

26 July 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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Subscription or Comments

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Biggs Bunker Complex Radiation

In this video, Fort Bliss PAO



MAJ Joe Buccino and Army Public Health Command Physicist COL John Cuellar address the radiation in the Biggs Bunker Complex.

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U.S. MILITARY

July 28th is World Hepatitis Day: New Hepatitis Brochures

Brochures on Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C are available for download on the [Health Information Products eCatalog](#).



Army releases May 2013 suicide information

18 July - The Army released suicide data today for the month of May 2013. During May, among active-duty soldiers, there were 12 potential suicides. None have been confirmed as suicides and 12 remain under investigation. For April 2013, the Army reported 11 potential suicides among active-duty soldiers: five have been confirmed as suicides and six are under investigation. For calendar year 2013, there have been 64 potential active-duty suicides: 31 have been confirmed as suicides and 33 remain under investigation. [Defense.gov](#)

Fighting military suicide: Can technology help?



15 July - ...Last week, an initiative called [The Durkheim Project](#) announced the availability of an opt-in veteran's database that will analyze veterans' social-media posts to identify suicide risk factors. The project is named in honor of Emile Durkheim, whose book, *Suicide* – published in 1897 — consisted of surveys and suicide statistical analysis that classified victims into categories, and found links between their daily actions and the likelihood of committing suicide. Phase One of The Durkheim Project, conducted with The Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and completed in 2013, the predictive analytics and text-mining technology methods used to power the database were statistically significant in predicting suicide-risk factors with 65% accuracy. [Time](#)

Incident diagnoses of common symptoms (“sequelae”) following traumatic brain injury, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2000-2012

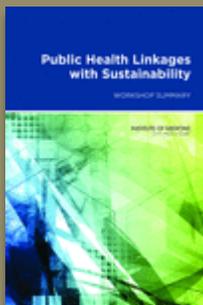
June – 2013 - ...Given that the majority of traumatic brain injuries sustained by service members were not war-related (most service members in this analysis had no history of deployment at the time of their injury), it seems unlikely that the observed increases in the proportion of individuals with diagnosed symptoms in the three time periods can be attributed to changes in combat operations. The sharp increase in the percentage of injured service members with post-TBI symptoms undoubtedly reflects increased awareness, more complete ascertainment, and broader reporting of current and past TBI cases. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Initial testing at Fort Bliss bunker indicates 'safe' levels of radiation

19 July - Test results of possible low-level radiation contamination of a weapons storage bunker at Fort Bliss, Texas, were normal, said an installation spokesman. No harmful levels of radiation were found inside the bunker, with the exception of low levels of alpha and

Public Health Linkages with Sustainability - Workshop Summary

The IOM hosted a workshop to consider the linkages between sustainability and health. Presentations emphasized the intersections between sustainability and toxicology, noncommunicable diseases, energy options and air quality, food and water resources, occupational and childhood health, and the role of climate change and urbanization across these topic areas.



beta particles which are safely contained within the paint used in the bunker's interior, said Maj. Joe Buccino, Fort Bliss public affairs officer, during a press conference on the installation, July 19. The epoxy used in the paint effectively sealed the particles, preventing their release, he explained. No gamma particles, a more dangerous form of radiation, were detected in the paint or elsewhere, he added. [Army Times](#)

'Prolonged exposure' therapy may help vets with PTSD

17 July - Therapy that involves repeatedly processing painful memories and approaching anxiety-provoking situations in a safe way may ease symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among veterans, a new study suggests... One Veterans Affairs report showed that of about 830,000 veterans who were treated at VA medical centers over the last decade, 29 percent had a diagnosis of PTSD and 22 percent were depressed. In 2007, the VA launched a national initiative to train psychologists and social workers in prolonged exposure therapy. Every VA facility is now required to provide evidence-based treatments for PTSD, including prolonged exposure. [Reuters](#)

US survivors of military sexual assaults seek better treatment

19 July - Four U.S. military veterans who are survivors of military sexual assaults testified Friday before a House of Representatives Veterans' Affairs subcommittee. They asked for better care and treatment for their trauma from the U.S. Veterans Administration. The U.S. Defense Department released a study in May estimating that as many as 26,000 military members were victims of sexual assault in the military last year. The Republican Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Health, Dan Benishek, broke that number down. "Last fiscal year there were roughly 71 incidents of sexual assault every single day among those who wear our uniform," said Benishek. Four veterans who were victims of sexual assault traveled to Washington, D.C., to tell lawmakers their story and to ask for changes in the way survivors are treated. [VOA](#)

VA health care facilities named to 2013 "Most Wired" hospitals list

22 July - The Department of Veterans Affairs, representing 152 VA medical centers, was recently named to the [2013 "Most Wired"](#) hospitals list. The list, which is released by *Hospitals & Health Networks*, in partnership with McKesson, the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME) and the American Hospital Association (AHA), is the result of a national survey aimed at ranking hospitals that are leveraging health information technology (HIT) in new and innovative ways.... Over the past year, VA has provided Veterans and VA health care teams with 21st century health care through the use of new and innovative technology. Some examples are: telehealth being used in Veterans homes as an adjunct to traditional face-to-face care; recent VA Blue Button enhancements that allow improved access to critical patient medical information; deployment of asset tracking devices; the use of technology to better link specialty care providers to primary care physicians in rural areas. [Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

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Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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GLOBAL

NIH study uncovers a starring role for supporting cells in the inner ear

25 July - Researchers have found in mice that supporting cells in the inner ear, once thought to serve only a structural role, can actively help repair damaged sensory hair cells, the functional cells that turn vibrations into the electrical signals that the brain recognizes as sound. The study... reveals the rescuing act that supporting cells and a chemical they produce called heat shock protein 70 (HSP70) appear to play in protecting damaged hair cells from death. Finding a way to jumpstart this process in supporting cells offers a potential pathway to prevent hearing loss caused by certain drugs, and possibly by exposure to excess noise. [NIH](#)

Pertussis vaccine only 'moderately effective' during outbreak

19 July - Tetanus toxoid, reduced diphtheria toxoid, and reduced acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccines are only moderately effective against pertussis in adolescents and adults, according to a *BMJ* case-control study that includes data from the large California outbreak of 2010... The authors calculated a vaccine effectiveness of 53% using the PCR-negative controls, and 64% using the population controls. Previous estimates of the vaccine's effectiveness were higher, but based on smaller sample sizes. The authors suggest that giving the Tdap booster to those who received only acellular vaccines as children would be one strategy to decrease the incidence of pertussis. Their findings, they say, "draw attention to the need for more effective vaccines." [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

Poll finds public a bit wary about taking anthrax pills

23 July - Federal officials have beefed up the nation's Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) with antibiotics to protect Americans in future anthrax attacks and public health plans are set for their distribution, but the public may not be willing to take the drugs, a new poll found... In an anthrax attack, federal response plans call for treating those at risk of *Bacillus anthracis* spore exposure with a 60-day course of antibiotics, and also offering three doses of anthrax vaccine for longer-term protection against late-germinating spores... [H] health departments face a tall task in getting the medication to the public within the recommended 48-hour time frame, including the step of getting the public to come to the PODs... An overarching question about how likely the public would be to follow recommendations to pick up the pills from dispensing sites showed that 69% would be very likely and 21% would be somewhat likely. "Those are pretty good numbers," she said.

[CIDRAP](#)

Potential for the international spread of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome in association with mass gatherings in Saudi Arabia

17 July - Background: A novel coronavirus (MERS-CoV) causing severe, life-threatening respiratory disease has emerged in the Middle East at a time when two international mass gatherings in Saudi Arabia are imminent. While MERS-CoV has already spread to and within other countries, these mass gatherings could further amplify and/or accelerate its international dissemination, especially since the origins and geographic source of the virus remain poorly understood... Results: 16.8 million travelers flew on commercial flights out of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates between June and November 2012, of which 51.6% were destined for India (16.3%), Egypt (10.4%), Pakistan (7.8%), the United Kingdom (4.3%), Kuwait (3.6%), Bangladesh (3.1%), Iran (3.1%) and Bahrain (2.9%). Among the 1.74 million foreign pilgrims who performed the Hajj last year, an estimated 65.1% originated from low and lower-middle income countries. Conclusion: ...Understanding global population movements out of the Middle East through the end of this year's Hajj could help direct anticipatory MERS-CoV surveillance and public health preparedness to mitigate its potential global health and economic impacts. [PLOS](#)

Social media spots a strep outbreak

18 July - An alert parent who noticed postings about multiple cases of severe sore throat on Facebook helped the Minnesota public health authorities identify a foodborne outbreak of group A *Streptococcus* pharyngitis, according to a new report. Within days of a banquet given for an all-female high school dance team attended by 63 people, a parent notified the public health department of a cluster of cases of strep throat described on the team's Facebook page, Sarah K. Kemble, MD, of the Minnesota Department of Health, and colleagues reported. A total of 18 primary cases ultimately were confirmed, for an attack rate of 29%, the researchers reported online in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. [MedPage Today](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 28, 5.3% of all deaths reported through the 122-Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia and influenza. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 6.4% for week 28. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

Respiratory Highlights for 1-30 June 2013 (Surveillance Weeks 23-26)

- During the month of June, 42 specimens were received from 23 locations. Results were finalized for 40 specimens from 22 locations. There was one A(H3N2), one influenza B, two adenoviruses, one enterovirus, and two parainfluenzas detected (see Table 1).
- To date this influenza season, 3,832 specimens have completed testing from 82 locations, of which 1,077 were positive for influenza A (957 A(H3N2), 110 A(H1N1)pdm09, five co-infections, and five A/not subtyped).
- To date this influenza season, 378 specimens were positive for influenza B. Of these, there were 71 B/Yamagata, 19 B/Victoria, and two B & enterovirus co-infections. The lineage is pending or unknown for 286 specimens.
- There have been 268 other respiratory viruses isolated (69 adenovirus, 91 RSV, 96 parainfluenza, and 12 enterovirus) cumulatively this season. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

For weeks 27-28/2013:

- All 18 reporting countries experienced low-intensity transmission. Stable trends were reported by almost all reporting countries.
- Four countries tested 16 sentinel specimens, none of which were positive for influenza virus.
- No hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases have been reported since week 21/2013.

Influenza activity has been low in Europe since week 21/2013. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

25 July – Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity is minimal throughout the northern hemisphere and ranges from minimal to high (Chile) in the southern hemisphere. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 20 July 2013:

- Influenza: No cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.

- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Study: H7N9 highly transmissible by airborne route

18 July - Chinese researchers who did extensive work on H7N9 viruses from birds and humans found that one of the human strains was highly transmissible by aerosol droplets in ferrets, fueling more concerns that the new virus could spread between people. The potential for aerosol spread is one of the key factors health officials use in gauging a new virus's pandemic potential, and the new study follows closely on the heels of two others that also found evidence of respiratory droplet transmission in ferrets. [CIDRAP](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

FDA offers guidance on eggs from free-range hens

23 July - Proposed guidance released by the US Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) today suggests the use of measures such as high walls and netting to limit *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) contamination of eggs from hens that have access to the outdoors. The FDA said the guidance outlines "practical and reasonable safety controls" to help egg producers comply with the agency's 4-year-old Egg Safety Rule. In an e-mailed statement, the FDA said that to help develop the guidance, officials visited a number of farms to observe a range of laying operations with various poultry house designs and field conditions. [CIDRAP](#)

Health risks from arsenic in rice exposed

22 July - High levels of arsenic in rice have been shown to be associated with elevated genetic damage in humans, a new study has found. Over the last few years, researchers have reported high concentrations of arsenic in several rice-growing regions around the world. Now, University of Manchester scientists, working in collaboration with scientists at CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology in Kolkata, have proven a link between rice containing high levels of arsenic and chromosomal damage, as measured by micronuclei in urothelial cells, in humans consuming rice as a staple... Increased frequency of these micronuclei has been shown by other groups to be linked to the development of cancers.

[EurekAlert](#)

New bat virus called closest known relative of MERS-CoV



24 July - The view that MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) originated in bats gathered steam today with the report that a new coronavirus (CoV) found in the feces of a South African bat is more closely related to MERS-CoV than any other known virus. The study, published as a letter in *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, doesn't solve the mystery of what animal is passing MERS-CoV to humans. But the authors, from the University of Bonn, Germany, and several South African institutions, say the findings suggest that ancestors of the human virus evolved in African bats. [CIDRAP](#)

Infectious Diseases, doesn't solve the mystery of what animal is passing MERS-CoV to humans. But the authors, from the University of Bonn, Germany, and several South African institutions, say the findings suggest that ancestors of the human virus evolved in African bats. [CIDRAP](#)

Stomach virus linked to produce sickens 285 people in 11 U.S. states

25 July - At least 285 people in 11 states have been sickened by a parasitic infection commonly linked to fresh produce, and the exact cause of the outbreak has yet to be pinpointed, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Thursday. Most of the cyclospora infections have been clustered in the Midwest, with 138 cases reported in Iowa and 70 in neighboring Nebraska. The remainder have been identified in Texas, Georgia, Wisconsin, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, New Jersey and Ohio. The cause of the illness has not yet been identified, but the parasite is most commonly found in fresh produce, including fruits, vegetables and herbs, grown in tropical and subtropical regions, according to Dr. Barbara Herwaldt, a medical epidemiologist at the CDC. [Reuters](#)

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WELLNESS

Decongestants in pregnancy linked to birth defects

22 July - A woman's use of decongestant medications in the first trimester of pregnancy may raise her child's risk of certain rare birth defects, according to a small study. Some types of over-the-counter decongestants, including the popular phenylephrine and pseudoephedrine, were individually linked to rare, specific birth defects of the digestive tract, ear and heart. [Reuters](#)

HPV virus 'linked to third of throat cancer cases'

20 July - One third of people diagnosed with throat cancer are infected with a form of the HPV virus, a study suggests. HPV (human papillomavirus) is the major cause of cervical cancer, and the virus is known to spread through genital or oral contact... There are two HPV strains which are most likely to cause cancer - HPV-16 and HPV-18. HPV-16 is thought

to be responsible for around 60% of cervical cancers, 80% of cancers in the anus and 60% of oral cancers. [BBC News](#)

Mosquito-repelling bands and clip-on devices: Which work best



22 July - The Ache: The most effective way to avoid bug bites is wearing mosquito repellent with Deet, entomologists say. But many people want to avoid applying chemical repellents directly to their skin. And mosquito repellent has to be reapplied after swimming or sweating a lot. The Claim: Wristbands and devices that clip to a belt or beach chair can repel mosquitoes by diffusing natural or chemical repellents in the air. The Verdict: Several studies—including a recently published eight-person study of several products—show that the best of the wearable devices can significantly reduce the number of mosquitoes that land on the skin or bite.

[Wall Street Journal](#)

Neighborhood planning increases impact of Community Transformation Grants

23 July - ...[T]he Community Transformation Grant program, or CTGs, [is] a series of community-based grants implemented to improve the health of more than four of 10 U.S. citizens... Through a recent neighborhood plan, the city of Fort Worth assigned separate task forces to improve education, public transit, employment, urban development, health and wellness, arts and homelessness rates. Its plan has defined goals, such as a 50 percent increase in city bikeways by 2016 and a restaurant health inspection passing rate of 95 percent. Before and after pictures of Crockett Street in Fort Worth show the impact of the city's neighborhood planning: dormant only five years ago, the street is now booming with thriving businesses and busy sidewalks. [Public Health Newswire](#)

Plain cigarette packs 'encourage smokers to quit'

22 July - Selling cigarettes in unbranded packs seems to make tobacco less appealing and encourages smokers to quit, suggests a study. The work comes from Australia - the first country to introduce plain packaging. The BMJ Open research looked at the impact of the policy on 536 smokers in the state of Victoria... Researchers polled a sample of smokers during November 2012 when plain packs were already available in the run up to the country-wide introduction of the legislation. Almost three out of four (72.3%) were smoking cigarettes from plain packs while the remainder (27.7%) were still using branded packs with smaller health warnings. Compared with branded pack smokers, smokers using plain packs were 66% more likely to think their cigarettes were poorer quality than a year ago and they were 70% more likely to say they found them less satisfying. [BBC News](#)

Risky supplements Jack3d and OxyElite voluntarily destroyed, following FDA crackdown on DMAA products

17 July - Two popular sport supplements, Jack3d and OxyElite, have been voluntarily destroyed by their manufacturer following the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) increasing pressure to remove the stimulant dimethylamylamine (DMAA) from the products' ingredients. The stimulant DMAA is not a proper amphetamine, but the FDA warns people of the extreme health risks associated with its consumption. Manufacturers claim the stimulant is all-natural, likening it to caffeine; however, the FDA claims it can "elevate blood pressure and lead to cardiovascular problems ranging from shortness of breath and tightening in the chest to heart attack," according to a recent statement. [Medical Daily](#)

Skipping breakfast may increase coronary heart disease risk

22 July - Here's more evidence why breakfast may be the most important meal of the day: ... Men who reported they skipped breakfast had a 27 percent higher risk of heart attack or death from coronary heart disease than those who reported they didn't. The men who reported not eating breakfast were younger than those who did, and were more likely to be smokers, employed full time, unmarried, less physically active and drank more alcohol. [EurekAlert](#)

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USAFRICOM

Report finds gradual fall in female genital cutting in Africa

22 July - A comprehensive new assessment of the ancient practice of female genital cutting by the United Nations Children's Fund has found that it is gradually declining in many countries, even some where it remains deeply entrenched. The authors of the report, released Monday, describe the practice as "remarkably tenacious, despite attempts spanning nearly a century to eliminate it." But they also say teenage girls are now less likely to have been cut than older women in more than half of the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East where it is concentrated. In Egypt, where more women have been cut than in any other nation, 81 percent of 15- to 19-year-olds have undergone the practice, compared with 96 percent of women in their late 40s. [New York Times](#)

Somalia: Polio eradication suffers a setback as Somali outbreak worsens



20 July - Somalia hadn't had a case of polio for nearly six years. But in the past few months, the virus has come back. Now the East African country has the worst polio outbreak anywhere in the world. Twenty new cases of polio were **reported** this week in Somalia by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. That brings the total number of cases in the Horn of Africa to 73. The rest of the world combined has tallied only 59 cases so far this year. Health workers are worried that the virus could gain a foothold in the Horn of Africa and jeopardize the multibillion-dollar effort to wipe out the virus worldwide... Part of the problem, he says, is that the majority of children in Somalia have never been immunized against polio. "We have an outbreak in a population that has been quite vulnerable for quite some time," Yusuf says. **NPR**

Sudan: Measles kills four children in El Salam Camp, South Darfur

22 July - Four children have died of measles in El Salam camp for the displaced near Nyala, capital of South Darfur, and there are threats the camp "might have to be dismantled". Speaking to Radio Dabanga on Friday, Sheikh Mahjoub Adam Tabaldiya attributed the children's deaths a lack of medicine, health care and a food shortage at the camp. Sheikh Tabaldiya reiterated that "the displaced are going through very difficult humanitarian and health circumstances, especially children, women and the elderly". He warned that "the camp might be dismantled from lack of food, medicine and due to organisations' stoppage of food provision to displaced people," the sheikh said, appealing to the authorities and humanitarian NGOs to urgently provide food for the displaced. **allAfrica**

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USCENTCOM

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

21 July - WHO has been informed of two additional laboratory-confirmed cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection in Saudi Arabia. Both the cases are currently critically ill and hospitalized in ICUs. The first case is a 41-year-old Saudi male in Riyadh who presented to the hospital with symptoms on 15 July. The second patient is a 59-year-old Saudi female in the Al-Ahsa governorate. She presented with symptoms on 11 July. Both patients have underlying medical conditions, but neither patient has had contact

with known MERS-CoV confirmed cases or animals... Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 90 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 45 deaths. [WHO](#)

Pakistan battles polio, and its people's mistrust

21 July - ...Anger ...over American foreign policy has led to a disastrous setback for the global effort against polio. In December, nine vaccinators were shot dead here, and two Taliban commanders banned vaccination in their areas, saying the vaccinations could resume only if drone strikes ended. In January, 10 vaccinators were killed in Nigeria's Muslim-dominated north. Since then, there have been isolated killings — of an activist, a police officer and vaccinators — each of which has temporarily halted the campaign. The war on polio, which costs \$1 billion a year and is expected to take at least five more years, hangs in the balance... But the real urgency to finish the job began earlier, for a very different reason. Two years ago, India, Pakistan's rival in everything from nuclear weapons to cricket, [eliminated polio](#). "Nothing wounded our pride as much as that," said Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, a vaccine expert at Aga Khan University's medical school. [New York Times](#)

Risk from MERS virus "very low" for haj pilgrims: WHO

25 July - The risk from a new Middle East respiratory virus for millions of Muslims planning to go to the annual haj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia is very low and there is no need for pilgrims to be screened, the World Health Organisation said on Thursday. While it encouraged countries to raise awareness about the virus to help reduce the risk of the virus spreading among pilgrims, the U.N. health agency said it would not be recommending any travel or trade restrictions. [Reuters](#)

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USEUCOM

Spain: Re-emergence of leishmaniasis: community outbreak in Madrid, 2009 to 2012

25 July - Since July 2009, there has been a community outbreak of leishmaniasis in the south-west area of the Madrid autonomous community, Spain, affecting residents from four towns that are geographically close together and share extensive park areas. As of December 2012, 446 cases were reported (6 in 2009, 97 in 2010, 196 in 2011 and 147 in 2012), a mean incidence rate of 22.2 per 100,000 inhabitants during July 2009 and December 2012. The mean age was 44 years (range: 2 months to 95 years); 61.0% were male. A total of 68 (15.2%) had immunosuppressive conditions; 160 (35.9%) had visceral leishmaniasis and 286 (64.1%) cutaneous. A total of 421 (94.4%) cases were confirmed. *Leishmania infantum* was identified as the agent. Monitoring revealed high densities of the vector *Phlebotomus perniciosus*. The surveillance system for canine leishmaniasis did not detect any increase in prevalence during the period. [Eurosurveillance](#)

The Netherlands: Measles outbreak widens, reaches 600 cases

25 July - A further 147 cases of measles were reported last week, bringing the total to 613, the public health institute RIVM said on Thursday. The outbreak, which began in May, has also spread to four new local authority health services, including Utrecht and The Hague. Among the new cases are two healthcare workers who probably contracted the disease during their work. Several hospitals in the affected regions and with low take-up of vaccination are now taking preventative measures. [DutchNews.nl](#)

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USNORTHCOM

Canada: Big railways review safety rules after train disaster

18 July - Canada's two big railroads are set to strengthen their safety measures following the deadly train crash on July 6 that killed some 50 people and destroyed the center of a small Quebec town. Canadian Pacific Railway Ltd, Canada's No. 2 operator, said on Thursday it has already made some changes to its operating rules. These include a ban on parking unattended trains that contain hazardous materials on main lines and tougher rules on setting the brakes that hold a stationary train in place. The runaway crude-oil train that smashed into Lac-Megantic, Quebec, had been parked on a main line after the engineer, its only crew member, finished his shift. The train, operated by the small Montreal Maine & Atlantic Railway, rolled down the track, derailed in the center of the lakeside town, and exploded. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Brooklyn measles outbreak shows risks

19 July - A measles outbreak in Brooklyn, N.Y., this year shows how easily one of the most contagious diseases leaps hemispheres. In March, New York City health authorities saw a sudden rise in measles cases in several densely populated Orthodox Jewish communities. The disease quickly spread. Among the 58 measles cases reported thus far, a child contracted pneumonia and two pregnant women were hospitalized, according to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. One of the women had a miscarriage. The department traced the outbreak to a person who it concluded brought the virus from a trip to London, says Jay Varma, the department's deputy commissioner for disease control. Overall, vaccination rates are high in the communities, he says, but the outbreak then started in a small group of families with members who refused vaccines, he says. [Wall Street Journal](#)

U.S.: FDA eyes menthol in cigarettes

24 July - The FDA has taken an initial step toward regulating -- and possibly banning -- the use of menthol in cigarettes... Accompanying the announcement was an FDA-authored, preliminary evaluation of the scientific evidence on the effects of menthol in cigarettes. The bulk of the evidence did not support an increase in toxicity or disease with the addition of menthol, although menthol was associated with increased initiation and greater progression to regular smoking, increased dependence, and reduced success in quitting, particularly among black smokers. [MedPage Today](#)

U.S.: Federal judge halts new North Dakota abortion law, for now

22 July - A federal judge on Monday temporarily blocked North Dakota's new abortion law, the most restrictive in the country because it prohibits ending a pregnancy once a fetal heartbeat can be detected, which can be as early as six weeks after conception. Banning abortions as early as six weeks, or before fetal viability between 24 and 26 weeks of gestation, would bar nearly 90 percent of the abortions performed at the Red River Women's Clinic, the state's only abortion clinic, said its director, Tammi Kromenaker. U.S. District Court Judge Daniel Hovland, in granting a preliminary injunction in response to a lawsuit filed by the clinic, wrote that the new law "is clearly an invalid and unconstitutional law based on the United States Supreme Court precedent in Roe v. Wade from 1973."

[Reuters](#)

U.S.: Mental health parity rules coming soon

24 July - The Obama administration will release in a few months final rules implementing the 2008 mental health parity law, a former Congressman said Wednesday. The law -- the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act -- states that health plans must cover the treatment of mental illness or drug or alcohol abuse at the same level as they cover other healthcare treatment. But full scale-up of the law has been delayed because rules haven't been issued outlining treatment limits for some nonquantitative services -- rules that would define exactly how mental health services are comparable to physical medical care.

[MedPage Today](#)

U.S.: Milwaukee County reports 27 cases of Legionnaire's disease

25 July - A late start to summer weather in the Upper Midwest may be linked to an outbreak of 27 cases of Legionnaire's disease in Milwaukee County since June 1 of this year, a health official said on Thursday. The outbreak includes 19 cases of the illness, a severe form of pneumonia, among Milwaukee residents, according to the city's health department. Two other county cases are suspected. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Researchers trace novel Heartland virus to Missouri ticks

22 July - Researchers have solved part of a medical mystery about a new virus that infected two Missouri men in 2009, confirming the pathogen in lone star ticks near where the patients were infected, then hospitalized, after they were bitten by ticks, according to a study today... Henry Savage, PhD, lead author of the study and research entomologist at the CDC division of vector-borne diseases in Fort Collins, Colo., said in an ASTMH press release that 10 tick samples were positive for Heartland virus, 9 from the property of one of the patients and 1 from nearby conservation lands... The new tick disease stands apart from others such as Lyme, ehrlichiosis, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever because it is caused by a virus rather than bacterium and does not respond to antibiotics. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S.: State-specific healthy life expectancy at age 65 years – United States, 2007–2009

19 July - Healthy life expectancy (HLE) is a population health measure that combines mortality data with morbidity or health status data to estimate expected years of life in good health for persons at a given age... during 2007–2009, females had a greater HLE than males at age 65 years in every state and DC. HLE was greater for whites than for blacks in all states from which sufficient data were available and DC, except in Nevada and New Mexico. These results can be used as a baseline for states to monitor changes in the HLE of persons aged 65 years as they age and identify health disparities among subpopulations. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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Australians are getting fatter



25 July - Around the world, Australia may be known for its rugged outdoor lifestyles. But recent statistics suggest a different reality. Australia and its equally outdoorsy neighbor, New Zealand, are now two of the fattest countries in the developed world. Obesity rates in the two countries have tripled in the last three decades, mirroring the sharp rise that occurred in the United States during roughly the same period. In Australia, at least 60 percent of adults and roughly a quarter of children are overweight or obese. A United Nations [report](#) this month showed that Mexico and the United States, in that order, lead the developed world in obesity. But Australia and New Zealand were only slightly behind. [New York Times](#)

China: Bribery serves as life-support for Chinese hospitals

23 July - Bribery is the lubricant that helps keep China's public hospitals running, and the health system would struggle to function without illegal payments to poorly paid doctors and administrators, say medical practitioners and industry experts. They say government policies are partly to blame for a system in which doctors and other staff expect to be paid extra fees to perform operations and take kickbacks from pharmaceutical firms and medical-equipment suppliers. The profession's ugly underbelly was exposed last week when police accused British drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline of bribing officials and doctors for six years to boost sales and the price of its medicines. GSK has called the developments "shameful" and on Monday said some of its Chinese executives appeared to have broken the law. [Reuters](#)

China: Drug research falls under a cloud

22 July - Executives at the British drug maker GlaxoSmithKline were warned nearly two years ago about critical problems with the way the company conducted research at its drug development center in China, exposing it to potential financial risk and regulatory action, an internal audit found. The confidential document from November 2011, obtained by The New York Times, suggests that Glaxo's problems may go beyond the sales practices that are currently at the center of a bribery and corruption scandal in China. They may extend to its Shanghai research and development center, which develops neurology drugs for Glaxo. The failings, some experts said, underscore the problems that can arise when major drug companies export their scientific development to emerging markets like China. [New York Times](#)

China: Strong earthquake in western China kills at least 89



23 July - An earthquake rocked a rural, semi-arid area of northwestern China's Gansu province on Monday, killing at least 89 people and injuring hundreds more. Another five people were listed as missing and 628 injured in the quake near the city of Dingxi in Gansu province. About 123,000 people were affected by the quake, with 31,600 people moved to temporary shelters, the provincial earthquake administration said on its website. The first and strongest of a series of tremors struck at 7:45 a.m. Beijing time south of Dingxi, about 770 miles west of Beijing, toppling farmers' one-story homes and severing power lines. Nearly 2,000 homes were destroyed and about 22,500 damaged, the provincial government said. [USA Today](#)

India: Contaminated school meal kills 25 Indian children

17 July - At least 25 Indian children died and dozens needed hospital treatment after apparently being poisoned by a school meal, sparking violent protests and angry

allegations of blame. The children aged four to 12 fell ill on Tuesday after consuming a lunch of rice, soybean and lentils in the impoverished eastern state of Bihar. The school, at Mashrakh village in the district of Chapra, provided free meals under the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, the world's largest school feeding program involving 120 million children. Medical teams treating the children said they suspected the food had been contaminated with insecticide. [Reuters](#)

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Colombia: Malaria - *P. vivax*, urban outbreak

24 July - ...The latest report of the Department of Health... confirmed the increase to 5, of the malaria cases detected [in Colombiatón] this week. Thanks to early detection tests performed by officials in the district since Saturday, said Jorge coordinator of the direction of Environment and Health two people were diagnosed within the parasite incubation period. [ProMED-mail](#)

Honduras: Health Ministry confirms 15 deaths from dengue in Honduras

23 July - ...The Minister of Health, Salvador Pineda, said Tuesday during the Council of Ministers dengue deaths totaled certified 15, two more since the last official report... Pineda explained that "there are currently 11,000 reported cases of dengue fever... Moreover, to date there have been 1,838 reported cases of severe dengue or hemorrhagic throughout Honduras. According to official data, 152 of the 298 municipalities have a high incidence of dengue cases, with special focus on 37 communities where the situation is serious, as it has nearly double the average case of the last five or six years. [El Heraldo](#) (translation from [Google Translate](#))

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