

28 March 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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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**COCA Call:
Tickborne Diseases:
A Springtime
Review of
Diagnosis,
Treatment and
Prevention**

From May through July, people get tick bites and tickborne diseases more often than any other time of year in the United States. Early recognition and treatment of tickborne diseases decreases the risk of serious complications. During this COCA call, CDC subject matter experts will describe the signs and symptoms, treatment, management, and prevention of tickborne diseases in the U.S., with an emphasis on Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Date: **April 10, 2014**

Time: **1400-1500 ET**

[Web link](#)



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- Indonesia: Leaders fiddle as Sumatra burns

USSOUTHCOM

- Caribbean: Chikungunya cases approach 16,000
- Cholera cases trending lower in Haiti, Dominican Republic

Managing Chaos

Our secret fears are true: We write emergency plans that nobody reads. But it's worse than that.

Done wrong (and most of us do it sort of wrong), disaster planning creates complicated documents full of specific actions that make us feel prepared but really just perpetuate a fantasy world. Poor planning makes disaster response worse – bureaucratic, slow, with a false sense of security and stubborn leaders that won't innovate when we need them most.

But good emergency planning is desperately important. This handbook and its accompanying tools, checklists and templates will walk you through a planning process that compiles the best evidence-based planning techniques into one readable guide.

 THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

U.S. MILITARY

Reprimand, \$20K Fine, no jail time for general's sexual misconduct

20 March - Army Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sinclair avoided jail time Thursday and instead "was reprimanded and fined a total of \$20,000 for inappropriate relationships with three subordinates in a closely watched court case," The Associated Press reports from Fort Bragg, N.C. According to The New York Times, Sinclair will "forfeit \$5,000 a month in pay for four months, but was allowed to keep his pension." Sinclair was not demoted or dismissed from the military, NPR's Tom Bowman adds. He reports that "any reduction in rank would be determined by a military board, once the general decides to retire." The 51-year-old Sinclair, as we've written, was accused of sexually assaulting a subordinate, but struck a deal with prosecutors to plead guilty to lesser charges. [NPR](#)

U.S. Naval Academy midshipman acquitted in sex assault case

20 March - A judge acquitted a former Naval Academy football player on Thursday of sexually assaulting a drunken female midshipman, one of a number of sexual misconduct cases roiling the U.S. military. Midshipman Joshua Tate, a senior from Nashville, Tennessee, had been accused of assaulting the 22-year-old woman at an alcohol-fueled off-campus party in April 2012. Marine Colonel Daniel Daugherty found Tate not guilty of aggravated sexual assault after two days of testimony by more than a dozen witnesses at Washington's Navy Yard... The Defense Department said in December that there were slightly more than 5,000 reports of sexual assaults across the armed forces in the fiscal year through October, up about 50 percent from the previous year. [Reuters](#)

VA urged to make lung disease service-connected

21 March - A New York congressman wants the Veterans Affairs Department to make a rare lung disease found in some Iraq and Afghanistan veterans service-connected, meaning having the condition automatically would rate compensation and care from VA. Democratic Rep. Tim Bishop wrote VA Secretary Eric Shinseki on March 12 urging him to designate constrictive bronchiolitis a service-connected condition. The Social Security Administration in 2012 added the condition to its "compassionate allowances" list, meaning it is among conditions expedited through the claims process because they are "so serious they obviously meet disability standards," according to the administration. "I commend the Social Security Administration for making it a little easier for our nation's veterans to access the benefits they have earned through their service; it is now time for the Veterans Administration [sic] to do the same," Bishop said. [Army Times](#)

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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Veterans Journal: Veterans, service members with ALS eligible for adaptive-housing grants

23 March - Veterans and active-duty military personnel with service-connected amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, are now presumed medically eligible for grants up to almost \$68,000 to adapt their homes, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced last Wednesday... Grants are also available to help eligible individuals purchase adapted homes or pay down mortgages on homes that are already adapted.

[Providence Journal](#)

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GLOBAL

A key antibacterial soap ingredient must go

20 March - ...[Triclosan] is now the most common active ingredient found in antibacterial consumer hand soaps... Soap aside, triclosan can also be found in consumer products as diverse as cutting boards, shoes, lipstick and toothpaste... In animal studies it has been shown to interfere with the regulation of thyroid hormones (affecting metabolism and brain development), testosterone synthesis (decreasing sperm counts) and estrogen action (causing early onset of puberty)... There are also concerns about the potential impact of triclosan use on development of antibiotic resistance. Laboratory studies on bacteria exposed to triclosan demonstrate evidence of cross-resistance to critically important antibiotics including erythromycin, ciprofloxacin, ampicillin and gentamicin... [T]he Natural Resources Defense Council sued the FDA to compel it to finalize its rules. As a result of the settlement, the FDA now has to finish its rules on antibacterial soaps by September 2016.

[Scientific American](#)

European group offers guidance for treating MDR, XDR-TB

24 March - A European clinical network for tuberculosis (TB) research has published what is being billed as the first consensus guidelines for treatment of multidrug-resistant and extensively drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB and XDR-TB). [CIDRAP](#)

New cochlear implant gets FDA nod

20 March - The FDA has approved a novel type of cochlear implant for patients with severe bilateral sensorineural hearing loss at middle and high frequencies but who retain the ability to hear low-frequency sounds unaided. Called the Nucleus Hybrid L24 Cochlear Implant system, the device combines features of conventional cochlear implants and hearing aids,

the agency said Thursday. It includes an external microphone and speech processor inserted into the ear canal, which then transmits signals to an inner-ear implant. The system creates "a sense of sound that the user learns to associate with the mid- and high-frequency sounds they remember," according to the FDA. Its label will indicate that it should be implanted in only one ear, and the approval is restricted to patients for whom standard hearing aids are ineffective. [MedPage Today](#)

Pollution killed 7 million people worldwide in 2012, report finds

25 March - From taxi tailpipes in Paris to dung-fired stoves in New Delhi, air pollution claimed seven million lives around the world in 2012, according to [figures released Tuesday by the World Health Organization](#). More than one-third of those deaths, the organization said, occurred in fast-developing nations of Asia, where rates of cardiovascular and pulmonary disease have been soaring. Around the world, one out of every eight deaths was tied to dirty air, the agency determined — twice as many as previously estimated. Its report identified air pollution as the world's single biggest environmental health risk... The report found that those who are most vulnerable live in a wide arc of Asia stretching from Japan and China in the northeast to India in the south. Exposure to smoke from cooking fires means that poor women are especially at risk, the agency said. [New York Times article](#)

World now 80% polio free, World Health Organization says

27 March - The World Health Organization has declared its South East Asia region polio-free. The certification is being hailed a "historic milestone" in the global fight to eradicate the deadly virus. It comes after India officially recorded three years without a new case of polio. The announcement means 80% of the world is now officially free of polio, although the disease is still endemic in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan. Other countries in the WHO South East Asia region, such as Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan, have been free of the virus for more than 15 years. However, despite the "huge global significance" of the announcement, the WHO admits there are still major challenges to overcome if the world is to reach the goal of eradicating polio everywhere by 2018. There have also been outbreaks in conflict-hit countries such as Syria, which had previously managed to stamp out the virus. [WHO](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 11 (March 9-15, 2014), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 5,650 specimens tested and reported during week 11 by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories, 495 (8.8%) were positive for influenza.
- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- **Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths:** Seven influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Weeks 10 & 11, a total of 196 specimens were collected and received from 49 locations. Results were finalized for 36 specimens from 19 locations.
- For specimens collected during Week 10, there were 8 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, six influenza A(H3N2), and five influenza B identified. For specimens collected during Week 11, there were three influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, two influenza A(H3N2), one influenza A/not subtyped, and three influenza B identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

In week 11/2014:

- Of the 29 countries providing clinical data, no country reported high-intensity influenza activity.
- Of the 787 sentinel specimens tested across 22 countries, 281 (36%) were positive for influenza virus. Of these, 275 (98%) were type A and six (2%) were type B.
- Six countries reported 152 hospitalised, laboratory-confirmed influenza cases, including 71 cases admitted to intensive care units.

Influenza activity remains at a moderate to low-intensity level with a stable or decreasing trend in the majority of the EU/EEA Member States and co-circulation of influenza A(H1)pdm09 and A(H3) subtypes. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Most flu is asymptomatic

17 March - Influenza, whether of the seasonal or pandemic variety, is asymptomatic in most people with serologically confirmed infection, according to a study in the *Lancet Respiratory Medicine*. Researchers studied five successive cohorts of people in England during the 2006-2011 flu seasons. The cohorts ranged in size from 600 to 3500, and all members provided blood samples before and after each flu season. Their households were contacted weekly to identify flu-like illness and symptoms. On average, roughly 20% of the unvaccinated had serologic evidence of influenza infection, but up to three quarters of the infected were asymptomatic. The proportions did not vary significantly between seasonal and pandemic influenzas. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week 11 ending 15 March 2014:

Influenza

- Three cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza two A (untyped) and one A (H1N1) among US military basic trainees.
- Influenza activity decreasing in NHRC surveillance populations

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](#)

Neuraminidase inhibitors cut deaths in adults admitted to hospital with H1N1 influenza

24 March - Treatment with neuraminidase inhibitors (NAI) was associated with a significant reduction in mortality among adults admitted to hospital with H1N1 influenza during the 2009-10 pandemic, a meta-analysis of patient data indicates. The Roche-funded study, published in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* (online, 19 March 2014), found that, compared with no treatment, mortality was 19 per cent lower in patients who received an NAI, usually oseltamivir (Tamiflu), and 50 per cent lower when an NAI was given within two days of symptom onset. The study's lead author Jonathan Nguyen-Van-Tam, from the University of Nottingham, said that the new data were in line with advice from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in recommending that NAIs should be started as soon as possible for any hospitalised adult with suspected or confirmed flu. [PJ Online](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 15 March 2014 (Week 11)

Europe continues to demonstrate elevated influenza activity while all CONUS civilian and military influenza surveillance systems are reporting declining trends. For the first time since the end of November, the CDC reports ILI activity below the national baseline.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week eleven were 29% lower than for the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: Five hospitalized influenza cases have been reported to USAPHC through DRSi in week eleven. To date, 104 cases have been reported during this influenza season: twenty-five in Active Duty (AD) Service Members (SMs) and 79 in non-AD beneficiaries.
- Viral specimens: During week eleven, 192 of 848 (23%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. The most influenza A positive specimens were reported from ERM (27%), followed by PRM and NRM which accounted for 23% and 14%, respectively. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

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

27 March - Between 20 and 25 March 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of six additional laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus. [WHO](#)

Uptick in Cambodian H5N1 cases may be result of virus mutation

26 March - The H5N1 avian influenza virus that has infected multiple Cambodians in recent months may have undergone a mutation that is fueling the uptick, according to international experts meeting yesterday in Phnom Penh, says a story in the Cambodia Daily. Cambodia had 21 cases of human H5N1 from 2003 through 2012, according to official WHO numbers. However, 35 cases have been reported just since the beginning of 2013, which is more than any other country for that period, says the story. "We got a novel first mutation that started around the same time in 2013 as we saw an increase of cases," said Dennis Carroll, director of the US Agency for International Development's avian influenza unit, at the meeting. The new variant primarily causes disease in poultry, he noted, but was a predominant cause of recent human cases as well. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

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CDC makes 40 years of *Salmonella* data available online

26 March - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today made 40 years of data on *Salmonella* available to the public on the Web. The data, collected by state and federal officials, provide a wealth of information on *Salmonella*, the top foodborne cause of US hospitalizations and deaths, the CDC said in a news release. The "Atlas of *Salmonella* in the United States, 1968-2011" summarizes surveillance data on 32 types of *Salmonella* isolates from people, animals, and other sources organized by age, sex, geography, and season, the agency said. In addition to data on human infections, the atlas includes reports of *Salmonella* in animals, the environment, and animal feeds, which can be sources of antibiotic-resistant strains. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fifth item)

S. Korea steps up border quarantine over new FMD outbreak in N. Korea

26 March - South Korea has stepped up quarantine measures after North Korea reported another outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), concentrating its efforts on the border, the South Korean government said Wednesday. According to a report by North Korea to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), another outbreak of FMD was confirmed at a pig farm in Pyongyang on Jan. 16, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs said in a press release. The North, however, culled only six infected pigs out of the total 729 heads at the farm, also failing to file its report to the OIE for over two months until Monday. [Global Post](#)

U.S. drug firms move to bar antibiotic use in livestock growth

26 March - U.S. regulators on Wednesday said that 25 out of 26 drugmakers that sell antibiotics used in livestock feed for growth enhancement have agreed to follow new guidelines that will make it illegal to use their products to create beefier cattle, heftier hogs and other outsized animals. The companies - which include Eli Lilly & Co's Elanco Animal Health unit, Bayer Healthcare LLC's animal health division and Zoetis Inc - have agreed to start the process of removing any growth promotion claims on their products' labeling, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA announced the guidelines in December, as part of an ongoing bid to stem a surge in human resistance to certain antibiotics. [Reuters](#)

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WELLNESS

Anti-anxiety drugs tied to higher mortality

27 March - A large study has linked several common anti-anxiety drugs and sleeping pills to an increased risk of death, although it's not certain the drugs were the cause. For more than seven years, researchers followed 34,727 people who filled prescriptions for anti-anxiety medications like Valium and Xanax, or sleep aids like Ambien, Sonata and Lunesta, comparing them with 69,418 controls who did not. After adjusting for a wide variety of factors, the researchers found that people who took the drugs had more than double the risk of death. [New York Times](#)

Apples vs. oranges: Google tool offers ultimate nutrition smackdown



	Apple	Orange
Amount per	100 g	100 g
Calories	52	47
	% Daily Value	% Daily Value
Total Fat	0.2 g	0.1 g
Saturated fat	0 g	0 g
Polysaturated fat	0.1 g	0 g
Monounsaturated fat	0 g	0 g
Cholesterol	0 mg	0 mg
Sodium	1 mg	0 mg
Potassium	107 mg	181 mg
Total Carbohydrate	14 g	12 g
Dietary fiber	2.4 g	2.4 g
Sugar	10 g	9 g
Protein	0.3 g	0.9 g

24 March - Leave it to the [folks at Reddit](#) to uncover the hidden treasures of the Internet. Recently, they were gabbing about Google's nutrition comparison tool, which was quietly [launched](#) at the end of 2013 and escaped us here at The Salt.

Using this clever little tool is as simple as searching for two types of food, preceded by the word "compare." The word "vs." between the two foods also seems to work for some comparisons but not every single one. So, for example, say you want to compare the calories, sugar content and nutrients of mashed potatoes and sweet potatoes? Just type in "[compare mashed potatoes and sweet potatoes](#)," and boom, you get photos and an elegant chart revealing that sweet potatoes have 4.2 grams of sugar per 100 grams, compared with 0.5 grams in mashed potatoes. Scroll down and you'll see that sweet potatoes kill mashed potatoes in vitamin A, potassium and calcium content. [NPR](#)

Colon cancer rates drop sharply due to screenings

17 March - Colon cancer rates have fallen by 30% over the past decade in people over age 50, and colonoscopies are getting much of the credit, according to a report released Monday. "This is one of the great public health success stories of the decade," says Richard Wender, chief cancer control officer at the American Cancer Society... Screening rates have climbed in recent years. The number of Americans ages 50 to 64 who have had a colonoscopy — which allow doctors to detect and remove polyps before they turn malignant — has nearly tripled, growing from 19% in 2000 to 55% in 2010. Use of colonoscopy also rose among those age 65 and over, growing from 55% in 2000 to 64% in 2010, according to the new report. To further reduce colon cancer cases and deaths, the American Cancer Society has set a goal of screening 80% of eligible people by 2018.

[USA Today](#)

Poor sleep tied to metabolic issues

25 March - Substantial observational evidence has tied insufficient sleep to obesity, type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia, and hypertension, and some studies have shown potential mechanisms for the link, according to Bernd Schultes, MD, of the eSwiss Medical and Surgical Center in Gallen, Switzerland, and colleagues... The observational studies showing such a link include those that have tied sleep issues to cardiometabolic risk as well as risk of type 2 diabetes. The potential mechanisms linking sleep problems with metabolic issues include effects on the body's ability to metabolize glucose, control food intake, and maintain energy balance, the researchers reported. They said the findings open the door for new strategies of targeted interventions aimed at an "epidemic" of metabolic diseases.

[MedPage Today](#)

Selling a poison by the barrel: liquid nicotine for e-cigarettes

23 March - ... The drug is nicotine, in its potent, liquid form — extracted from tobacco and tintured with a cocktail of flavorings, colorings and assorted chemicals to feed the fast-growing electronic cigarette industry. These "e-liquids," the key ingredients in e-cigarettes, are powerful neurotoxins. Tiny amounts, whether ingested or absorbed through the skin, can cause vomiting and seizures and even be lethal. A teaspoon of even highly diluted e-liquid can kill a small child... Reports of accidental poisonings, notably among children, are soaring... Nationwide, the number of cases linked to e-liquids jumped to 1,351 in 2013, a 300 percent increase from 2012, and the number is on pace to double this year, according to information from the National Poison Data System. [New York Times](#)

Smoking proves hard to shake among the poor

25 March - ...[A]s evidence of smoking's deadly consequences has accumulated, the broad patterns of use by class have shifted: Smoking, the leading cause of preventable death in the country, is now increasingly a habit of the poor and the working class. While previous data established that pattern, a new analysis of federal smoking data released on Monday shows that the disparity is increasing. The national smoking rate has declined steadily, but there is a deep geographic divide. In the affluent suburbs of Washington, only about one in 10 people smoke, according to the analysis, by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. But in impoverished places like this — Clay County, in eastern Kentucky — nearly four in 10 do. [New York Times](#)

Study: Pregnant women show increased risk of HPV

26 March - Pregnancy renders women more susceptible to human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, particularly if they are under age 25, according to a study yesterday in *Epidemiology and Infection*. The researchers, from Shandong, China, did a systematic literature review and meta-analysis of studies published before Apr 30, 2013, on HPV prevalence in pregnant and nonpregnant women. Their results are based on 28 eligible

studies comprising 13,640 pregnant women and age-matched, nonpregnant controls. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

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USAFRICOM

Ebola virus suspected to have spread from Guinea to Liberia

25 March - Africa's biggest Ebola outbreak in seven years has probably spread from Guinea to neighboring Liberia and also threatens Sierra Leone. Five people are suspected to have died from the disease in Lofa county in northern Liberia, Bernice Dahn, Liberia's chief medical officer, said at a briefing yesterday. At least 86 cases and 59 deaths have been recorded across Guinea, the west African country's health ministry said. The capital, Conakry, hasn't been affected, government spokesman Albert Damantang Camara said... Unicef plans to dispatch 5 metric tons of aid, including medical supplies, to the worst-affected areas. Suspected cases of the lethal hemorrhagic disease are being investigated in Guinea's southeast border areas, according to the World Health Organization. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#)

Guinea: Bat-eating banned to curb Ebola virus



25 March - Guinea has banned the sale and consumption of bats to prevent the spread of the deadly Ebola virus, its health minister has said.

Bats, a local delicacy, appeared to be the "main agents" for the Ebola outbreak in the south, Rene Lamah said...

People who eat the animals often boil them into a sort of spicy pepper soup, our correspondent says. The soup is sold in village stores where people gather to drink alcohol. [BBC News](#)

Guinea: Ebola haemorrhagic fever – update

26 March -The total number of suspected cases in the ongoing Ebola haemorrhagic fever outbreak in Guinea remains 86. Two more cases died bringing total deaths to 62 (CFR: 72%). The cases are spread across three districts in south-east Guinea (Guekedou, Macenta, and Kissidougou districts). Seven of the cases are currently undergoing treatment in isolation units in Guekedou district. Investigations on reported cases in Liberia and Sierra Leone along the border with Guinea are ongoing. [WHO](#)

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Iraq: Displacement, violence likely cause of Iraq's first polio case in 14 years



24 March - Health officials in Iraq are stepping up polio immunization and surveillance following the first confirmed case of the virus in the country in more than a decade... WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region poliovirus laboratory in Egypt and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the USA both confirmed the outbreak, detected after a six-month-old baby living on the outskirts of Baghdad became paralysed... The strain's genetic sequence matches the one found last September in Syria - wild polio virus type 1 (WPV1) - but it is not yet clear how the virus made it to the Iraqi capital or how the boy became infected. [IRIN](#)

United Arab Emirates: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – update

26 March -On 23 March 2014, the National IHR Focal Point of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) notified WHO of an additional laboratory-confirmed case of infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)... Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 200 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 85 deaths. [WHO](#)

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Europe: Measles outbreak tied to cruise ship reaches 34 cases

25 March - A total of 34 cases of measles on or associated with the Mediterranean cruise ship Costa Pacifica had been reported as of Mar 21, according to an epidemiologic update today from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The outbreak began in February, and the majority of case-patients (22) have been crew members or other workers. No new cases among crew members have been reported since Mar 14. However, five contacts of an Italian passenger who developed measles and disembarked on Mar 14 also contracted measles; one had pneumonia and was admitted to an intensive care unit. The index case-patient, an Italian crew member who had fever and rash, received care off the ship Feb 22. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

United Kingdom: Cuts have left 250,000 older people without state care, report says

25 March – A quarter of a million [older people](#) have lost their state-funded help with carrying out everyday activities such as bathing, dressing and eating in the past four years as council budgets have been slashed and services rationed, according to a report released on Wednesday... As well as leaving thousands of previously eligible older people without help, those still receiving publicly-funded care may be receiving poorer services because fees to care providers had been squeezed, resulting in staff shortages, high staff turnover or reduced contact hours. [Guardian](#)

United Kingdom: Faecal transplant safe for gut treatment, says watchdog

26 March - A treatment using faecal matter is a safe and effective procedure for people with a recurring gut infection, the NHS medicines watchdog has said. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published guidance on using the transplant procedure to treat repeated *Clostridium difficile* infections. *C. difficile*, caused by an imbalance of bacteria in the gut, can be deadly. Faecal transplants could be used where antibiotics have failed, NICE said. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

Canada: B.C. measles outbreak reveals vulnerability of unvaccinated children

27 March - Widespread use of the measles vaccine has dramatically reduced the numbers of cases in Canada over the past 45 years. But the recent outbreak in British Columbia is underscoring how the highly contagious virus can very effectively seek out groups of unprotected children. More than [200 cases of measles have been confirmed in the Fraser Valley](#), an outbreak health officials have linked to a region east of Vancouver where immunization rates are low in certain school and religious groups. [CBC News](#)

U.S.: A doctor's take on the anti-vaccine movement

20 March - ... In the United States, we are witnessing the scientifically ignorant and sometimes deadly impact of an anti-vaccine movement. Individuals who support the movement continue to question the safety and necessity of vaccines despite extensive medical literature to the contrary... The vaccines we use today have minimal risks and an extremely safe track record. They have undergone rigorous testing and scrutiny by the

scientific community and have proven their effectiveness in large-scale clinical trials... Yet for the last two decades, fear mongers associated with the anti-vaccine movement in the U.S. and other developed countries have convinced some parents to refuse to vaccinate their kids. The result is an erosion in health gains, both individual and collective. And in some parts of the country, we are witnessing a reversal of what many believe is one of the greatest advances in medical science in the last century. [Forbes](#)

U.S.: BP confirms oil spill into Lake Michigan from Whiting refinery



25 March - Less than a year after BP started up a new unit to process Canadian tar sands at its Whiting refinery, the company reported today that a malfunction allowed a slug of crude oil into Lake Michigan a few miles away from the Chicago city limits. It remains unclear how much oil spilled into the lake or how long the discharge continued.

Workers at the refinery reported an oil sheen on the water about 4:30 p.m. Monday, and an official from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said the leak was plugged by the time he arrived at 9 p.m. Mike Beslow, the EPA's emergency response coordinator, said there appeared to be no negative effects on Lake Michigan, the source of drinking water for 7 million people in Chicago and the suburbs. The 68th Street water intake crib is about eight miles northwest of the spill site, but there were no signs of oil drifting in that direction.

[Chicago Tribune](#)

U.S.: Heartland virus disease — United States, 2012–2013

28 March - Heartland virus is a newly identified phlebovirus that was first isolated from two northwestern Missouri farmers hospitalized with fever, leukopenia, and thrombocytopenia in 2009. Based on the patients' clinical findings and their reported exposures, the virus was suspected to be transmitted by ticks. After this discovery, CDC worked with state and local partners to define the ecology and modes of transmission of Heartland virus, develop diagnostic assays, and identify additional cases to describe the epidemiology and clinical disease. From this work, it was learned that Heartland virus is found in the Lone Star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*). Six additional cases of Heartland virus disease were identified during 2012–2013; four of those patients were hospitalized, including one with comorbidities who died. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: HHS hits 6 million health care enrollment mark

27 March - More than 6 million people have enrolled in the federal and state health exchanges as of Thursday, President Obama announced this afternoon. This means the administration has met its latest goal, as projected by the Congressional Budget Office, to ensure the insurance system is sustainable... More than 1.5 million people visited

[HealthCare.gov](#) Wednesday, just days ahead of the March 31 enrollment deadline. Those who do not have insurance this year will have to pay a fine with their taxes next January. [USA Today](#)

U.S.: How a California earthquake becomes the news - an extremely precise timeline

19 March - Early Monday morning, Los Angeles suffered the strongest earthquake it had seen in 20 years. The 4.4-magnitude seismic event woke up sleeping Angelenos, but thankfully did little additional damage. The quake came at 6:25 a.m. Eight minutes later, the Los Angeles Times had posted a story about the quake. It had an odd final paragraph: This information comes from the USGS Earthquake Notification Service and this post was created by an algorithm written by the author. Indeed, the story was written by a program, but read like normal newspaper prose. In the eight minutes that passed—from tremor to coverage—what happened? [The Atlantic](#)

U.S.: More of the bugs kids get are resistant

20 March - The rate of antibiotic-resistant Gram-negative bacterial infections in children is increasing in inpatient and outpatient settings, a study reports. The prevalence of third-generation cephalosporin-resistant (G3CR) bacteria increased from 1.39% in 1999-2001 to 3% in 2010-2011, wrote Latania K. Logan, MD, of Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, and her co-authors online in the *Journal of the Pediatric Infectious Disease Society*. The prevalence of extended-spectrum B-lactamase-producing (ESBL) bacteria increased from 0.28% to 0.92% in the same time frame, the authors said. "Blood and respiratory cultures showed a higher proportion of G3CR and ESBL, rising in prevalence across patient settings, U.S. regions, and pediatric age groups represented in the data," the authors said. "Presentation in the ambulatory settings is common." [MedPage Today](#)

U.S., Ohio: Mumps outbreak increases to 69 cases, includes Delaware

25 March - The mumps outbreak in Central Ohio grew to 69 cases around Franklin County – and now includes Delaware County. As of March 25, 69 mumps cases have been reported in Franklin County. To date, 52 cases have been linked to The Ohio State University. According to Columbus Public Health, the numbers are likely to climb as Delaware County is investigating four to five suspected cases of mumps. The university cases have occurred in 29 males and 23 females, 18 to 48 years old. Of the Ohio State cases, 41 were students, six staff members, one relative, and four with strong ties to the university community. The community cases in Columbus and Franklin County have occurred in residents 4 to 55 years old. Of the community cases, there were 34 female, and 35 male patients. [NBC 4](#)

U.S.: The health gap - the worst places in America for mental health, child poverty and college attendance mapped

26 March - Even within a single state, Americans' ability to lead healthy lives can vary wildly and depends significantly on which county they live in. Large gulfs exist between the least healthy and the healthiest U.S. counties. For example, one county has 55,969 people per mental health provider, while another has only 72 people per provider. In the latest edition of County Health Rankings, researchers from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute analyzed local data to paint a holistic picture of the quality of health in each U.S. county. The health rankings are based on 29 factors, including smoking, high school graduation rates, housing problems, physical inactivity and access to healthy foods. [Newsweek](#)

U.S.: Tuberculosis in U.S. hits record low – CDC

20 March - Rates of tuberculosis in the United States are falling, with cases at a historic low, health officials reported Thursday. Improved screening of immigrants has helped reduce incidence of the highly contagious lung disease, researchers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said... According to preliminary data from the CDC's National TB Surveillance, fewer than 9,600 cases were reported in the United States in 2013. That represents a decline of 4.2 percent from 2012 -- from 3.2 cases per 100,000 people to 3.0 per 100,000. [WebMD](#)

U.S., Washington: 25 dead, at least 90 others missing, presumed dead in landslide disaster

27 March - The landslide that has killed dozens of people with at least 90 more presumed dead is the worst natural disaster in Washington state history in the last century. Snohomish County officials said Wednesday the number confirmed dead by the medical examiner remained at 16, with an additional nine bodies found that still need to be recovered, bringing the known death toll to 25. Department of Emergency Management Director John Pennington said there are 90 people confirmed missing or unaccounted for who are likely dead. That's about half the population of Oso. The status of 35 other people who may or may not have been in the area during the time of the slide is not known. Authorities will focus on finding those 90, but Pennington acknowledged that not everyone may be located. [KIRO TV](#)

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China smog at center of air pollution deaths cited by WHO

25 March - As China's top officials pledge to declare war on smog, a World Health Organization report said 40 percent of the 7 million people killed by air pollution globally in 2012 lived in the region dominated by that country. The report released today found that air pollution caused more deaths worldwide than AIDS, diabetes and road injuries combined. WHO Director-General Margaret Chan yesterday called China's situation a regional health issue that harms the nation's economy. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang earlier this month said that air pollution is a top priority for the nation's authorities. A March 19 study by Columbia University and Chongqing Medical University, meanwhile, found that babies whose mothers were exposed to a Chinese coal-fired power plant had poorer learning and memory skills.

[Bloomberg](#)

China, Taiwan: Cases of typhoid, paratyphoid fevers on rise

27 March - The numbers of typhoid fever and paratyphoid fever cases reported in Taiwan so far this year are both higher compared with the same period of the past three years, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) said Wednesday, urging the public to pay attention to food safety and personal hygiene. A total of seven typhoid fever cases and four paratyphoid fever cases have been confirmed since the beginning of the year, the CDC said. From 2011 to 2013, the numbers of typhoid fever cases were one, two and six, respectively, during the same period, while those of paratyphoid fever were one, three and zero, it said. [China Post](#)

Indonesia: Leaders fiddle as Sumatra burns



22 March - Pekanbaru, the capital of Riau province on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, has been shrouded in an acrid white cloud of smoke so dense that visibility is down to 50 metres (about 160 feet). The air quality is officially described as "dangerous", and most people are wearing face masks, even indoors. Nearly 50,000

people in Riau have already been treated for respiratory, eye or skin problems. All flights last week were cancelled, and only a few have got through since. The provincial governor has declared a state of emergency. The haze is back, and has arrived earlier this year than usual. Drive to Pekanbaru from the ferries that dock at a north Sumatran port, and you can see what the cause of the problem is: mile upon mile of smouldering or charred land. Much of it is peat-bog, where fires can burn up to two metres underground and take weeks to end... The fires are usually started deliberately, often to clear land to make way for palm-oil plantations. Indonesia is the world's biggest producer of palm oil. Successive governments

have passed a mountain of laws and regulations outlawing burning, yet enforcement is so poor that people carry on regardless. [Economist](#)

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Caribbean: Chikungunya cases approach 16,000

24 March - The Caribbean now has 15,913 confirmed, probable, or suspected cases of chikungunya, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said in an update today, up from 10,476 at the end of February. The outbreak is the first known in the Americas; it began on St. Martin in December 2013. Martinique continues to have the most cases, with 7,630 suspected and 1,141 confirmed or probable cases, the ECDC said. The French side of St. Martin is next, with 2,640 suspected and 782 confirmed or probable cases, but the pace of new cases appears to be slowing there. Guadeloupe has 1,960 suspected and 586 confirmed or probable cases. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Cholera cases trending lower in Haiti, Dominican Republic

21 March - Though Haiti and the Dominican Republic are still reporting cholera cases, the trends are decreasing and the number of cases reported so far in 2014 is running below this point in 2013, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said yesterday in an epidemiologic update. Haiti has reported 3,850 new cases and 18 deaths so far this year through Mar 10, PAHO said. Since the outbreak began in October 2010, the country has reported 700,541 illnesses, 8,546 of them fatal. Elsewhere, Cuba has reported 23 lab-confirmed cholera cases from the end of August through late February, for an outbreak total of 701 illnesses, three of them fatal. Cuba's outbreak began in early July of 2013. No new cases have been reported from Mexico since Nov 15. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

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