

26 October 2012

Army Public Health Weekly Update

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U.S. Army Public Health Command



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A video on vaccine storage and handling from the CDC's 2012 Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine Preventable Disease Series.



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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>

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Army releases September suicide data

19 October - The Army released suicide data today for the month of September. During September, among active-duty soldiers, there were 15 potential suicides: one has been confirmed as suicide and 14 remain under investigation. For August, the Army reported 16 potential suicides among active-duty soldiers. Since the release of that report, one case was

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removed for a total of 15 cases: five have been confirmed as suicides and 10 remain under investigation. For 2012, there have been 146 potential active-duty suicides: 91 have been confirmed as suicides and 55 remain under investigation. Active-duty suicide number for 2011: 165 confirmed as suicides and no cases under investigation. [Defense.gov](#)

Coccidioidomycosis, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, January 2000-June 2012

September 2012 - Coccidioidomycosis, also known as "Valley Fever," is an infectious illness caused by inhalation of the spores of *Coccidioides immitis* or *Coccidioides posadasii*, which are naturally occurring fungi found primarily in the soil of large areas of the southwestern United States and Central and South America....Providers of health care to U.S. military members should consider coccidioidomycosis a potential cause of febrile, respiratory, infectious illnesses among those currently or previously exposed to endemic areas. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Nearly 30% of vets treated by V.A. have PTSD

21 October - The Department of Veterans Affairs has quietly released [a new report](#) on post-traumatic stress disorder, showing that since 9/11, nearly 30 percent of the [834,463](#) Iraq and [Afghanistan War veterans](#) treated at V.A. hospitals and clinics have been diagnosed with PTSD. Veterans' advocates say the new V.A. report is the most damning evidence yet of the profound impact multiple deployments have had on American service men and women since 9/11. Troops who've been deployed multiple times to Iraq and Afghanistan are more than three times as likely as soldiers with no previous deployments to screen positive for PTSD and major depression, according to a 2010 study published by the American Journal for Public Health. [Daily Beast](#)

New military apparel repels chemical, biological agents



17 October - Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) scientists and collaborators are developing a new military uniform material that repels chemical and biological agents using a novel carbon nanotube fabric. The material will be designed to undergo a rapid transition from a breathable state to a protective state. The highly breathable membranes would have pores made of a few-nanometer-wide vertically aligned carbon nanotubes (CNT) that are surface modified with a chemical warfare agent-responsive functional layer. Response to the threat would be triggered by direct chemical warfare agent attack to the membrane surface, at which time the fabric would switch to a protective state by closing the CNT pore entrance or by shedding the contaminated surface layer. [R&D](#)

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GLOBAL

Additive restores antibiotic effectiveness against MRSA

22 October - Researchers from North Carolina State University have increased the potency of a compound that reactivates antibiotics against methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), an antibiotic-resistant form of *Staphylococcus* that is notoriously difficult to treat. Their improved compound removes the bacteria's antibiotic resistance and allows the antibiotic to once again become effective at normal dosage levels. NC State chemist Christian Melander had previously proven the effectiveness of a 2-aminoimidazole compound in reactivating antibiotics against resistant bacterial strains. However, the original compound was not potent enough. In his latest work, described in a paper appearing in *Angewandte Chemie*, Melander, research assistant professor Roberta Worthington and graduate student Tyler Harris have solved the potency issue, bringing them one step closer to in vivo testing. [NC State University](#)

How does the polio vaccine reach a remote corner of the world?



24 October - In the past week, we've had a lot to say about polio — from its [history](#) in the U.S. to vaccination efforts in [Nigeria](#) and [Pakistan](#). Why do we care so much about disease that has essentially disappeared from most of the world? Because we seem to be right on the verge of wiping out polio globally, making it just the second disease to be completely eliminated from the world. Polio cases have plummeted in the past 25 years, from an estimated 350,000 in 1988 to only 171 cases so far in 2012. But as NPR's Jackie Northam [tweeted](#) last week: For polio "'this close' is akin to being 'kinda pregnant'. You need to eradicate polio, full stop." To do that, kids in the most rural corners of Pakistan and Afghanistan must be inoculated, not once, but multiple times. [NPR](#)

Migratory birds' ticks can spread viral haemorrhagic fever

22 October - A type of haemorrhagic fever (Crimean-Congo) that is prevalent in Africa, Asia, and the Balkans has begun to spread to new areas in southern Europe. Now Swedish researchers have shown that migratory birds carrying ticks are the possible source of contagion. The discovery is being published in the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*. [Uppsala Universitet](#)

New opportunity for rapid treatment of malaria



24 October - Malaria causes up to 3 million deaths each year, predominantly afflicting vulnerable people such as children under five and pregnant women, in tropical regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Treatments are available for this disease, but the Plasmodium parasite is fast becoming resistant to the most common drugs, and health authorities say they desperately need new strategies to tackle the disease. This new potential treatment uses molecules that interfere with an important stage of the parasite's growth cycle and harnesses this effect to kill them. The impact is so acute it kills ninety per cent of the parasites in just three hours and all those tested in laboratory samples of infected human blood cells, within twelve hours. The research was carried out by chemists at Imperial College London and biological scientists from the research institutions Institut Pasteur and CNRS in France. Their work is published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS). [Imperial College London](#)

Progress toward global eradication of dracunculiasis — January 2011–June 2012

26 October - Dracunculiasis (Guinea worm disease) is caused by *Dracunculus medinensis*, a parasitic worm. Approximately 1 year after initial infection from contaminated drinking water, the worm emerges through the skin of the infected person, usually on the lower limb. Pain and secondary bacterial wound infection can cause temporary or permanent disability that disrupts work and schooling for the entire family. In 1986, the World Health Assembly (WHA) called for dracunculiasis elimination (1) and the Guinea Worm Eradication Program, supported by The Carter Center, World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), CDC, and other partners, was coalesced to assist ministries of health of endemic countries in meeting this goal. At that time, an estimated 3.5 million cases occurred annually in 20 countries in Africa and Asia (1,2). This report updates published (3,4) and previously unpublished surveillance data reported by ministries of health and describes progress toward global dracunculiasis eradication. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Researchers develop antibodies to treat Ebola virus

18 October - Researchers say they're making progress toward a treatment for the dreaded Ebola virus, which recently caused outbreaks in equatorial Africa. Experiments with monkeys using laboratory-engineered disease-fighting agents called monoclonal antibodies show promise in treating infection with the highly lethal disease. U.S. government and private industry researchers have developed a drug that contains a cocktail of monoclonal antibodies against Ebola. A monoclonal antibody is a disease-fighting protein engineered to target and disarm a specific virus, bypassing natural antibodies produced by the body's immune system. Dubbed MB-003, the anti-Ebola cocktail contains three monoclonal antibodies that attach themselves to three different sites on the surface of the deadly virus. The pathogen, unable to evade the multiple attacks, withers away. [VOA](#)

Study shows how obesity heightens cancer risk

17 October - In addition to being a known risk factor for diabetes, morbid obesity causes higher death rates in severely overweight cancer patients, regardless of their diet. Scientists have new evidence that excess fat stimulates and supports tumor growth. Experts say up to 25 percent of cancer cases occur in morbidly obese individuals. And, for reasons not fully understood, tumors appear to be more aggressive and therapy less effective in patients with excess fat tissue. But researchers at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston may have found the reason at the molecular level. They say expanding fat tissue cells emit hormones and growth factors, called adipokines, that promote the growth of new blood vessels which nourish and promote tumor growth... [VOA](#)

Tough TB responds to drug treatment



22 October - An antibiotic used to treat severe infections shows promise against a very resistant and deadly form of tuberculosis. XDR-TB is resistant to at least four of the drugs used most often against the disease. Extensively drug resistant tuberculosis – or XDR-TB – is still considered rare, although cases have been reported in nearly 80 countries. Health officials believe the number of XDR-TB cases is underreported because there's no specific test for it. It can be cured, but the odds against that happening are often quite high. It can kill quickly, especially if a person is co-infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Dr. Ray Chen, a staff clinician at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, says XDR-TB is the next step after MDR-TB, or multi-drug resistant tuberculosis, which is a lot more common. [VOA](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

25 October 2012:

- Overall, influenza activity remains low in the MHS and ranges from low to moderate in the overseas DoD laboratory surveillance network. So far this season, circulating subtypes include influenza A/H1, A/H3, and B.
- The influenza vaccination coverage for the DoD (Active Duty component only) is approximately 71%. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 41 (7-13 October 2012), influenza activity remained low in the United States.

[FluView](#)

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

During week 41 (8-14 October 2012), all 24 reporting countries experienced low intensity of clinical influenza activity, 20 countries notified no geographic spread. Three countries reported increasing trends. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

German regulator recalls some Novartis flu vaccines

25 October - Germany's vaccination agency said on Thursday that some anti-influenza vaccines produced by Novartis should not be used and that the Swiss drugmaker had agreed to recall them. The Paul-Ehrlich Institute said some lots of flu vaccines Begripal and Fluad would be recalled. [Italy](#) on Wednesday banned the sale and use of anti-influenza vaccines produced by Novartis pending tests for possible side effects after small particles were found in some of the injections, prompting authorities in Switzerland to also take precautionary steps. Germany's Paul-Ehrlich Institute said the recall was a precautionary measure and that no small particles had been found in the products in [Germany](#). [Reuters](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

25 October – Estimates of flu activity based on flu-related Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the United States ranges from low to moderate. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 20 October 2012:

A cluster of influenza A/H1N1(09) cases were identified at MCRD Parris Island, continuing into early October.

Adenovirus

- Vaccination against types 4 and 7 adenovirus was instituted at all basic training centers by mid-November 2011 (week 45).
- FRI rates and the proportion of FRI cases positive for adenovirus have decreased markedly since vaccine was reintroduced.
- Type 14 adenovirus is present at MCRD Parris Island.

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

13 October – Current influenza and influenza-like illness activity is low in US Army and civilian populations. All beneficiaries aged 6 months and older should receive this year's influenza vaccine, unless medically exempted. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

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China: Ebola antibodies found in Chinese bats

23 October - Bats in China have been found to harbor antibodies to Ebola viruses, the first such evidence of filovirus infection in the country, researchers reported in the *Virology Journal*. Chinese and Australian researchers developed an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) for Ebola using the recombinant nucleocapsid protein and conducted a seroprevalence survey among Chinese bats. The researchers collected 843 wild bats from various provinces in mainland China from 2006 to 2009. They found that 32 of 843 serum samples contained Ebola antibodies and that 10 of 16 were further confirmed by western blot test. They conclude, "To our knowledge, this is the first report of any filovirus infection in China." [CIDRAP](#)

Netherlands: Outbreak of Salmonella Thompson since July 2012

25 October - An ongoing outbreak of salmonellosis due to *Salmonella* Thompson is affecting the Netherlands. Between 2 August and 19 October 2012, 866 cases were confirmed. Their median age was 44 years (range: 0–95 years), 63% were female and 36% were hospitalised. A matched case–control study suggested smoked salmon as the vehicle. *Salmonella* Thompson was confirmed in four of nine batches of smoked salmon from one producer. A recall of all concerned smoked salmon products was executed starting end of September. [Eurosurveillance](#)

U.S.: FDA documents voice doubts about voluntary approach on animal antibiotics

24 October - Internal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) documents obtained by an advocacy group show that the agency has some doubts about its voluntary strategy for reducing the use of antibiotics in food animals, according to the group, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). The voluntary approach, unveiled in April, encourages drug companies to change the labels of certain antibiotics to stop growth-promotion uses. PEER had asked the FDA for documentary evidence supporting its confidence in the voluntary strategy. The agency initially didn't respond, but recently provided documents under the threat of a lawsuit, according to PEER. The group, which posted some documents on its Web site, says they contradict rather than support the FDA's optimism about the voluntary strategy. One FDA memo says, "We recognize that the voluntary strategy has certain limitations in that (1) it lacks specifically defined/mandated timeframes, (2) its success is dependent on drug sponsors deciding it is in their best interest to work cooperatively with the agency, and (3) FDA collects insufficient data on drug use...to measure the effectiveness of the strategy." Another memo states that the FDA has

"regulatory options" in case the voluntary approach doesn't work, but the agency blanked out the options in the document. PEER attorney Kathryn Douglass said in a press release, "In the foot-thick stack of materials FDA surrendered there is not a shred of evidence that industry is working to phase-out injudicious use of these drugs." [CIDRAP](#)

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WELLNESS

Docs say choose organic food to reduce kids' exposure to pesticides



22 October - For the first time, the nation's pediatricians are wading into the controversy over whether organic food is better for you – and they're coming down on the side of parents who say it is, at least in part. It's worth buying organic to avoid pesticide residues, at least in some foods, says the American Academy of Pediatrics in a [report](#) released today. Contrary to what the Stanford University study on organics a few weeks back suggested, the pediatricians say when it comes to feeding kids, relying on [federal standards for pesticide residue](#) isn't good enough. The pediatricians are worried because babies of female farm workers in California showed small but significant developmental and motor delays when their mothers were exposed to pesticides at levels similar to those deemed acceptable in conventionally grown produce while pregnant. No studies have been done to see if exposure to similar levels of pesticides from simply eating produce would cause similar problems. But since early childhood exposure to lead and other toxins at very low levels is [now known](#) to be harmful, the pediatricians think caution is in order. [NPR](#)

Energy drink caffeine levels often stray from labels: study

25 October - Energy drinks do not always divulge how much caffeine they contain, and when an amount is listed on a label, it is not always accurate, Consumer Reports magazine has found. According to a study released on Thursday by the magazine, 11 of the 27 top-selling energy drinks in the United States do not specify the amount of caffeine in their beverages. Of the 16 drinks that did list a specific caffeine amount, five had more caffeine per serving than was listed and the average amount over was more than 20 percent. [Reuters](#)

Hormone therapy not recommended for disease prevention: U.S. panel

22 October - The risks of taking hormone therapy to prevent heart disease and osteoporosis in post menopausal women far outweigh the benefits and such treatment is not recommended, according to new guidelines from an influential panel of U.S. health advisers. The guidelines from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, published on Monday in the

Annals of Internal Medicine, reaffirm the group's 2005 guidelines recommending against the treatment. They apply only to hormone therapy for prevention of chronic disease. They do not apply to the use of hormones to treat symptoms of menopause, such as hot flashes or vaginal dryness, or to women under age 50 who have had a hysterectomy. [Reuters](#)

New breast cancer therapy tied to more complications

22 October - Women about to have breast cancer surgery may want to pay extra attention to the radiation treatment they could be offered afterward. A new study shows a new and increasingly popular treatment called brachytherapy is tied to more wound and skin complications than the standard radiation technique. Yet as many as one in six women on Medicare, the government's health insurance program for people over 65, end up getting the new therapy following breast-conserving surgery, researchers found. "We were very surprised to see that brachytherapy is as commonly used as it is, particularly given that there is no clear evidence that it offers better cancer outcomes," said Dr. Cary P. Gross of Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut. His findings were published Monday in the Journal of Clinical Oncology. [Reuters](#)

NIH videos demonstrate behavior's role in personal health

22 October - Habit, education, and environment all affect our behavior and our health. The National Institutes of Health's Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), today released four videos highlighting outstanding behavioral and social science research on mindless eating, risk-taking, diabetes management, and the evolution of skin pigmentation. The videos, called Research Highlights, are available on both the OBSSR website (www.obssr.od.nih.gov/video/) and the NIH YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/NIHOD>) and feature prominent researchers describing their work and its implications for society. [NIH](#)

Partial sleep deprivation linked to obesity

24 October — Evidence linking partial sleep deprivation to energy imbalance is relevant to weight gain prevention and weight loss promotion. A new study published October 24 in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics bases this finding on an extensive review of literature published over a fifteen-year period. More than 35 percent of American adults are obese and more than 28 percent sleep less than six hours a night... The research team evaluated articles published between 1996 and 2011 to determine the role of partial sleep deprivation on energy balance and weight regulation. As part of its methodology, the team constructed a series of comparative tables detailing individual study populations, study designs, energy intake, energy expenditure, and measurements of the hormones ghrelin, leptin, insulin, glucose, and cortisol. Analysis of these characteristics identified a set of patterns, including reduced insulin sensitivity, increases in ghrelin, and decreases in leptin among partially sleep-deprived individuals. Changes in ghrelin and leptin influenced energy intake among the study populations. [ScienceDaily](#)

Wait longer between Pap tests, ob-gyns say

22 October - Most women can wait three to five years between Pap tests to screen for cervical cancer, according to guidelines released Monday by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). The recommendations fall in line with two separate sets of guidelines released earlier this year - one by the American Cancer Society and other medical groups, and another from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, a government-backed panel. All of the new recommendations mark a further shift away from annual Pap testing, which was once the standard advice. Now ACOG and the other groups say most women ages 21 to 29 should have a Pap test no more than every three years. For women ages 30 to 65, the best option is to have a Pap test, along with a test for human papillomavirus (HPV), every five years; otherwise, a Pap test alone every three years is "acceptable." [Reuters](#)

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USAFRICOM

Northwest Africa: Locust warning – food security



25 October - Swarms of desert locusts are likely to migrate to Algeria, Libya, Mauritania and Morocco in the coming weeks from West Africa and the Sahel region, says the UN [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), which urges the four countries to prepare for pest control. Clouds of adult locusts are developing in Chad and are about to form in Mali and Niger after plentiful rains during the June-September rainy season favoured the [breeding of two generations](#) of locusts and increased their population 250 times. When they migrate to northwestern African countries, they are "expected to arrive in areas where there has been recent rainfall and with green vegetation... there could be impacts on associated livelihoods," Keith Cressman, FAO's senior locust forecasting officer, told IRIN. Prevailing winds and past trends make it likely that the swarms, once formed, will fly to Algeria, Libya, southern Morocco and northwestern Mauritania, he said in a statement on 23 October. [IRIN](#)

Uganda faces fresh outbreak of hemorrhagic fever

24 October - Uganda is struggling to contain the spread of the deadly Marburg virus, just weeks after an outbreak of Ebola killed at least 16 people. Last week, health officials declared an outbreak of the rare and deadly Marburg virus, a type of hemorrhagic fever similar to Ebola. Five people have died so far, six have been placed in isolation and over 150 more are being monitored for symptoms. One of the cases is being treated in the capital, Kampala. The outbreak comes just two weeks after Uganda was declared free of Ebola earlier this month. At least 16 people died of Ebola, a virus which in the past has killed hundreds. [VOA](#)

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Afghanistan: Winter planning aims to save lives



25 October - After last year's Afghan winter - the harshest in 15 years - killed dozens of displaced children in urban settlements, government and aid agencies in Afghanistan are preparing themselves for the coming winter. As of 30 September 2012, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported 445,856 persons internally displaced due to conflict. Many of these live in informal settlements in and around Kabul, but their numbers can be hard to track. The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is compiling data on the size of the settlements, where the deaths occurred, to scale up its winter assistance stocks accordingly, the deputy head of the Afghanistan office, Arnhild Spence, told IRIN. The Afghan National Disaster Management Authority is in the process of collecting and consolidating data on preparedness measures which the various line ministries are undertaking in the provinces. [IRIN](#)

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Czech Republic: An invasive mosquito species *Aedes albopictus*, 2012

25 October - Between July and September 2012, seventeen larvae of the invasive mosquito species *Aedes (Stegomyia) albopictus* (Skuse) were discovered using 60 ovitraps at four study sites alongside two main road exits in South Moravia, Czech Republic. This is the first report of imported *Ae. albopictus* in the Czech Republic. The findings highlight the need for a regular surveillance programme to monitor this invasive species throughout western and central Europe. [Eurosurveillance](#)

Greece: In vulnerable Greece, mosquitoes bite back



22 October - Just when it seems things couldn't get any worse for [Greece](#), the exhausted and indebted country has a new threat to deal with: mosquito-borne diseases. Species of the blood-sucking insects that can carry exotic-sounding tropical infections like malaria, West Nile Virus, chikungunya and dengue fever are enjoying the extra bit of warmth climate change is bringing to parts of southern Europe. And with austerity budgets, a collapsing health system, political infighting and rising xenophobia all conspiring to allow pest and disease control measures here to slip through the net, the mosquitoes are biting back. [Reuters](#)

Greece: Malaria

19 October - Cases of malaria continue to be reported in Greece. Some new cases have occurred in areas of Greece where malaria had not been previously reported. Cases of malaria have been reported from the Attica, Karditsa, Laconia, Viotia, and Xanthi regions of Greece. Cases have occurred in the cities of Evrotas, Marathon, Markopoulo, and Selino. No cases have been reported in Athens. The Hellenic (Greek) CDC and the European CDC are improving surveillance for malaria cases. In affected areas, mosquito control has been intensified, health care providers have been educated, and the public has been informed.

[CDC](#)

Italy: L'Aquila quake - scientists guilty of manslaughter

22 October - Six Italian scientists and an ex-government official have been sentenced to six years in prison over the 2009 deadly earthquake in L'Aquila. A regional court found them guilty of multiple manslaughter. Prosecutors said the defendants gave a falsely reassuring statement before the quake, while the defence maintained there was no way to predict major quakes. The 6.3 magnitude quake devastated the city and killed 309 people. [BBC](#)

[News](#)

United Kingdom: NHS hearing services 'being cut'



22 October – NHS hearing services are being scaled back in England, an investigation by campaigners suggests. Data obtained by Action on Hearing Loss from 128 hospitals found more than 40% had seen cuts in the past 18 months. In particular, the study found evidence of rises in waiting times and reductions in follow-up care. The report is the latest in a growing number to have suggested front-line care is being rationed as the health service struggles with finances. The NHS is in the middle of a £20bn five-year savings drive. The government believes the savings can be made by increasing productivity. But in the past year reports have suggested everything from hip and knee operations to eye surgery is being cut. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: 2012 was second worst year for West Nile virus



19 October - The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that as of Oct. 16, there have been 4,531 human cases of West Nile virus (WNV) reported, reaching a death toll of 183, making this year's outbreak the second worst in six years. Of all the WNV cases, 51 percent were classified as being neuroinvasive diseases, such as meningitis or

encephalitis, while 49 percent were non-neuroinvasive. In total, 48 states have reported the infection in people or animals and nearly 70 percent of all the cases have come from eight states: Texas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Illinois, South Dakota, Michigan and Oklahoma, and nearly a third of the cases can be attributed to Texas. [Private MD News](#)

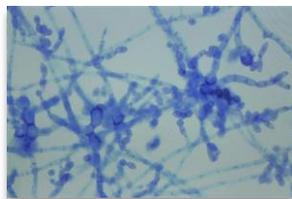
U.S.: ACIP makes recommendations for Tdap, meningococcal vaccines

24 October - A federal panel today recommended that all pregnant women receive the tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) vaccine during each pregnancy and that infants at increased risk receive four doses of a newly approved meningococcal combination vaccine. The federal Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP), whose recommendations are usually accepted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), made the Tdap recommendation on a 14-0 vote (with one abstention) and the meningococcal shift on a 13-1 vote, also with one abstention. The Tdap step expands the ACIP's June 2011 recommendation that, among pregnant women, only those who have not had the Tdap vaccine should receive it. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S.: Boys hit puberty sooner now, study finds

20 October - American boys are entering puberty at a younger age now than they did several decades ago, new research reveals. Specifically, investigators discovered that males are showing the first signs of sexual maturity six months to two years earlier, with blacks having a significant head start relative to whites and Hispanics. The study does not pinpoint what exactly is driving the trend toward earlier puberty, nor does it identify an underlying mechanism that might explain any racial differences. However, the finding builds on what most experts consider definitive research from the 1990s, which confirmed that American girls are also entering puberty at a younger age today than in decades past. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: Meningitis outbreak spreads to 18 states with South Carolina case



25 October - The deadly outbreak of fungal meningitis tied to tainted steroid medications from a Massachusetts company expanded to 18 states on Thursday with South Carolina reporting its first probable case of the disease. New England Compounding Center of Framingham, Massachusetts, shipped the steroid to 23 states and all but five of those states now have reported cases of rare fungal meningitis. The five states which have not reported cases are California, Nevada, West Virginia, Rhode Island and Connecticut. [Reuters](#)

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India: Monsoon hits Tamil Nadu, claims 20 lives

21 October - The North-East monsoon lashes Tamil Nadu and leaves twenty persons dead during the two-day rains that lashed various parts of the state. Tamil Nadu Chief minister J Jayalalithaa, who reviewed the arrangements to tackle the northeast monsoon has ordered officials to provide `2.5lakh each as compensation to the kin of the dead. She has also announced help to those who've suffered injuries or loss of livestock or property. The victims, including women, were killed in incidents such as electrocution and lightning strikes. The CM asked ministers to visit their districts regularly and take stock of the situation, as rains are expected to continue till December-end. [NewsX](#)

Indonesia: Chikungunya

25 October - The head of the District Health Office (DKK) Sukoharjo, Dr Guntur Subiyantoro, asks city residents to be wary of mosquitoes from other areas or urbanizations due to an outbreak of chikungunya disease in 2 villages bordering the Klaten [regency]. According to DKK data there are 41 patients with diseases caused [transmitted] by mosquitoes. That number includes 25 Ngemplak villagers and 16 Pucangan villagers, both areas in the Kartasura, Sukoharjo district. On Wed 17 Oct 2012, the official stated that, "people suspected of having chikungunya [virus infections] in both villages were located in the region bordering Klaten." Furthermore, Guntur said the allegations were based on routine community action in 2 villages where people were accustomed to fogging or fumigation. Meanwhile, the villagers still do not have these activities on the border. "A healthy lifestyle is practiced by citizens. Residents were routinely eradicating mosquito larvae." In the meantime, Dr Guntur ordered that the public be aware of the spread of mosquito-borne chikungunya and dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) as the rainy season arrives. "If people want fogging please report that to DKK. Also drain the bathtub and discard the water in catchment areas." [ProMED-mail](#)

Myanmar: Demining moves a step closer



22 October - A major Norwegian demining NGO says it is ready to begin mine-clearing in southeastern Myanmar once it receives a green light. "As soon as we get the go-ahead from both the government and relevant ethnic groups, we can start doing a survey, and then clearance," Andreas Indregard, country director for NGO Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in Myanmar, told IRIN. "From our side, we're ready to act." On [26 September](#) NPA signed an agreement with the Burmese government for the clearance of landmines in Kayah State (eastern Myanmar), Karen and Mon states, as well as the Tanintharyi and Bago regions (all in southern Myanmar). "But for each area covered by our MoU [memorandum of understanding], we need all relevant groups in the area to agree," Indregard said, adding: "Mine action is a new kind of intervention in Myanmar, and it takes a little bit of time to get everyone on board."

Currently there is no organized demining activity in Myanmar and no one is sure if and when it may begin. In June the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) reportedly made its first visit to Myanmar in a decade and discussed the possibility of mine clearance with senior officials. [IRIN](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Cuba: Sandy hits Cuba as category two hurricane

25 October - Sandy has reached south-east Cuba and strengthened into a strong category two hurricane. The hurricane was carrying maximum sustained winds of 175km/h (110mph) as it hit land just west of Santiago de Cuba, said the [US-based National Hurricane Center \(NHC\)](#). On Wednesday, one man was killed as Sandy swept over Jamaica. A hurricane watch is in place in the Bahamas, and Florida has been placed on tropical storm watch. The NHC said wind gusts of up to 183km/h had been reported in Santiago de Cuba. It warned the hurricane was bringing heavy rain which could "produce life-threatening flash floods and mudslides, especially in areas of mountainous terrain". Forecasters said up to 300mm (11 inches) of rain was expected to fall in some areas of eastern Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Some mountainous areas of the Caribbean could see up to 500mm. [BBC](#)

Peru doctors 'to suspend strike over pay'



21 October - Thousands of doctors in Peru have agreed to suspend a strike that has left many poor people without medical care for more than a month. The leader of the doctors' union, Cesar Palomino, said they would return to work while they consider government proposals for a pay rise. The doctors had complained that their pay was not increasing despite strong economic growth in Peru. The strike caused huge backlogs in hospitals and clinics. Peruvian media reported that the decision was taken shortly after the government threatened to cut the doctors' pay unless they returned to work. Some 1.5m medical appointments were missed because of the strike, the BBC's Mattia Cabitza reports from the Peruvian capital, Lima. [BBC News](#)

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