

28 February 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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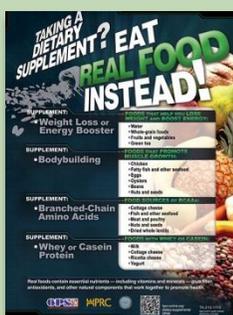
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A new poster that encourages getting your nutrients from food instead of dietary supplements is now available from the [Health Information eCatalog](#).



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Dari Posters

Three new posters have been translated into Dari and are now available from the [Health Information eCatalog](#). They encourage hand hygiene, vaccination for healthcare workers, and watching for signs of tuberculosis.



U.S. MILITARY

Aircraft used in Vietnam source of postwar Agent Orange contamination in U.S.

24 February – During the Vietnam War, in an operation called Operation Ranch Hand, approximately twenty million gallons of herbicides, including around 10.5 million gallons of dioxin-contaminated Agent Orange, were sprayed by about thirty-four C-123 aircraft. These aircraft were subsequently returned to the United States and were used by Air Force reserve units between 1971 and 1982 for transport operations. Air Force reservists who flew these planes were exposed greater levels of dioxin than previously acknowledged. [Homeland Security News Wire](#)

Medical care is now a tool of war

28 February – ...Until recently, medical care was something of a bright spot in the history of conflict. Major European powers, shocked by the suffering and grisly deaths of their soldiers in the Crimean War, agreed in 1864 to the First Geneva Convention. It granted medical workers a special neutral status on the battlefield, and upheld the right of all wounded to medical care regardless of nationality... The wars of the 1990s spread in shocking new ways, with widespread torture, starvation, and genocidal murder campaigns. Rather than fighting other soldiers, armed groups often concentrated on battling civilians. The Geneva Conventions barely figured for the combatants in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda, the Congo, and Afghanistan. The United States contributed to that decline after 9/11 when it suspended Geneva Convention protections for prisoners in the “war on terror,” and normalized drone strikes against targets in civilian areas. The protections around medical care started to collapse as well. Dr. Jennifer Leaning, director of Harvard University’s FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, has worked in conflict zones for decades and has surveyed the eroding conditions of medical care. Increasingly, she found, the biggest victims in armed conflicts weren’t the combatants but the civilian populations suffering in scorched-earth or ethnic cleansing campaigns in which doctors and hospitals became explicit, rather than incidental, targets. [Boston Globe](#)

Reports of sexual assault in the military climbed in FY 2013

26 February - About 5,400 instances of sexual assault or “unwanted sexual contact” were reported within the U.S. military last fiscal year, a 60 percent rise from 2012, the Pentagon said Wednesday. The total, which is preliminary, has risen since late December, when the military had just over 5,000 reports. The number could potentially rise somewhat higher before a final report for 2013, Pentagon spokeswoman Lt. Col. Cathy Wilkinson said. In fiscal 2012, military members reported 3,374 instances of unwanted sexual contact. That same year, defense official estimated the true number was about 26,000, based on a “prevalence survey” given to troops. [Stars and Stripes](#)

Chart: The Deadliest and Most Common Cancers

This interactive graphic, created by biotechnologist David Taylor and appearing first on his [data-visualization blog](#), illustrates how common and deadly various types of cancer are. Each pie chart represents an organ (matched for color) and is sized according to the incidence of cancer of that organ.



Self-reported malaria prophylaxis compliance among U.S. Service Members with diagnosed malaria, 2008-2013

January 2014 - Non-adherence to malaria chemoprophylaxis increases the risk of acquiring malaria. Compliance in service members deployed to Afghanistan has been reported to be approximately 60 percent for doxycycline and lower (38%) for other medications. This analysis summarized responses to questions on the post deployment health assessment form... related to malaria prophylaxis. Of 203 service members diagnosed with malaria between 2008 and 2013 and who had a valid DD2796 form associated with the deployment or temporary duty in the country of presumed malaria acquisition, 201 (99%) responded that they were told to take malaria medications. The percentage of service members reporting that they “took all pills” varied by medication. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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GLOBAL

Blood test provides more accurate prenatal testing for Down syndrome

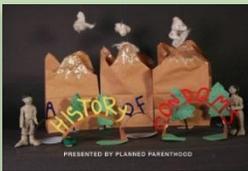
26 February - A new blood test offers pregnant women a safe and much more accurate way to screen a fetus for Down syndrome. A study that evaluated the test in 1,914 pregnancies found that by checking fetal DNA it produces far fewer false alarms than current screening techniques... Bianchi and others stressed that a positive result on the screening test would still need to be confirmed by follow-up diagnostic tests — either amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling, which can cause miscarriages. But the new blood test would send fewer women for that riskier testing. [NPR](#)

Camels linked to spread of MERS virus in people

25 February - A new study suggests that camels are the major source of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, or MERS, a viral disease that has sickened 182 people and killed 79 of them since it was first detected in Saudi Arabia in 2012. The animals are most likely to infect people through respiratory secretions — from coughing, sneezing, snorting or spitting — that travel through the air or cling to surfaces. People with chronic illnesses like diabetes, lung disease or kidney failure, or other conditions that weaken their immunity, seem to be most susceptible, and should avoid close contact with camels, researchers say. [New York Times](#)

The 10,000 Year History of the Condom in 2 Minutes and 12 Dioramas

When were condoms invented? How old is the oldest condom? Who invented the condom? What are condoms made of? Video from Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest.



F.D.A. Weighs fertility method that raises ethical questions

25 February - The Food and Drug Administration is weighing a fertility procedure that involves combining the genetic material of three people to make a baby free of certain defects, a therapy that critics say is an ethical minefield and could lead to the creation of designer babies. The agency has asked a panel of experts to summarize current science to determine whether the approach — which has been performed successfully in monkeys by researchers in Oregon and in people more than a decade ago — is safe enough to be used again in people.... Regulators are asking scientists to discuss the risks to the mother and the potential child and how future studies should be structured, among other issues. The meeting is being closely watched. The science of such therapies has advanced significantly in recent years, and many scientists are urging federal regulators to ease requirements for study in humans. [New York Times](#)

Virtual arm eases phantom limb pain

25 February - Doctors have devised a new way to treat amputees with phantom limb pain. Using computer-generated augmented reality, the patient can see and move a virtual arm controlled by their stump. Electric signals from the muscles in the amputated limb "talk" to the computer, allowing real-time movement... Max Ortiz Catalan, the brains behind the new treatment, says giving the muscles a work-out while being able to watch the actions carried out may be key to the therapy. "The motor areas in the brain needed for movement of the amputated arm are reactivated, and the patient obtains visual feedback that tricks the brain into believing there is an arm executing such motor commands. He experiences himself as a whole, with the amputated arm back in place." [BBC News](#)

Visually displayed early warning system for epidemics

24 February – In an EU-funded project, scientists are examining the effects various environmental factors have on cholera epidemics in Uganda, and have developed a software architecture for early warning systems that compares environmental and health data and presents the results graphically, allowing for the creation of visually displayed early warnings of epidemic breakouts. [Homeland Security News Wire](#)

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Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

As of 21 February 2014:

- **NORTHCOM:** The percent of outpatient encounters due to influenza-like illness (ILI) are above baseline for service members and beneficiaries. There were 2 RMEs among active duty service members and 1 among a dependent.
- **CENTCOM:** The percent of outpatient encounters due to ILI and pneumonia and influenza (P&I) remain above baseline.
- **EUCOM:** The percent of outpatient encounters due to ILI and P&I were above baseline.
- **PACOM:** ILI and P&I activity increased in week 07. The percent of outpatient encounters due to ILI and P&I were above baseline. There were 2 reportable medical events among dependents. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 7 (February 9-15, 2014), influenza activity decreased, but remained elevated in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 6,887 specimens tested and reported during week 7, 958 (13.9%) were positive for influenza.
- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was above the epidemic threshold.
- **Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths:** Two influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- **Influenza-associated Hospitalizations:** A season-cumulative rate of 26.1 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported.
- **Outpatient Illness Surveillance:** The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 2.5%, above the national baseline of 2.0%. Nine of 10 regions reported ILI at or above region-specific baseline levels. Seven states experienced moderate ILI activity; 16 states and New York City experienced low ILI activity; 27 states experienced minimal ILI activity, and the District of Columbia had insufficient data.
- **Geographic Spread of Influenza:** The geographic spread of influenza in 17 states was reported as widespread; 22 states reported regional influenza activity; the District of

Columbia, Guam, and nine states reported local influenza activity; Puerto Rico and two states reported sporadic influenza activity, and the U.S. Virgin Islands reported no influenza activity. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

Respiratory Highlights - 2 - 15 February 2014 (Surveillance Week 6 & 7):

During Weeks 6 & 7, a total of 317 specimens were collected and received from 57 locations. Results were finalized for 104 specimens from 37 locations. For specimens collected during Week 6, there were 61 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, eight influenza A(H3N2), one influenza A/not subtyped, and two influenza B identified. For specimens collected during Week 7, 10 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, four influenza A(H3N2), one influenza A/not subtyped, and two influenza B were identified.

Cumulative results were finalized for 2,153 specimens from 79 locations. There were 842 specimens positive for influenza A (792 A(H1N1)pdm09, 34 A(H3N2), one A(H1N1)pdm09 & adenovirus, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & coronavirus, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & parainfluenza, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & RSV, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & rhinovirus/enterovirus, and 10 A/not subtyped). There were 18 specimens positive for influenza B (14 B/unknown lineage, and four B/Yamagata). Other respiratory pathogens identified were 47 adenovirus, 24 *Chlamydomydia pneumoniae*, 77 coronavirus, 36 human metapneumovirus, 38 *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, 59 parainfluenza, 112 RSV, and 231 rhinovirus/enterovirus. To date, 83 non-influenza co-infections have been identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

For week 7/2014:

- Of the 29 countries providing clinical data, Finland and Greece reported high-intensity influenza activity, eleven reported medium intensity and 16 countries reported low-intensity influenza activity.
- Of the 1 332 sentinel specimens tested across 25 countries, 488 (37%) were positive for influenza virus.
- Six countries reported 221 hospitalised, laboratory-confirmed influenza cases, including 117 cases admitted to intensive care units (ICU).

Based on the various indicators for the influenza season, the status of the season is considerably varied among EU/EEA Member States. Some countries are experiencing decreasing influenza activity while others have not yet reached an epidemic peak. Influenza A(H1)pdm09 and A(H3) viruses are co-circulating in outpatient settings; however, A(H1)pdm09 is predominant in hospitalised cases. Influenza B virus has rarely been detected. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 15 February 2014:

Influenza: Nine cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/untyped, 6 A/H1N1, 2 B) among US military basic trainees.

- Elevated influenza activity in late January at several basic training centers and in southern California civilians
- Increased influenza B activity among civilians in California near US-Mexico border

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](#)

Preventing and controlling influenza with available interventions

5 March - Influenza activity has been surging in the United States, and there are reports of critical illness and death in young and middle-aged adults. The predominant virus so far this season is influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, the cause of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. Despite many challenges, there is much that the public, patients, the public health community, and clinicians can do now to reduce influenza's impact. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 15 February 2014 (Week 7)

The number of specimens testing positive for Influenza A continued to decline in week seven. All regions, except ERM and PRMC, have shown declining trends from peaks earlier in the influenza season.

- **ILI Activity:** Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week seven were unavailable due to ESSENCE system outage.
- **Influenza cases:** Six hospitalized influenza cases have been reported to USAPHC through DRSi in week seven. To date, 86 cases have been reported during this influenza season: twenty in Active Duty (AD) Service Members (SMs) and 66 in non-AD beneficiaries.
- **Viral specimens:** During week seven, 301 of 1,138 (26%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. The most influenza A positive specimens were reported from SRMC (26%), while PRMC and ERM accounted for 24% and 20%, respectively. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

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

27 February - On 25 February 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of an additional laboratory-confirmed case of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus... The overall risk assessment has not changed (see WHO Risk Assessment under 'Related links'). While the recent report of avian influenza A(H7N9) virus detection in live poultry exported from mainland China to Hong Kong SAR shows the potential for the virus to spread through movement of live poultry, at this time there is no indication that international spread of avian influenza A(H7N9) has occurred. However as the virus infection does not cause signs of disease in poultry, continued surveillance is needed. [WHO](#)

New H7N9 cases in China include first in Jilin province

21 February - China today reported four new H7N9 infections, one fatal, including the first case from Jilin province, which lies well north of the main outbreak area. Three of the latest illnesses are from Guangdong province, a hotspot of disease activity during the outbreak's second wave. ...Jilin province, located in northeastern China, borders North Korea and Russia. The area where the H7N9 case was detected is about 600 miles northeast of Beijing, the northernmost site where H7N9 cases have previously been detected. So today's news of a case in Jilin represents an expansion of the outbreak area. The four new cases boost the outbreak total to 365, according to a case list kept by Flu Trackers. The latest death lifts the unofficial number of fatalities to 113. [CIDRAP](#)

Sick cities: how to beat pandemics that spread like we live in one big metropolis

26 February - ...[C]ities need careful planning for health. While infectious and contagious diseases are the most obvious hazard, it is now recognised that the urban environment also has a major part to play in chronic illness. Heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer rates are rising, fuelled by unhealthy lifestyles; fast food restaurants proliferate in our cities; convenience or fear of busy roads stops us cycling or walking; and there is little green space for active leisure or children's play. The Amoy Gardens outbreak also pointed to another factor that even rich cities find hard to master: sanitation. The official investigation found that the breeding ground for the Sars coronavirus in the Amoy blocks was the toilet system. Each block had eight vertical soil stacks to take waste from toilets, basins and baths, but too little water was passing through to flush it all away. Contaminated water droplets were blown back in by the bathroom air-extractor fans. [Guardian](#)

Vietnam on high alert over flu risk

26 February - The H7N9 avian-influenza virus that has killed more than 100 people in China in the past year has for the first time been detected in a province bordering Vietnam, raising the prospect that the disease may take hold across Asia and beyond. It was found in poultry in the live-bird markets of southern China's Guangxi province in late January, and has caused three known human cases in the region. The news comes as a surge in human H7N9 flu cases in China since the start of the year shows signs of abating, possibly because of the reintroduction of control measures. Vietnam, which had already prepared response plans for such an H7N9 outbreak, has placed itself on high alert. [Scientific American](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Multistate outbreak of listeriosis—Maryland and California

26 February - A total of eight persons infected with the outbreak strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* were reported from two states. The number of ill persons identified in each state was as follows: California (1) and Maryland (7). Seven of eight ill persons were hospitalized. One death was reported in California. Five of the illnesses (2 mother-newborn pairs and a newborn) were related to pregnancy. All patients are of Hispanic ethnicity. The outbreak strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* that caused the illnesses has been found in cheese products produced by Roos Foods of Kenton, Delaware. These cheeses have been recalled. [CDC](#)

Scientists query health risk of food package chemicals



19 February - Scientists say "far too little" is known about the health risks of chemicals used in food packaging, and some could cause cancer. Research is needed to understand the effect on the human body and embryonic development of at least 4,000 chemicals used in packaging, they said. Links between packaging and obesity, diabetes and neurological diseases need to be explored, scientists warned. But critics have said that the call is alarmist. Scientists Jane Muncke, John Peterson Myers, Martin Scheringer and Miquel Porta called for an investigation into the health risks of food packaging in a commentary piece published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. [BBC News](#)

Sri Lanka: Foot-and-mouth disease

24 February – Amid an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease [FMD] spreading in 5 districts -- Anuradhapura, Puttalam, Trincomalee, Ampara, and Vavuniya -- health authorities have been directed to ban all forms of meat other than poultry and introduce other stringent measures. Also brought under the ban is the Divisional Secretary's [DS; administrative sub-unit] Division in the Mullaitivu District. All meat stalls selling beef, pork, and mutton will be closed down immediately. Supermarkets will also be banned from selling these products if they are obtained locally. Different gazette notifications have been issued by Dr WK De Silva, Director General of the Department of Animal Production and Health. They declare the 5 districts and the [Mullaitivu] DS area as 'infected areas' and have warned that cattle, buffalos, sheep, goats, and pigs are susceptible. [ProMED-mail](#)

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WELLNESS

A hot debate over e-cigarettes as a path to tobacco, or from it

22 February - Dr. Michael Siegel, a hard-charging public health researcher at Boston University, argues that e-cigarettes could be the beginning of the end of smoking in America. He sees them as a disruptive innovation that could make cigarettes obsolete, like the computer did to the typewriter. But his former teacher and mentor, Stanton A. Glantz, a professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, is convinced that e-cigarettes may erase the hard-won progress achieved over the last half-century in reducing smoking. He predicts that the modern gadgetry will be a glittering gateway to the deadly, old-fashioned habit for children, and that adult smokers will stay hooked longer now that they can get a nicotine fix at their desks. These experts represent the two camps now at war over the public health implications of e-cigarettes. The devices, intended to feed nicotine addiction without the toxic tar of conventional cigarettes, have divided a normally sedate public health community that had long been united in the fight against smoking and Big Tobacco. [New York Times](#)

Cooking meat 'may be dementia risk'



24 February - Browning meat in the oven, grill or frying pan produces chemicals which may increase the risk of developing dementia, US researchers suggest. Advanced glycation end (AGE) products have been linked to diseases such as type-2 diabetes. Mice fed a

high-AGEs diet had a build-up of dangerous proteins in the brain and impaired cognitive function. Experts said the results were "compelling" but did not provide "definitive answers". AGEs are formed when proteins or fats react with sugar. This can happen naturally and during the cooking process. [BBC News](#)

How to get fit in a few minutes a week

26 February - High-intensity interval training, a type of workout that consists of very brief bouts of very strenuous exercise, has become enormously popular in recent years. A main reason is that although such workouts are draining, they can be both very effective and very short, often lasting only a few minutes... [R]esearchers at two of the laboratories most noted for HIIT science set out to learn more about the best way to do interval training... The takeaway of both studies is that it is best, if you wish to perform high-intensity interval training, to stick to what is well documented as effective: a few sessions per week of 30- or 60-second intervals so strenuous you moan, followed by a minute or so of blessed recovery, and a painful repetition or four. Done correctly, such sessions, in my experience, get you out of the gym quickly and inspire truly inventive cursing.

[New York Times](#)

Scant evidence to support vitamins against cancer, heart disease

25 February - If you're taking vitamins to guard against cancer or a heart attack, you've got plenty of company. Nearly half of American adults take a vitamin of some kind each a day. About a third take a multivitamin. But are they worth it? For people in good health and without any special nutritional deficiencies, there isn't enough evidence to say it's a good idea — at least when it comes to preventing cardiovascular disease and cancer. That's the verdict from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an influential panel of doctors, nurses and scientists who weigh the evidence and make recommendations on medical care. The group published new guidelines on vitamins Monday in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. [NPR](#)

Study finds limited benefit to some 'medical homes'

25 February - You may have heard the term "medical home" to describe a way of organizing doctors' practices to provide more comprehensive, less costly, patient-friendly treatment... Now, a study of one large, long-running pilot of the medical home approach has found that it resulted in limited quality improvement, and that it didn't save money, over a three-year period. The report, by researchers at the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research group, ... found that the pilot practices successfully adopted medical home techniques, like creating lists of patients who were overdue for certain services, and received formal recognition as medical homes... The study found no reduction in patients' use of emergency rooms or hospitals, however. Practices in the pilot did a better job of monitoring patients with diabetes for kidney disease, the study found, and quality improved for some other aspects of diabetes care, too. But the study

found no improvements in other areas, like asthma care and cancer screening. Over all, it found improvements in just one of 11 quality measurements. [New York Times](#)

Vegetarian diet may lower your blood pressure



24 February – Nearly a third of American adults have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. Often called the "silent killer" because it provides few warning signs, hypertension increases a patient's risk for heart attack and stroke. New research suggests eating a vegetarian diet could help combat this deadly disease.

A healthy blood pressure is 120/80 mm HG. Previous studies have shown that each increase of 20/10 mm Hg in that number doubles the patient's risk of cardiovascular disease. But lowering that top number just 5 mm HG can reduce your chances of dying from cardiovascular disease by about 7%. And eating more fruits and vegetables may be a good way to do that, according to the new study, published Monday in the scientific journal JAMA Internal Medicine. [CNN](#)

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USAFRICOM

Afghanistan: Aid group sees daunting obstacles to health care

25 February – The patients in the four hospitals run by Doctors Without Borders in Afghanistan are the lucky ones, by all accounts, having arrived at well-stocked facilities that maintain international standards with high-quality free care. But when Doctors Without Borders, a French medical aid organization also known as Médecins Sans Frontières, surveyed 800 of those patients last year, the results showed a dismaying picture of unmet health care needs. Nearly one in five of the Afghan patients, 18.4 percent, had a close relative or friend who died last year because that person was unable to reach medical care — in some areas because of high costs, even though health care is supposed to be free in Afghanistan, and in other areas because the war posed an obstacle to getting to facilities. [New York Times](#)

Africa: Call for shake-up in nutrition research



24 February - Rwanda has achieved remarkable success in reducing child hunger, and nutrition experts believe there may be lessons here for other countries in Africa. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), in a 2013 report on progress in tackling malnutrition, noted that in 2005 more than half

of Rwanda's children under five years of age - about 800,000 - were stunted. "Just five years later, stunting prevalence had decreased from an estimated 52 percent to 44 percent," the report said. The Rwandan approach has been to try and find home-grown solutions...The Rwandan model could be used in other African countries, where foreign donor-driven initiatives tend to focus on treatment and technical solutions. Change will only come when nutrition research is led by Africa, and interventions are designed to meet a country's priorities, according to the findings of a two-year European Union-funded SUNRAY (Sustainable nutrition research for Africa in the years to come) project, published recently in PLOS Medicine, a peer-reviewed journal. [All Africa](#)

Namibia: Cholera outbreak

17 February – Since November 2013, Namibia has been affected by a cholera outbreak, which was initially confined to four northern regions, including hardest-hit Kunene, as well as Omusati, Oshana and Ohangwena. By 10 Feb 2014, 504 cases and 16 deaths had been recorded. The Ministry of Health and Social Services declared the situation to have "completely stabilized" on 20 Jan. On 11 Feb, the first cases of cholera were reported in the capital Windhoek, in the Katutura area. By 17 Feb, 14 cases and one death had been recorded. [ReliefWeb](#)

South Sudan: 140,000 people to get cholera vaccine in South Sudan

22 February – WHO is working with the South Sudan Government and partners to provide vaccines to protect nearly 140 000 people living in temporary camps in South Sudan against cholera. The vaccines come from an emergency stockpile managed by WHO, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and UNICEF. It is the first time the stockpile, created in 2013 by WHO, is being activated. Although currently there is not a cholera outbreak, people displaced by the recent conflict and living in the camps are at risk due to poor sanitary conditions and overcrowding. Starting today, 94 000 people will be vaccinated in the Minkaman camp, Awerial County, targeting displaced people and host communities, followed by vaccination campaigns in camps based in Juba, covering an additional 43 000 people. [ReliefWeb](#)

Uganda says healthcare is for all despite anti-gay law

25 February - Uganda's health minister says homosexuals will not be discriminated against when accessing healthcare despite the introduction of a tough new anti-gay law. Dr Ruhakana Rugunda told the BBC that all people, gay or otherwise, should get full access to medical treatment. Aid charities warn the new bill will have "disastrous" effects on the country's response to HIV. Uganda is a very conservative society where many people oppose homosexuality... Mr Rugunda urged gay people to be honest with healthcare workers, particularly when discussing treatment for HIV. [BBC News](#)

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Afghanistan: 'Deepening' medical crisis



25 February - Despite years of aid, medical care in Afghanistan remains severely limited as casualty rates from violence climb, humanitarian organisation Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) warns in a report. Gaping holes in the war-torn country's healthcare system are being obscured by misleading narratives of success, it says. Reliable data is hard to come by, but MSF says patient testimonies paint a troubling picture. Many struggle to access basic care. The research - conducted over six months in 2013 with more than 800 patients in the hospitals where MSF works in Helmand, Kabul, Khost and Kunduz provinces - reveals the serious and often deadly risks people take to seek medical help. [BBC News](#)

Food security in the Gulf: How to keep stomachs full

22 February - ...The Gulf countries have long been preoccupied by the question of how to feed their people. Turmoil in the Arab world since 2011 has spiced up such concerns, which are further sharpened by a rise in the price of staples since 2009 and memories of a threatened 1970s grain embargo. The region's population is expected to grow by 40% between 2010 and 2030. Some Gulf countries import as much as 90% of their food. Their governments have been unsure of the best way to keep everyone fed—and content. Qatar reportedly declared that it would produce 70% of its food at home by 2023, by adopting new technologies of desalination and hydroponics. That idea was soon dropped. Saudi Arabia, with the busiest farm sector among the six countries of the Gulf Co-operation Council, scaled back wheat grown by irrigation because it was draining non-renewable aquifers. Heavy reliance on imports is problematic when countries such as Argentina suddenly restrict their exports in response to rising prices. Buying farmland in countries such as Sudan, Tanzania and Pakistan is another Gulf ploy. [Economist](#)

Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia reports 2 MERS cases, 1 fatal

20 February – Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health (MOH) today reported two new cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, one of which was fatal. The first patient is a 58-year-old male citizen of Al-Ahsa, who has "various chronic diseases." He is receiving medical treatment, but the MOH didn't provide any details on his condition or whether he had contact with any animals or infected people. The second case is in an 81-year-old woman from Riyadh, who also had underlying chronic diseases. She died, but the MOH did not list a date of death or any other specifics. The cases appear to bring the global MERS-CoV count to 186 cases and 81 deaths. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

UN: Syria refugee children in Lebanon risk starvation



25 February - Nearly 2,000 Syrian refugee children in Lebanon are in danger of starving to death if they do not receive immediate treatment, UNICEF said Tuesday, warning of a looming malnutrition crisis. "Malnutrition is a new, silent threat among refugees in Lebanon," said Annamaria Laurini, the UN children's agency UNICEF's representative in Beirut. The problem is linked to "poor hygiene, unsafe drinking water, diseases, lack of immunization and improper feeding practices of young children," she said. There are nearly one million registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon, including 200,000 children. [NOW](#)

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USEUCOM

Europe: Tough EU smoking rules approved

26 February - Anti-smoking legislation is to be introduced across the European Union in an attempt to cut the number of smokers by 2.4 million. The rules, voted in by the European Parliament, mean picture health warnings will have to dominate the front and back of all packaging. There will also be a ban on flavoured, such as menthol, cigarettes. [BBC News](#)

Europe: WHO sees risk of obesity becoming the new norm in Europe



24 February - Being overweight is so common in Europe that it risks becoming "the new norm", with around a third of teenagers now heavier than is recommended for their health, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday. In a report on obesity levels in the 53 countries of the WHO's European Region, the United Nations health agency said up to 27 percent of 13-year-olds and 33 percent of 11-year-olds are overweight. "Our perception of what is normal has shifted; being overweight is now more common than unusual. We must not let another generation grow up with obesity as the new norm," said Zsuzsanna Jakab, the WHO's regional director. [Reuters](#)

Netherlands: Immunity against poliomyelitis, assessed in 2006 to 2007

20 February - Europe has been declared polio-free since 2002. Here we describe the seroprotection against poliomyelitis in the Dutch population using banked serum samples. Samples from 1,581 inhabitants of eight municipalities with low vaccination coverage (LVC) and an additional 6,386 samples from a nationwide (NS) group (clinical trial number: ISRCTN20164309; collected in 2006–07) were tested for neutralising antibodies (\log^2 reciprocal titres (GMT); non-protection <3) against all three poliomyelitis serotypes. Demographic and epidemiological data were used for statistical regression analysis. Seroprevalence in the NS was 94.6% (type 1), 91.8% (type 2) and 84.0% (type 3). Infants (0–7 months-old) had $\geq 80\%$ seroprevalence for all serotypes. The highest seroprevalence was found in children, with type 1 and type 2 in five year-olds and type 3 in nine to 10 year-olds. In the LVC group, orthodox protestants, many of whom refuse vaccination, showed seroprevalence rates of 64.9% (type 1), 61.0% (type 2) and 62.1% (type 3). In the NS group, non-Western immigrants and travellers to non-European continents had higher seroprevalences compared to Western immigrants and travellers within Europe, respectively. [Eurosurveillance](#)

United Kingdom: Obese people in Wales 'denied' life saving treatment

25 February - Obese people in Wales are being denied access to life saving treatments, a leading group of surgeons has said. The British Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society has said morbidly obese people have been told to gain weight to qualify for bariatric surgery. It voiced its concerns to the Welsh government's health and social care committee. The Welsh government said new criteria for surgery would be introduced soon following a review in 2013. The latest government figures show 59% of adults in Wales are classed as overweight or obese. ... Jonathan Barry, consultant bariatric surgeon at Morriston Hospital in Swansea and a member of the British Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society, said huge numbers of people were being referred to the unit but most do not fulfil the criteria. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

Canada: Surge in designer drugs, tainted 'E' poses lethal risks

26 February - With up to 10 new designer drugs flooding streets every year, more education is needed to convey risks, especially among youth, say University of Alberta researchers. In the span of a decade, Canada has gone from ecstasy importer to global

supplier of the illegal party drug. At the same time, even newer designer highs—sometimes just a mouse-click away—are flooding the drug market faster than legislation can keep pace. It's a worrying problem that University of Alberta researchers say requires more education to help Canadians understand the very real, deadly risks of designer drug use. [University of Alberta News and Events](#)

U.S., California: As California's flu season fades, new threat emerges: measles

22 February - Officials count 15 cases of measles in six counties. None of the cases have been fatal, but the virus can be deadly. Just as California's record-setting flu season seems to be fading, with 278 deaths confirmed as of Friday, health officials warned that another infectious and sometimes deadly virus has arrived — measles. Fifteen Californians have come down with measles thus far this year, officials said. And nearly half had opted against childhood vaccination against the disease through the state's personal beliefs exemption. [Los Angeles Times](#)

U.S., California: Polio-like illness seen in up to 25 children

25 February - A rare and mysterious polio-like illness may have afflicted up to 25 children in California, several of whom have suffered limb paralysis, and health experts were struggling to identify the cause of the ailment, medical researchers said on Monday. Since 2012, between 20 and 25 previously healthy children from across California have shown signs of the illness, possibly caused by an infectious virus, the American Academy of Neurology said in a statement detailing the research of two California neurologists. One of the children remains in serious condition but none have died from the syndrome, researchers said. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Histoplasmosis associated with a bamboo bonfire — Arkansas, October 2011

28 February - On October 27, 2011, the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) was notified by a northeast Arkansas primary care provider of a cluster of three histoplasmosis cases. On November 4, ADH was notified by a pediatric infectious diseases specialist regarding seven potential cases of pulmonary histoplasmosis associated with a family gathering that included a bonfire that burned bamboo from a red-winged blackbird roost. An outbreak investigation found 18 confirmed or probable cases of histoplasmosis among the 19 attendees at the bonfire. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S., New Mexico: 13 workers test positive for radiation at New Mexico waste site

26 February - Thirteen workers have tested positive for radiation exposure tied to an accidental release earlier this month of high levels of radiation in an underground

nuclear waste repository in New Mexico, the U.S. Department of Energy said on Wednesday. No workers were underground at the Waste Isolation Pilot Project in southeastern New Mexico when air sensors half a mile below surface in an ancient salt formation triggered an alarm on February 14 indicating excessive amounts of radioactive particles. The plant is a repository for so-called transuranic waste shipped from federal nuclear laboratories and weapons sites... "It is premature to speculate on the health effects of these preliminary results or any treatment that may be needed," [Joe Franco, manager of the U.S. Energy Department field office] said. He did not give details on the level of contamination detected in the biological samples. [Scientific American](#)

U.S.: New pain pill's approval - 'genuinely frightening'

25 February - ...A coalition of more than 40 health care, consumer and addiction treatment groups is urging the Food and Drug Administration to revoke approval of the prescription drug Zohydro. The hydrocodone-based drug is the latest in a long line of painkillers called opioid analgesics. The FDA approved the medication last fall to treat chronic pain, and it is set to become available to patients in March. "In the midst of a severe drug epidemic fueled by overprescribing of opioids, the very last thing the country needs is a new, dangerous, high-dose opioid," the coalition wrote in a letter to FDA Commissioner Dr. Margaret Hamburg. [CNN](#)

U.S.: NIH releases comprehensive new data outlining Hispanic/Latino health and habits

24 February - A comprehensive health and lifestyle analysis of people from a range of Hispanic/ Latino origins shows that this segment of the U.S. population is diverse, not only in ancestry, culture, and economic status, but also in the prevalence of several diseases, risk factors, and lifestyle habits. These health data are derived from the Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos (HCHS/SOL), a landmark study that enrolled about 16,415 Hispanic/Latino adults living in San Diego, Chicago, Miami, and the Bronx, N.Y., who self-identified with Central American, Cuban, Dominican, Mexican, Puerto Rican, or South American origins. These new findings have been compiled and published as the Hispanic Community Health Study Data Book: A Report to the Communities. [NIH](#)

U.S.: Obesity rate for young children plummets 43% in a decade

25 February - Federal health authorities on Tuesday reported a 43 percent drop in the obesity rate among 2- to 5-year-old children over the past decade, the first broad decline in an epidemic that often leads to lifelong struggles with weight and higher risks for cancer, heart disease and stroke. The drop emerged from a major federal health survey that experts say is the gold standard for evidence on what Americans weigh. The trend came as a welcome surprise to researchers. New evidence has shown that obesity takes hold young: Children who are overweight or obese at 3 to 5 years old are five times as likely to be overweight or obese as adults. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: White House sets new limits on junk food ads in schools

25 February - The Obama administration laid out new restrictions on the marketing of junk food and sugary drinks in schools on Tuesday. The new rules from the White House and the Department of Agriculture prohibit advertisements for unhealthy foods on school campuses during the school day, including sugary drinks that account for 90 percent of such ads in school. An ad for regular Coca-Cola, for example, would be banned from appearing on a scoreboard at a high school football game, though ads for Diet Coke and Dasani water, owned by the same company, would be allowed. Junk food ads like a Coca-Cola scoreboard would be phased out under the new rules and would not have to be replaced overnight. [Time](#)

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USPACOM

Australia: Invasive mosquitoes

21 February – A rare dengue fever-spreading mosquito -- thought to have been eradicated from the [Northern] Territory [NT] in 1969 -- has reappeared in Darwin Harbour. Between April and December [2013], 5 different invasions were detected between Toll Marine Logistics at Frances Bay and East Arm Wharf. Yellow fever mosquitoes, or *Aedes aegypti*, were discovered in an insect trap at the Toll Marine Logistics dock on Frances Bay Drive in April, according to a recent bulletin from the Centre for Disease Control (CDC). And Asian tiger mosquitoes [*Aedes albopictus*] were also found in traps at East Arm Wharf in August, December, and at Toll in August.

[ProMED-mail](#)

China: WHO anti-smoking guidelines could prevent 13 million deaths



21 February – More than 13 million deaths could be prevented in China over the next 40 years if the country fully implements global anti-smoking measures. Beijing has not taken many steps, however, to improve tobacco control. China signed onto the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco

Control in 2003, but it has only half-heartedly enforced the world body's strict recommendations to curtail smoking. Experts say that following the guidelines could cut smoking rates 40 percent by the year 2050. Without stronger measures, they estimate 50 million tobacco-related deaths could occur in China over that time. The authors of a new study based their predictions on a computer model called SimSmoke. [VOA](#)

India: Superbugs' presence increases during annual pilgrimage to India's sacred sites

21 February – The spread of antibiotic-resistance to one of the most pristine locations in Asia is linked to the annual human pilgrimages to the region, new research has shown. The researchers have found that in May and June, when hundreds of thousands of visitors travel to Rishikesh and Haridwar to visit sacred sites, levels of resistance genes that lead to “superbugs” were found to be about sixty times greater than other times of the year. They argue that preventing the spread of resistance genes that promote life-threatening bacteria could be achieved by improving waste management at key pilgrimage sites. [Homeland Security News Wire](#)

Japan: At Fukushima, a radioactive mess wrapped up in plastic with nowhere to go



23 February - ...Today — just a few weeks before the three-year anniversary of the disaster — the radiation problem is not contained in and around the Fukushima plant operated by the Tokyo Electric Power Company (Tepco). Thousands of gallons of radioactive water have leaked into the Pacific, or have been stored in containers that Japanese authorities know will not survive intact for years... But the water-storage challenge is simply the most public struggle the Japanese government and Tepco are confronting... In December 2013, I visited Fukushima prefecture, where government-hired contractors were charged with personally bagging 250,000 tons of low-level radioactive topsoil and piling these bags outdoors in 30 locations around the prefecture - and where local citizens were left to ensure that these bags do not break, leak or fall over. Stored atop manmade plateaus built on nearby mountains and around people's homes and rice fields, the bags are temporary and designed to withstand the environment for five years... The thousands of bags neatly stacked on this plateau will eventually be loaded back onto the trucks and hauled to a permanent burial place — that is, as soon as the Tokyo bosses can figure out where that will even be. [Stars and Stripes](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Bolivia under water: Why no national disaster declared amid floods?

21 February – Bolivia is suffering from weeks of heavy rains that are causing rivers to swell, homes to flood, and crops to rot. More than 58,000 families have been affected

over the past month, according to official counts, with 56 people reported dead. Limited reporting from isolated communities could mean the actual number is significantly higher. A lack of potable water, the destruction of crops and livestock, and the threat of mosquito-borne disease all pose long-term risks. Bolivia's government says a massive aid operation, which includes food and tents, is well underway, but not everyone is satisfied with the response. Carmelo Lens, governor of Beni, one of the country's worst-hit departments, says the government should declare a regional disaster and allow a broad range of international aid organizations into the area, as it did in the past. [Christian Science Monitor](#)

Transregional: ECDC reports spike of Caribbean chikungunya, spread in South America

21 February – Martinique and neighboring Caribbean islands have seen a major surge of suspected chikungunya cases this week, and two locally acquired cases in French Guiana mark the first indigenous cases in South America, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) reported today. The ECDC said the suspected cases total more than 5,900, but it gave an island-by-island breakdown that totaled 6,540. Both numbers are far above the roughly 2,000 confirmed cases the ECDC reported on Feb 17. It was not clear if the 6,540 suspected cases included any confirmed or previously reported cases. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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