

26 April 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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NMCPHC to Host Webinar on Sleep Issues

The Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center webinar will identify signs and symptoms of sleep problems and common sleep disorders, describe prevalence of sleep problems and summarize health behavior strategies to help mitigate sleep disturbances. This session will be conducted on Defense Connect Online and certified health education specialists may receive one continuing education contact hour for the session.

Date: 1 May

Time: 12-1 p.m., EST

Register for the webinar.



WELLNESS

- 40 percent of parents give young kids cough/cold medicine that they shouldn't
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- Linking stress to diabetes and heart disease
- New medical exam policy for sexual assault cases
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- U.S.: New York City aims to ban cigarette sales for under age 21
- U.S.: Not enough data to support suicide screening: panel
- U.S.: Notes from the Field - Exposures to discarded sulfur mustard munitions — Mid-Atlantic and New England States 2004–2012

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- Australia: Genital wart decline tracked to HPV vaccine
- Bangladesh building collapse kills at least 123
- China: Quake rescuers rush to isolated areas
- China: Tuberculosis, MDR
- In China, breathing becomes a childhood risk
- Solomon Islands: Solomons gets foreign help to deal with dengue outbreak

USSOUTHCOM

- Brazil: Trichinosis outbreak affected 30 people in San Martin de los Andes

American Lung Association's "State of the Air 2013"

Thanks to the Clean Air Act, the United States continues to make progress providing healthier air. The "State of the Air 2013" shows that the nation's air quality is overall much cleaner, especially compared to just a decade ago. Still, over 131.8 million people—42 percent of the nation—live where pollution levels are too often dangerous to breathe.



- Brazil: Increase in the number of cases of whooping cough
- Paraguay: Suman 48 killed by dengue

U.S. MILITARY

Panelists: PTSD can't be cured, only managed



24 April - There is no way to cure post-traumatic stress disorder, but those suffering from it can learn to manage it, health professionals said Tuesday night. Kevin Smythe, a supervisory psychologist in the Mental Health Service Line at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center, said managing the disorder is currently the only option. "There are a lot of ebbs and flows (with the disorder)," Smythe said. He was one of five panelists to speak about the disorder and post-traumatic stress symptoms. [Military.com](#)

Signature scars of the long war

April 2013 - ... For 15 of the 16 illness/injury categories of interest, annual hospitalization rates remained fairly stable, with some year-to-year variability, throughout the 11-year war period. However, for mental disorders, annual hospitalization rates were fairly stable from 2002 through 2006 and then sharply increased from 2006 through 2012. As such, the hospitalization rate for mental disorders was approximately 8 percent higher in 2006 than 2002 but more than twice as high in 2012 as 2006. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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GLOBAL

HCV-targeting therapy shows more promise

23 April - An investigational drug that acts directly against the hepatitis C virus (HCV) works quickly and effectively, according to new reports. Each report on the oral nucleotide analogue sofosbuvir, appearing in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, focuses on different patient populations, but, with one exception, they suggest that the drug can deliver high cure rates and an acceptable safety profile with 12 weeks of therapy. In contrast, the current standard of care – involving pegylated interferon and ribavirin -- can take up to 48 weeks. [MedPage Today](#)

Research finds targeted screening for hepatitis C is cost-effective

24 April - Researchers at the University of Cincinnati have found that targeted screening for populations with a higher estimated prevalence for hepatitis C may be cost-effective. These

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.

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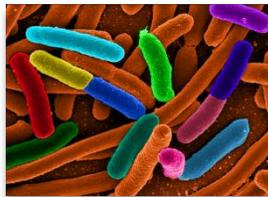
findings, published in the April 24, 2013, online edition of the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, indicate that targeted screening for chronic hepatitis C virus infection is cost-effective when the prevalence of hepatitis C in a population exceeds 0.84 percent (84/10,000). [EurekAlert!](#)

Scientists try new tactic against schistosomiasis



22 April - Every year, more than 240 million people get a potentially deadly parasitic infection known as schistosomiasis, transmitted by fresh water snails. Infection rates have risen to as high as 80 percent in some parts of Africa, where communities often rely on rivers and lakes for bathing, cooking and other household chores. In Saint-Louis, Senegal, aid workers are using another indigenous species, the prawn, to keep parasite levels in check in local rivers. [VOA](#)

Stronger antibiotics linked with bacteria evolving resistance faster



24 April - Combining various antibiotics will not help kill bacteria and in fact, help the bacteria evolve resistance to the drug combination faster, a new study says. The study included researchers from University of Exeter and Kiel University in Germany. The team first treated E-coli with various combinations of antibiotics. They found that the bacteria evolved resistance more quickly if it was treated with a strong combination of antibiotics. Researchers say that the bacteria thrive under aggressive treatments. This happens because the strong antibiotics kill all non-resistant bacteria, so the resistant forms of bacteria have very less competition and can multiply faster. [Nature World News](#)

Study links autism with antidepressant use during pregnancy

22 April - A cautiously worded [study](#) based on data collected in Sweden has found that "in utero exposure to both selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (S.S.R.I.'s) and nonselective monoamine reuptake inhibitors (tricyclic antidepressants) was associated with an increased risk of autism spectrum disorders, particularly without intellectual disability." The Swedish medical birth register (which contains data on current drug use reported by mothers early in their pregnancies), along with a system of publicly funded screenings for autism spectrum disorders and extensive national and regional registers of various health issues, make a detailed, population-based case-control study possible — one that controls for other variables like family income, parent educational level, maternal and paternal age and even maternal region of birth (all factors the authors note have been previously associated with autism). [New York Times](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

18 April - AFHSC is monitoring the current status of the H7N9 influenza outbreak in China. More information will be presented as it becomes available.

- ILI and Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) incidence rates continued to trend downward for all regions. This season, there have been 305 reportable medical event (RME) influenza cases among service members (82.6% were vaccinated); an additional 325 cases were reported among other beneficiaries.
- Across the overseas DoD laboratory surveillance network, influenza activity was at low levels.
- As of 26 March 2013, vaccine coverage in the active component of the U.S. Armed Forces is 97%. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 15 (April 7-13, 2013), influenza activity decreased in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 3,802 specimens tested and reported by collaborating laboratories, 354 (9.3%) 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: Ten pediatric deaths were reported.
- Geographic Spread of Influenza: Three states reported widespread influenza activity; 6 states reported regional influenza activity. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Week 15, 27 specimens were tested from 15 locations. There were three influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and three influenza B viruses detected.
- To date this influenza season, 3,530 specimens have been tested from 81 locations of which 1,057 were positive for influenza A (940 A(H3N2), 104 A(H1N1)pdm09, seven co-infections, and six A/not subtyped). Also, 338 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 320 specimens.
- There have been 234 other respiratory viruses isolated (55 adenovirus, 90 RSV, 80 parainfluenza, and nine enterovirus) cumulatively this season.
- According to [WHO](#), a total of 63 patients have been laboratory-confirmed with influenza A(H7N9) virus in China; including 14 deaths. More than a thousand close

contacts of the confirmed cases are being closely monitored.

- USAFSAM has prepared the [Novel Respiratory Pathogens Quick Sheet](#) in the event you have a suspect case of a novel respiratory pathogen.
- The final vaccination rates by service are as follows: Army - 94%, Air Force - 98%, Marines - 93%, Navy - 96%, Coast Guard - 98%. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

- In week 15/2013(8–14 April2013), 25 of 28 reporting countries indicated low-intensity transmission.
- Decreasing or stable trends were reported by all reporting countries.
- The proportion of influenza-positive sentinel specimens (34%) has continued to decrease since the peak observed in week 5/2013 (61%), in line with the lower numbers of specimens being tested.
- Since week 40/2012, 47% of sentinel surveillance specimens testing positive for influenza virus have been type A and 53% type B. Of the influenza A viruses subtyped, the proportion of A(H1)pdm09 viruses was 64%.
- Forty-four hospitalised, laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported by three countries.

In all reporting countries, influenza activity continued to decline or had already returned to baseline levels. After more than three months of active transmission, a long period compared to other years, the 2012–13 influenza season is waning and moving towards its end. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

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

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 13 April 2013:

- Influenza: One cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (B) among US military basic trainees.
- Adenovirus: Sporadic adenovirus cases at basic training centers in 2013.
- 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](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 13 April 2013 (Week 15):

Influenza-like illness (ILI) activity continues decreasing in both Army and civilian populations. Influenza B still exceeds influenza A among typed specimens. More cases of influenza virus A(H7N9) continue to be identified in China; risk to DoD personnel is still assessed as very low.

ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 15 were 2% lower than the same week last year.

Influenza cases: Two hospitalized influenza cases were reported to USAPHC in week 15. 97 hospitalized cases have been reported during this influenza season, 85 in dependents and 12 in Active Duty.

Acute Respiratory Disease at BCT sites: ARD rates remain low; rates did not increase significantly at any sites during week 15.

Viral specimens: During week 15, 127 of 611 (21%) laboratory specimens tested were positive for respiratory pathogens. Influenza B accounted for 51% of positive specimens. Most of the influenza positive specimens were from PRMC (11%); ERM and WRMC accounted for 7% each. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

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

25 April - As of 25 April 2013 (16:30 CET), one laboratory-confirmed case of human infection with the virus has been reported by the Taipei Centres for Disease Control (CDC). The patient is a 53-year-old man who had been working in Jiangsu province from 28 March to 9 April 2013. He returned from Jiangsu via Shanghai on 9 April 2013, and became ill on 12 April 2013. The patient was laboratory confirmed with the virus on 24 April 2013. To date, a total of 109 laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus including 22 deaths have been reported to WHO. Contacts of the confirmed cases are being closely monitored. [WHO](#)

Report: Most H7N9 patients had underlying conditions, animal exposure

24 April – Chinese health professionals said in a detailed account today of H7N9 flu cases that about three fourths of patients had underlying medical conditions, and the same percentage had been exposed to animals, including chickens... [The] review includes data

from 82 cases that were reported as of Apr 17. Since then, the outbreak total has grown to 109 illnesses, including 22 deaths... Among 664 hospitalized patients with unexplained pneumonia, 81 (12.2%) were infected with the new virus...

Most of the patients who had confirmed infections were men (73%), and most lived in urban settings (84%). Of 71 patients with available information, 54 (76%) had underlying medical conditions. Among 46 of that group with available data, 40 (87%) were at increased risk due to their age—either younger than 5 years or 65 or older. Four of the patients were poultry workers...

Details about animal exposure were available for 77 of the patients, and 59 (77%) said they had recent exposure to animals while working at or visiting a live-animal market...

The investigators wrote that the current mortality rate is 21%, but they expect it to increase, given that many of the patients are still critically ill...

Though extensive testing is needed to verify the source of H7N9, the Chinese authors strongly suspect poultry that don't show signs of disease... Limited human-to-human contact remains a possibility, the scientists wrote, especially in blood relatives. [CIDRAP](#)

Taiwan man contracts H7N9 bird flu, first outside mainland China

24 April - A 53-year-old Taiwan businessman has contracted the H7N9 strain of bird flu while travelling in [China](#), Taiwan's Health Department said on Wednesday, the first reported case outside of mainland China. The man was hospitalized after becoming ill three days after returning from Suzhou on April 9, Health Department Minister Wen-Ta Chiu told a news conference. Chiu said the patient was diagnosed with the H7N9 virus and was in serious condition. Chiu said Taiwan will take appropriate measures, including opening a special out-patient clinic for H7N9 cases. [Reuters](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Europe: Schmallenberg virus, international trade

23 April - Belarus has suspended import of beef cattle, sheep and goats from Denmark, BelTA learnt from the veterinary and food supervision department of the Agriculture and Food Ministry of Belarus. The decision was made in connection with the reemergence of Schmallenberg virus [SBV] infection in Denmark (Zealand island). In this regard, Belarus' veterinary authorities have suspended the imports and transit through its territory of cattle and small ruminants from Denmark. The recently detected virus provisionally named "Schmallenberg" (SBV) virus (Simbu serogroup, Bunyaviridae family, genus Orthobunyavirus) is found in ruminants... Current knowledge suggests that it is unlikely that SBV can cause disease in humans. [ProMED-mail](#)

Koala chlamydia: The STD threatening an Australian icon



24 April - The koala is unique to Australia and is an important symbol of the country. But numbers are plummeting and the survival of koalas is under threat. One of the reasons is the sexually transmitted disease chlamydia... Last year, [veterinary surgeon Amber]Gillett

and her team treated about 300 koalas for chlamydia - and so far, 2013 has been a busy year too... Many have to be put down, and about half of females are left infertile - which means fewer koalas are being born. Experts say it's hard to predict the total number of koalas in Australia, but it's likely to be somewhere between 50,000 and 100,000 - and in some areas, numbers have dropped by as much as 80% in the last 10 years. [BBC News](#)

U.S.: Food industry opposes FDA plan to boost food safety budget with fees

22 April - Much of the food industry opposes paying fees that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is proposing to pay for an increase in its food safety budget in fiscal year 2014, Food Safety News (FSN) reported today. Earlier this month the FDA announced that it was seeking a \$295.8 million increase in its food safety budget for next year, with \$252.4 million of that coming from a food facility registration and inspection fee and a food importer fee. In connection with a hearing late last week, a coalition of industry groups sent a letter to leaders of the Senate appropriations subcommittee that oversees the FDA, urging them not to impose any "new food regulatory taxes on industry and consumers," FSN reported. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S.: Foodborne hospitalization analysis puts ground beef, chicken as top risks

23 April - An analysis of hospitalization rates in foodborne outbreaks over the past 12 years found that ground beef and chicken are the riskiest meats, according a 25-page report today from the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), a health and food safety watchdog group based in Washington, D.C. The CSPI ranked 12 categories of meat and poultry based on the likelihood of hospitalizations linked to the most common pathogens reported in the foods. Ground beef topped the list, because *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 hospitalizes about half of those it infects, the CSPI said in a press release. Caroline Smith DeWaal, the CPSP's food safety director, said that a quarter of those sickened with *Salmonella* are hospitalized. [CIDRAP](#)

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40 percent of parents give young kids cough/cold medicine that they shouldn't

22 April - ... More than 40 percent of parents reported giving their children under age 4 cough medicine or multi-symptom cough and cold medicine, according to the latest University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health. Twenty-five percent gave those children decongestants. In 2008, the federal Food and Drug Administration issued an advisory that these over-the-counter medicines not be used in infants and children under age 2. They have not been proven effective for young children and may cause serious side effects. [EurekaAlert!](#)

Consequences of the 'Cinnamon Challenge'

22 April - It is known as the cinnamon challenge, and in recent years, the phenomenon has become wildly popular. On YouTube, tens of thousands of videos show people shoveling a tablespoon of ground cinnamon into their mouths. The videos show them coughing, choking and lunging for water, usually as friends watch and laugh... But now doctors and poison control experts are warning people that this seemingly harmless dare is more dangerous than it appears. A report published in the journal *Pediatrics* on Monday found that the stunt has led to a growing number of calls to poison control centers and visits to emergency rooms. Some teenagers have suffered collapsed lungs and ended up on ventilators. [New York Times](#)

Linking stress to diabetes and heart disease

22 April - High levels of cortisol — the so-called stress hormone — have been associated with cardiovascular disease in some studies, but not in others. This may be because measuring cortisol in blood or saliva at one point in time may pick up acute stress, but it fails to account for long-term stress. Now Dutch researchers have assessed cortisol levels over several months by analyzing scalp hair samples... The researchers measured the cortisol content in hair samples corresponding to roughly three months of growth from 283 older men and women, average age 75. They also gathered self-reported data about coronary heart disease, stroke, peripheral artery disease, Type 2 diabetes, lung disease, cancer and osteoporosis. Compared with those in the lowest quarter for cortisol, those in the highest quarter had about three times the risk for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. There was no association between cortisol levels and the risk for lung disease, cancer or osteoporosis. [New York Times](#)

New medical exam policy for sexual assault cases

24 April - On Wednesday, the Department of Justice issued new national guidelines for forensic medical examinations in cases of sexual assault. The recommendations, revised from those issued in 2004, are aimed at establishing voluntary standards for care when rape victims seek help at hospitals or other medical facilities. The standards will be mandatory for practitioners working in federal prisons or in the military. The guidelines emphasize that the

rape victim's physical and emotional needs should take precedence over criminal justice considerations... "Research shows that once victims get support, they're more likely to cooperate with the criminal justice system," Ms. Hanson said... Unlike the 2004 protocol, the new guidelines also recommend that rape victims be offered emergency contraception or — in cases where health professionals have moral objections — information on how to immediately obtain the medication. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Recalls of dietary supplements highlight mystery ingredients

23 April - Just because an over-the-counter product is called a dietary supplement doesn't mean that it's harmless. Quite a few [supplements](#) have been found to include hidden and potentially risky ingredients, including drugs. A recent [study](#) published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* found 273 recalls of dietary supplements between 2004 and 2012 because they contained drugs that could cause "serious adverse health consequences or death." When it comes to regulation of supplements, the FDA is "more reactive ... than proactive," explains Dr. Ziv Harel, an internist at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto and lead author of the study. The majority of these supplements were marketed for sexual enhancement, bodybuilding or weight loss. About one-quarter of them were manufactured outside the U.S. [NPR](#)

When cheeseburger = walking, will we eat less?

23 April - Nutrition labeling has been required on packaged food since 1990, and the new federal food safety law will require calorie counts to be posted for restaurant food — all in an effort to get the American public to eat healthier. But most studies on calorie count labels show they don't do much to nudge people toward better food choices. If I want that oh-so-delicious Chunky Monkey ice cream, knowing that a half-cup serving [delivers](#) 300 calories and 18 grams of fat isn't going to stop me. But what if I knew that it would take me an hour and 20 minutes of brisk walking to burn off those Chunky Monkey calories? Would I think twice? Probably, says Ashlei James, a graduate student at Texas Christian University. She tested how much people ate when given menus with labels that stated how much brisk walking would be required to burn off the calories in a given food item. She compared that to menus with calorie counts, and those with no information, and tracked how much people ordered and ate. The menus with and without calorie counts had no effect on how much the 300 participants, ages 18 to 30, ordered and ate. But the people who saw the walking times listed ordered fewer of the burgers, fries, chicken tenders, salad, dessert, sodas and water on the menu. They ordered less food, and ate less, too. [NPR](#)

Why circumcision lowers risk of HIV



19 April - Promising trials hinted that circumcision could lower rates of HIV infection, but until now, researchers didn't fully understand why. Now, in a study published in the journal *mBio*, scientists say that changes in the population of bacteria living on and around the penis may be partly responsible. Relying on the latest technology that make sequencing the genes of

organisms faster and more accessible, Lance Price of the Translational Genomics Research institute (TGen) and his colleagues conducted a detailed genetic analysis of the microbial inhabitants of the penis among a group of Ugandan men who provided samples before circumcision and again a year later. [CNN](#)

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USAFRICOM

Cassava and mental deficits

22 April - Konzo, a disease that comes from eating bitter cassava that has not been prepared properly — that is, soaked for days to break down its natural cyanide — has long been known to cripple children. The name, from the Yaka language of Central Africa, means “tied legs,” and victims stumble as if their knees were bound together. Now researchers have found that children who live where konzo is common but have no obvious physical symptoms may still have mental deficits from the illness... The mental damage was like that done by lead exposure but more subtle, Dr. Boivin said. [New York Times](#)

Kenya: Technology revolutionizes TB management

18 April - The use of technology is revolutionizing the way Kenya manages tuberculosis (TB). Through a computer- and mobile-phone based programme called TIBU, health facilities are able to request TB drugs in real-time and manage TB patient data more effectively, health officials say. They also use the platform to carry out health education. “One of the challenges we have had with TB treatment is people defaulting [on treatment], but this will reduce significantly because through TIBU we will be able to track down patient treatment progress,” Joseph Sitienei, head of the Division of Leprosy, TB and Lung Disease at Kenya’s National AIDS Control Programme, told IRIN. [IRIN](#)

Nigeria: 1,000 polio cases caused by misinformation - Minister

23 April - The Minister of State for Health, Dr Muhammad Pate, has expressed shock that more than 1,000 children have been paralysed by the wild polio virus largely due to the rejection of immunisation in the northern part of the country. Pate was reacting to a newspaper report that an Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) don, Prof Haruna Kaita, whose previous utterances allegedly stirred up the anti-polio controversy, had repented his decision. The minister told the New Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja on Sunday that Kaita's decision was a welcome development. “We are glad that the professor from ABU, whose previous utterances were associated with the misguided anti-polio controversy, has finally come out to straighten the facts from his perspective. [AllAfrica](#)

South Africa: Shortages of new one-a-day ARV pills

19 April - Just days into the rollout of fixed-dose combination (FDC) antiretrovirals (ARVs) by South Africa's HIV treatment programme - the world's largest - activists are raising fears of drug shortages. Patients on the triple-therapy regimen will be able to take just one pill daily to control the virus. This has the advantages of improving adherence, simplifying regimens so that prescribing errors are reduced, and enabling the introduction of community models of care. [IRIN](#)

Uganda's soaring HIV infection rate linked to infidelity



19 April - HIV activists are struggling to find ways to address one of Uganda's biggest health crises: soaring HIV infections among couples, caused largely by cheating spouses. The subject can be too politically and culturally sensitive to discuss. The face of Uganda's AIDS epidemic is changing. In the 1990s, the country brought down its infection rate dramatically with a campaign advocating ABC - abstinence, being faithful and condoms. The government urged people to get off the so-called "sexual network" and into stable, committed relationships, which were considered safe. But that is no longer true. According to the results of a national survey released last year, more than 40 percent of new infections are happening among married couples. [VOA](#)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan - the world's most dangerous place for aid workers



18 April - Attacks on aid workers in Afghanistan - the world's most dangerous country for aid workers - are likely to be as high in 2013 as the worst year on record, 2011, according to a new report from the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) published today. The latest figures - which tally only incidents affecting NGO personnel, excluding UN aid workers - show that in the first three months of this year, NGOs were affected by 39 separate incidents of violence, a 63 percent increase over 2012. Twenty incidents were attributed to armed opposition groups, 11 to pro-government forces and eight to criminals. [IRIN](#)

Afghanistan: Scores dead after earthquake, flash floods

24 April - A powerful earthquake and flash floods in eastern Afghanistan have left scores of people dead. The U.S. Geological Survey said the earthquake had a magnitude of 5.7 and its

epicenter was 11 kilometers from Mehtar Lam, the capital of Afghanistan's eastern province of Laghman, at a depth of 70 kilometers. The Afghan Red Crescent in neighboring Nangarhar Province told RFE/RL that the quake left 12 people dead in Nangarhar. The Afghan Health Ministry said in a statement the quake injured more than 100 people in Nangarhar... Meanwhile, flash floods caused by heavy rains killed at least 13 people in the northern province of Balkh. Dozens of homes were destroyed and at least five people remain missing. [Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty](#)

Syria: Leishmaniasis on the rise in war-torn Syria

22 April - Health workers in northern Syria have reported a dramatic rise in cases of Leishmaniasis--locally dubbed "Aleppo Button Disease" for the sores it produces--and are calling on the World Health Organization and other international agencies for help. Leishmaniasis, transmitted through the bite of the common sandfly, is a complex of diseases affecting different parts of the body. The kind most commonly found in Syria is called cutaneous Leishmaniasis, which is characterized by welts or sores on the skin. These can sometimes become infected. [VOA](#)

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USEUCOM

Ancient DNA reveals Europe's dynamic genetic history



23 April - Ancient DNA recovered from a series of skeletons in central Germany up to 7,500 years old has been used to reconstruct the first detailed genetic history of modern Europe. The study, published today in *Nature Communications*, reveals a dramatic series of events including major migrations from both

Western Europe and Eurasia, and signs of an unexplained genetic turnover about 4,000 to 5,000 years ago. The research was performed at the University of Adelaide's Australian Centre for Ancient DNA (ACAD). Researchers used DNA extracted from bone and teeth samples from prehistoric human skeletons to sequence a group of maternal genetic lineages that are now carried by up to 45% of Europeans. [Science Daily](#)

England: HIV spread 'could be halted within generation'

23 April - The spread of HIV in England can be stopped within a generation, according to a new prevention campaign funded by the Department of Health. There are around 90,000 people living with HIV in England. One person in four does not know they have it. Gay and bisexual men and people in African communities make up three-quarters of cases. Focused screening and information for high-risk groups could end the epidemic, experts say. [BBC](#)

[News](#)

England: Measles vaccination plan targets 1m children

25 April - One million schoolchildren in England who missed MMR jabs are to be targeted by a vaccination plan aimed at curbing the growing threat of measles. Health officials warn epidemics similar to the one in Swansea, which has seen nearly 942 cases, could occur anywhere. There are fears that a generation of children have low levels of protection after the MMR scare a decade ago. The catch-up campaign, run through GPs, schools and community groups, will focus on children aged 10 to 16. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Deadly meningitis cases worry gay community

23 April - A series of bacterial meningitis cases in Southern California and New York City, resulting in the deaths of several gay men, have set the gay community on edge. However, preliminary tests suggest the cases on each coast aren't connected. Health activists became concerned in Los Angeles after a 33-year-old gay attorney from West Hollywood suddenly became ill from meningitis and died on April 13. The AIDS Healthcare Foundation, which advocates for health for gay men, initially criticized local health officials for not pushing for vaccinations. However, "we don't think it's part of an outbreak or due to him being a gay man," said Dr. Wayne Chen, the organization's acting chief of medicine. Still, the Los Angeles County's public health department is offering meningitis vaccinations for free for those who are poor or uninsured. In New York City, health officials are recommending that certain groups of gay and bisexual men, along with certain visitors to the city, get vaccinated against meningitis. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: 'Misdiagnosis' leading cause of malpractice payouts

23 April - Missed or wrong diagnoses made up the lion's share of U.S. malpractice payouts - which totaled nearly \$39 billion -- during the past 25 years, finds a new study of more than 350,000 claims. "These are the most common and the most costly of all malpractice claims," said study author Dr. David Newman-Toker, an associate professor of neurology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, in Baltimore. "We have to pay attention to this because it is too big of a problem to ignore." In the new study, researchers analyzed diagnosis-related claims from a national data bank from 1986 to 2010. Of all the claims, diagnostic errors led the pack, accounting for about 35 percent of the total payments of \$38.8 billion (after adjusting for inflation). The study only reviewed claims that involved a malpractice payout, not those that did not get this far in the process. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: More cancers than expected in WTC responders

23 April - Incidence rates of all cancers -- and some in particular -- were higher among World Trade Center rescue workers than expected, researchers reported. In an ongoing

registry study, incidence rates of all cancers combined were 15% higher than expected... Incidence rates were also higher for thyroid, prostate, hematopoietic/ lymphoid, and soft-tissue cancers, they found. [MedPage Today](#)

U.S.: MRSA dropping in hospitals; elsewhere, not so much

24 April – The latest data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest that hospitals have cut their incidence of invasive methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infections in half since 2005, but the decline in community-associated MRSA infections has been far more modest. At a conference this week, CDC officials reported that the incidence of invasive MRSA infections in hospitals dropped an estimated 54% between 2005 and 2011, while the incidence of community-associated infections declined only 5% during that time. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S.: New York City aims to ban cigarette sales for under age 21



22 April - New York City, home to bans on trans fats and salt, is taking a step toward outlawing sales of cigarettes to anyone under age 21. City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, running to replace health conscious Mayor Michael Bloomberg, is due on Monday to announce legislation to increase the minimum age for buying cigarettes to 21 from 18, the current limit. On nearby Long Island, Nassau and Suffolk counties have boosted their legal age for buying cigarettes and other [tobacco](#) products to 19. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Not enough data to support suicide screening: panel

22 April - There is not enough evidence to recommend universal screening to find people at risk of suicide, according to a government-backed panel. As it did in 2004, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) issued draft guidelines on Monday that conclude "there is not enough evidence to make a definitive recommendation for or against screening." Its statement is available for public comment here: bit.ly/ZKptK6. "Although we did not find enough evidence to say 'here are the right questions and [tools](#) to find the people who may be at risk for suicide,' doctors should be screening for depression and alcohol abuse disorders in their primary care population," said Dr. David Grossman, a member of the Task Force. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Notes from the Field - Exposures to discarded sulfur mustard munitions — Mid-Atlantic and New England States 2004–2012

26 April - Before the 1970s, the United States sometimes disposed of at sea excess, obsolete, or unserviceable munitions, including chemical munitions (1). Chemical munitions known to have been disposed of at sea included munitions filled with sulfur mustard, a

vesicant (i.e., an agent that causes chemical burns or blisters of the skin and mucous membranes) (2). Signs and symptoms of exposure to a mustard agent can include redness and blistering of the skin, eye irritation, rhinorrhea, hoarseness, shortness of breath, and (rarely) diarrhea and abdominal discomfort. Since 2004, CDC has received notification of three separate incidents of exposure to sulfur mustard munitions. In one incident, a munition was found with ocean-dredged marine shells used to pave a driveway. The other two incidents involved commercial clam fishing operations. This report highlights the importance of considering exposure to sulfur mustard in the differential diagnosis of signs and symptoms compatible with exposure to a vesicant agent, especially among persons involved with clam fishing or sea dredging operations. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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USPACOM

Australia: Genital wart decline tracked to HPV vaccine

18 April - The incidence of genital warts declined by more than 90% in adolescent and teenage girls in the first 4 to 5 years after introduction of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in Australia, investigators reported. Genital warts occurred more than 70% less often among women 21 to 30, as compared with the 3 to 4 years before the vaccine became available. The reductions in wart incidence among girls and women were accompanied by 50% to 80% decreases in the incidence of genital warts among heterosexual boys and young men. [MedPage Today](#)

Bangladesh building collapse kills at least 123



24 April – An eight-story building collapsed Wednesday morning on the outskirts of the Bangladeshi capital, killing at least 123 people and injuring hundreds, a police official said. Broken concrete and twisted metal stuck out from the massive pile of rubble, where rescuers dug by hand to reach trapped workers. Dhaka

District Police Chief Habibur Rahman said search efforts were continuing. It was unclear how many people were trapped in the ruins. Video from the scene showed injured victims being whisked away on stretchers and crews carrying limp bodies from the rubble. Some onlookers wept while others frantically searched for missing loved ones. Authorities said they did not know what caused the collapse of the building, where five garment manufacturers employing about 2,500 workers were based, according to the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association. [CNN](#)

China: Quake rescuers rush to isolated areas



22 April - Aftershocks and landslides continue to challenge rescue efforts in China's Sichuan province on Monday as teams rush to reach isolated parts of the quake-struck area. China's worst earthquake in the past three years, which struck early Saturday, has already left 188 people dead and toppled or damaged more than 170,000 buildings and homes. Authorities say the region has experienced more than 2,200 aftershocks since Saturday, making it difficult to reach some parts of the province. [VOA](#)

China: Tuberculosis, MDR

21 April - Heavily burdened by rising multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), China now has nearly 120 000 new cases on the mainland each year, according to public health experts. That accounts for 25 percent of the world's total per year, according to statistics from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention. MDR-TB is defined as TB, which is resistant to [at least] isoniazid and rifampicin, the most powerful 1st-line anti-TB drugs. [ProMED-mail](#)

In China, breathing becomes a childhood risk

22 April - Levels of deadly pollutants up to 40 times the recommended exposure limit in Beijing and other cities have struck fear into parents and led them to take steps that are radically altering the nature of urban life for their children. Parents are confining sons and daughters to their homes, even if it means keeping them away from friends. Schools are canceling outdoor activities and field trips. Parents with means are choosing schools based on air-filtration systems, and some international schools have built gigantic, futuristic-looking domes over sports fields to ensure healthy breathing. [New York Times](#)

Solomon Islands: Solomons gets foreign help to deal with dengue outbreak

25 April - Health teams from New Zealand and Australia are providing a much needed boost to help control a dengue outbreak in Solomon Islands. Last week, a report totalled the number of sufferers at 3,189, up 485 on the week before. The Permanent Secretary of Health, Dr Lester Ross, says the number of provinces with dengue has risen to seven, with the Central Province reporting its first ten cases. With almost 89 percent of cases in Honiara, he says people are now choosing to go directly to the hospital. [A] a 13-year-old girl is the latest victim to die from the mosquito-borne viral disease, bringing the total number of deaths in Solomon Islands to four. [Radio New Zealand International](#)

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Brazil: Trichinosis outbreak affected 30 people in San Martin de los Andes

24 April - At least 30 people ill with the parasite Trichinella by eating smoked wild boar in this city, and health authorities sounded the alarm, and do not rule out the occurrence of more cases in the next few hours... Most victims of the disease had consumed the product at a family party held in San Martin de los Andes. While the outbreak is controlled to trace confirmed infected merchandise, other people in the city and its hinterland may have consumed the same batch, so no new cases were discarded. [Rio Negro](#)

Brazil: Increase in the number of cases of whooping cough

23 April - In recent years, the number of pertussis cases has increased dramatically in Minas Gerais and it is worrying. In 2011, 82 cases were reported to the State Department of Health (SES), while in 2012 the number reached 300, ie an increase of 365% from one year to another. Earlier this year [2013], the numbers follow the same pace of last year [2012]. Until this Thursday (18) [abril/2013] at least 106 people had been diagnosed with the disease in the state... Despite the growing number of cases of the disease, SES ruled that there is an outbreak in Minas [General] and reported that the increase is general, ie, throughout the country. [ProMED-mail](#)

Paraguay: Suman 48 killed by dengue

24 April - The Ministry of Health reported that there are 48 confirmed dengue deaths in the first four months of this year. According IP publishes Paraguay, more than 1,100 people are hospitalized with symptoms of the disease in different health centers in the country.

[Paraguay.com](#)

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