29 May 2015

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command

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- They’re going door to door in the Amazon to see why people get sick
Redotex for weight loss?

Redotex is a drug manufactured in Mexico and sold in the U.S. as a weight-loss product. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), it is a misbranded drug and is not legal to sell as either a drug or a dietary supplement. It is not permitted for use by DoD personnel or civilians.

Redotex contains a combination of thyroid, diuretic, stimulant, and tranquilizer drugs that may cause serious and potentially fatal adverse reactions. Redotex also contains a controlled substance that will cause a positive drug test.

It is very important to read product labels, and if the label is not in English or contains any of the drug ingredients listed in the FDA Alert, steer clear - it is an illegal product.

UC. MILITARY

Army releases new, longer list of approved eye pro

27 May - The Authorized Protective Eyewear List, released once every year or two by Program Executive Office Soldier, now has 16 spectacles and 15 goggles. That's more than double the previous list of nine spectacles and six goggles, granting more ways to comply with an Army directive to only use APEL-labeled eyewear by 2016. Of the current options, 10 goggles and six spectacles are Universal Prescription Lens Compatible, with those models clearly noted as such on PEO Soldier's website and APEL poster. UPLC lenses offer rims that hold prescription lenses in the protective eyewear. Army Times


May 2015 - Joint replacements among active component service members increased 10.5% during 2004–2009, then 61.9% during 2009–2014. Knees and hips were the most frequently replaced joints among service members. During the surveillance period (and particularly after 2009), incidence rates increased in each age group of service members 30 years or older. Relative to their respective counterparts, rates of joint replacement overall—and of the hip and knee specifically—were higher among service members who were black, non-Hispanic; officers; and healthcare workers. One year after joint replacement, 18.2% had retired; 5.2% had been medically disqualified from service; 6.3% had otherwise left service; and 70.3% were still in service. By 2 years post-joint replacement, 30.2% had retired; 13.0% had been medically disqualified; 10.0% had otherwise left service; and 46.8% were still in service. Service members aged 30–44 years were the most likely to remain in service post-joint replacement. Given the increases in the frequency of joint replacement among younger service members, the number of service members who remain in service post-joint replacement may continue to increase. Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

U.S. Army chief says no human error seen in anthrax mishap

28 May - U.S. personnel working at an Army facility in Utah appeared to follow correctly all the outlined procedures to inactivate anthrax before they mistakenly shipped off live samples of the deadly bacteria, the Army's top general said on Thursday. Army Chief of Staff General Raymond Odierno said investigators were now reviewing the procedures themselves to determine why the bacteria was not rendered inactive. “The best I can tell there was not human error,” Odierno told reporters, cautioning that his information was based solely on preliminary reports. U.S. officials disclosed on Wednesday that U.S. Army
facilities mistakenly shipped live anthrax bacteria to laboratories in nine states and an air base in South Korea. The Pentagon has said there was no known suspected infection or risk to the public. But four U.S. civilians have started taking preventive measures called post-exposure prophylaxis, which usually includes the anthrax vaccine, antibiotics or both. Twenty-two personnel at the base in South Korea were also given precautionary medical measures although none have shown sign of exposure. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has begun an investigation of the incident. Odierno said the CDC was reviewing whether "we have to change the procedures that are in place." Reuters

What Veterans Affairs won’t pay for: Chance for the wounded to have kids

25 May - ... VA will not pick up the bill for in vitro fertilization, which fertility experts say offers those with spinal cord and genital injuries the best hope for a biological child. Under a 23-year-old law, VA is prohibited from covering IVF. Congress adopted the ban as the result of conservative opposition to assisted reproduction and concern that some fertilized embryos might be discarded. Now, however, veterans and lawmakers from both parties are pushing to overturn the ban. They argue that it is outdated and that IVF is widely accepted and performed worldwide. Washington Post

While at war, female soldiers fight to belong

24 May - One of the biggest adjustments the United States military attempted during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars was cultural: the integration of women into an intensely male world. Women made up about 15 percent of the force during these two wars, compared with 7 percent in the Persian Gulf war of 1991, and they saw more combat in greater numbers than ever before. Yet even though women distinguished themselves as leaders and enlisted soldiers, many of them describe struggling with feeling they do not quite belong. For men, the bonds of unconditional love among fellow combatants — that lifeblood of male military culture — are sustaining. But in dozens of interviews with women who served, they often said such deep emotional sustenance eluded them. New York Times

Brain-reading implant controls arm

22 May - A man has been able to control a robotic limb with a mind-reading chip implanted in his brain. It allowed Erik Sorto, from California, to sip a drink unaided for the first time in 10 years. The details, published in Science, reveal how complex bursts of electrical signals in his brain could be interpreted into commands for the arm. Experts said the results made brain-controlled robotics closer to being a reality. Mr Sorto was shot at the age of 21. The
damage to his spinal cord left him paralysed from the neck down. Two tiny sensors were implanted into his brain to monitor the activity of around 100 neurons. Previous attempts at thought-controlled robotics have focused on the motor cortex - the region responsible for the action of individual muscles. However, the US team tried implanting the chips in the posterior parietal cortex - the part of the brain that comes up with the initial intention. BBC News

Map reveals the distinctive cause of death in each state

Francis Boscoe, a researcher with the New York State Cancer Registry, calculated the mortality rates for all 113 causes of death in each state and compared them with the rates for the same causes nationwide. On the map, each state and Washington, D.C., then got labeled with the local cause that was, essentially, the largest multiple of the corresponding national rate.

Controlling typhoid bacterium key to prevent gallbladder cancer in India and Pakistan

28 May - Controlling bacterial infections responsible for typhoid fever could dramatically reduce the risk of gallbladder cancer in India and Pakistan, according to a study published by Cell Press May 28th in Cell Host & Microbe. The findings establish for the first time the causal link between bacterial infection and gallbladder cancer, explaining why this type of cancer is rare in the West but common in India and Pakistan, where typhoid fever is endemic. Medical Xpress

Exposure to air pollution before, during, and after pregnancy linked to childhood autism

24 May - ... [A recent study found] that exposure to fine particulate air pollution during pregnancy as well as throughout the first two years of the child's life may be associated with an increased risk of autism. The study authors interviewed the families of over 200 children diagnosed with [autism spectrum disorder (ASD)] alongside a similarly sized control sample in Southwestern Pennsylvania. They then approximated the mother's and child's exposure to levels of air pollution before, during and after pregnancy, specifically to particles of pollutant smaller than 2.5 millimeters in diameter, such as dirt or soot (PM2.5). After controlling for other possible risk factors like the mother's age and smoking history, the authors found that there was a significant correlation between cumulative pollution exposure to later development of ASD. High exposure predicted a 50 percent increase in the rate of autism compared to low exposure. Medical Daily

Pocket optician 'good as eye charts'

28 May - A smartphone app is as effective at testing eyesight as an optician's clinic, a trial suggests. The team, at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, hopes it can transform eye care for millions of people in remote parts of the world. Trials on 233 people in Kenya, published in JAMA Ophthalmology, showed the phone produced the same results as eye charts. ... The Portable Eye Examination Kit (Peek) uses the phone's camera to scan the lens of the eye for cataracts. Its "Acuity App" uses a shrinking letter which appears on screen and is used as a basic vision test. It uses the camera's flash to illuminate the back of the eye to check for disease. BBC News
Surveillance for *Neisseria meningitidis* disease activity and transmission using information technology

20 May - While formal reporting, surveillance, and response structures remain essential to protecting public health, a new generation of freely accessible, online, and real-time informatics tools for disease tracking are expanding the ability to raise earlier public awareness of emerging disease threats. ... The underreporting of disease cases in internet-based data streaming makes inadequate any comparison to epidemiological trends illustrated by the more comprehensive ABCs network published by the Centers for Disease Control. However, the expected delays in compiling confirmatory reports by traditional surveillance systems ... emphasize the helpfulness of real-time internet-based data streaming to quickly fill gaps including the visualization of modes of disease transmission in outbreaks for better resource and action planning. HealthMap can also contribute as an internet-based monitoring system to provide real-time channel for patients to report intervention-related failures. PLOS ONE

U.N. reports about 200 million fewer hungry people than in 1990

27 May - The number of hungry people globally has declined from about one billion 25 years ago to about 795 million today, or about one person out of every nine, despite a surge in population growth, the United Nations reported Wednesday. In developing regions, the number of hungry people has fallen to 780 million today, or 12.9 percent of the population, from 991 million 25 years ago, or 23.3 percent of the population at the time, according to the United Nations’ annual hunger report. New York Times

INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 19 (May 10-16, 2015), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 6,553 specimens tested and reported by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories during week 19, 228 (3.5%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.3%, which is below the national baseline of 2.0%. FluView
Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2015 Week 20 (through 23 May 2015):

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Disease threatens livestock on Lebanon's Syrian border

25 May - The war in Syria has forced many people to look for safety in Lebanon but there are now concerns about the farm animals the refugees brought with them. Since the conflict has disrupted the delivery of animal vaccinations in Syria, the risk of trans-boundary animal diseases across the border into Lebanon has increased dramatically. Lebanon's agriculture ministry says large numbers of animals arrived from Syria without proper health checks and some Lebanese farmers have reported new diseases over the past two years. The most common disease is foot-and-mouth, which causes ulcers, but a new viral disease causing lumpy skin has also raised concern. The United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation says it has already killed several cattle. Al Jazeera

New canine flu detected in several more states

22 May - The new canine H3N2 flu virus has now been detected in as many as 13 states, though most cases have been reported near Chicago, where the virus first turned up in the middle of April, according to veterinary groups and lab reports. The virus is related to an H3N2 strain that has infected dogs in southern China and South Korea since 2006. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in late April that a genetic analysis of the new strain found no sign that it can infect or cause severe disease in humans. CIDRAP

Raw tuna may be to blame in Salmonella outbreak

26 May - Raw tuna is suspected as the source of a Salmonella outbreak that has infected 53 people in nine states, according to U.S. health officials. No deaths have been reported. But 10 people have been hospitalized, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a statement. The majority of those who fell ill said they had recently eaten sushi that included raw tuna. However, “a common brand or supplier of raw tuna has not been identified,” the CDC said in its statement. While the bulk of cases, 31, are in California, eight
other states are affected: Arizona (10), Illinois (1), Mississippi (1), New Mexico (6), South Dakota (1), Virginia (1), Washington (1), and Wisconsin (1), the agency said. Clinical Advisor

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WELLNESS

Air purifiers help lungs and heart

27 May - Filtering fine-particle pollutants out of indoor air for just 2 days improved markers of cardiorespiratory health in study volunteers, according to a study from China. In the randomized, crossover trial, the air purifiers, which were designed to filter out fine particulate matter pollutants (less than 2.5 µm in diameter) achieved and maintained 57% reductions of pollutants during the 48 hours (mean concentration 41.3 µg/m3), reported Renjie Chen, PhD, of Fudan University in Shanghai, and colleagues. The authors also noted significant reductions in blood pressure and inflammatory biomarkers as well as nonsignificant increases in lung function. MedPage Today

Depression may increase risk of low back pain

27 May - Patients with symptoms of depression are at increased risk of developing a new episode of low back pain compared with those who are not depressed, a meta-analysis has found. Analysis also showed that the more severe the depression, the greater the risk of low back pain. In a pooled analysis of 19 studies, 11 of which were incorporated into the meta-analysis, symptoms of depression increased the risk of developing low back pain by almost 60% compared with an absence of depression (odds ratio (OR) 1.59, 95% CI 1.26-2.01). ... [Age] was a potential confounder in the relationship between depression and low back pain because when studies that included only older participants were pooled, older depressed patients had almost a twofold risk of developing a new episode of low back pain. MedPage Today

FDA ban nearly wiped out deaths, poisonings from ephedra

27 May - A 13-year tally of deaths and poisonings from ephedra show a spectacular decline after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration banned the sale of weight loss products containing the herb in 2004. "The number of poisonings resulting in major effects or deaths has decreased by more than 98% since 2002. The 2004 FDA ban has proved to be a very effective means of limiting the availability of ephedra and therefore its potential toxicity in the United States," Illinois researchers report in the May 28 New England Journal of Medicine. It was the first dietary supplement to be banned. Reuters
'Less is more': The next big thing for medicine

26 May - ... Proponents of less-is-more medicine stress that its focus is avoiding harm rather than mere cost-cutting, which consumers fear might reduce access to necessary care. But it's also clear that targeting tests and procedures that offer little or no value, involve unnecessary risks to patients, and result in avoidable downstream care will indeed reduce wasteful healthcare spending. ... The less-is-more movement ... [gained] traction with the 2012 launch of the Choosing Wisely campaign by the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) Foundation. The campaign enlisted clinician groups to help galvanize change by naming an evidence-based top 5 list of tests and procedures that physicians and patients should question because they offer little or no benefit and may cause harm. MedPage Today

Newer birth control pills more likely to cause blood clots

27 May - Women taking oral contraceptive pills had slightly higher risks of developing a clot, especially if the pill was a newer formulation, according to the results of two nested case-control studies from the U.K. [Researchers] reported any use of an oral contraceptive was associated with an increased risk of a venous thromboembolism (adjusted odds ratio 2.97, 95% CI 2.78-3.17) compared with women with no oral contraceptive use in the previous year. Risk seemed to vary by contraceptive formulation -- newer third and fourth generation pills appear to have about a fourfold relative risk increase versus about 2.5 times increase for older, second generation pills, they wrote in The British Medical Journal. MedPage Today

Over 4 million workers have anxiety disorders

21 May - A new study finds that 4.3 million Americans with full-time jobs had an anxiety disorder in the past year. That number represents 3.7 percent of full-time workers aged 18 and older, according to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). ... Rates of anxiety disorders were even higher among adults without full-time jobs: 5.6 percent among part-time workers (1.7 million adults); 6.9 percent among those who were unemployed (1 million adults); and 8.9 percent among those not in the workforce (5.9 million adults). Overall, 5.7 percent of all American adults -- almost 13 million people -- had suffered from an anxiety disorder in the past year, the report found. WebMD

The Mediterranean diet: Can it help memory?

26 May - ... [The] Mediterranean Diet ... focuses on the use of olive oil for cooking and in salads, lots of fruits and vegetables, nuts, some cheese and yogurt, and plenty of fatty fish, with less red meat and butter. ... The diet was so successful at reducing heart disease risk that it was stopped early so the control group could partake of the Med Diet benefits. ... A just-published
study ... used the same diet but then tested global cognitive function, memory performance, and a composite of frontal functions, both at the beginning of the study and after the end of the 5-year period. Here’s the boil-down: compared with the control group, those on the Med diet supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil performed better on both frontal and global composite scores, and subjects on the Med diet supplemented with nuts did better on memory composite tests. MedPage Today

**Sudden infant death risk greater in mountains**

26 May - Babies born at a higher altitude faced a greater risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), according to the results of a large population-based study. [Researchers] found an adjusted increased risk of SIDS (odds ratio 2.30, 95% CI 1.01-5.24) for babies born where the mother resided at an altitude >8,000 feet compared with those born at <6,000 feet of mother’s residence. However, there was no statistically significant risk for babies born in residences between 6,000 and 8,000 feet (OR 1.21, 95% CI 0.81-1.81), they reported online in *Pediatrics*. MedPage Today

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**USAFRICOM**

**Genomic data reveals emergence in Africa of drug resistant strain of typhoid**

26 May - The team has completed two genomics studies on the tropical disease, a condition that is estimated to cause up to 30 million illnesses and over a quarter of a million deaths globally each year. The first study ... suggests that the H58-strain, which is likely to have emerged in Asia approximately thirty years ago, is now rapidly spreading across Africa, where it has been introduced on several separate occasions. A key feature of this strain appears to be its ability to acquire resistance to commonly available antibiotics. ... "Importantly, the antibiotic resistance genes, which have previously been carried on a separate genetic package, have now been incorporated into the main chromosome of the bacteria itself, which is likely to make it easier for the Typhoid strain to retain these resistance genes." EurekAlert!

**Guinea: Guineans jailed for putting corpse in taxi**

25 May - Six people have been put in isolation in prison in Guinea after being accused of travelling with a corpse of a relative who had died of Ebola. The authorities said the body was seated upright in a taxi, dressed in a T-shirt and jeans with sunglasses and sandwiched between three others. If after 21 days they show no signs of having the virus they will be tried for violating the health emergency. ... The BBC’s Alhassan Sillah in the capital, Conakry, says just nine days ago only nine patients were in Ebola treatment centres countrywide, but
now that number has risen to nearly 30 cases. ... Ebola victims must be buried by the Red Cross but people who disobey the rules generally do so because they want to conduct the funeral themselves in a specific place, our correspondent says. BBC News

Nigeria: New mothers get a new kind of care in rural Nigeria

26 May - ... Community health workers live where they work. They're not trained medical professionals, but they do have "training that is recognized by the health services and national certification authority," according to the World Health Organization. And they've become a boon in Nigeria, which has one of the world's highest rates of maternal death — 576 per 100,000 live births in 2013. That's about half a percent of all births, though the rate is as high as 1 percent in northern Nigeria. ... After seven months, the researchers reported in the journal Global Health: Science and Practice, there was a 500 percent increase in visits to the local clinic — from 1.5 monthly visits for every 100 people in the population to about eight monthly visits. The number of deliveries in a facility doubled compared with the year before. And monthly prenatal visits were as high as 21 percent of pregnant women, up from a maximum of about 6 percent before the project started. NPR

Tanzania: 'Significant challenges’ in cholera outbreak

26 May - U.N. aid agencies report better sanitation and clean drinking water is containing a cholera epidemic among Burundian refugees in Tanzania, but there are fears that the deadly disease could spread to the local Tanzanian population. The U.N. refugee agency (UNHCR) reports measures to control cholera in western Tanzania's Lake Tanganyika area appear to be working. More than 4,000 cases of cholera have been reported among newly arrived Burundian refugees there, and the disease has killed 30 people. The epidemic peaked in early May with 915 cases, but has since subsided to around 100 cases per day. UNHCR says this is due to improved hygiene standards, increased supplies of safe drinking water, and close cooperation by Tanzanian health authorities. VOA

Zambia: A toilet in every home - Zambians celebrate sanitation milestone

21 May - On a sunny day in the remote Chienge district of Zambia, hundreds gathered for a celebration that was the first of its kind. ... The daylong event celebrated a milestone in Zambia, where the practice of defecating in the open is all too common. In April, Chienge, in the northernmost province of Luapula, became the first district in Zambia to be declared free of open defecation by the government. According to UNICEF, it's also the first district in southern Africa to fully abandon the practice. That means every household has at least one private latrine and a place to wash your hands. ... Zambia wants to make the entire country "open-defecation-free" within the next five years. And Chienge is a role model. Since the initiative began more than a year ago, Crooks says, the district has not recorded a single case of cholera. NPR
Saudi Arabia: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

25 May - Between 18 and 23 May, the National IHR Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia notified WHO of 4 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, including 1 death. Globally, WHO has been notified of 1139 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 431 related deaths. WHO

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

24 May - On 18 May 2015, the IHR National Focal Point of the United Arab Emirates notified WHO of 1 additional case of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection. WHO

Yemen: Medical need climbs alongside death toll

27 May - Airstrikes by a Saudi-led military coalition were said to have killed at least 80 people in Yemen on Wednesday, and the World Health Organization warned that roughly one-third of the country’s population was in urgent need of medical care. ... Health officials said those killed included dozens of civilians, as well as fighters loyal to the Houthi rebel movement. New York Times

Europe reports 3,800 measles cases, 4,400 rubella cases in past year

27 May - European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) countries saw 3,809 cases of measles and 4,394 cases of rubella from April of last year through March of this year, with 1 measles case proving fatal and 6 complicated by acute encephalitis, says a new quarterly report from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Thirty EU/EEA countries had measles cases (70.1% of them laboratory confirmed), with 69.9% of the cases in Germany and Italy, says the report. An outbreak in Berlin that began last October continues, with cases through Apr 22 numbering 1,134. Vaccination status was known in 3,365 measles case-patients (88.3%); 2,742 of these (81.5%) had not been
vaccinated, says the report. The report states that measles outbreaks outside of Europe are ongoing in Mongolia, the Republic of Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Sudan, and Brazil. Rubella has occurred in 27 EU/EEA countries over the same period, with 96% of cases occurring in Poland. CIDRAP News Scan (third item)

Spain and Italy hit by devastating 'olive ebola' outbreak

25 May - Spanish olive groves are at risk of being wiped out by a strain of “olive ebola” which has ravaged the crop in Italy. The bacteria *Xylella fastidiosa*, believed to have originally come from the United States, has torn through southern Italy since it first appeared in late 2013. Dubbed “olive ebola” by a Blanca Landa, a researcher at the Institute of Sustainable Agriculture, is threatening to wipe out decimate entire groves across southern Spain. ... the destruction of Italian olive groves could "cause unacceptable economic and environmental damage” and wipe out “hundreds of years of history”.

Independent

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USNORTHCOM

Mexico: 13 dead after tornado strikes border city in Mexico

25 May - In six seconds, a tornado ripped through the border city of Ciudad Acuña, Mexico, with a ferocity that officials said hasn't been witnessed in more than 100 years. At least 13 people were killed, including three children, Acuña Mayor Evaristo Lenin Perez said. Another 200 were injured. Photos from the scene, which sits right across the border from Del Rio, Texas, showed cars blown upright, front bumper on the ground and leaning against homes. The twister flipped over school buses and damaged about 400 homes. CNN

U.S.: Doctoring, without the doctor

25 May - ... The laws giving nurse practitioners greater autonomy have been particularly important in rural states like Nebraska, which struggle to recruit doctors to remote areas. About a third of Nebraska’s 1.8 million people live in rural areas, and many go largely unserved as the nearest mental health professional is often hours away. “The situation could be viewed as an emergency, especially in rural counties,” said Jim P. Stimpson, director of the Center for Health Policy at the University of Nebraska, referring to the shortage. Groups representing doctors, including the American Medical Association, are fighting the laws. They say nurses lack the knowledge and skills to diagnose complex illnesses by themselves. New York Times
U.S.: Federal appeals court blocks Arkansas ban on abortion after 12 weeks

27 May - The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit has blocked an Arkansas law that bans abortion after 12 weeks of pregnancy. The case was filed by two doctors on their own and their patients' behalf. The court's ruling notes: "By banning abortions after 12 weeks' gestation, the Act prohibits women from making the ultimate decision to terminate a pregnancy at a point before viability. Because the State made no attempt to refute the plaintiffs' assertions of fact, the district court's summary judgment order must be affirmed." "Arkansas' law required doctors to test for a fetal heartbeat, then banned abortion after 12 weeks if a heartbeat was present. But the law's opponents noted that all fetuses at that stage have a heartbeat, yet none is considered viable outside the womb. NPR

U.S.: Nearly 1 in 7 Hispanic/Latino adults has some hearing loss

28 May - In the largest study to date of hearing loss among Hispanic/Latino adults in the United States, researchers have found that nearly 1 in 7 has hearing loss, a number similar to the general population prevalence. The analysis also looked at the differences between subgroups and found that Hispanics of Puerto Rican descent have the highest rate of hearing loss, while Mexican-Americans have the lowest. The study identified several potential risk factors for hearing loss, including age, gender, education level, income, noise exposure, and diabetes. NIH


26 May - A man has died in New Jersey of Lassa fever, a disease similar to Ebola, after traveling in Liberia, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Health officials say the risk to the public is "extremely low" because Lassa fever doesn't spread easily. The death rate for Lassa fever is 1%, compared to the 70% mortality rate seen in Ebola patients, the CDC said. ... The man tested positive for Lassa fever early Monday morning, but did not test positive for Ebola. The patient was in "appropriate isolation" at the hospital when he died Monday evening, the CDC said. USA Today

U.S.: Storms ease in Texas, but runoff could mean more flooding

28 May - Although the deadly thunderstorms that lashed much of Texas have tapered off, many cities were still in danger of flooding Thursday as heavy rain from earlier in the week poured downstream, swelling rivers. The Houston area got a respite from the rain a day earlier, but runoff from earlier in the week lifted the
San Jacinto River above flood stage, and it kept climbing. Nearby residents watched the high water with alarm. ... About 60 miles southwest of Houston, the mayor of Wharton asked residents to voluntarily evacuate about 300 homes because of the predicted rise of the Colorado River. And in the rural Parker County community of Horseshoe Bend, some 40 miles southwest of Fort Worth, officials asked people in 250 homes to flee from the Brazos River. ... This week’s storms and floods in Texas and Oklahoma have left at least 21 people dead and at least 10 others missing. ... In Central Texas, crews continued searching for eight people feared dead after the swollen Blanco River smashed through Wimberley. ABC News

U.S.: Supreme Court says locals can make pill-makers pay for drug disposal

27 May - ... Three years ago Alameda County, across the bay from San Francisco, became the first county in the nation to require pharmaceutical manufacturers to pay for safe disposal of prescription drugs. Drug companies sued and lost in lower courts. Tuesday the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case, meaning that drug makers will now need to pay for collection and disposal of unused drugs. "I think that this is an important step forward for protecting our marine resources as well as our drinking water," says Miriam Gordon with Clean Water Action, an advocacy group. NPR

U.S.: Whooping cough outbreak hits orthodox Williamsburg, health department says

27 May - An outbreak of whooping cough has hit the Orthodox Jewish community in Williamsburg and Borough Park — largely among children and infants without vaccines, the Health Department said. Between October 2014 and April 2015, there have been 21 cases of pertussis, or whooping cough, a highly contagious bacterial infection that causes violent coughing and can be fatal for infants, according to an alert from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Eighteen of those cases were children and three of the cases were adults. Twelve of the children were unvaccinated, and two had vaccines but not the updated pertussis vaccine, the agency said. The other four children with confirmed whooping cough had the proper vaccines. Ten of the children were less than 1 year old. DNAinfo

U.S.: Women of all ages more likely to have serious mental health problems than men, report says

28 May - Women in every age group in the United States were more likely than men to have serious mental health problems, according to federal health statistics released Thursday. The report from the National Center for Health Statistics, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, also found that more than one-fourth of people age 65 or older who are afflicted with these mental health problems have difficulty feeding, bathing and dressing themselves. Washington Post

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**India: Are reverse osmosis filter systems a threat to public health?**

26 May - The reverse-osmosis water purifier at home seems to be a benign invention, allowing people to drink clean, healthy water. But now scientists are warning that rampant use of the RO technology could pose a serious threat to public health. One of the most popular water purifying technologies in India, the RO process is efficient in terms of filtering out toxic substances like arsenic and fluoride, especially in areas where groundwater is heavily contaminated. Simultaneously, though, RO systems, at both household and industrial levels plough back concentrated amounts of these substances back into the aquifers. Experts suggest that regulations are needed to stop the unchecked use of RO, or at least the disposal of the stuff left behind after filtering. *Economic Times*

**India: Heatwave kills 800 as capital's roads melt**

26 May - At least 800 people have died in a major heatwave that has swept across India, melting roads in New Delhi as temperatures neared 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit). Hospitals were on alert to treat victims of heatstroke and authorities advised people to stay indoors, with no end in sight to the searing conditions. India’s Meteorological Department said it had issued heat warnings to several states where temperatures were forecast to top 45 degrees Celsius over the next few days. "As of now, we don't predict any respite from the extreme heatwave for the next few days," said spokesman B. P. Yadav. ... Streets were deserted in Hyderabad, capital of the worst-hit state of Andhra Pradesh in southern India where 551 people have died in the last week. *Yahoo! News*

**Malaysia: Dengue cases top 45,000, ‘monkey malaria’ accounts for majority of human malaria cases**

25 May - Mosquito borne diseases are taking a significant role in the health of Malaysians as some 200 additional dengue fever cases are reported on a daily basis and two out of three cases of malaria in the country are derived from monkeys, according to health officials. As of Friday, the Malaysia Health Ministry has reported 45,284 dengue fever cases in 2015. Of that total, 136 fatalities (as of May 16) due to the virus have been documented. In addition, just six months after we reported that 68 percent of malaria hospitalizations in Malaysia were due to infection with Plasmodium knowlesi, health officials report sixty-six per cent or 2,584 out of 3,923 malaria cases reported in the country last year derived from monkey (zoontic) malaria. *Outbreak News Today*
Malaysia: Inside the Malaysian jungle camps: Human cages, 139 suspected graves

26 May - There were 139 suspected graves discovered in a mountainous region along the Thai-Malaysia border in what authorities believe are abandoned jungle camps used by human traffickers. The graves are a gruesome reminder of the dire migrant crisis afflicting thousands in Southeast Asia. “It is a very sad scene,” National Police Chief Khalid Abu Bakar told the Associated Press. “I am shocked. We never expected this kind of cruelty.” The AP reports police found what they believe were human cages made from wood and barbed wire. “We think the migrants were imprisoned in these wooden pens,” Khalid told the AP. “They were not allowed to move freely and traffickers kept watch at sentry posts.” Also found were a pink teddy bear and other children’s items, which led police to believe that children may have been held at one camp. Other items indicate that two of the camps may have been vacated only a few weeks ago. Washington Post

Papua New Guinea: Woman accused of witchcraft to spread measles axed to death

27 May - Police in Papua New Guinea vowed to find the men who axed to death a woman accused of using witchcraft to spark a measles outbreak in the country’s remote jungle highlands, a missionary said on Wednesday after meeting authorities. The woman, Mifila, was one of four women accused with 13 of their family members of using sorcery to cause measles deaths last November in the village of Fiyawena. … Women are often accused and killed in witch hunts even though laws passed in 2013 make revenge killings over black magic punishable by death. Human Rights Watch earlier this year named Papua New Guinea as one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman due to gender based violence. Las Vegas Review-Journal

South Korea: Seven cases of MERS virus confirmed

28 May - Health officials in South Korea have confirmed two more cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in the country on Thursday, bringing the total number of patients diagnosed with the fatal illness to seven. According to reports, a potential third patient allegedly broke from the voluntary quarantine to travel to China. The two latest MERS patients have been in isolation at their own homes after coming in direct contact with the first confirmed patient, a 68-year-old man who had travelled to the Middle East between April and May. Tech Times
**Brazil: MOH say dengue peak transmission season has passed, currently 846,000 cases**

27 May - While compared to 2014, the dengue epidemic in Brazil this year is dramatically worse as Ministry of Health officials say the 845,900 cases of dengue as of May 9 shows an increase of 155 percent. However, on the bright side, the current outbreak of dengue fever represents a 30 percent decrease compared to 2013 which ended up with some 1.4 million dengue cases (1.2 million cases during the same period). The Brazil Ministry of Health (MOH) this week reported a reduction in cases showing the peak dengue transmission season has passed. ... Regarding dengue-related deaths, the number this year is an increase of 25% compared to 2014 and a decrease of 33.3% compared to 2013. **Outbreak News Today**

**Brazil: Taking a bite out of dengue fever with genetically modified mosquitoes**

25 May - Brazil is fighting a variety of mosquito responsible for spreading an estimated 390 million cases a year of dengue fever globally. ... One experiment involves releasing genetically modified mosquitoes by the thousands in an effort to slow the spread of the debilitating disease by killing the pests as larvae. ... The mosquitoes in the pot were bred in a lab by a British biotechnology company called Oxitec. They were all males, genetically altered to fly out, find a female, have sex and die – essentially the normal life plan of a male mosquito – but along the way pass on their altered genes to their offspring. These too will die, as larvae: before they can fly, or, if female, bite – and contract and then pass on a virus such as dengue fever or chikungunya to humans. **Globe and Mail**

**Haiti: Cholera surges as rain arrives early**

28 May - ... An unusually early start to the rainy season has brought a spike in the waterborne bacteria — and thus the number of [cholera] infections. In the first four months of this year, the number of reported cholera cases was nearly 400 percent higher than that reported in the same period in 2014. This outbreak in Haiti has been ongoing since October 2010 — 10 months after the catastrophic earthquake. So far, nearly 9,000 people have died, and more than 730,000 have been infected. **NPR**

**PAHO: 16,000 new chikungunya outbreak cases**

26 May - The Americas have had more than 16,000 new chikungunya cases in the Americas, bringing the outbreak total to 1,446,750, according to the Pan American Health Organization’s (PAHO’s) weekly update on May 22. The new numbers include a big jump in Colombia, which has been the outbreak hot spot for weeks. But they also include reductions in case numbers for several countries, so the net gain is 14,551 cases. The previous 3 weeks
They're going door to door in the Amazon to see why people get sick

20 May - Is it the mercury or the malaria? Or maybe it's something else entirely that's making people sick in the Peruvian Amazon. Those questions are bedeviling researchers from Duke University who have been studying gold mining in the region. Illegal mining has exploded in the area in the past decade, and the people living downriver have a variety of medical issues, from malaria to anemia to high blood pressure. ... To try to determine the possible health effects of the mercury, this year the researchers launched a massive survey that stretches from the Eastern slope of the Andes down into the plains of the Amazon basin. ... "We're going to sample for malaria and for dengue," Ortiz says. "We are also testing for tuberculosis. Also testing for chronic diseases, diabetes, hypertension, kidney function, nutritional status, so we are going to have a big picture of how things are going."

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