qatari officials filed with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). [CIDRAP](#)

## Avoid new Lyme culture test, say CDC and FDA

18 April - CDC and the FDA have again cautioned the public about the use of an unapproved test for diagnosing Lyme disease. "As with any diagnostic test, it is critical that new tests for Lyme disease have adequate analytical and clinical validation to avoid misdiagnosis and improper treatment of patients," wrote Christina Nelson, MD, and colleagues from the two agencies in the April 18 issue of *MMWR*. Testing for Lyme disease has been fraught with difficulties over the years, and many patients and advocacy groups have argued that current approaches are inadequate, with the result that some patients have persisting symptoms such as arthritis for months or years. [MedPage Today](#)

## Frozen fecal material effective treatment for *C difficile*

24 April - A medical team treating patients with *Clostridium difficile* infection (CDI) achieved an overall 90% cure rate using frozen fecal transplant material as a "biologic therapeutic," according to an article published online April 24 in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. Although some healthcare-associated infections may be on the decline, CDI incidence remains at a high level and is linked with 14,000 American deaths a year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Recently, researchers have used fecal transplantation to treat the disease, with good results, and have evidence that it is cost-effective. Although one team has tested the use of fecal material in pill form, increasing availability of the treatment remains an issue. Therefore, Ilan Youngster, MD, from the Division of Infectious Diseases, Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Boston, and colleagues conducted a pilot study testing frozen fecal material. [Medscape](#)

## Impact of whooping cough vaccination revealed

23 April - ...Genomic analysis of 343 strains of the *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria from around the world collected over the last 100 years illustrates how vaccination has shaped its evolution. Since its introduction across the globe between 1940 and 1960, vaccination has dramatically reduced rates of infection and loss of life from whooping cough. However, strategies used to date have not completely eradicated strains of the bacteria, instead leading to an increase in diversity. While researchers suspect that the diversity may be the result of lineages of the bacteria persisting in unvaccinated populations, resurgence of *B. pertussis* has also been observed between 2010 and 2012 in highly vaccinated populations such as Australia, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA. One reason could be the widespread switch to the use of acellular vaccines, which, though better tolerated than the original whole-cell vaccines, tend to produce more rapidly-waning immunity. [EurekAlert!](#)

### In the cloud: How coughs and sneezes float farther than you think

A novel study by MIT researchers shows that coughs and sneezes have associated gas clouds that keep their potentially infectious droplets aloft over much greater distances than previously realized.

The smaller droplets that emerge in a cough or sneeze may travel five to 200 times further than they would if those droplets simply moved as groups of unconnected particles — which is what previous estimates had assumed.

The tendency of these droplets to stay airborne, resuspended by gas clouds, means that ventilation systems may be more prone to transmitting potentially infectious particles than had been suspected.



## Michigan man among 1st in U.S. to get 'bionic eye'

23 April —Diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa as a teenager, [Roger] Pontz has been almost completely blind for years. Now, thanks to a high-tech procedure that involved the surgical implantation of a "bionic eye," he has regained enough of his eyesight to catch small glimpses of his wife, grandson and cat... The 55-year-old former competitive weightlifter and factory worker is one of four people in the U.S. to receive an artificial retina since the Food and Drug Administration signed off on its use last year... Not all of the 100,000 or so people in the U.S. with retinitis pigmentosa can benefit from the bionic eye. An estimated 10,000 have vision low enough, said Dr. Brian Mech, an executive with Second Sight Medical Products Inc., the Sylmar, Calif.-based company that makes the device. Of those, about 7,500 are eligible for the surgery. [NPR](#)

## Who's protecting whom from deadly toxin?

21 April - Questions are swirling around a science journal's decision last year to publish a description of a newly discovered botulinum toxin while omitting key genetic details that researchers would normally disclose. The unusual case highlights important unresolved issues in how to balance scientific openness with the worry that biological information could potentially be misused. NPR has learned that the scientist at the center of this controversy has not been sharing materials and information with other botulinum toxin researchers — and for two years, he ignored entreaties from federal officials who wanted the microbe so that they could test vaccines and antitoxins. The scientist kept the genetic sequence secret, but federal officials did not recommend doing so. Some experts who have concerns about how potentially dangerous discoveries are dealt with in biology say this situation shows that it's still unclear what kinds of findings should be withheld from the public, who should make those decisions, and how to ensure that legitimate researchers will get access to the information so that science can advance and protect public health. [NPR](#)

## With genome deciphered, experts aim to swat dreaded tsetse fly

24 April - An international team of scientists has deciphered the genetic code of the tsetse fly, the bloodsucking insect that spreads deadly African sleeping sickness, with the hope that its biological secrets can be exploited to eradicate this malady. The findings announced on Thursday were the culmination of a multimillion dollar, decade-long effort involving more than 140 scientists from 78 research institutions in 18 countries. The fly's bite carries a parasitic microorganism that causes sleeping sickness in people in sub-Saharan Africa and a form of the disease in animals that can devastate livestock herds... The scientists expressed optimism that the genetic blueprint could lead to new ways to combat the tsetse fly like a chemical that could interfere with its reproduction or ways to improve existing traps used to kill it. [Reuters](#)

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<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.

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## INFLUENZA

### CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 15 (April 6-12, 2014), influenza activity continued to decrease in most regions of the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 4,653 specimens tested and reported during week 15, 675 (14.5%) 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 influenza-associated pediatric death was reported.
- Influenza-associated Hospitalizations: A season-cumulative rate of 33.2 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported.

[FluView](#)

### DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Weeks 14 & 15, a total of 99 specimens were collected and received from 34 locations. Results were finalized for 61 specimens from 29 locations. For specimens collected during Week 14, there were two influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, four influenza A(H3N2), and 15 influenza B identified. For specimens collected during Week 15, there were two influenza A(H3N2) and six influenza B identified.
- Cumulative results were finalized for 3,314 specimens from 86 locations. There were 1,020 specimens positive for influenza A (906 A(H1N1)pdm09, 98 A(H3N2), one A(H1N1)pdm09 & adenovirus, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & coronavirus, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & parainfluenza, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & RSV, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & rhinovirus/enterovirus, and 8 A/not subtyped). There were 90 specimens positive for influenza B (84 B/unknown lineage and six B/Yamagata). Other respiratory pathogens identified were 69 adenovirus, 32 *Chlamydomphila pneumoniae*, 220 coronavirus, 115 human metapneumovirus, 46 *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, 67 parainfluenza, 185 RSV, and 339 rhinovirus/enterovirus. To date, 149 non-influenza co-infections have been identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

For week 15/2014:

- Low intensity was reported by all reporting countries, while widespread or regional activity was reported by three countries.
- Of the 303 sentinel specimens tested across 15 countries, 13% were positive for

influenza virus. The proportion of positive specimens decreased substantially compared to the previous week.

- Four countries reported 40 hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases, 11 of which were admitted to intensive care units.

Overall, influenza activity continued to decline but influenza viruses still circulated in some reporting countries. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

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

For week 15, ending 12 April 2014:

Influenza: Two cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (1 influenza A/H1N1 and 1 influenza B) among US military basic trainees.

FRI surveillance:

- All eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values.
- *C. pneumoniae* was found in FRI and pneumonia cases at Ft. Leonard Wood. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

## The flu is back. (It never really goes away.)

23 April - Many communities are experiencing an increase in flu, part of a second wave that is hitting some regions of the country particularly hard, health officials say. Most of the effects are in the northeast — New England, New York and New Jersey – but some parts of the mid-Atlantic are seeing increased flu activity. Federal health officials say it's common for an uptick in flu to occur in March and April. Often, that is caused by an increase in the influenza B virus, a strain different from the ones that dominated earlier in the flu season.

[Washington Post](#)

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### **VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

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## Incidence and trends of infection with pathogens transmitted commonly through food — Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network, 10 U.S. Sites, 2006–2013

18 April - Foodborne disease continues to be an important problem in the United States. Most illnesses are preventable. To evaluate progress toward prevention, the Foodborne

Diseases Active Surveillance Network\* (FoodNet) monitors the incidence of laboratory-confirmed infections caused by nine pathogens transmitted commonly through food in 10 U.S. sites, covering approximately 15% of the U.S. population. This report summarizes preliminary 2013 data and describes trends since 2006. In 2013, a total of 19,056 infections, 4,200 hospitalizations, and 80 deaths were reported. For most infections, incidence was well above national Healthy People 2020 incidence targets and highest among children aged <5 years. Compared with 2010–2012, the estimated incidence of infection in 2013 was lower for Salmonella, higher for Vibrio, and unchanged overall. Since 2006–2008, the overall incidence has not changed significantly. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## Kraft recalls 96,000 pounds of hot dogs due to undeclared allergen

21 April - Kraft Foods Group Inc is recalling about 96,000 pounds of Oscar Mayer Classic Wieners because the packages may instead contain Classic Cheese Dogs made with milk, a known allergen. The product labels are incorrect as they do not reflect the ingredients associated with the pasteurized cheese in the cheese dogs, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) said in a statement on Sunday. [Reuters](#)

## USDA will require reporting of killer piglet virus PEDv

18 April - In an expected move, the U.S. Department of Agriculture on Friday announced new measures to combat the spread of disease in the U.S. pig population. The agency said it would require reporting of the porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDv), which has killed millions of piglets over the past year, and the Swine Delta Coronavirus. USDA will also require tracking movements of pigs, vehicles, other equipment leaving affected premises. Movements of pigs will still be allowed. [Reuters](#)

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### WELLNESS

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## Are electronic cigarettes a public good or a health hazard?

23 April - When electronic cigarettes first appeared a little over a decade ago, they were hailed by public health advocates-as well as some smokers-as a godsend: a tool to help smokers quit while mitigating the most harmful effects of tobacco... Very quickly, however, enthusiasm faded, when some public health advocates began worrying that the cure was worse than the disease... This has created a dilemma for health regulators, says Quelch. Do they regulate e-cigarettes in order to decrease the number of new smokers who may pick

up the habit, or do they apply a light hand in order to increase the number of existing smokers who will quit. "Put crudely," says Quelch, "how many nicotine addicts is it worth the risk of creating to have one tobacco smoker quit?" [Forbes](#)

## Dirty money: A microbial jungle thrives in your wallet

23 April - Each dollar bill carries about 3,000 types of bacteria on its surface, scientists have found. Most are harmless. But cash also has DNA from drug-resistant microbes. And your wad of dough may even have a smudge of anthrax and diphtheria. In other words, your wallet is a portable petri dish. And currency may be one way antibiotic-resistant genes move around cities, says biologist Jane Carlton, who's leading the Dirty Money Project at the New York University. The project offers an in-depth look at the living organisms shacking up on our cash. One goal of the work is to provide information that could help health workers catch disease outbreaks in New York City before they spread very far. [NPR](#)

## Improving feelings of control may curb desire to drink

21 April - The authors of a new study say that manipulating alcohol drinkers' sense of control can counteract the negative feelings that motivate them to drink. People who have a strong sense of control believe their lives are controlled by their own choices rather than the actions of others, luck or other external factors. Feeling a lack of control often impairs people's ability to achieve their goals and can reduce their quality of life and damage their health, the authors say. "The most important finding from the study is that simple techniques can be used to change drinkers' feelings of control - this includes increasing their feeling that they can control their drinking," Miles Cox told Reuters Health in an email. [Reuters](#)

## Mental and physical toll of bullying persists for decades



19 April - ... Some may still consider bullying a harmless part of growing up, but mounting evidence suggests that the adverse effects of being bullied aren't something kids can just shake off. The psychological and physical tolls, like anxiety and depression, can follow a person into early adulthood. In fact, the damage doesn't stop there, a

British study published this week in the American Journal of Psychiatry suggests. It actually lasts well into the adults' 40s and 50s... The study began with a national survey of nearly 18,000 children in England, Scotland and Wales who were born during a single week in 1958... Researchers found that at age 50, those who'd been bullied – particularly those who were repeatedly bullied — reported somewhat poorer physical health than those who hadn't been, and also had an increased incidence of anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts. They also had lower education attainment; memory tests indicated that they tended, as a group, to have somewhat poorer cognitive function than those who weren't bullied. [NPR](#)

## More employers starting wellness programs to reduce health costs, pushed in part by overhaul

23 April - ... More companies are starting or expanding wellness programs that aim to reduce their medical costs by improving their employees' health... The Affordable Care Act is one reason the programs are spreading. The federal law calls for a 40 percent tax on expensive benefit plans starting in 2018, and many companies that offer employer-based coverage already have begun looking for ways to lower costs and avoid that tax... Businesses see wellness programs as a win for themselves and their workers. But studies have shown that the programs have a limited ability to reduce costs. They also raise concerns about privacy and discrimination against older workers or those who are more likely to have chronic conditions. Penalties also can hit lower-wage workers harder than they would executives because premiums already consume a larger portion of those workers' paychecks. [StarTribune](#)

## New research shows people are thinking about their health early in the week

21 April - A new study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* analyzing weekly patterns in health-related Google searches reveals a recurring pattern that could be leveraged to improve public health strategies. Investigators from San Diego State University, the Santa Fe Institute, Johns Hopkins University, and the Monday Campaigns, analyzed "healthy" Google searches (searches that included the term healthy and were indeed health-related, e.g., "healthy diet") originating in the U.S. from 2005 to 2012. They found that on average, searches for health topics were 30 percent more frequent at the beginning of the week than on days later in the week, with the lowest average number of searches on Saturday. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#)

## Why mumps and measles can spread even when we're vaccinated

18 April - ... Dr. William Schaffner at Vanderbilt University [says]... Measles is a terrific vaccine. If you get two doses, it's predicted to protect 99.99 percent of people for life. That case [of a young woman] in New York was so unusual that it's come to everyone's attention. On rare occasions, the virus trumps an individual's protection. The mumps vaccine, on the other hand, is not so good. The protection rate varies from study to study. But it's usually in the mid-80s. Both vaccines, for mumps and measles, are tamed versions of the viruses. The viruses aren't killed but what we call attenuated, live viruses. If you don't attenuate the mumps virus enough, you get better protection but more complications with the vaccine. So we're walking a fine line. To avoid complications, the mumps vaccine doesn't protect as well as the measles. [NPR](#)

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## Democratic Republic of Congo: Yellow fever

24 April - On 12 March 2014, 2 events of yellow fever were reported in the North and in the South of DRC. Six laboratory-confirmed cases with yellow fever virus infection were reported. Of these, 3 were from Bondo health zone<sup>1</sup>, Orientale Province, 2 from Buta health zone, Orientale Province and 1 from Kikondja health zone, Katanga Province. In total 139 suspected, probable and confirmed cases, including 6 death were reported. [WHO](#)

## Nigeria: Lead poisoning nightmare may be easing

21 April - Children in northwestern Nigeria are no longer dying by the hundreds. That's the promising word from Mary Jean Brown, chief of the lead poisoning prevention program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She is a co-author of a recent assessment of the lead poisoning crisis in Nigeria. From November 2009 to May 2010, some 400 children died in the northwestern state of Zamfara. They were poisoned by lead dust released during the processing of gold ore. Doctors Without Borders called it the worst case of environmental lead poisoning in years. Brown and her colleagues reviewed subsequent efforts to eliminate the lead dust. To see if protective efforts were working, they reviewed data collected in 2012 on the level of lead in the blood of youngsters age 5 and under — with encouraging results. "The assessment found few children in need of medical treatment," the team writes in the current issue of Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. [NPR](#)

## Polio threatens to spread through Central Africa

19 April - In Central Africa, there are new fears that polio is on the move. Polio cases in Cameroon have spread to the tiny country of Equatorial Guinea, and there's concern it could spread even further in the region... JASON BEAUBIEN, BYLINE: The problem with polio cropping up in Equatorial Guinea is that polio vaccination rates for kids in that country are the lowest in the world. Despite being Africa's third-largest oil producer, Equatorial Guinea only manages to vaccinate 39 percent of its children against polio. The World Health Organization pushes countries to keep polio vaccination rates above 80 percent, and most nations are in the high 90s... Oliver Rosenbauer, with the WHO's Polio Eradication Initiative in Geneva says that efforts to contain the Cameroon outbreak have fallen flat. Seven kids in Cameroon have been paralyzed by polio since October. The number of actual cases is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of how far the poliovirus has spread. Rosenbauer says the Cameroon outbreak is expanding, and this could have grave consequences for other countries in the region. [NPR](#)

## Refugees, returnees from Nigeria strain Niger host population



23 April - There are now more returnees and refugees in Niger's southeastern region of Diffa near the border with Nigeria than there are Malian refugees in western Niger, straining host populations who are already some of the poorest people in the world, and the local authorities.

According to UNHCR, some 40,000 people have taken refuge in Diffa Region following an upsurge in Boko Haram violence in Nigeria. Others have fled to Cameroon and Chad... There are currently no refugee camps in Diffa Region so host families across 21 villages have taken in people. Many of the arrivals are women who have lost their husbands, or children who have become separated from their parents, according to Hawna. Their first priority is to find shelter and food. [IRIN](#)

## West Africa: Ebola virus disease

22 April – **Guinea:** As of 18:00 on 20 April, the Ministry of Health (MOH) of Guinea has reported a cumulative total of 208 clinical cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), including 136 deaths. To date, 169 patients have been tested for ebolavirus infection and 112 cases have been laboratory confirmed, including 69 deaths. In addition, 41 cases (34 deaths) meet the probable case definition for EVD and 55 cases (33 deaths) are classified as suspected cases. Twenty-five (25) health care workers (HCW) have been affected (18 confirmed), with 16 deaths (12 confirmed)...

**Liberia:** From 13 March, the date of onset of the first laboratory confirmed case in Liberia, to 21 April, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Liberia has reported a total of 34 clinically compatible cases of EVD; 6 confirmed cases, including 6 deaths, 2 probable cases and 26 suspected cases. The date of onset of the most recent confirmed case was 6 April and the date of admission of the last confirmed case was 10 April...

**Sierra Leone:** As of 22 April 2014, clinical samples from 19 clinically compatible cases of EVD have been tested at the Kenema Government Hospital. All 19 samples tested negative for ebolavirus. [WHO](#)

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**USCENTCOM**

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

24 April - On 22 April 2014, the Ministry of Health of Jordan reported an additional laboratory-confirmed case of infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus

(MERS-CoV)... Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 254 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 93 deaths. [WHO](#)

## Saudi Arabia reports 11 new cases of MERS virus, first in Mecca

23 April - Saudi Arabia said on Wednesday it had discovered 11 more cases of the potentially deadly Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), including what appeared to be the first case in the Muslim holy city of Mecca. A health ministry statement said eight of the people were in intensive care, two were stable, including a 24-year-old Saudi man from the "holy capital" Mecca, and one showed no symptoms. Three of those affected worked in health care, it said. Saudi Arabia has witnessed a jump in the rate of infection with the virus in recent weeks, with many of the new cases recorded in Jeddah, the kingdom's second largest city... The jump in Saudi cases is of particular concern as the country is expected to see a large influx of pilgrims from around the world in July during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, followed in early October by the arrival of millions of people to perform the annual Haj in Mecca and Medina. [Reuters](#)

## Saudi Arabia: Saudi health minister sacked as Mers death toll rises

22 April - Abdullah al-Rabiah was dismissed just days after visiting hospitals in Jeddah to calm a public hit by panic over the spread of the respiratory virus. Saudi has registered the largest number of infections of Mers (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome). The ministry said it had registered 261 cases of infection across the kingdom... Public Health England said the recent rise in the number of Mers infections in Saudi could be the result of a number of factors: a change in the virus itself, a consequence of more active surveillance or some sort of, as yet unexplained, seasonality. [BBC News](#)

## Syria: Thousands starving on outskirts of Damascus; situation 'unprecedented in living memory,' U.N. says



21 April - Months ago, in times better than these, the only thing that could be obtained at the markets of Yarmouk in southern Damascus was a "green starch" that could be fried and eaten. One kilogram (2.2 pounds) of rice cost between \$70 and \$100. Boys scurried in search of dandelions and cactus leaves. A common meal included a bowl of water and spice. Some drank dog milk. Others ate fertilizer. Many had nothing at all. And then, 12 days ago, after the Syrian authorities cut off food shipments into the Palestinian refugee camp in Yarmouk, everything became more dire. More than 48 hours have now passed since the United Nations says food ran out for nearly 20,000 people dependent on aid in Yarmouk, which has suffered some of the worst fighting in the Syrian war. Today the community, which sits on the outskirts of Damascus, is little more than a

warren of bombed-out buildings long on rubble and short on everything else. "It is unprecedented in living memory for a [U.N.]-assisted population to be subject to abject desperation in this way and the sheer humanitarian facts cry out for a response," United Nations Relief and Works Agency spokesman Chris Gunness told London's Observer.

[Washington Post](#)

## Syria/U.S.: U.S. cites 'indications' toxic chemical was used in Syria attack

21 April - The State Department said Monday that it is investigating allegations that the Syrian government used a toxic chemical in an attack on a rebel-controlled area, raising questions about whether President Bashar al-Assad is violating an international agreement to destroy his most lethal chemical stockpiles. "We have indications of the use of a toxic industrial chemical, probably chlorine, in Syria this month," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said. She said the toxin was used in the rebel-held village of Kafr Zeita, in Hama province, about 125 miles north of Damascus. [Washington Post](#)

## United Arab Emirates: UAE mothers divided over breastfeeding law

22 April - It is one of the most personal decisions facing any new mother. But in the UAE, the question of whether or not to breastfeed has in recent months, come under increased public scrutiny, as the country considers enshrining into law the need for mothers to nurse their children until the age of two. The proposal was added to a child protection bill passed by the UAE's Federal National Council - an advisory and legislative body - in January, and has since prompted much discussion about breastfeeding as a requirement rather than a choice. Proponents of the breastfeeding clause have argued that it is a maternal duty and is in the best interest of the child... [A] study published in 2013 by the BMC Public Health journal found that while a majority of the Emirati women surveyed breastfed their infants at birth, only 25 percent exclusively breastfed for six months. [Al Jazeera](#)

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### **USEUCOM**

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## United Kingdom: The public health crisis hiding in our food

20 April - [U.S. health] experts have been asking the food industry to [stop loading up their food with sodium] for decades... When salt levels in food drop, people's preference for salt also shifts down, so no one would notice a gradual reduction in sodium across all foods. That's exactly what Britain's Food Standards Agency has done. It divided processed food

into different categories, set salt-reduction targets in each category and then asked companies to meet those targets over time. And as they did that, from 2001 to 2011, sodium consumption by the British fell 15 percent. The new study shows that this drop in salt intake has been accompanied by a substantial reduction in average blood pressure, a 40 percent drop in deaths from heart attacks and a 42 percent decline in deaths from stroke. [New York Times](#)

## United Kingdom: Skin cancer rates 'surge since 1970s'

21 April - The incidence of the most serious skin cancer in Great Britain is now five times higher than it was in the 1970s, figures show. Cancer Research UK statistics show more than 13,000 people develop malignant melanoma each year, compared with around 1,800 in the mid-1970s. It says the rise is partly due to rising popularity of package holidays to Europe from the late 1960s. Sunbed use has also fuelled the increase, the charity has said. Malignant melanoma is now the fifth most common cancer, with more than 2,000 dying from it each year. [BBC News](#)

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### USNORTHCOM

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## U.S.: FDA proposes crackdown on e-cigarettes



24 April - The Food and Drug Administration... proposed rules that call for strict regulation of electronic cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, nicotine gels, water pipe tobacco and hookahs. Currently, only cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and roll-your-own tobacco come under the FDA's regulatory authority.

When these recommendations are finalized following a 75-day public comment period, the age limit to buy the products is expected to be at least 18, although individual states could choose to set it higher. Health warnings would also be required, and the sale of the products in vending machines would be prohibited. Initially, the only health warning required for e-cigarettes would be about the potential for addiction to nicotine. Manufacturers would be required to register all their products and ingredients with the FDA. They would be able to market new products only after an FDA review, and they would need to provide scientific evidence before making any direct or implied claims of risk reduction associated with their product. [CNN](#)

## U.S., Georgia: Governor signs 'guns everywhere' into law

23 April - ...Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal, a Republican, on Wednesday signed the state's "Safe Carry Protection Act," which critics dubbed the "guns everywhere bill," in north Georgia...

The new law, which goes into effect July 1, allows licensed gun owners in Georgia and visitors from 28 other states to bring a gun into a bar without restrictions and carry a firearm into some government buildings that don't have security measures. It also allows school districts to decide whether they want some employees to carry a firearm and religious leaders to decide whether to allow licensed gun owners to tote to their church, synagogue or mosque. [USA Today](#)

## **U.S.: Indoor firing ranges and elevated blood lead levels — United States, 2002–2013**

25 April - Indoor firing ranges are a source of lead exposure and elevated blood lead levels (BLLs) among employees, their families, and customers, despite public health outreach efforts and comprehensive guidelines for controlling occupational lead exposure... During 2002–2012, a total of 2,056 persons employed in the categories "police protection" and "other amusement and recreation industries (including firing ranges)" had elevated BLLs reported to ABLES; an additional 2,673 persons had non-work-related BLLs likely attributable to target shooting. To identify deficiencies at two indoor firing ranges linked to elevated BLLs, the Washington State Division of Occupational Safety and Health (WaDOSH) and NIOSH conducted investigations in 2012 and 2013, respectively. The WaDOSH investigation found a failure to conduct personal exposure and biologic monitoring for lead and also found dry sweeping of lead-containing dust. The NIOSH investigation found serious deficiencies in ventilation, housekeeping, and medical surveillance. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## **U.S.: New painkiller rekindles addiction concerns**

21 April - ...[M]any state health officials and advocacy groups were incredulous last fall when the Food and Drug Administration approved an even more powerful prescription painkiller — against the advice of its own expert advisory committee. The drug is Zohydro ER, a long-acting formulation of the opioid hydrocodone... [S]tates in New England are moving to restrict the use of Zohydro, and 29 state attorneys general have asked the F.D.A. to reconsider its approval... F.D.A. officials say they have an obligation to approve new treatment options for the more than 100 million Americans who live with chronic pain... Members of the F.D.A. committee who voted against approval... pointed to what one member called "very modest" reductions in pain scores among trial participants. And some members felt a 12-week trial was not long enough to prove Zohydro was effective for chronic pain, which is defined as lasting more than three months. Many experts do not recommend opioids for chronic pain. [New York Times](#)

## **U.S.: Treatment practices, outcomes, and costs of multidrug-resistant and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis, United States, 2005–2007**

[May 2014](#) - To describe factors associated with multidrug-resistant (MDR), including extensively-drug-resistant (XDR), tuberculosis (TB) in the United States, we abstracted inpatient, laboratory, and public health clinic records of a sample of MDR TB patients

reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from California, New York City, and Texas during 2005–2007. At initial diagnosis, MDR TB was detected in 94% of 130 MDR TB patients and XDR TB in 80% of 5 XDR TB patients... Nearly three-quarters of patients were hospitalized, 78% completed treatment, and 9% died during treatment. Direct costs, mostly covered by the public sector, averaged \$134,000 per MDR TB and \$430,000 per XDR TB patient; in comparison, estimated cost per non-MDR TB patient is \$17,000. Drug resistance was extensive, care was complex, treatment completion rates were high, and treatment was expensive. [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#)

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## USPACOM

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### Australian Defence Force veterans detail growing scourge of post-traumatic stress disorder

23 April - As Australia prepares to mark Anzac Day commemorations, a former top commander is warning of a tidal wave of new post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) cases amongst returning veterans. There has been a four-fold increase in PTSD cases since Australian troops first went to war in Afghanistan in 2001. Some veterans have told the ABC the health system will not cope - and say some of their comrades will be reluctant or unable to admit that they have PTSD. Many do not report their symptoms, and as the ABC reported yesterday, their subsequent unravelling has resulted in a suicide toll three times that of Australia's combat losses in Afghanistan. [ABC News](#)

### India: Measles mess - Bangalore sees a rash of cases

24 April - This isn't the season for measles yet 40 cases in the city have flummoxed doctors. Nearly 70 per cent of the afflicted are children below 14 years. "Measles usually occurs in winter, not summer. But we are attending to such cases now," say doctors. Though reasons for the outbreak are yet to be traced, doctors attribute it to irregular vaccination. "This is true of the migrant population, especially the labour class. If one child in the group who is not immunized gets the virus, the disease can spread to other children," say doctors. [Times of India](#)

### Mongolia: Pollutants from coal-burning stoves strongly associated with miscarriages in Mongolia

23 April - Burning coal for domestic heating may contribute to early fetal death according to a new study by experts from The Saban Research Institute of Children's Hospital Los Angeles and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia – the coldest capital city in the world. In a paper published today in the journal BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, researchers report

“alarmingly strong statistical correlations” between seasonal ambient air pollutants and pregnancy loss in Ulaanbaatar (UB), Mongolia. UB has one of the highest levels of air pollution of all world capitals, with sulfide dioxide and particulate matter levels during winter months, which are up to 23 times World Health Organization standards. [EurekAlert!](#)

## Vietnam measles outbreak ‘could have been prevented’: WHO



23 April - The World Health Organization chief in Vietnam said the deadly measles outbreak in the country could have been prevented through a more effective vaccination program, but added that the authorities have strengthened their capability to contain the crisis. Doctors say that more than 7,000 children have been affected by the highly contagious virus since it resurfaced in Vietnam late last year, while at least 127 have died—nearly all of whom were located in the capital Hanoi and other nearby localities... The WHO says two doses of the vaccine are needed to ensure immunity and prevent outbreaks, as about 15 percent of vaccinated children fail to develop immunity from the first dose, but experts have suggested that many have not received their second shot. [Radio Free Asia](#)

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### USSOUTHCOM

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## Chikungunya cases still increasing in some Caribbean areas

22 April - Although the ongoing Caribbean outbreak of chikungunya has slowed or stayed steady in some areas, it is increasing in others, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) reported in its latest Communicable Disease Threats Report, released today. In the French West Indies, where the outbreak began last December on the French side of St. Martin, the number of new cases has generally leveled off or decreased, says the ECDC. However, an increasing number of autochthonous cases is reported in French Guiana, Dominica, and Anguilla. The Dominican Republic as of Apr 17 reported 17 confirmed and 767 suspected cases in its San Cristobal province. More than 25,000 probable and confirmed cases have occurred, with six deaths. Most territories in the French West Indies have stopped seeking laboratory confirmation for all suspected cases because of the large caseload. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

## Chile: Authorities on alert for new synthetic drugs

23 April - “Delirium” is more than just an effect of synthetic drugs: It was the name of a police operation in April that netted the largest seizure of synthetic drugs in Chile’s history.

The Counter-narcotics Brigade of Chile's Investigations Police (PDI) on April 8 seized 3,987 doses of LSD, ecstasy and amphetamine derivatives 2CB and 25i-NBome, along with a new substance known as Foxy, with a collective street value of \$59 million pesos (about US\$106,000)... "Effective control of chemical precursors is forcing manufacturers to seek alternatives to create new drugs," Pérez said. "This dynamic is changing every day."

[InfoSurHoy](#)

## Peru: Fake morning-after pills found in Peru may hint at bigger problem

18 April - A survey of emergency contraceptives in Lima, Peru, turned up worrying results: More than a quarter were either counterfeit or defective. Some of the morning-after pills tested contained too little of the active ingredient, or none at all. Other pills contained another drug altogether, researchers reported Friday in the journal PLOS ONE. Swallowing these fakes can result in dangerous side effects, not to mention unwanted pregnancies. "The biggest implication is the quality of emergency contraceptives in developing countries cannot be taken for granted," says Facundo Fernandez, a chemist at the Georgia Institute of Technology, who contributed to the study. [NPR](#)

## U.N. struggles to stem Haiti cholera epidemic



19 April - For three years, the United Nations has refused to address whether its peacekeepers brought a deadly strain of cholera to Haiti, insisting instead that it was more important to help the country stanch the disease once and for all. But on that score, it is still very far behind. In some ways, Haiti is even less equipped to tackle cholera than it was three years ago. The United Nations raised barely a fourth of the \$38 million it needed last year to provide lifesaving supplies, including the most basic, like water purification tablets. Clinics have run short of oral rehydration salts to treat the debilitating diarrhea that accompanies the disease. Some treatment centers in the countryside have shut down as the aid groups that ran them have moved on to other crises. And a growing share of patients are dying after they finally reach hospitals, according to the United Nations' own assessments.

[New York Times](#)

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