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Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Contents

U.S. MILITARY

- 3 possible suicides at Fort Bliss last weekend
- Active-duty military suicides dropped last year, but Reserves' went up
- Bills call for recruits to be tested for mental health
- DoD report: Many troops who commit suicide have seen doctor
- For transgender service members, honesty can end career
- Fresh reports of sexual misconduct undercut Pentagon's argument for internal fix
- Military targets childhood obesity
- Rising suicide in Special Operations Forces prompts call for review
- Sexual assault reports are up 50 percent in the military
- Soldier dies following training march at Fort Benning

GLOBAL

- Pig cells help injured soldiers recover
- Polio cases spark concern and emergency talks – WHO
- Secrets of sound health
- Trial of dengue fever vaccine cuts infection in half
- WHO: Antibiotic resistance a major public health threat globally

INFLUENZA

- CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report
- DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview
- Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update
- PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA
- Human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus – update
- Scientists propose alternate origins for 1918 pandemic flu virus

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- Multistate outbreak of human *Salmonella* Cotham infections linked to contact with pet bearded dragons
- The most deadly creature on earth
- United Kingdom: Army dog killed in Afghanistan given posthumous medal

State of the Air Report

For 15 years, the American Lung Association has analyzed data from air quality monitors to compile the State of the Air report. The more you learn about the air you breathe, the more you can protect your health and take steps to make our air cleaner and healthier.



WELLNESS

- 1 in 3 US adults haven't visited the dentist within past year
- Acetaminophen in Rx drugs: For liver's sake, lower the dose, says FDA
- Alternative to Pap test is approved by F.D.A.
- Breast-cancer survivors face high unemployment, says study
- Exercising in the heat? Cool down for better performance
- Fatal heroin overdoses on the increase as use skyrockets: Health officials battling opiate epidemic
- Got gas? It could mean you've got healthy gut microbes
- Higher doses of antidepressants may raise teen suicide risk
- Laughter may work like meditation in the brain
- Testosterone, the biggest men's health craze since Viagra, may be risky

USAFRICOM

- Diagnosis of childhood TB in Africa
- Ebola virus disease, West Africa – update
- Sudan: River of hope

USCENTCOM

- Afghan coal mine collapse kills at least 15 people
- Afghan flood death toll rises as thousands need aid
- Egypt: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – update
- Pakistan: 53 percent of children not vaccinated for preventable diseases
- Saudi Arabia: MERS cases keep rising, but no change in virus seen

USEUCOM

- Republic of Georgia: New virus related to smallpox is found
- Spain has Europe's best healthcare

USNORTHCOM

- Canada: Alberta declares three-region measles outbreak
- U.S.: Failing economy, failing health
- U.S.: Measles - California, January 1-April 18, 2014
- U.S.: Potentially preventable deaths from the five leading causes of death — United States, 2008–2010
- U.S.: Tornado outbreak kills at least 36 as threat pushes into fourth day: state-by-state updates

USPACOM

- Malaysia: 29,788 dengue cases with 66 deaths recorded this year
- Myanmar: Lack of health care deadly for Myanmar's Rohingya

USSOUTHCOM

- Chikungunya cases in the Caribbean top 33,000
- Peru: Ubinas eruption causes health problems for 2500 in Puno region

10 Outrageous Things You May Have Heard About Vaccines

There's lots of hot air circulating about vaccines. We're here to set the record straight, because vaccines are at the heart of our work – keeping children alive and healthy!



U.S. MILITARY

3 possible suicides at Fort Bliss last weekend

24 April - Fort Bliss, Texas, is reeling from three deaths on Easter weekend that, while still under investigation, are thought to be suicides. A source told Military Times that two enlisted soldiers and a captain have died by suicide since April 17, a blow to a post that has built a new center for mental health and suicide prevention and where President Obama in 2012 announced an executive order expanding military and veterans mental health services. [Military Times](#)

Active-duty military suicides dropped last year, but Reserves' went up

25 April - Suicides among Army National Guard and Reserve members increased last year, even as the number of active-duty troops across the military who took their own lives dropped by more than 15 percent, according to new data. The overall totals provided by the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps give some hope that prevention programs and increased efforts to identify troops at risk may be taking hold after several years of escalating suicide rates. But the increase among Army National Guard and Reserve members raises questions about whether those programs are getting to the citizen soldiers who may not have the same access to support networks and help that their active duty comrades receive. [Stars and Stripes](#)

Bills call for recruits to be tested for mental health

25 April - Two congressional bills calling for mental health screening of all military recruits are drawing more attention following the April 2 shootings at Fort Hood, Texas. The bipartisan Medical Evaluation Parity for Service Members bill, HR 4305, was introduced in March before Army Spc. Ivan Lopez wounded 16 soldiers, killed three others and then turned his gun on himself. Afterward, a companion bill, S 2231, was drafted in the Senate, and military and veterans service organizations began weighing in... The bill would require the services to screen for behavioral health problems just as they conduct medical evaluations and physical exams. The intent would be to provide an assessment that could alert the services to potential issues and provide a baseline of comparison for later assessments. [Military Times](#)

DoD report: Many troops who commit suicide have seen doctor

25 April - Nearly two-thirds of active-duty troops who died by suicide in 2012 were seen by a doctor within three months before taking their own lives, and one-third told someone of their plans, according to a Defense Department report released Friday. Forty-two percent had at least one mental health diagnosis, and one in five were prescribed a psychiatric

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Links

[A-Z Index](#)

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[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

[Medical Threat Briefings \(AKO\)](#)

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[USAPHC Library](#)

[USAPHC Homepage](#)

[USAPHC Training](#)

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medication sometime in the 90 days before they died, according to the 2012 DoD Suicide Event Report. A total of 319 active-duty and mobilized National Guard and reserve troops died by suicide in 2012, along with 203 nonmobilized reserve component members. The active-duty deaths included 155 soldiers, 59 sailors, 57 airmen and 47 Marines. [Military Times](#)

For transgender service members, honesty can end career

26 April - ... More than two years after the repeal of the law that barred gay men and lesbians from serving in the military openly, transgender service members can still be dismissed from the force without question, the result of a decades-old policy that dates back to an era when gender nonconformity was widely seen as a mental illness. The policy, however, is now coming under scrutiny as service members like Wilson become more visible. Transgender service members are increasingly undergoing procedures to align their bodies more closely with the genders with which they identify. Medical experts, meanwhile, are urging the Defense Department to rescind a policy they view as discriminatory and outdated, noting that some of America's closest allies, including Canada, Britain and Australia, have done so seamlessly. [Washington Post](#)

Fresh reports of sexual misconduct undercut Pentagon's argument for internal fix

24 April - For more than a year, U.S. military officials have admitted they have a serious problem with sexual assault and harassment in the ranks. They've pleaded with the White House, Congress and the public to trust commanders to fix it on their own terms. But the Pentagon's argument has been undercut badly by fresh reports of senior commanders bungling cases or coming under investigation themselves. [Washington Post](#)

Military targets childhood obesity



28 April - The Department of Defense is taking aim at childhood obesity among military children. The goal: to stop the civilian population's obesity epidemic from reaching military households. Barbara Thompson, director of the Office of Family Policy/Children & Youth, said although military children are generally in better physical shape than their civilian counterparts, DoD officials are still making an effort to promote healthy lifestyles. Thompson noted that there's a culture within the military that may contribute to lower obesity rates among military children. "Being physically fit is the standard for our military members, so I would think that children see their parents being physically fit, and that's a good model for them too." [Health.mil](#)

Rising suicide in Special Operations Forces prompts call for review

29 April - Concerned with the increase in commandos taking their own lives, a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee is calling for the Pentagon to review Department of Defense efforts regarding suicide prevention among members of the Special Operations Forces and their dependents... The review, according to the committee, would include whether it is feasible to apply existing Department of Defense suicide prevention policy guidelines and prevention programs to Special Operations Forces. [Tampa Tribune](#)

Sexual assault reports are up 50 percent in the military

1 May - According to a new report from the Pentagon, sexual assault reports went up 50 percent in the military from 2012 to 2013. This is likely due to increased confidence in the system, not an increase in crimes... Prosecutions of perpetrators within the military have also increased over the past year. DoD officials say the military was able to take "some action" against 73 percent of accused perpetrators in the military justice system in 2013. In 2012, they took some action against 66 percent. Since Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand's bill to take sex crimes outside the chain of command failed in the Senate this year, the military will continue to pursue prosecutions on its own. [Government Executive](#)

Soldier dies following training march at Fort Benning

28 April - Fort Benning on Monday identified a National Guards member who died following a training march over the weekend as Pvt. Aurek S. Rardin, 20, of Tennessee. Rardin – who was assigned to the 198th Infantry Brigade – was participating in basic training. He vomited and lost his pulse following a "ruck march," Muscogee County Coroner Buddy Bryan said. Officials revived Rardin at a military hospital and then transported him to St. Francis Hospital in Columbus, where he was pronounced dead early Saturday morning. A Fort Benning spokeswoman said the military is investigating the cause of his death. [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#)

[top of page...](#)

GLOBAL

Pig cells help injured soldiers recover

30 April - Cells derived from pig bladders served as surgically implanted scaffolding to recruit native stem cells to help build muscle in the legs of five severely injured soldiers and civilians, researchers reported. Three out of five patients with lower limb volumetric muscle loss experienced a measurable improvement in the ability to stand, walk, and climb stairs 6 months after surgical placement of porcine extracellular matrix (ECM) scaffolding, according

to Stephen F. Badylak, MD, of the University of Pittsburgh, and colleagues. The pig cells boosted ability of native stem cells to form dense muscle tissue, he said... All five of the patients were male and had experienced anywhere from 58% to 90% of leg muscle loss from a serious injury at least 6 months prior to the experimental procedure. [MedPage Today](#)

Polio cases spark concern and emergency talks – WHO

29 April - The World Health Organisation has convened emergency talks amid rising concern over polio after cases were discovered in Afghanistan, Iraq and Equatorial Guinea. The UN health agency said that following several days of closed-door discussions, it would decide whether to declare the new spread of polio a "public health emergency of international concern" that could require measures such as travel restrictions... The number of recorded cases worldwide has fallen from 350,000 in 1988 to 406 in 2013, according to WHO data. Polio is currently endemic in three countries, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan, down from 125 in 1988. [New Zealand Herald](#)

Secrets of sound health

Winter 2014 - ...Francesca Dominici, ...professor of biostatistics and senior associate dean for research at Harvard School of Public Health, is a renowned expert in analyzing huge data sets to ferret out hidden environmental causes of disease... Dominici found that elderly individuals who live along the noisiest flight paths near airports have a higher risk of being admitted to the hospital for cardiovascular disease. Specifically, she estimated a 3.5 percent increase in the cardiovascular hospitalization rate for every 10-decibel (dB) increase in airport-related noise. She also saw a strong association between noise exposure and cardiovascular hospitalizations in zip codes with noise exposures greater than 55 decibels, but no association in zip codes with exposures less than 55 decibels. [Harvard Public Health](#)

Trial of dengue fever vaccine cuts infection in half

28 April - The French drug manufacturer Sanofi Pasteur says its vaccine against dengue fever protected more than half of all children in a late-stage clinical trial. Dengue fever is a mosquito-borne illness that infects an estimated 400 million people each year. The vaccine was tested in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam on more than 10,000 children, protecting 56 percent of them. Another large trial is underway in Latin America. Those results are expected later this year. Experts say a 50 percent reduction in dengue cases is significant. Olivier Charmeil, chief executive of Sanofi Pasteur, is quoted as saying, "Our goal is to make dengue the next vaccine-preventable disease." [VOA](#)

WHO: Antibiotic resistance a major public health threat globally

1 May - Antibiotic resistance "has reached alarming levels in many parts of the world" and is now a major public health threat, according to a World Health Organization report. The WHO surveyed member nations for antibiotic resistance in seven common bacteria. Among the findings:

- Carbapenem-resistant *Klebsiella pneumoniae* has spread to all areas of the world. In some nations, carbapenem antibiotics are ineffective in over 54% of patients.
- Treatment failure with third-generation cephalosporins — the last-resort treatment for gonorrhea — has been confirmed in 36 countries, including Austria, Australia, Canada, France, Japan, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, and the U.K.
- In some countries, fluoroquinolones are ineffective for *Escherichia coli*-related urinary tract infections more than half the time.

The WHO says that proper surveillance to antimicrobial resistance is lacking in much of the world. It plans to develop tools and standards for tracking drug resistance, taking cues from its programs to fight malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

[top of page...](#)

INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 16 (April 13-19, 2014), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 5,061 specimens tested and reported during week 16, 606 (12.0%) 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:** Three influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- **Influenza-associated Hospitalizations:** A season-cumulative rate of 33.9 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported.
- **Outpatient Illness Surveillance:** The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.4%, which is below the national baseline of 2.0%. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Weeks 16 & 17, a total of 67 specimens were collected and received from 27 locations. Results were finalized for 28 specimens from 19 locations. For specimens collected during Week 16, there was one influenza A(H3N2), one influenza A/not subtyped, and seven influenza B identified. During Week 17, there were four influenza B specimens identified.
- Cumulative results were finalized for 3,396 specimens from 87 locations. There were

1,022 specimens positive for influenza A (906 A(H1N1)pdm09, 99 A(H3N2), one A(H1N1)pdm09 & adenovirus, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & coronavirus, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & parainfluenza, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & RSV, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & rhinovirus/enterovirus, and nine A/not subtyped). There were 103 specimens positive for influenza B (74 B/unknown lineage, 17 B/Victoria, 11 B/Yamagata, one B & coronavirus). Other respiratory pathogens identified were 71 adenovirus, 32 *Chlamydomphila pneumoniae*, 222 coronavirus, 121 human metapneumovirus, 47 *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, 68 parainfluenza, 185 RSV, and 358 rhinovirus/enterovirus. To date, 154 non-influenza co-infections have been identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

For week 16/2014:

- Low intensity was reported by all 27 reporting countries and local or sporadic activity was reported by 19 countries.
- Of 161 sentinel specimens tested across 18 countries, 32 (20%) were positive for influenza virus. Twenty-seven (84%) of them were influenza A viruses.
- Four countries reported twenty-three hospitalised, laboratory-confirmed influenza cases, nine (39%) of which were admitted to intensive care units.

Overall, both influenza activity and circulation of influenza viruses in reporting countries are declining. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For week 16 ending 19 April 2014:

- Influenza: One case of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H1N1) 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.
- *C. pneumoniae* found in FRI and pneumonia cases at Ft. Leonard Wood. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

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

1 May - On 25 and 28 April 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of 3 additional laboratory-confirmed cases of human

infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus.

Details of the cases reported on 25 April 2014 are as follows:

- A 51 year-old man from Zhenjiang City, Jiangsu Province. He became ill on 13 April, was admitted to a hospital on 18 April, and is currently in a critical condition. Information on exposure is currently not available.
- A 75 year-old woman from Ganzhou City, Jiangxi Province. She became ill on 12 April, was admitted to a hospital on 17 April, and is currently in a critical condition. She had a history of exposure to poultry.

Details of the cases reported on 28 April 2014 are as follows:

- A 55 year-old man from Lu'an City, Anhui Province. He became ill on 15 April, was admitted to a hospital on 23 April, and is currently in a severe condition. He had a history of exposure to poultry. [WHO](#)

Scientists propose alternate origins for 1918 pandemic flu virus

28 April - The 1918 H1N1 pandemic influenza virus may have originated from reassortment between a human flu virus lineage and an avian flu virus, researchers speculate today after conducting a phylogenetic evolutionary analysis. The findings run contrary to previous estimates of the virus's evolution. US and UK researchers analyzed full-length gene sequences from human, bird, and swine viruses over the years involving H1, H2, H5, and N1 subtypes, according to their study in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Their results indicate that human H1 (the "H" is for the hemagglutinin [HA] protein) emerged from an avian source well before 1918 but after 1895. They also noted that the classic swine flu lineage is nested completely within the 1918 genetic diversity of human H1 but the seasonal human H1 HA line is only distantly related to the pandemic 1918 HA. "This pattern indicates that the swine influenza lineage emerged directly from the human pandemic virus but that postpandemic seasonal H1N1 did not," they write. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

[top of page...](#)

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Multistate outbreak of human *Salmonella* Cotham infections linked to contact with pet bearded dragons

23 April - As of April 21, 2014, a total of 132 persons infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Cotham have been reported from 31 states since February 21, 2012. 58% of ill persons are children 5 years of age or younger. 42% of ill persons have been hospitalized.

No deaths have been reported. Epidemiologic, laboratory, and traceback findings have linked this outbreak of *Salmonella* infections to contact with pet bearded dragons purchased from multiple stores in different states. Bearded dragons are popular pet lizards that come in a variety of colors. [CDC](#)

The most deadly creature on earth

29 April - You were going to say humans, right? All those guns, bombs, chemicals and God-knows-what-else we use to kill each other. Okay, we're second, at 475,000 deaths annually. But it's a distant second to the lowly mosquito, which, according to Bill Gates, kills 725,000 people a year; 600,000 of them by transmitting malaria. Another 200 million people are incapacitated annually by the disease. Gates is devoting [his blog to mosquitoes this week](#), hoping to create a Mosquito Week to compete with the Discovery Channel's well-known Shark Week (the star of "Jaws" kills about 10 people each year), as he and his foundation continue their efforts to wipe out mosquito-borne illnesses. [Washington Post](#)

United Kingdom: Army dog killed in Afghanistan given posthumous medal



29 April - A British Army dog killed alongside her handler in Afghanistan is to be honoured with what is called the highest military award for an animal. Sasha, a four-year-old yellow Labrador who was trained to hunt out explosives, is credited with saving the lives of scores of soldiers and civilians. She will be awarded the PDSA Dickin Medal, which the charity says is the animal version of the Victoria Cross. She died alongside L/Cpl Kenneth Rowe in a Taliban attack in 2008. Sasha was deployed with handlers from the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, attached to the 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment. [BBC News](#)

[top of page...](#)

WELLNESS

1 in 3 US adults haven't visited the dentist within past year

29 April - A new Gallup poll has revealed that 1 in 3 adults in the United States have not visited the dentist within the past year – a trend that has stayed mostly the same since 2008...According to recommendations from the American Dental Association, adults should visit the dentist at least once a year to lower the risk of oral disease. The poll found that 64.7 percent of Americans are meeting this minimum requirement. [Fox News](#)

Acetaminophen in Rx drugs: For liver's sake, lower the dose, says FDA

28 April - Apparently, a Food and Drug Administration warning four months ago was missed by many physicians, pharmacists and patients, so the agency, in an unusual move, saw fit Monday to remind us: Stop writing prescriptions for, stop dispensing prescriptions for, and stop taking prescription medications containing more than 325 milligrams of acetaminophen. Your liver will thank you -- acetaminophen overdose has overtaken viral hepatitis infection as the most common cause of acute liver failure. It is now the second most common cause of liver failure requiring transplantation in the United States. "These products are no longer considered safe by FDA and have been voluntarily withdrawn" by the manufacturers, the FDA said. Or maybe not, because the FDA does not usually have to repeat itself. [Los Angeles Times](#)

Alternative to Pap test is approved by F.D.A.

24 April - The Food and Drug Administration on Thursday approved the first alternative to the long-used Pap test as a primary screening method for cervical cancer, in the face of opposition from some women's groups and health organizations. The new test, developed by Roche, detects the DNA of the human papilloma virus, which causes almost all cases of cervical cancer, in a sample taken from the cervix. Pap testing involves examining the cervical sample under a microscope to detect abnormalities. A committee of outside advisers to the F.D.A. unanimously endorsed the Roche test in a meeting last month. But a coalition of 17 consumer, women's and health groups opposed the approval, arguing that the new screening method had not been adequately tested and could upend a practice that has successfully prevented cervical cancer for decades. [New York Times](#)

Breast-cancer survivors face high unemployment, says study

28 April - ...According to a [study](#) published online in the journal *Cancer*, 30% of women who had jobs at the time of their diagnosis found themselves unemployed four years later. Those who underwent chemotherapy were 1.4 times more likely to be unemployed. Half of the women said they still wanted to work, and 39% said they were seeking jobs. The study, conducted by the University of Michigan Health System, surveyed 2,290 women shortly after they were diagnosed with nonmetastatic breast cancer. A total of 1,536 of them filled out the follow-up questionnaire four years later. [Time](#)

Exercising in the heat? Cool down for better performance

30 April - Using cold water, ice baths or ice vests before or during a workout in the heat helps athletes perform better, according to a new review. One way to think about it, said study author Dr. Thijs M H Eijvogels, would be that cooling techniques may reduce the amount of energy the body needs to use to stay cool, leaving more energy for the exercise itself... Eijvogels, of the physiology department at Radboud University Medical Center in

The Netherlands, and his colleagues included 28 studies in their review of prior research on cooling techniques... Before exercise, the athletes used methods like wearing a cooling vest or cooling packs, immersing themselves in cold water, drinking cold water or an ice slurry, or a combination of these. [Reuters](#)

Fatal heroin overdoses on the increase as use skyrockets: Health officials battling opiate epidemic

May/June 2014 - ...Today, thanks to statewide efforts to restrict easy access to painkillers, prescription opioids such as oxycodone are hard to find on the street, Roberts said. However, that gap has been quickly filled by another opioid: heroin... According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, heroin use has been on the rise since 2007. In 2012, about 669,000 Americans reported using heroin in the past year, up from about 373,000 in 2007. The greatest increase in heroin use was among young people ages 18 to 25. Heroin overdose deaths have risen as well, increasing by 45 percent between 2006 and 2010. Closely tied to the rise in heroin use is the rise in prescription opioid abuse, which in 2008 was involved in more overdose deaths than heroin and cocaine combined. [Nation's Health](#)

Got gas? It could mean you've got healthy gut microbes



28 April - ...Gas gets into the digestive tract primarily through two routes: Swallowing air (which we all do when we eat and chew gum) and your microbiome. That's the collection of organisms in the GI tract that scientists and doctors are currently all fired up about... That microbiome includes hundreds of different bacteria. But there are also

organisms from another kingdom shacking up with them: the archaea. All these microbes are gas-making fools. They eat up unused food in your large intestine, like fiber and other carbohydrates we don't digest, and churn out a bunch of gases as waste. But that's not all they make. They also produce a slew of molecules (called short chain fatty acids) that may promote the growth of other beneficial bacteria and archaea. And the more fiber you feed these friendly inhabitants, the more types of species appear, studies have found. This bump in microbial diversity has been linked to a slimmer waistline. [NPR](#)

Higher doses of antidepressants may raise teen suicide risk

28 April - Antidepressants are thought to increase the risk of suicide in young people, but that may be caused by starting them on larger doses of the drugs, a study finds. Children and young adults who started taking selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor antidepressants in higher-than-average doses were twice as likely to attempt suicide as people taking average doses, according to a study published Monday in *JAMA Internal Medicine*. [NPR](#)

Laughter may work like meditation in the brain

28 April - Laughter triggers brain waves similar to those associated with meditation, according to a small new study. It also found that other forms of stimulation produce different types of brain waves. The study included 31 people whose brain waves were monitored while they watched humorous, spiritual or distressing video clips. While watching the humorous videos, the volunteers' brains had high levels of gamma waves, which are the same ones produced during meditation, researchers found. [Medline Plus](#)

Testosterone, the biggest men's health craze since Viagra, may be risky



28 April - Men seek it out to combat low energy and decreased sex drive. Prescription testosterone has become so popular that so-called "low T" clinics are becoming common sights in cities and suburbs. The number of testosterone prescriptions written in the U.S. more than tripled in the past decade. But researchers suspect that much of the testosterone dispensed at low-T clinics isn't tracked, since it's often bought with cash. This unfettered flow of testosterone — officially a controlled substance — has raised concerns among doctors who specialize in hormonal problems... Hormone treatment itself isn't without risk: A recent study of more than 55,000 men found a doubling of heart-attack risk among older men who used testosterone. Younger men who had a history of heart disease had a higher incidence of nonfatal heart attacks. In addition, men who are on prolonged high-level testosterone replacement therapy can experience testicular shrinkage. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

USAFRICOM

Diagnosis of childhood TB in Africa

30 April - Tuberculosis (TB) remains a heavy burden in many areas of the world, particularly those with high rates of HIV infection. In children, the disease is often diagnosed solely on clinical grounds. The signs and symptoms of childhood TB are similar to those of several other conditions, however, and misdiagnosis commonly occurs, leading to delays in administering appropriate therapy and the unnecessary use of antimicrobials. Diagnostic advances are sorely needed, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where TB is a major public health problem. In a recent study, researchers investigated the use of genome-wide RNA expression in host blood to distinguish TB from other illnesses common among children in the region... After identifying a 51-transcript signature distinguishing TB from other diseases in children from South Africa and Malawi, the researchers tested the resulting risk score in a

validation cohort from Kenya with culture-confirmed TB. The score had a sensitivity of 82.9% (95% confidence interval, 68.6% to 94.3%) and a specificity of 83.6% (95% CI, 74.6% to 92.7%) for discriminating culture-confirmed TB from other diseases in children with or without HIV coinfection. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

Ebola virus disease, West Africa – update

Guinea: As of 18:00 on 26 April 2014, the Ministry of Health (MOH) of Guinea has reported a cumulative total of 224 clinical cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), including 143 deaths. To date, 202 patients have been tested for ebolavirus infection and 121 cases have been laboratory confirmed, including 74 deaths. In addition, 41 cases (34 deaths) meet the probable case definition for EVD and 62 cases (35 deaths) are classified as suspected cases. A revised number of 25 health care workers (HCW) have been affected (19 confirmed), with 16 deaths (12 confirmed); the number of HCW was previously reported as 26. [WHO](#)

Sudan: River of hope

1 May – A deadly and pervasive disease affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide and the Senegal basin is the site of the biggest outbreak that the world has ever seen. Schistosomiasis, also known as snail fever or bilharzia, is a water-borne parasite that once inside the body stunts physical and intellectual growth, particularly in children... The outbreak started 30 years ago when a dam was built across the Senegal River at the point where it drains into the sea. Up to 90 percent of the population in the river basin was infected and no one understood why -- until a development specialist linked the explosion of schistosomiasis to the extinction of river prawns in the river system caused by the dam. River prawns prey on the snails that carry the schistosomiasis parasite. Without prawns, the snail population increased, and so did the risk of schisto infection for everyone who entered the river. Now Alassane works with project leader Elizabeth Hutteringer on a novel experiment to reintroduce prawns into the river system. [Al Jazeera](#)

[top of page...](#)

USCENTCOM

Afghan coal mine collapse kills at least 15 people

30 April - A coal mine collapse in northern Afghanistan killed at least 15 workers on Wednesday, an official said. Two other miners were missing in the collapse Wednesday morning in the remote district of Dara Seuf in Samangan province, provincial Gov. Hirullah Anush said . He said the bodies of the 15 workers were recovered from the rubble. Anush said the province has about 2,000 coal mines that are technically legal, since they pay tax to the government. But the mines operate in difficult conditions with workers using shovels and pick axes. He said the provincial government has tried to shut down some mines

deemed unsafe, but those in remote areas simply reopen. Most of the coal extracted is burned for heat in the winter or exported to Kabul or Pakistan. [Kentucky.com](#)

Afghan flood death toll rises as thousands need aid



30 April - The death toll from last week's flash floods in northern Afghanistan now stands at almost 150. Some areas are still completely cut off, with no help reaching people because roads were swept away. The governor of Jowzjan province, Boymurod Qoyinli, told the BBC that thousands were still living in tents after their mud brick homes were destroyed. He said the death toll in his province alone had reached 70. Officials from two other badly hit provinces, Sar-e Pol and Faryab put the number of bodies found so far at 31 and 43 respectively... The flooding last week caught many people by surprise. Hundreds were trapped on the roofs of their homes and needed to be rescued by army helicopters. The international charity Save the Children estimates that 40,000 people have been affected in all, 25,000 of them children. [BBC News](#)

Egypt: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – update

1 May - On 26 April 2014, the Ministry of Health of Egypt reported the first laboratory-confirmed case of infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in the country. The patient is a 27 year-old man who has been living in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia for the past 4 years. The patient had contact with a previously laboratory-confirmed case (his uncle) who died on 19 April, and another laboratory-confirmed case (neighbour of his uncle) who is still under treatment in a hospital in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. [WHO](#)

Pakistan: 53 percent of children not vaccinated for preventable diseases

1 May – ...[Children] in Pakistan continue to die of preventable diseases for which vaccinations are easily available. More than half — 53 percent — children in Pakistan are not vaccinated for preventable diseases even though the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) provides free vaccination against nine diseases. As the world observed immunisation week in the last week of April, the Pakistan Paediatric Association (PPA) shared these shocking figures at a press briefing held on Wednesday to spread awareness of the importance of vaccination. Out of every 1,000 children born in Pakistan 90 do not even live long enough to celebrate their first birthday. Moreover, there are 80,000 deaths every year due to a preventable disease like pneumonia. [News International](#)

Saudi Arabia: MERS cases keep rising, but no change in virus seen

28 April - Saudi Arabia reported another 26 MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) cases over the weekend, and Egypt identified its first case, but the latest sequencing findings showed no mutations that might help explain the virus's accelerated spread over the past month. With five deaths among the new cases and five in previously reported cases, Saudi Arabia's MERS death toll reached 102, while its overall case count jumped to 339. Fifteen of the 26 new cases are in Jeddah, the leading MERS hot spot in the country. [CIDRAP](#)

[top of page...](#)

USEUCOM

Republic of Georgia: New virus related to smallpox is found



1 May - Two herdsmen in the country of Georgia have been infected with a brand-new virus, scientists from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday. The newly identified virus is a second cousin to smallpox. And, like smallpox, it causes painful blisters on the hands and arms.

Other symptoms include a fever, swollen lymph nodes and overall weakness, CDC scientists reported at a meeting in Atlanta. "We consider this family of viruses very important because smallpox could be used as a bioterrorism agent," says disease detective Neil Vora, who led the team that made the discovery. The virus doesn't yet have a name, Vora says, because so little is known about it. "We haven't found any evidence of human-to-human transmission, so far," Vora tells Shots. "But how many people are getting sick? Are animals getting sick? We don't know. ... We don't know if it has caused any deaths." Both of the men who caught the virus fully recovered. [NPR](#)

Spain has Europe's best healthcare

28 April - Healthcare systems around the world have been ranked – and Spain has come out at the top for Europe in terms of spending efficiency. Bloomberg has ranked the world's most efficient health care systems, putting Spain in fifth position, following Hong Kong (92.6%), Singapore (81.9%), Japan (74.1%) and Israel (68.7%) respectively. Spain scooped Europe's top place – despite a shaky economy over recent years and budget cuts – with a life expectancy of 82.3 years, a per capita health care cost of \$3,027 (€2287), and overall health care spending at 10.4% of gross domestic product (GDP). Spain's efficiency spending

score is currently 68.3 out of 100, with the UK coming in 14th place, with an efficiency rating of 55.7 and a life expectancy of 80.8. The USA (with an efficiency score of 30.8%) ranked 46th in a list of 48 nations included in the list which identifies the most—and least—efficient health care systems in the world based on life expectancy and health costs per capita.

[EuroWeeklyNews](#)

[top of page...](#)

USNORTHCOM

Canada: Alberta declares three-region measles outbreak

30 April - Public health officials in Alberta have declared a measles outbreak in three regions after almost two dozen recent cases in the province, the Canadian Press reported yesterday. The declaration allows immunization of babies 6 months to 1 year old who typically would not be vaccinated, according to a spokeswoman for Alberta Health Services. The outbreak regions are Edmonton, Calgary, and central Alberta. The agency also recommended that children 4 years old and older receive their second dose of measles vaccine as soon as possible if they haven't yet received it. In light of the cases during several straight weeks, spokeswoman Shannon Evans said the measure "was a necessary step to protect public health." [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

U.S.: Failing economy, failing health

April 2014 - Five years after the Great Recession officially came to an end, the United States has yet to fully recover from the economic devastation sparked by the collapse of an \$8 trillion housing bubble and the ensuing turmoil that saw global financial systems teetering on the brink of collapse. But while the economic costs of the downturn have drawn the lion's share of attention, the damage to our bodies could end up far surpassing the damage to our bank accounts... If the issue is largely invisible in the nation's news outlets, it is drawing the attention of a growing number of public health researchers, some of whom are beginning to identify possible links between the Great Recession—the worst economic downturn in the U.S. since the Great Depression of the 1930s—and a growing list of physical and mental health ills, from heart attacks to obesity to depression. In addition to cataloging the health harms resulting directly from stress, ...many studies suggest that economic pressures may also give rise to a host of unhealthy behaviors—such as bingeing on sugary or high-fat comfort foods, smoking, and drinking to escape worries—as well as to widening economic disparities, which exact a documented toll on people's health. [Harvard Public Health](#)

U.S.: Measles - California, January 1-April 18, 2014

25 April - ...Measles was documented as eliminated (defined as interruption of continuous transmission lasting ≥ 12 months) in the United States in 2000; however, importation of measles cases and limited local transmission continue to occur. During January 1–April 18, 2014, the California Department of Public Health received reports of 58 confirmed measles cases, the highest number reported for that period since 1995. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Potentially preventable deaths from the five leading causes of death — United States, 2008–2010

2 May - In 2010, the top five causes of death in the United States were 1) diseases of the heart, 2) cancer, 3) chronic lower respiratory diseases, 4) cerebrovascular diseases (stroke), and 5) unintentional injuries. The rates of death from each cause vary greatly across the 50 states and the District of Columbia. An understanding of state differences in death rates for the leading causes might help state health officials establish disease prevention goals, priorities, and strategies... To determine the number of premature annual deaths for the five leading causes of death that potentially could be prevented ("potentially preventable deaths"), CDC analyzed National Vital Statistics System mortality data from 2008–2010. The number of annual potentially preventable deaths per state before age 80 years was determined by comparing the number of expected deaths (based on average death rates for the three states with the lowest rates for each cause) with the number of observed deaths. The results of this analysis indicate that, when considered separately, 91,757 deaths from diseases of the heart, 84,443 from cancer, 28,831 from chronic lower respiratory diseases, 16,973 from cerebrovascular diseases (stroke), and 36,836 from unintentional injuries potentially could be prevented each year. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Tornado outbreak kills at least 36 as threat pushes into fourth day: state-by-state updates

30 April - A multi-day severe weather event is expected to continue across parts of the South and mid-Atlantic Wednesday, bringing deadly flooding, damaging winds, hail and tornadoes to the region for a fourth consecutive day. Flash flooding and at least five tornadoes were reported in eastern North Carolina by Tuesday evening, the Associated Press reported. Meanwhile, areas of the Florida Panhandle were under flash flood warnings [Tuesday] morning as record rainfall left homes, cars and streets under water. On Monday, dozens of tornadoes flared up across the South inflicting widespread damage across Alabama and Mississippi that contributed to the deaths of more than a dozen individuals. Preliminary reports from the National Weather's Storm Prediction Center indicate 80 reports of tornadoes from 3 p.m. CDT Monday through 2 a.m. Tuesday, though the number of confirmed tornadoes could be different as surveys are conducted by the NWS. At least 15 people were killed in Mississippi from the wave of tornadoes that scarred the state, nine of which died in Winston County. In Alabama, three people were reported dead, two in the

northern part of the state and one in Tuscaloosa. In total, at least 36 people have been killed, and countless more injured, from the severe storms that started in the Midwest Sunday and continue to push into the South into Tuesday. Arkansas suffered some of the heaviest damage and the largest number of deaths so far from the multi-day severe outbreak, after tornadoes from a long-lived supercell thunderstorm ripped through the center of the state, killing at least 15 people Sunday. [Weather Channel](#)

[top of page...](#)

USPACOM

Malaysia: 29,788 dengue cases with 66 deaths recorded this year

1 May - A total of 29,788 dengue cases were reported this year until April 26, an increase of 277 per cent compared with 7,912 cases for the same period last year. Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said that for the same period 66 deaths due to dengue were recorded, an increase of 340 per cent compared to 15 deaths last year. "On the 17th week, from April 20 to 26, a total of 974 dengue cases were reported compared with 1,252 cases in the previous week and this showed a decrease of 22 per cent. [Bernama](#)

Myanmar: Lack of health care deadly for Myanmar's Rohingya



2 May - ...Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist nation of 60 million, has been gripped by ethnic and religious violence — mostly in Rakhine — since it began its bumpy transition to democracy three years ago. Though many Rohingya here are from families that arrived generations ago, the government considers them all illegal migrants from

Bangladesh and has denied them citizenship. Many of those displaced by recent violence live under apartheid-like conditions on the outskirts of Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine. There are reports almost daily about deaths, many of them pregnant women experiencing complications that could have been prevented, according to aid workers and Rohingya in the camps. Before Doctors Without Borders was kicked out of Rakhine, pregnant women made up a quarter of the group's emergency referrals. The government expelled the group in February. It had angered officials by hiring some Rohingya staff, and by saying it had treated victims of an attack on a village in northern Rakhine state early this year... Weeks later, more than 700 other foreign aid workers were forced to flee after their guest houses, offices and warehouses were attacked by Buddhist mobs. The government insisted it could fill the gap, though the health care system across the country is still rebuilding after years of

neglect. [Herald-Standard](#)

[top of page...](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Chikungunya cases in the Caribbean top 33,000

28 April - The Caribbean chikungunya outbreak grew by 3,499 cases in the past week, reaching 33,260 suspected, probable, or confirmed cases, according to an update today from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The case count is up from 29,761 in the agency's Apr 22 report. Martinique continues to report the largest numbers, with 17,630 suspected (up from 16,000) and 1,515 confirmed or probable cases, the ECDC said. Guadeloupe reported the second-most cases, with 6,000 suspected and 1,328 confirmed or probable cases. The French side of St. Martin is third, with 3,030 suspected and 793 confirmed or probable cases. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Peru: Ubinas eruption causes health problems for 2500 in Puno region



28 April - An estimated 2500 individuals in Puno region have reported health problems related to prevalent ash and smoke from the recent Ubinas, according to a report in the news publication *El Economista America*. Affected areas include Tolapalca, Charamaya, Pichacani, Laraqueri and Huacochullo. Individuals, the majority of whom are children, are reporting throat irritation and conjunctivitis. According to Percy Quispe, the deputy head of Puno's Civil Defense Office, the levels of ash in the air are still mild. However, the Civil Defense Office will coordinate efforts to test water samples for contamination and put together a plan for possible evacuation, Quispe told Peru21. In addition, the Regional Health Authority (DIRESA) in Puno will distribute masks to children and working to put together a system of emergency medical services in case of greater catastrophe. [Peru this Week](#)

[top of page...](#)

[U.S. Military](#) | [Global](#) | [Influenza](#) | [Veterinary/Food Safety](#) | [Wellness](#) | [Contact Us](#)

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