

2 March 2012

Army Public Health Weekly Update

The Army Public Health Update is a collection of articles taken verbatim from public sources to offer awareness of current health issues and the media coverage given to them. The articles do not necessarily represent US Army Medical Department opinions, views, policy, or guidance, and should not be construed or interpreted as being endorsed by the US Army Medical Department.

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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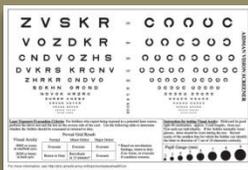
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**Health Information
e-Catalog Products
can now be
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without signing in!**



Aidman Vision Screening Card

A new vision screening card that can be used to test soldiers who have been exposed to a potential laser source is now available for order from the **Health Information Products eCatalog**.



VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- Nutrition labeling for meat becomes mandatory
- U.S.: Campylobacter cases from raw milk outbreak reach 80
- Zimbabwe: Anthrax

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- A diet rich in fish may help the aging brain
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- Emergency ban extended on chemicals used in drugs that mimic pot
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- U.S.: CDC warns untreatable gonorrhea is on the way
- U.S.: Dental visits to ERs are on the rise
- U.S.: HIV infection and HIV-associated behaviors among injecting drug users — 20 cities, United States, 2009
- U.S.: Kids still eat too much added sugar, CDC
- U.S.: Midwest cleans up from tornadoes, more storms forecast
- U.S.: More than 10,000 participants have joined the GuLF STUDY
- U.S.: Otsuka America receives FDA nod for breath test in children
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National Brain Injury Awareness Month

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a disruption of function in the brain resulting from a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury. Causes of traumatic brain injuries may include falls, motor vehicle crashes, assaults, and combat events such as blasts. Medical providers classify TBI as mild, moderate, severe, or penetrating primarily based on initial symptoms. The majority of traumatic brain injuries are mild, also known as concussions. Receiving prompt medical care is essential to maximizing recovery. **Stand-To!**

See video: **March is National Brain Injury Awareness Month by LTG Patricia D. Horoho**



USPACOM

- **China: For women, a basic need, and few places to attend to it**
- **China to promote condoms to cap HIV/AIDS cases**
- **India: No longer polio endemic says WHO**
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USSOUTHCOM

- **Peru: Yellow fever**

U.S. MILITARY

Army probes reversals of PTSD diagnosis



22 February - The U.S. Army is investigating suggestions that diagnoses of posttraumatic stress disorder in 14 soldiers were changed to limit their eligibility for disability benefits. According to the army's Western Regional Medical Command (WRMC), the soldiers -- whose PTSD diagnoses were reversed by a forensic psychiatric team at Madigan Army Medical Center in Fort Lewis, Wash. -- have been flown to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., for reevaluation... The Seattle Times has reported that the investigation began in response to a memo from an unidentified ombudsman for the Army Medical Command, who heard a Madigan psychiatrist tell colleagues during a lecture that a PTSD diagnosis could incur a lifetime cost to taxpayers of more than \$1.5 million. "He (the psychiatrist) stated that we have to be good stewards of the tax payers dollars, and we have to ensure that we are just not 'rubber stamping' a soldier with the diagnoses of PTSD," according to the memo, as quoted by the newspaper. **MedPage Today**

Health care experiences prior to suicide and self-inflicted injury, Active Component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2001-2010

February 2012 - We summarized the outpatient experiences of service members prior to suicide or self-inflicted injury and compared them with service members without suicidal behavior. During 2001-2010, 45 percent of individuals who completed suicide and 75 percent of those who injured themselves had outpatient encounters within 30 days prior to suicide/self-harm. Primary care was the most frequently visited clinical service prior to suicide/self-harm. As compared to their counterparts, service members with suicidal behavior had especially excessive outpatient visit rates within, but not prior to, 60 days of their deaths/injuries. **Medical Surveillance Monthly Report**

Ending Violence @ Home

Preventing domestic violence demands the use of effective tools. To jump-start the development of innovative ways to tackle this global problem, the Institute of Medicine and Avon Foundation for Women will launch the "Ending Violence @ Home App Challenge" on March 8.

The contest will encourage participants to create mobile- or Web-based apps that can help prevent physical assaults, verbal abuse, and other acts of domestic violence, or aid victims and those trying to help them. Prizes up to \$10,000 will be awarded.



Vets feel abandoned after secret drug experiments

1 March - From 1955 to 1975, military researchers at Edgewood were using not only animals but human subjects to test a witches' brew of drugs and chemicals. They ranged from potentially lethal nerve gases like VX and sarin to incapacitating agents like BZ. The military also tested tear gas, barbiturates, tranquilizers, narcotics and hallucinogens like LSD. This top secret Cold War research program initially looked for ways to defend against a chemical or biological attack by the Soviet Union, thought to be far ahead of the United States in "psycho-chemical" warfare. But the research expanded into offensive chemical weapons, including one that could, according to one Army film obtained by CNN, deliver a "veritable chemical ambush" against an enemy. "This incapacitating agent would be dispersed by standard munitions, and the agent would enter the building through all nonprotected openings," the film's narrator boasts. President Nixon ended research into offensive chemical weapons in 1969, and the military no longer uses human subjects in research on chemical agents, said a spokesman for [Edgewood Chemical Biological Center](#), as the facility is known now. [CNN](#)

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GLOBAL

New guidelines on chikungunya virus

27 February - The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has published new guidelines on chikungunya, a mosquito-transmitted virus transmitted that causes fever and severe joint pain. The Guidelines for Preparedness and Response for Chikungunya Virus Introduction in the Americas aims to help countries throughout the Americas improve their ability to detect the virus and be prepared to monitor, prevent, and control the disease, should it appear... While the virus has not spread locally in the Western Hemisphere, experts say there is a clear risk of its introduction into local mosquito populations. [World Health Organization](#)

New model accurately predicts who will develop deadly form of dengue fever

18 February - Researchers at the University of Texas Medical Branch have developed the first accurate predictive model to differentiate between dengue fever (DF) and its more severe form, dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF). The breakthrough, which could vastly reduce the disease's mortality rate, was reported in related papers in *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* and *Clinical and Translational Science*. These studies could lead to a personalized approach to treatment of dengue fever. Approximately 2.5 billion people – more than 40 percent of the world's population – are at risk for dengue infection, mainly in tropical and subtropical regions. An estimated 500,000 people with DHF are

**COCA Call:
Epidemiology and
Clinical Features of
Lyme Disease**

Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vector-borne disease in the U.S. From 1992-2009, the number of reported cases in the U.S. tripled. Understanding the epidemiology and clinical features of Lyme disease is valuable for clinicians in emerging areas, clinicians in endemic regions who need a refresher course, and for health care providers in non-endemic regions who see travel-related cases.

Date: March 6, 2012

Time: 2:00 – 3:00 pm
(Eastern Time)

Call Number: 888-790-6180

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hospitalized each year, a large proportion of whom are children, and about 12,500 of those affected die. Dengue is reemerging in the Americas – with 1.6 million cases in 2010 – due to increasing urbanization, globalization of travel and the reduced use of DDT pesticide. In the U.S., the number of people hospitalized for dengue tripled between 2000 and 2007. "We have long known that dengue has many manifestations, from asymptomatic to a flu-like state to a life-threatening condition. [Infection Control Today](#)

Rise in tropical diseases blamed on turmoil in Mideast, North Africa

1 March - Years of conflict and political struggle have caused massive human and animal migrations in the Middle East and North Africa. Now a new study blames these upheavals for the spread or re-emergence of a variety of tropical diseases - some previously eliminated or controlled - affecting an estimated 65 million people. A family of illnesses called Neglected Tropical Diseases [NTDs] adds to the troubles in the Middle East and North Africa. These diseases traditionally affect poor countries, but the new study says NTDs also are prevalent in many middle-income countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Yemen. "Cutaneous leishmaniasis, Dengue, Rift Valley fever, Crimean Congo hemorrhagic fever," said Dr. Peter Hotez of the National School of Tropical Medicine, listing some of the diseases. [VOA News](#)

Syphilis tests could save a million babies: experts

29 February - The lives of almost a million newborn babies could be saved every year if simple, cheap and rapid tests for syphilis were offered to pregnant women in poorer countries, global health experts said on Thursday. The Global Congenital Syphilis Partnership, a group set up to help tackle the sexually transmitted disease, said testing women in early pregnancy would cost less than 1 pound (\$1.58) per woman, and those who tested positive could be treated with a single dose of the cheap antibiotic penicillin. "Screening and treating pregnant women for syphilis is one of the most cost-effective ways to save lives. New rapid tests are easy to use... affordable and give a result in just 15 minutes," said Peter Piot, chair of the partnership and director of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). [Reuters](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

For the week ending 29 February 2012:

- AFHSC-GEIS and its laboratory partners prepared and presented results of DoD Respiratory Surveillance for the 2011-2012 season to the Vaccines and Related

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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Biological Products Advisory Committee at the FDA on 28 Feb 2012.

- Influenza activity remains low across all overseas DoD laboratory surveillance networks; with the exception of moderate activity in South America and increased level of activities in Europe.
- The influenza vaccination rate for the DoD (Active Duty component only) is 96%.

[AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 7 (ending 18 February 2012), influenza activity in the United States increased slightly, but remained relatively low. Of the 4,269 specimens tested and reported to CDC/Influenza Division, 614 (14.4%) were positive for influenza. The proportion of deaths attributed to P&I was below the epidemic threshold. [FluView](#)

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

During week 7 (ending 24 February), medium or high intensity was reported by 18 countries and increasing trends by 19 countries. Of 1,873 sentinel specimens tested, 927 (49.5%) were positive for influenza virus, which is a similar percentage to that observed during the two previous weeks. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

FDA picks two new vaccine strains for 2012-13 flu season

28 February - An advisory group to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today selected two new strains for the 2012-13 seasonal flu vaccine, based on a recent recommendation from the World Health Organization (WHO). Today's FDA Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) vote allows pharmaceutical companies that make seasonal flu vaccine for the US market to proceed with their production steps. It takes several months to develop vaccine viruses based on the circulating strains, grow large quantities in chicken eggs, and formulate them into vaccines. [CIDRAP](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

1 March - - Estimates of flu activity based on flu-related Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere ranges from minimal to high and ranges from minimal to low in the southern hemisphere. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For Week 8 (ending 25 February 2012):

Adenovirus

- Vaccination against types 4 and 7 adenovirus was instituted at all basic training centers by mid-November 2011 (week 45).

- The proportion of FRI cases positive for adenovirus has markedly decreased since vaccine was reintroduced.
- Type 14 adenovirus is present at MCRD Parris Island.

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

Universal vaccines could finally allow for wide-scale flu prevention

27 February - An emerging class of long-lasting flu vaccines could do more than just save people the trouble of an annual flu shot. Princeton University-based researchers have found that the "universal" vaccine could for the first time allow for the effective, wide-scale prevention of flu by limiting the influenza virus' ability to spread and mutate. Universal, or cross-protective, vaccines — so named for their effectiveness against several flu strains — are being developed in various labs worldwide and some are already in clinical trials. The researchers recently reported in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that the new vaccines would make a bout with influenza less severe, making it more difficult for the virus to spread. At the same time, the vaccines would target relatively unchanging parts of the virus and hamper the virus' notorious ability to evolve and evade immunity; current flu vaccines target the pathogen's most adaptable components. [Infection Control Today](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

25 February - Influenza activity continues increasing but overall activity remains lower than last year.

- Viral specimens: During week eight, 185 specimens were submitted for testing, of which 29 were positive. Influenza A was identified in 15 (52%) of these positive samples.
- Influenza cases: 184 influenza cases have been reported in DRSI through week eight of the 2011-2012 season. Twenty-eight were reported with onset dates in week 8.
- Outpatient ILI surveillance: ILI activity within ESSENCE indicates both AD and beneficiary visits remains lower this year than for the same period last year.
- Army MEDCEN & reporting trend: RSV and Influenza A were the most commonly identified respiratory pathogens, accounting for 53% and 32% of positive specimens, respectively. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Avian influenza – situation in Egypt

28 February - The Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt has notified WHO of two new cases of human infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) virus. The first case is a thirty-two year old male from Behira governorate, in the Abo Elmatameer District. He developed

symptoms on 16 February 2012 and was admitted to hospital on 21 February 2012 where he received oseltamivir treatment upon admission. He died on 28 February 2012. The second case was a thirty seven year-old female from Kafr Elshihk governorate in the Kelleen District. She developed symptoms on 18 February 2012 and was admitted to hospital on 23 February 2012 where she received oseltamivir treatment upon admission. She died on 26 February 2012. Preliminary investigations into both cases with regard to the source of infection indicate close contact with sick or deceased backyard poultry at the cases' respective residences. [World Health Organization](#)

Indonesia: Avian influenza situation – WHO update

1 March - The IHR National Focal Point in Indonesia has notified WHO of one new case of human infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) virus. The case was a 12 year-old male from Badung, Bali. He had onset of symptoms on 11 February 2012 and was admitted to a private clinic on 16 February 2012. His condition continued to worsen, resulting in severe difficulty breathing. He was referred to an avian influenza referral hospital on 20 February 2012 where he died on 21 February 2012. Epidemiological investigation into the source of infection indicated contact with poultry, though no poultry deaths within the household or neighborhood have been reported. The risk factors are still under investigation. Of the 186 cases confirmed since 2005 in Indonesia, 154 have been fatal. [WHO](#)

Scientists report first evidence of flu in bats

29 February - For the first time, scientists have found evidence of flu in bats, reporting a never-before-seen virus whose risk to humans is unclear. The surprising discovery of genetic fragments of a flu virus is the first well-documented report of it in the winged mammals. So far, scientists have not been able to grow it, and it's not clear if – or how well – it spreads. Flu bugs are common in humans, birds and pigs and have even been seen in dogs, horses, seals and whales, among others. About five years ago, Russian virologists claimed finding flu in bats, but they never offered evidence. [Telegraph](#)

With new data, NSABB may revisit H5N1 studies

29 February - The mutant H5N1 virus generated in one of two controversial studies was less lethal and contagious than has been generally understood, and the US government's biosecurity advisory committee will be asked to examine new and clarified data from the study, scientists and government officials revealed today. Ron Fouchier, PhD, lead author of one of the studies, said the mutant H5N1 virus generated in his experiment was not highly lethal when it spread among ferrets via coughing and sneezing, though it was lethal when intentionally introduced into the ferrets' lungs in high doses... Anthony Fauci, MD, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), said new data and clarifications of existing data emerged Feb 16 and 17 at a meeting of flu experts and public health officials hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva. Fauci said the National Institutes of Health, which includes the NIAID, now supports a revision of the manuscripts to include the new and clarified data and hopes to reconvene the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity (NSABB) to look at the new version. [CIDRAP](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Nutrition labeling for meat becomes mandatory

29 February - The next time you shop at the grocery store, you may see something new—nutrition labels on meat. The same types of labels you already find on other foods. In 1993, the U.S. Department of Agriculture made nutrition labeling voluntary for many types of raw meats. The [labeling becomes mandatory](#) on Thursday. The new rule affects all ground meat and poultry and 40 of the most popular cuts of meat in the United States such as chicken breasts, steaks, pork chops, roasts, lamb and veal. If the nutrition facts are not on the package, as in the case of some larger cuts of meat, look for posters or signs at the meat counter for this information. [CNN](#)

U.S.: Campylobacter cases from raw milk outbreak reach 80

1 March - Since Food Safety News last reported on February 24, the Pennsylvania Department of Health has confirmed an additional two cases of Campylobacter infections in an outbreak tied to contaminated unpasteurized milk from Your Family Cow dairy in Chambersburg, PA. The latest cases bring the outbreak toll to 80 confirmed illnesses. The two new confirmations -- both from Pennsylvania -- do not have a recent onset, as the emergence of new cases appears to have slowed. [Food Safety News](#)

Zimbabwe: Anthrax

28 February - At least 20 dogs are being shot daily in Masvingo in a controversial operation by the town council, police, and veterinary services to curb the spread of anthrax, it emerged on Monday [27 Feb 2012]. Since 13 Feb 2012, police sharpshooters accompanied by municipal security guards have been mowing down unaccompanied dogs. But some residents complain that their dogs have been shot indiscriminately during the exercise, which will run until 14 Mar 2012. [ProMED-mail](#)

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WELLNESS

A diet rich in fish may help the aging brain

28 February - Eating fish and other foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids could help people maintain healthy brains as they age, as well as protect their hearts, new research suggests. In a study to be released Tuesday, participants with low levels of omega-3 fatty acids in their blood had slightly smaller brains and scored lower on memory and cognitive tests than people with higher blood levels of omega-3s. The changes in the brain were equivalent to about two years of normal brain aging, says the study's lead author, Dr. Zaldy Tan, a visiting

associate professor in the geriatrics department of the University of California, Los Angeles, and a member of the UCLA Easton Center for Alzheimer's Disease Research. [The Wall Street Journal](#)

Citrus fruits may lower women's stroke risk

23 February - Researchers have identified a compound found in oranges, grapefruits, and other citrus fruits that may lower a woman's stroke risk. Previous studies suggest that eating fruits and vegetables helps protect against strokes, and many believe that antioxidant compounds known as flavonoids may explain why, because they have been shown to improve blood vessel function and they have anti-inflammatory effects... Women whose diets included the highest amount of flavanones had a 19% lower risk of suffering a blood-clot-related stroke than women with the lowest intake of the compound. [WebMD](#)

Emergency ban extended on chemicals used in drugs that mimic pot



29 February - The Drug Enforcement Administration is extending for another six months its emergency ban on five chemicals used to make synthetic drugs such as Spice, the DEA announced on Wednesday. The DEA already had banned the substances for a year, but with that period soon to expire, the DEA announced it will file a notice in the Federal Register on Thursday that will mean the chemicals will continue to be illegal. The substances used to make the fake pot products are: JWH-018, JWH-073, JWH-200, CP-47,497 (that's all one chemical CP-47,497) and cannabicyclohexanol. The names sound like an alphabetical and numerical soup. But the drugs are marketed as herbal incense under such names as K2, Blaze, Spice and Red X Dawn and have been popular with teenagers and young adults. [CNN](#)

Patch may not help pregnant women quit smoking

29 February - Nicotine patches don't help pregnant women quit smoking, suggests a new study from the UK -- in part because so few women use them as prescribed. While there's evidence that the patch ups the chance most people will be able to kick the habit, researchers generally haven't found the same benefit in pregnant women. "I don't think it's an issue so much with the way the nicotine patch works. The big issue is whether people are going to use it and adhere to it," said Dr. Gideon Koren, head of the Motherisk program at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, who wasn't involved in the new report. [Reuters](#)

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Cameroon: Yellow fever

1 March - The Secretary of State in the Ministry of Public Health in charge of epidemics and pandemics, Alim Hayatou, recently launched a vaccination campaign against yellow fever at Lagdo in the Northern Region. Speaking during the launching ceremony, the Secretary of State indicated that the vaccination campaign targets the population of the regions especially inhabitants of the banks of the Lagdo River because of their vulnerability to attacks. The Minister reiterated government's determination to protect the population against the ravaging effects of yellow fever. [ProMED-mail](#)

Horn of Africa: Drought warning prompts call for early action

29 February - Drought is likely to return to Somalia and other parts of the Horn of Africa over the next three months, say regional climate scientists meeting in the Rwandan capital, Kigali. The forecast comes just weeks after the UN declared the Somali "famine" over. "There is a high probability of drought returning to the Greater Horn of Africa...Poor rains are a definite in all of Somalia, Djibouti, northern Kenya, southern, eastern and northeastern Ethiopia," said Laban Ogallo, director of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), which provides forecasts for the Horn. "We have put the message out there. It is now up to governments, civil society and the media to prepare... for the worst-case scenario even if the worst does not happen. There is no harm in being prepared," he said. "We must realize many of these areas are already facing the cumulative impact of several droughts." [IRIN](#)

Nigeria: Lassa fever

28 February - Bauchi State Commissioner for Health, Dr Sani Malami, has warned rural dwellers against drying food items by the roadside, to guard against Lassa fever. Speaking at a news conference on Tuesday in Bauchi, Malami said that the common practice of drying foodstuffs on the shoulders of highways could result in rodents that carried the Lassa fever disease contaminating the food items. The commissioner stated that the warning became necessary as part of educating the people on the dangers of the disease, which has already affected about 397 people and claimed more than 40 lives in 12 states across the country. [allAfrica](#)

Nigeria: Polio constitutional debate brews



29 February – A constitutional debate is under way in Nigeria over whether the government can prosecute parents who refuse to have their children vaccinated against polio, or if it has the power to force parents to have their children vaccinated against any communicable disease. The debate comes on the heels of a resolution by the government of Nigeria's northern Kano state to prosecute any parent who refuses to

have their children receive the oral vaccine against the highly contagious disease. Rights advocates say a provision of Nigeria's constitution protects the right of all Nigerians to privacy, including medical privacy, and give them a right to refuse treatment. [VOA News](#)

Rwanda: Alert on as cholera hits Democratic Republic of Congo

29 February - A cholera outbreak in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has seen government officials in Kigali locked up in discussions to prevent the disease from spreading to Rwanda. Officials in the DRC say that up to 1,228 cases of cholera have been registered in North Kivu since January 2012, leading to 11 deaths last week. North Kivu is close to the Gisenyi border in Rubavu District, Western Province. The Ministry of Health says that although cholera is now declared an epidemic in DRC, Rwanda was not under threat and that imported cases were being contained. [allAfrica](#)

Uganda: Government tasked to find cash for nodding disease

29 February - The government has ordered the Ministry of Health to divert about Shs1b meant for malaria control to help hundreds of children in northern Uganda who are dying from the nodding disease. The revelation made by Junior Health Minister Richard Nduhura in Parliament yesterday, angered legislators across the political spectrum, who accused the government of neglecting thousands of sick children in northern Uganda and went on to reject the minister's proposal. The diversion of malaria funds came on a day Parliament debated the plight of the sick children in the north in an emotional debate in which lawmakers accused the government of discriminating against the people of northern Uganda, a claim government denied. [allAfrica](#)

Zimbabwe: Health sector severely understaffed

29 February - Meanwhile, the number of cases of typhoid reported in the capital and other parts of the country has risen to 3,074, according to Dr. Portia Manangazira, director of Epidemiology and Disease Control for the Ministry of Health. The head of Zimbabwe's Health Services Board says health workers should be exempted from a state hiring freeze to improve public health service delivery, this at a time when outbreaks of typhoid are spreading from Harare to other parts of the country. [Voice of America](#)

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Afghanistan: Ill-prepared for cold snap



24 February - At least 150 people in Afghanistan have died in the past month after some of the coldest weather for years. The deaths - mainly of those without adequate food, housing or heating in Kabul and the northern province of Badakhshan - have prompted some to ask how this can happen given that the country has received billions of dollars of aid since the Taliban regime fell in 2002. Sediq Hassani, director of policy at the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority, said every possible effort had been made to stock food and other items in the most at-risk areas, but acknowledged: "We were not 100 percent successful. There were districts to which, due to bad roads, we couldn't send food items before winter started." He blamed lack of investment by the government and international community in the last decade, but one UN official told IRIN the international community has failed to prioritize disaster reduction management in Afghanistan. [IRIN](#)

Iraq: 70,000 killed in Iraq between 2004 and 2011, says Baghdad

29 February - Bombings in Iraq yesterday killed eight people as authorities released figures showing nearly 70,000 people died in violence from 2004 to 2011, markedly fewer than numbers from other sources... Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh announced "that the number of victims ... from April 5, 2004 to December 31, 2011 reached 69,263 martyrs and 239,133 wounded," the statement said. "These figures represent the total number of victims who fell as a result of terrorist attacks and violence and military operations," the statement said. The figures come from the health ministry and national security council. The deadliest year was 2006, when 21,539 people were killed and 39,329 wounded, as Iraq was engulfed in bloody sectarian conflict. [Gulf-Times](#)

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Cancer seen killing 1.3 million EU citizens in 2012

29 February - Almost 1.3 million people will die of cancer in the European Union this year, but death rates from the disease are on a steady decline, according to new research released on Wednesday. A study of all types of cancer across the 27-country EU bloc found that more men than women are likely to die from the disease, and that "substantial reductions" in the number of deaths from breast cancer would lower death rates for

women. Despite this, breast cancer remains the leading cause of female cancer deaths in the bloc. Lung cancer, caused mainly by smoking or inhaling second-hand smoke, kills more men in the European Union than any other type of cancer. [Reuters](#)

Netherlands: Q fever, human, 2007-2010

29 February - The number of people killed by Q-fever, a flu-like illness which mainly infects sheep and goats, was at least 24, the head of the public health institute RIVM told television current affairs show Nieuwsuur on Tuesday [28 Feb 2012]. The previous official death toll stood at 19. The outbreak of Q-fever began in 2007 and led to the slaughter of some 40,000 goats in an effort to get the spread under control. Some 4000 humans became ill with the disease, but that total could be far higher, Roel Coutinho, head of the RIVM's infectious diseases unit, told the show. On Tuesday [28 Feb 2012], it emerged that dozens of people who still have health problems relating to Q-fever are planning to take legal action against the goat farms where they became infected. [ProMED-mail](#)

United Kingdom: Experts fear diseases 'impossible to treat'

20 February - Britain is facing a "massive" rise in antibiotic-resistant blood poisoning caused by the bacterium E. coli – bringing closer the spectre of diseases that are impossible to treat. Experts say the growth of antibiotic resistance now poses as great a threat to global health as the emergence of new diseases such as Aids and pandemic flu... Between 2005 and 2009 the incidence of E. coli "bacteraemias" [the presence of bacteria in the blood] rose by 30 per cent, from 18,000 to over 25,000 cases. Those resistant to antibiotics have risen from 1 per cent at the beginning of the century to 10 per cent. [The Independent](#)

United Kingdom: Free HIV treatment on NHS for foreign nationals



28 February - Foreign nationals are to be offered free treatment for HIV on the NHS under plans backed by the government. Campaigners say the move in England will reduce the risk of Britons being infected and cut the costs of more expensive later treatment. Currently only British residents are eligible, which excludes migrants. The Department of Health said it would bring England into line with Scotland and Wales, and there would be safeguards against "health tourism". [BBC News](#)

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U.S.: Americans love the beach, but should watch out for bacteria

26 February - From sea to shining sea, Americans love the beach. The average citizen hangs out on an ocean shore, Great Lake or river about 10 days a year, according to a federal estimate. And the money they spend is crazy, nearly \$6 trillion in 2007, 85 percent of all tourism revenue, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. But money doesn't always buy happiness at the beach. About 3.5 million people each year get sick enough to throw up or get diarrhea after splashing in water containing harmful bacteria, according to an Environmental Protection Agency estimate. This is why environmentalists are criticizing the Obama administration's proposal this month to cut all funding for states to monitor contamination at beaches starting in 2013. [Washington Post](#)

U.S.: CDC warns untreatable gonorrhea is on the way

13 February - Gonorrhea, one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases in the United States, is increasingly showing resistance to one of the last known effective antibiotic treatments, leading researchers from the Centers for Disease Control to "sound the alarm" about potentially untreatable forms of the disease. "During the past three years, the wily gonococcus has become less susceptible to our last line of antimicrobial defense, threatening our ability to cure gonorrhea," Gail Bolan, director of the CDC's sexually transmitted disease prevention program, wrote in *The New England Journal of Medicine* last week. According to the CDC, gonorrhea has a long history of developing immunity to antibiotics, but doctors have always had a stronger medicine up their sleeves to treat patients. Not anymore—about 1.7 percent of gonorrhea is now resistant to cephalosporins, the last line of defense against gonorrhea. [US News & World Report](#)

U.S.: Dental visits to ERs are on the rise



28 February - Americans who turn up in the emergency room to get dental care aren't lost, they're probably just running out of options. According to a new [report from the Pew Center on the States](#), more than 800,000 visits to the ER in 2009 were for toothaches and other avoidable dental ailments. "People showing up at emergency rooms for dental is really your sign that your system is breaking down," [Shelly Gehshan](#), director for the [Pew Center's Children's Dental Campaign](#) says. "It's just not serving enough people. This is your symptom of a system in crisis." In hard times, states often [cut](#) Medicaid's dental benefits, pushing low-income patients from the dentist's office to the emergency room. [NPR](#)

U.S.: HIV infection and HIV-associated behaviors among injecting drug users — 20 cities, United States, 2009

2 March - Despite a recent reduction in the number of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections attributed to injecting drug use in the United States (1), 9% of new U.S. HIV infections in 2009 occurred among injecting drug users (IDUs) (2). To monitor HIV-associated behaviors and HIV prevalence among IDUs, CDC's National HIV Behavioral Surveillance System (NHBS) conducts interviews and HIV testing in selected metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). This report summarizes data from 10,073 IDUs interviewed and tested in 20 MSAs in 2009. Of IDUs tested, 9% had a positive HIV test result, and 45% of those testing positive were unaware of their infection. Among the 9,565 IDUs with HIV negative or unknown HIV status before the survey, 69% reported having unprotected vaginal sex, 34% reported sharing syringes, and 23% reported having unprotected heterosexual anal sex during the 12 previous months. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Kids still eat too much added sugar, CDC

29 February - Added sugar in drinks and foods makes up almost 16 percent of the calories U.S. children and teens consume, federal health officials report. That's far more than the daily recommendation of no more than 15 percent of calories from both sugar and fat, according to the report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, published online Feb. 29 in the *National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief*. "We were interested in looking at added sugar consumption in children because of the significant prevalence of childhood obesity in the United States and the fact that the dietary guidelines recommend that 5 to 15 percent of calories come from added sugars or fats," explained lead researcher Cynthia Ogden, an epidemiologist with CDC's National Center for Health Statistics. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: Midwest cleans up from tornadoes, more storms forecast

1 March - Residents of storm-tossed midwestern towns searched for photographs and mementos from their ruined homes on Thursday as the death toll from a line of tornado-producing storms rose to 13, while more storms bore down on the region... Another nine people in Kansas suffered storm-related injuries that required hospital care, state emergency management spokeswoman Sharon Watson said. The worst loss of life from the line of "super-cell" storms, which marched across the Midwest and produced 35 tornado reports from late Tuesday through Wednesday, was in Harrisburg, where six people died... Another 100 people were injured in Harrisburg, authorities said... The storms were also blamed for three deaths in Missouri, and three others in Tennessee as the violent weather moved eastward, officials said... The tornado that struck Harrisburg was rated an EF-4 by the National Weather Service, one notch below the strongest category and capable of leveling buildings. [Chicago Tribune](#)

U.S.: More than 10,000 participants have joined the GuLF STUDY

29 February - Nearly two years after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, more than 10,000 cleanup workers and volunteers have enrolled in the Gulf Long-term Follow-up (GuLF) STUDY, a national effort to determine if the oil spill led to physical or mental health problems. Reaching the GuLF STUDY's target goal of 55,000 participants would make it the largest health study of its kind. The study is conducted by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), part of the National Institutes of Health. "Ten thousand people have stepped forward to help find answers for their community and for the health concerns that linger after the oil spill," said Dale Sandler, Ph.D., chief of the NIEHS Epidemiology Branch and principal investigator of the study. "I encourage anyone who helped in the cleanup effort to make the call today to enroll in the GuLF STUDY. We want to hear everyone's story. Everyone is important to this study." For more information, people can call the toll-free number at 1-855-NIH-GULF (1-855-644-4853) or visit the GuLF STUDY website at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/gulfstudy/>. [National Institutes of Health](#)

U.S.: Otsuka America receives FDA nod for breath test in children

27 February - U.S. health regulators have approved Otsuka America Pharmaceutical's breath test to detect bacterial infection that causes stomach inflammation and ulcer, for use in children aged 3 to 17 years. A press release from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said BreathTek UBT was the first breath test to detect *Helicobacter pylori* bacterial infections in children. Rockville, Maryland-based Otsuka America, a unit of Japan's Otsuka Holdings Co Ltd, was granted approval to market its breath test for use in adults in 1996. [Health News](#)

U.S.: Tobacco health labels unconstitutional, judge

29 February - A U.S. judge sided with tobacco companies on Wednesday, ruling that regulations requiring large graphic health warnings on cigarette packaging and advertising violate free-speech rights under the U.S. Constitution. Cigarette makers challenged the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's rule requiring companies to label tobacco products with images of rotting teeth, diseased lungs and other images intended to illustrate the dangers of smoking. [Reuters](#)

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China: For women, a basic need, and few places to attend to it



29 February - ... "I think there should definitely be more stalls for women, because women take longer." At least twice as long, studies suggest. Despite that, national standards for public street toilets in urban **China** recommend a one-to-one ratio of men's stalls, including urinals, to women's stalls. Since sanitation workers — almost uniformly women — routinely take over at least one women's stall for their cleaning supplies, women typically end up with even less opportunity to relieve themselves. [New York Times](#)

China to promote condoms to cap HIV/AIDS cases

29 February - China hopes to cap the number of people living with HIV/AIDS at 1.2 million by 2015, up from around 780,000 at present, partly by promoting increased condom use, the government said in an action plan released on Wednesday. While praising achievements made over the past few years, including improved life expectancy for AIDS patients, the State Council, or cabinet, said China still faced a difficult task to prevent the spread of the disease. "The present spread of AIDS is still severe, there is widespread discrimination in society, the virus is a serious (problem) in some areas and amongst high-risk groups," it said in a statement on the central government's website (www.gov.cn). Sexually transmitted diseases are also on the rise, it added, a particular concern as AIDS is now mostly spread in China through sexual intercourse. [Reuters](#)

India: No longer polio endemic says WHO

27 February - India has been officially removed from the list of polio endemic countries. The announcement was made in Delhi at a polio summit. It was a decision that was widely trailed in my coverage of polio from India last week and confirms the remarkable achievement the country has had in tackling the disease... India will need to go another two years without a case of the disease before it is formally regarded as polio-free. It leaves three countries - Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria as polio endemic - which means the virus is circulating freely and transmission of the disease has never been stopped. [BBC News](#)

North Korea agrees to nuclear moratorium, IAEA inspections



29 February - North Korea agreed on Wednesday to stop nuclear tests, uranium enrichment and long-range missile launches, and to allow checks by nuclear inspectors, in an apparent policy shift that paves the way for resuming long-stalled disarmament talks...

The State Department said that in return, the United States was ready to go ahead with a proposed 240,000 metric-ton food aid package requested by North Korea and that more aid could be agreed to based on continued need. [Reuters](#)

Western Pacific: Final push needed to address leprosy

13 February - WHO's Western Pacific Regional Office today urged its Member States to make a final push to address leprosy in the Region... [T]hree Western Pacific countries – the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands – fail to meet the target. And there are still more than 5000 new cases of leprosy reported in the Region each year. Most of these new cases – about 2000 each year – occur in the Philippines, where leprosy is supposed to have been "eliminated" as WHO defines elimination of the disease. [World Health Organization](#)

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Peru: Yellow fever

29 February - In Puno to date, 3 yellow fever fatalities have been registered, stated the Puno Regional Health Director, Jose Irigoyen. "With respect to yellow fever, we now have it controlled; since 20 Jan [2012] to date, we have had the same cases as before. There has not been an increase -- 3 deaths and 6 suspected cases," said the Director. [ProMED-mail](#)

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