

30 January 2015

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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

U.S. Military | Global | Influenza | Veterinary/Food Safety | Wellness | Contact Us

USAFRICOM | USCENTCOM | USEUCOM | USNORTHCOM | USPACOM | USSOUTHCOM

*Approved for public release, distribution unlimited.*

## Subscription or Comments

If you wish to be added to the APH Weekly Update mailing list, removed from the mailing list, or if you have comments or questions about the update, please [contact us](#). We welcome your comments. Please feel free to share this update with others who may be interested.



## Follow us!



Facebook



Twitter



YouTube

## Contents

### U.S. MILITARY

---

- Glaucoma, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 1998–2013
- Report: Hood shooter showed no early warning signs
- Study links genetics, anti nerve-agent pills to Gulf War illness

### GLOBAL

---

- Ebola experts say 16 other bat viruses could infect man
- Gates, UK take lead in \$7.5 billion pledge for children's vaccines
- Screening: What is the true benefit?
- Taking antibiotics during travel fosters drug-resistant germs
- W.H.O. members endorse resolution to improve response to health emergencies
- World Bank president airs new private-public pandemic preparedness plan
- EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE
- Ebola outbreak: Virus mutating, scientists warn
- Fast track on drug for Ebola has faltered
- Guinea sees bump in Ebola cases, group reports vaccine trial results
- Scientists ask if Ebola immunizes as well as kills
- Single new case can reignite Ebola outbreak if vigilance lost, says MSF
- Studies detail Ebola spread, response steps
- Trial finds GSK Ebola shot is safe and provokes immune response
- Trial of 2 Ebola vaccines' effectiveness is announced
- Weekly Ebola cases below 100, WHO says endgame begins

### INFLUENZA

---

- Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary
- CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report
- DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program
- Flu News Europe
- Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update
- Rx pad: All about oseltamivir
- USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report
- WHO Influenza Update

## Winter Weather Infographic

The *Be Ready! Winter Weather* infographic has tips to stay safe when the cold weather hits.



- PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA
- Canadian has first H7N9 case in North America
- Egypt confirms 2 new H5N1 cases and 1 death; China reports 1 case
- Elderly man, young boy have newest H7N9 cases in Guangdong

### VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

---

- Beef packers block plan to revive growth-promoting drug
- CDC declares sprout-related *Salmonella* outbreak over
- Norway finds first case of mad cow disease, says food safe

### WELLNESS

---

- AAP: Decriminalize weed, but don't legalize it
- Doping is public health issue, says world anti-doping body
- FDA approves new vaccine for serogroup B meningococcal disease
- Financial incentives can double smoking cessation rates among pregnant women
- How weight training can help you keep the weight off
- Patients rarely warned about radiation hazards from CT imaging
- Statins may benefit women as much as men
- Study of retirees links youth football to brain problems
- Systolic pressure may signal risk in young

### USAFRICOM

---

- Africa: Meant to keep malaria out, mosquito nets are used to haul fish in
- Madagascar: Plague cases rise in Madagascar, fear of more epidemics – WHO

### USCENTCOM

---

- Afghanistan: Winning - Scorekeeping in Afghanistan
- Pakistan: In Pakistan, a charity project points to official tolerance of militants

### USEUCOM

---

- Europe: Tuberculosis rates decrease in majority of EU countries
- Scotland: SNP to back UK fracking moratorium
- United Kingdom: Child obesity rates 'levelling off' among under-10s

### USNORTHCOM

---

- Canada: Canada says measure every patient's BMI
- U.S.: 30 babies placed under home isolation as California grapples with measles outbreak
- U.S.: Boston's aging pipes leak high levels of heat-trapping methane
- U.S.: CDC urges measles vaccinations amid Disneyland outbreak
- U.S.: Consider Caribbean virus before treating RA
- U.S.: Florida health officials hope to test GMO mosquitoes this spring
- U.S. government unveils goal to move Medicare away from fee-for-service
- U.S.: Health insurers may be finding new ways to discriminate against patients
- U.S.: Multi-state measles outbreak, December 2014-January 2015
- U.S.: New Jersey bill proposes more suicide prevention training for teachers
- U.S.: Report on polio-like illness in kids supports link to EV-D68

### USPACOM

---

- Asia needs more cash, campaigns, law changes to end HIV epidemic: U.N.
- India: Deadly Japanese encephalitis surges in northeast India
- India: Outbreaks of unexplained neurologic illness — Muzaffarpur, India, 2013–2014

**An animated film  
that speaks volumes  
about war in nine  
minutes**

For research the crew turned to their recently returned friends as well as other veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan spread across the United States.

On a cross-country road trip, Madden and Wiessner stopped frequently to talk to those who had served. Watching videos of helicopter insertions and reading journals written in combat helped with the film's realism and atmosphere.

One e-mail, in particular, stood out to the crew. It described how a veteran had just finished watching the film and upon its conclusion realized that he still needed help with his war.



## USSOUTHCOM

---

- [Brazil: Drastic water rationing may be put in place in São Paulo](#)
- [Colombia: Chikungunya cases rise by more than 22,000 in Colombia](#)

## U.S. MILITARY

---

### Glaucoma, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 1998–2013

December 2014 - ... The analysis identified 117,075 incident cases of glaucoma and an overall incidence rate of 5.3 per 1,000 person-years (p-yrs). The majority of cases (94.5%) were diagnosed at an early stage as borderline glaucoma. Over the study period, 5.9% of incident case service members were eventually diagnosed with open-angle glaucoma. There were 26 cases of absolute glaucoma, or total blindness. Rates of glaucoma were higher among black, non-Hispanic (8.8 per 1,000 p-yrs), Asian (6.6), and Hispanic (5.4) service members, compared with white, non-Hispanic (4.2) service members. Rates among female service members (6.0 per 1,000 p-yrs) were higher than those among male service members (5.1). Between 1998 and 2013, incidence rates of glaucoma declined by 48% among service members older than 44 years of age, while rates increased slightly among service members younger than 30 years of age. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

### Report: Hood shooter showed no early warning signs

23 January - An Army investigation into the April shooting at Fort Hood, Texas, did not find anything in the assailant's background, medical or military profiles that might have provided an early warning for potential violence, according to findings released Friday, however the soldier was undergoing treatment for several medical conditions. But the investigation noted that when Spc. Ivan Lopez-Lopez first arrived at Fort Hood, his unit was experiencing "significant turnover in leadership" and struggling with "high operational tempo and manning shortages." To help prevent future shootings, the report also recommends examining whether soldiers should be required to register personally-owned weapons with their command. [Army Times](#)

### Study links genetics, anti nerve-agent pills to Gulf War illness

27 January - A small research study at Baylor University has identified a genetic difference between veterans who developed symptoms of Gulf War illness after deploying to that 1990-91 conflict and those who deployed but didn't get sick. The finding — touted as the first "direct evidence" that genetic factors may contribute to a veteran's risk for Gulf War illness — links the use of anti-nerve agent pills and troops' genetic makeup. Baylor University Institute of Biomedical Studies researcher Lea Steele and others examined the genetic profile of 304 Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm veterans, including 144

## 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.

former troops who had Gulf War illness symptoms and 160 who did not. The scientists found that veterans with a gene variant that complicates their bodies' efforts to metabolize chemicals in anti-nerve agent pills — pyridostigmine bromide, or PB — were up to 40 times more likely to have Gulf War illness symptoms than those who took the pills or were exposed but had a different gene variant. [Military Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

## GLOBAL

---

### Ebola experts say 16 other bat viruses could infect man

23 January - Scientists looking for Ebola in bats have identified 16 other viruses in the animal which could jump to humans and potentially cause a disease outbreak on a similar scale to the West African crisis, a health security expert said on Friday. ... Professor Nigel Lightfoot said the additional viruses had been identified by scientists from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in South Africa. "They tell me they have got 16 other (viruses)...which are just waiting to spread to humans and cause the next (epidemic)," he told a conference in London on tackling serious infectious diseases. [Thomas Reuters Foundation](#)

### Gates, UK take lead in \$7.5 billion pledge for children's vaccines

27 January - International donors pledged \$7.5 billion on Tuesday to immunize 300 million children in poor countries against deadly diseases such as diarrhea and pneumonia. At a Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) conference in Berlin, Microsoft founder Bill Gates and the British government topped the donations list at \$1.55 billion and \$1.5 billion respectively. German development minister Gerd Mueller said the total reached \$7.54 billion, surpassing GAVI's target of \$7.5 billion, despite a stronger dollar complicating funding efforts. ... Gates, who has donated \$4 billion to GAVI since it began 15 years ago, said there had been "amazing" progress but one in 20 children still died before their fifth birthday. [Reuters](#)

### Screening: What is the true benefit?

27 January - Screening for diseases where death is a common outcome rarely reduces disease-specific mortality, and doesn't reduce all-cause mortality in asymptomatic adults, according to a new study. Meta-analyses and individual trials for 39 screening tests for 19 diseases in asymptomatic adults showed little evidence that screening reduced either type of mortality. ... In addition, of the six diseases for which screening tests are recommended, randomized evidence with a mortality outcome backed up only five of them: breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer; abdominal aortic aneurysm; and type 2 diabetes. [MedPage Today](#)

## Links

[A-Z Index](#)

[About USAPHC](#)

[Army Public Health and Health Information Weekly Update Archives](#)

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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

[Request USAPHC Services](#)

[USAPHC Resource Materials](#)

[USAPHC Homepage](#)

[USAPHC Training](#)

[Contact USAPHC](#)

## Taking antibiotics during travel fosters drug-resistant germs

23 January - ... Treating traveler's diarrhea with antibiotics dramatically boosts the risk of catching drug-resistant microbes while visiting developing countries, scientists at Helsinki University Central Hospital report Thursday in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. About 40 percent of travelers to tropical regions will bring home drug-resistant microbes if they take antibiotics for diarrhea, the study found. For those going to India, the percentage rises to 80. ... For most travelers, these drug-resistant bacteria are harmless. They don't make them sick. "People don't even know they're there," Keystone says. But when travelers bring the bacteria home, they can spread the superbugs to their community — and possibly put their friends and family at risk for a nasty infection. [NPR](#)

## W.H.O. members endorse resolution to improve response to health emergencies

25 January - On Sunday, the W.H.O.'s executive board — representatives of 34 member states elected to help guide the agency — unanimously endorsed a resolution aimed at overhauling its capacity to head off and respond to outbreaks and other health emergencies. ... Critical provisions of the resolution adopted Sunday include the creation of a global cadre of emergency public health workers, the establishment of a fund that could be tapped quickly, and stepped-up support for the development of vaccines, diagnostics and treatments for emerging infectious diseases. These steps were all recommended but not put in place after a review of the response to the 2009 influenza pandemic. The board also asked the organization's director general to ensure that the W.H.O.'s in-country staff members were selected for their expertise. Some critics have said the early response to Ebola was hobbled in part because some W.H.O. workers lacked important qualifications or had been chosen largely for political reasons. [New York Times](#)

## World Bank president airs new private-public pandemic preparedness plan

28 January - The world is "dangerously unprepared" for future pandemics, and a private-public sector proposal that includes a pandemic facility and insurance coverage could help countries across the globe mitigate the risk, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim said today. .... Kim said insurance companies, governments, multilateral organizations, corporations, and international donors could work together to build a system, which the World Bank and partners, including the World Health Organization (WHO), have been working on for the past several months. ... It said the idea of developing a "pandemic facility" was also raised in informal discussions at the recent World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. He told the group that the short-term goal in the Ebola outbreak is to get to zero cases, but the world needs to also prepare for an infectious disease outbreak that could be worse than the one West Africa is experiencing. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

### Ebola outbreak: Virus mutating, scientists warn

29 January - Scientists tracking the Ebola outbreak in Guinea say the virus has mutated. Researchers at the Institut Pasteur in France, which first identified the outbreak last March, are investigating whether it could have become more contagious. More than 22,000 people have been infected with Ebola and 8,795 have died in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Scientists are starting to analyse hundreds of blood samples from Ebola patients in Guinea. ... Ebola is an RNA virus - like HIV and influenza - which have a high rate of mutation. That makes the virus more able to adapt and raises the potential for it to become more contagious. ... Virologist Noel Tordo ... from the Institut Pasteur in the Guinea capital Conakry ... said, "At the moment, not enough has been done in terms of the evolution of the virus both geographically and in the human body, so we have to learn more. But something has shown that there are mutations," [BBC News](#)

### Fast track on drug for Ebola has faltered

22 January - ... Efforts to procure more of ZMapp have run into snags, according to federal officials, researchers and biotechnology executives. The Department of Health and Human Services asked for proposals to produce more of it to be submitted by November, but so far, no contracts have been awarded. Facilities that Health and Human Services created, at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, expressly for rapidly manufacturing drugs or vaccines in a public health emergency are not being used to produce ZMapp yet. The same is true, with one exception, of facilities the Department of Defense invested in to build the capacity for rapid response. ... By government contracting standards, the effort might be moving at a lightning pace, just not fast enough for the epidemic. ... Dr. George D. Yancopoulos, chief scientific officer of Regeneron, said the crisis had pointed up shortcomings in biodefense. "Nobody is really prepared," he said. "Nobody in the world has rapid response capabilities." [New York Times](#)

### Guinea sees bump in Ebola cases, group reports vaccine trial results

29 January - With the Ebola response shifting into its next phase—building capacity to detect every case—the overall number of infections in West Africa's outbreak region continued to fall, but case incidence rose in Guinea, a country that has seen levels rise and fall multiple times in the epidemic. In another development, researchers today published new Ebola vaccine findings from a clinical trial conducted in the United Kingdom, which showed that the highest of the three doses of the ChAd3 vaccine prompted the biggest immune response. In its latest epidemiologic update on the outbreak today, the World Health Organization (WHO) said the total in the three hardest hit countries is at 22,057 confirmed, probable, and suspected as of Jan 25, with the number of deaths reaching 8,795. Over the past week the number of lab-confirmed cases grew by 30 in Guinea, 4 in Liberia, and 65 in Sierra Leone. [CIDRAP](#)

## Scientists ask if Ebola immunizes as well as kills

27 January - A recent sharp drop in new Ebola infections in West Africa is prompting scientists to wonder whether the virus may be silently immunizing some people at the same time as brutally killing their neighbors. So-called "asymptomatic" Ebola cases - in which someone is exposed to the virus, develops antibodies, but doesn't get sick or suffer symptoms - are hotly disputed among scientists, with some saying their existence is little more than a pipe dream. Yet if, as some studies suggest, such cases do occur in epidemics of the deadly disease, they may be a key factor in ending outbreaks more swiftly by giving secret protection to those lucky enough to be able to bat the infection away. [Reuters](#)

## Single new case can reignite Ebola outbreak if vigilance lost, says MSF

26 January - A decline in Ebola cases in West Africa must not result in a loss of vigilance because a single new case is enough to reignite an outbreak, international medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said on Monday. The downward trend of new cases in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone should be used as an opportunity to focus efforts on addressing weaknesses in the response, otherwise progress made in stemming the deadly virus would be jeopardized, it said. "We are on the right track, but reaching zero cases will be difficult unless significant improvements are made in alerting new cases and tracing those who have been in contact with them," Brice de la Vingne, MSF head of operations, said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

## Studies detail Ebola spread, response steps

23 January - French and Guinean researchers today noted how chains of transmission helped Ebola spread in Conakry, Guinea, the first of the region's capital cities to be hit by the virus. ... The team's analysis of transmission chains found that officials thought they had the first illnesses contained, but an uncooperative family was linked to latent infections that likely sparked a second wave. A third wave of illnesses was sparked by virus reintroduction from Sierra Leone. Transmission chains in Conakry spread to two other areas of Guinea, highlighting the challenge of battling the disease for large urban centers when populations are highly mobile, the authors noted. [CIDRAP](#)

## Trial finds GSK Ebola shot is safe and provokes immune response

28 January - First results from a human trial of an Ebola vaccine from GlaxoSmithKline show it is safe and generates an immune response, scientists said on Wednesday, but larger trials are needed to see if it protects and if a booster is needed. The vaccine is being developed by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) and GSK against the Zaire strain of Ebola -- the one circulating in West Africa -- and the first doses for a larger trial arrived in Liberia last week. ... The early-stage Phase I trial of GSK's vaccine was primarily designed to test safety, but Adrian Hill, who led the work at Oxford's Jenner Institute, said it was "encouraging" that

the shot also prompted responses from the immune system. "The safety profile is pretty much as we'd hoped and the immune responses are okay, but not great," he told Reuters. [Reuters](#)

## Trial of 2 Ebola vaccines' effectiveness is announced

23 January - Federal officials said on Thursday that the first clinical trial to test the effectiveness of Ebola vaccines was expected to begin in Liberia in two weeks. Volunteers in the trial will be given either a vaccine being developed by GlaxoSmithKline, a vaccine being developed by Merck or a placebo. There are expected to be 9,000 people in each arm of the trial. ... The number of new Ebola cases is waning in West Africa. Officials from the United States Department of Health and Human Services said that could make it harder to determine if either of the vaccines was preventing disease. More participants may have to be added to the trial, or it may need to be expanded to neighboring Sierra Leone, they said. Even if there are not enough Ebola cases to determine efficacy, they said, data would be gathered on the safety of the vaccines and the immune responses they generate. [New York Times](#)

## Weekly Ebola cases below 100, WHO says endgame begins

29 January - The number of new confirmed Ebola cases totaled 99 in the week to Jan. 25, the lowest tally since June 2014, the World Health Organization said on Thursday, signaling the tide might have turned against the epidemic. "The response to the EVD (Ebola virus disease) epidemic has now moved to a second phase, as the focus shifts from slowing transmission to ending the epidemic," the WHO said. "To achieve this goal as quickly as possible, efforts have moved from rapidly building infrastructure to ensuring that capacity for case finding, case management, safe burials, and community engagement is used as effectively as possible." The outbreak has killed 8,810 people out of 22,092 known cases, almost all of them in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

### **INFLUENZA**

---

## Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 2:

- There was widespread influenza activity throughout NORTHCOM. A/H3N2 remains the predominant virus.
- Low to Moderate influenza activity was seen for the majority of EUCOM. There was high

influenza activity in Italy.

- Influenza activity was high in Japan and moderate flu activity was seen in South Korea.
- In CENTCOM, influenza activity was high in Afghanistan.
- In SOUTHCOM, influenza activity was low. [AFHSC DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

## CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 2 (January 11-17, 2015), influenza activity remained elevated in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 26,205 specimens tested and reported by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories during week 2, 5,104 (19.5%) were positive for influenza.
- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was above the epidemic threshold.
- **Influenza-associated Pediatric Deaths:** Eleven influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- **Outpatient Illness Surveillance:** The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 4.5%, above the national baseline of 2.0%. All 10 regions reported ILI at or above region-specific baseline levels. [FluView](#)

## DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program

During 11 - 24 January 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 2 &3), a total of 611 specimens were collected and received from 60 locations. Results were finalized for 248 specimens from 50 locations. During Week 2, the laboratory identified 141 influenza A(H3N2), one influenza A/not subtyped and four influenza B. During Week 3, 28 influenza A(H3N2), one influenza A/not subtyped and two influenza B were identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

## Flu News Europe

Week 3/2015:

The influenza season is well under way, in particular in western and northern European countries.

- This week, 29 countries reported increased influenza activity and the overall proportion of influenza-positive sentinel specimens reached 40%.
- Excess all-cause mortality among the elderly (65+), consistent with the increased influenza activity and the predominating circulation of influenza A(H3N2), has been observed during recent weeks in Portugal, the United Kingdom (England, Scotland and

Wales), the Netherlands, Spain and France.

- Although the A(H3N2) viruses characterized so far exhibit antigenic differences to the virus included in the 2014–2015 northern hemisphere influenza vaccine, vaccination of the elderly and other risk groups is still recommended, since the A(H3N2) component is expected to reduce the likelihood of severe outcomes due to cross-protection, and both the A(H1N1)pdm09 and influenza B components are expected to be effective. [Flu News Europe](#)

## Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 24 January 2015:

### Influenza

- Eight cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.
- Moderate influenza A/H3 activity at several recruit sites. A large proportion of cases were vaccinated.
- A/H3 cases also occurring among DoD dependents and civilians near US-Mexico border. Low proportion of cases had been vaccinated prior to illness.

FRI surveillance at eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated elevated FRI rates at Fort Jackson and Lackland AFB. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

## Rx pad: All about oseltamivir

26 January - ... The decision to treat with a neuraminidase inhibitor requires a risk-benefit analysis, and for many patients the risks of side effects and the cost may outweigh the potential benefits. A 2014 Cochrane review was finally able to evaluate previously unavailable data, and found neuraminidase inhibitors are not all we had hoped. Oseltamivir can be used for the treatment of influenza to reduce length of symptoms. ... A Cochrane review of neuraminidase inhibitors performed in 2012 noted a reduction in length of symptoms of 21 hours with use of oseltamivir (from 160 hours to 139 hours). However, the reviewers had significant concerns about the lack of access to much of the data. ... The Cochrane review did find a statistically significant reduction in symptomatic influenza cases among contacts receiving oseltamivir as prophylaxis. [MedPage Today](#)

## USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 17 January 2015 (Week 2):

- In the general population, influenza-like illness (ILI) activity trends this flu season are quite similar to trends identified during the 2012-2013 flu season.
- Positive influenza A specimens: An increased incidence of positive influenza A specimens in the 18-29 age group was noted among AD SM, with the exception of

ERMC and PRMC.

- Influenza cases: 16 hospitalized influenza cases were reported to USAPHC in week two, all in non-AD beneficiaries. To date, 34 cases have been reported during this influenza season: 5 AD SM and 29 non-AD beneficiaries.
- Viral specimens: During week two, 922 of 2619 (35%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens; 763 of 2329 (33%) specimens tested for influenza A were positive. SRMC reported the most influenza A-positive specimens (58%), followed by NRMC and WRMC (both 12%), ERMC (10%), PRMC (8%), and CENTCOM (0.1%).  
[USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

## WHO Influenza Update

26 January - . Globally influenza activity was high in the northern hemisphere with influenza A(H3N2) viruses predominating so far this season. Antigenic characterization of most recent A(H3N2) viruses thus far indicated differences from the A(H3N2) virus used in the influenza vaccines for the northern hemisphere 2014-2015. Based on tests to date, the influenza A(H3N2) viruses are expected to be sensitive to neuraminidase inhibitors.

- In North America, the influenza season was ongoing with still high levels of influenza activity in most countries. Influenza A(H3N2) virus predominated. The influenza activity might have peaked in the USA.
- In Europe influenza activity was still on the rise with highest activity in the north-western part. Influenza A(H3N2) predominated this season.
- In northern and western Africa influenza activity seemed to have peaked with influenza B virus predominating, while Egypt reported mainly influenza A(H3N2) detections.
- In eastern Asia, influenza activity started to decrease with influenza A(H3N2) virus predominating.
- In central Asia influenza activity remained low.
- In western Asia, Bahrain and the Islamic Republic of Iran reported mainly influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 activity.
- In tropical countries of the Americas, influenza activity was low in most countries of the Caribbean, Central America and in the tropical countries of South America.
- In the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels. [WHO](#)

## PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

### Canadian has first H7N9 case in North America

26 January - Canadian officials announced today that a British Columbia resident who recently returned from China is recovering from an H7N9 avian flu infection, marking the first known case in North America. In a statement, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) said the risk to others is very low, because evidence suggests that the virus does not

spread easily from person to person. A public health official in British Columbia said the patient is a woman and that a man who traveled with her was also sick recently, according to a Canadian Press (CP) report today. The official, Bonnie Henry, MD, said additional testing is under way to find out if the man also was infected. [CIDRAP](#)

## Egypt confirms 2 new H5N1 cases and 1 death; China reports 1 case

28 January - Egypt's health ministry reported that a 31-year-old woman from Giza governorate has died of H5N1 avian flu, according to *Daily News Egypt* today. Of the 31 cases of H5N1 avian flu reported in Egypt this year, 10 people have now died, the story said. The Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population also announced that two more people have been hospitalized with H5N1. ... Meanwhile, a woman from China's Jiangsu province has been reported to have H5N1 avian flu, according to a press release today from the Hong Kong Centre for Health Protection (CHP). The 37-year-old woman, who is in critical condition, is from Suzhou in southeast Jiangsu province. The release says she had a history of poultry exposure. [CIDRAP Flu Scan](#) (second item)

## Elderly man, young boy have newest H7N9 cases in Guangdong

28 January - Hong Kong's Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has been notified of two more cases of H7N9 avian influenza in China's Guangdong province, continuing the spate of cases reported from there recently. ... The two new cases bring the H7N9 total to 535, according to a case list maintained by FluTrackers, an infectious disease news message board. The CHP gives the total as 499. The CHP release notes that a number of surveillance measures have been implemented in response to the continuing cases, such as temperature checks for inbound travelers, and the public has been warned to avoid visiting poultry markets and farms, avoid crowds, wear a mask if respiratory symptoms develop, and practice careful hand washing. [CIDRAP Flu Scan](#) (third item)

[top of page...](#)

### **VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

---

## Beef packers block plan to revive growth-promoting drug



27 January - For more than a year, a once-popular drug that makes cattle put on weight faster has been stuck in a kind of veterinary purgatory. As far as the Food and Drug Administration is concerned, the drug, Zilmax, is legal to use. But large meat packers, which dominate the industry, have

ostracized it after the drug was accused of making animals suffer. The drug's manufacturer, Merck, has been working on a plan to rehabilitate it. But that effort has stalled. Merck suspended sales of Zilmax in August 2013, after Tyson, a leading beef processor, announced that it would no longer buy cattle that had been treated with Zilmax, and other cattle buyers followed Tyson's lead. [NPR](#)

## CDC declares sprout-related *Salmonella* outbreak over

26 January - The *Salmonella* Enteritidis outbreak that sickened 115 people in 12 states is officially over, according to a CDC update issued Jan 23. The first *Salmonella* case was reported on Sep 30, and the multistate outbreak was later traced to mung bean sprouts produced by Wonton Foods, Inc. in Brooklyn, N.Y. The *Salmonella* strain sickened four people since the CDC's most recent update on Dec 16, with one new case each reported in Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania. The CDC reports that 25% of the 115 people affected by the outbreak required hospitalization. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

## Norway finds first case of mad cow disease, says food safe

29 January - Norway reported its first ever case of mad cow disease on Thursday, saying the instance was an isolated one and telling consumers it was still safe to eat beef and drink milk. Tests at a British laboratory confirmed the disease, also known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), in a 15-year-old cow, which had been slaughtered, the Norwegian Food Safety Authority said. The case was atypical, meaning there had been no transmission through the feed supply and it was not related to any wider outbreak, the authority said.

[Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

## WELLNESS

---

## AAP: Decriminalize weed, but don't legalize it

26 January - The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has called for a decriminalization of marijuana, but maintained its objection to legalizing the drug. Citing the lifelong negative effects of a criminal record on adolescents, the AAP strongly supported reducing penalties for marijuana possession and use to misdemeanors. ... Effects of marijuana-related felony charges include "ineligibility for college loans, housing, financial aid, and certain kinds of jobs," they said. ... The authors state in an accompanying technical report that studies have not shown decriminalization results in an overall increase in marijuana use by adolescents, which is a chief concern of those opposed to decriminalizing the drug. [MedPage Today](#)

## Doping is public health issue, says world anti-doping body

28 January - Doping in sport is a public health issue, the head of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) said Wednesday, because of the spread of substance abuse from elite athletes to school gyms. "Too many people are taking too many substances they don't even know," WADA director general David Howman told AFP in an interview in Tokyo. "Where have they come from? They are not sanitised, they could be very dangerous." ... Howman was in Tokyo for a conference involving sports bodies and the pharmaceutical industry on how to stamp out drug cheating. [Yahoo! News](#)

## FDA approves new vaccine for serogroup B meningococcal disease

26 January -A second vaccine to prevent invasive meningococcal disease caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup B has been approved by the FDA. Bexsero is approved for use in patients 10 to 25 years old. The agency approved the first serogroup B vaccine, Trumenba, 3 months ago. The older generation of vaccines cover four out of the five serotypes, and this newest pair covers the fifth. Approval was based on trials of roughly 2600 adolescents and young adults. After vaccination, 62% to 88% of participants who received two doses of the vaccine had antibodies that killed three *N. meningitidis* serogroup B strains, compared with 0% to 23% prior to vaccination. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

## Financial incentives can double smoking cessation rates among pregnant women

28 January - Pregnant women who are offered financial incentives to stop smoking are more than twice as likely to quit as their peers who receive only routine care, a BMJ study finds. Researchers in Scotland randomized some 600 pregnant smokers (less than 24 weeks' gestation) from a "materially deprived" area to receive routine care either by itself or with financial incentives. Routine care included an in-person appointment to discuss smoking cessation, four follow-up telephone calls, and free nicotine replacement therapy. The financial incentives could reach £400 (roughly US\$600) in shopping vouchers provided that women ultimately quit smoking. The primary outcome — smoking cessation confirmed by cotinine measurement at 34–38 weeks' gestation — was achieved by 23% of the incentives group versus 9% of the routine care group. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

## How weight training can help you keep the weight off

28 January - Exercise may help people avoid regaining weight after successful dieting, according to a new study. It shows that exercise can crucially alter the body's response to weight loss and potentially stop unwanted pounds from creeping back on. ... Studies show that non-exercise activity thermogenesis, or N.E.A.T. — a measure of how much energy people use to stand, fidget, walk to the car and otherwise move around without formally

exercising — often declines substantially after weight loss, perhaps because the body thinks you are starving and directs you to stay still and conserve energy. [New York Times](#)

## Patients rarely warned about radiation hazards from CT imaging

28 January - A new survey by *Consumer Reports* found that few patients are warned about the radiation hazards of computed tomographic (CT) imaging and other radiation-based imaging procedures. Of roughly 1000 U.S. adults surveyed, only 7% of those who had non-dental X-rays and 2% of those who underwent a CT scan said that the tests may have been unnecessary. Just 4% told their physicians that they didn't want a CT scan. The article also notes that the annual number of CT scans has increased from roughly 3 million in 1980 to over 80 million now. In addition, it points out that 2% of all future cancers in this country may be caused by the high doses of radiation from CT scans. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

## Statins may benefit women as much as men

28 January – A large international analysis finds that statin drugs reduce heart risk factors like high cholesterol as effectively in women as they do in men. The results, based on pooled data from 22 clinical trials, include a finding that reductions in deaths from any cause were similar for men and women taking statins. [Reuters](#)

## Study of retirees links youth football to brain problems

28 January - A new study of N.F.L. retirees found that those who began playing tackle football when they were younger than 12 years old had a higher risk of developing memory and thinking problems later in life. The study, published in the medical journal *Neurology* by researchers at the Boston University School of Medicine, was based on tests given to 42 former N.F.L. players, ages 41 to 65, who had experienced cognitive problems for at least six months. Half the players started playing tackle football before age 12, and the other half began at 12 or older. Those former N.F.L. players who started playing before 12 years old performed “significantly worse” on every test measure after accounting for the total number of years played and the age of the players when they took the tests. [New York Times](#)

## Systolic pressure may signal risk in young

27 January - Isolated systolic hypertension in young and middle-age adults was associated with an increased risk of death from cardiovascular causes later in life, according to a study done over 3 decades. Men in the study with systolic blood pressure (BP) levels of 140 mmHg or higher and diastolic BP below 90 had a 28% increased risk for death from coronary heart disease compared with men with normal BP. ... In addition, women with isolated systolic hypertension (ISH) had a more than twofold greater death risk ... than women with optimal BP. [MedPage Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

## USAFRICOM

---

### Africa: Meant to keep malaria out, mosquito nets are used to haul fish in



24 January – ... [Mosquito nets] are widely considered a magic bullet against malaria — one of the cheapest and most effective ways to stop a disease that kills at least half a million Africans each year. But Mr. Ndefi and countless others are not using their mosquito nets as global health experts have intended. Nobody in his hut, including his seven children, sleeps under a net at night. Instead, Mr. Ndefi has taken his family's supply of anti-malaria nets and sewn them together into a gigantic sieve that he uses to drag the bottom of the swamp ponds, sweeping up all sorts of life. ... But the unsparing mesh, with holes smaller than mosquitoes, traps much more life than traditional fishing nets do. Scientists say that could imperil already stressed fish populations, a critical food source for millions of the world's poorest people. [New York Times](#)

### Madagascar: Plague cases rise in Madagascar, fear of more epidemics – WHO

27 January - Plague has killed 57 people out of 213 known cases in Madagascar and more deaths are feared after recent flooding forced tens of thousands of people from their homes and set rats on the run, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday. The U.N. agency's first update since late November, when there were 119 cases including 40 deaths, was based on new figures from the Health Ministry. The outbreak began in August on the Indian Ocean island, one of the world's poorest countries, where the disease is endemic. ... "Plague established a foothold in the capital city, affecting densely populated slums. This is alarming, as around 8 percent of cases progress to the lethal pneumonic form," WHO director-general Margaret Chan said. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

## USCENTCOM

---

### Afghanistan: Winning - Scorekeeping in Afghanistan

26 January - While most Americans and the mass media worldwide have declared the 13 year U.S./NATO effort in Afghanistan a failure, most Afghans disagree. ... Back then [in 2001] less than ten percent of the population had access to any health care, now 85 percent do

and life expectancy has risen from 47 years (the lowest in Eurasia) to 62 (leaving Bangladesh to occupy last place in Eurasia). This is apparently the highest life expectancy has ever been in Afghanistan and the UN noted it was the highest one decade increase ever recorded.

[Strategy Page](#)

## Pakistan: In Pakistan, a charity project points to official tolerance of militants

28 January - Violence and mayhem are the hallmarks of Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Pakistani group that waged the deadly 2008 Mumbai attacks. But this week, the group publicly expanded its operations in an entirely different domain: health care. On Monday, Lashkar's founder, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, inaugurated an ambulance service run by the group's charity wing, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, in the bustling port city of Karachi. ... The group already operates a similar service in 100 towns and cities across Pakistan, a spokesman for the charity said, and was seeking donations to help fund the new service in Karachi. ... Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jamaat-ud-Dawa insist that the groups are distinct entities with different operations, and many Pakistani officials honor that distinction. But the United Nations Security Council does not, describing Jamaat-ud-Dawa merely as an alias or front for Lashkar on the international sanctions list. [New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

### USEUCOM

---

## Europe: Tuberculosis rates decrease in majority of EU countries

27 January - Tuberculosis cases decreased by 6% during 2012 in 29 European countries, while hot spots in northern Europe and the Baltic states remained, according to a report issued today by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The ECDC's Annual Epidemiological Report states that 68,423 cases of tuberculosis (TB) were reported in 29 European Union/European Economic Area (EU/EEA) countries during 2012. TB rates decreased in 19 countries, and the overall rate of new cases was 13.5 per 100,000 population. Of the cases reported, 80% were newly diagnosed. Pulmonary TB accounted for 71% of cases, 23% were extrapulmonary, and 6% of cases were both pulmonary and extrapulmonary. HIV co-infection was present in 5% of TB cases. Six countries accounted for 38% of all TB cases, with the highest rates of TB per 100,000 population occurring in Romania (85.2 per 100,000), followed by Lithuania (59.2), Latvia (48.6), Bulgaria (31.1), Portugal (25.2), and Estonia (21.6). Multidrug-resistant (MDR) TB accounted for 5% of cases. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## Scotland: SNP to back UK fracking moratorium

24 January - The SNP is to back a moratorium on fracking in the UK when the House of Commons votes on the issue on Monday. The Scottish government has also said it will outline plans to strengthen its "precautionary approach" to fracking next week. Scottish Labour leader Jim Murphy has said he would not allow fracking in Scotland without sufficient safeguards. But environmental groups said Holyrood already had the power to block shale gas extraction. ... SNP MP Mike Weir, the party's Westminster energy spokesman, told BBC Scotland, ... "We think there should be a moratorium which would mean that before there could be anything going forward with fracking there would have to be an assessment to take account of the impacts of exploration on climate change, environment, health and safety, and the economy." [BBC News](#)

## United Kingdom: Child obesity rates 'levelling off' among under-10s

29 January - The rise in childhood obesity, which has left one in three UK children overweight, may be beginning to level off in the under-10s, a study suggests. There was a steady rise in the proportion of overweight children between 1994 and 2003, but in the past decade it has remained at about 30%. The King's College London researchers add obesity rates among 11- to 15-year-olds are still rising, however. ... The number of obese people in the UK has more than trebled in the past 25 years. [BBC News](#)

[top of page...](#)

### USNORTHCOM

---

## Canada: Canada says measure every patient's BMI

26 January - New Canadian guidelines are calling for stronger surveillance of patients' weight, and referring them for intervention if they're overweight or obese. Primary care physicians should measure body mass index (BMI) at every visit -- a strong recommendation, albeit one with a lack of evidence, according to Paula Brauer, PhD, RD, of the University of Guelph in Canada, chair of the guideline, produced by the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Healthcare. "There's no evidence [for BMI-based screening]," Brauer told *MedPage Today*. "But we made a strong recommendation anyway because physicians can't advise anyone unless you have some clue about what's happening with their weight." [MedPage Today](#)

## U.S.: 30 babies placed under home isolation as California grapples with measles outbreak

27 January - Thirty babies have been placed under home isolation in Alameda County after possible exposure to measles, as California grapples with the outbreak that originated at Disneyland, the LA Times reported. Officials with the Alameda County Public Health

Department have contacted 500 people possibly connected to measles patients, and have asked parents of the 30 infants to keep their children home to avoid further exposure to the illness. Department spokeswoman Sherri Willis told the LA Times that the babies are not infected, but had some contact or connection to measles patients in Alameda County. ... There are 87 confirmed cases across seven states and Mexico, and officials say most of the cases are in California. [Fox News](#)

## **U.S.: Boston's aging pipes leak high levels of heat-trapping methane**

26 January - The aging system of underground pipes and tanks that delivers natural gas to Boston-area households and businesses leaks high levels of methane, with adverse economic, public health, and environmental consequences. Now a group of atmospheric scientists at Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) has produced hard numbers that quantify the extent of the problem. ... [The] Harvard-led team estimates that each year about fifteen billion cubic feet of natural gas, worth some \$90 million, escapes the Boston region's delivery system. [Homeland Security News Wire](#)

## **U.S.: CDC urges measles vaccinations amid Disneyland outbreak**

29 January - The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged Americans on Thursday to get vaccinated for measles amid an outbreak that began at Disneyland in December, saying that 2014 saw the highest number of cases in two decades. So far more than 90 people have been diagnosed with measles in California and elsewhere, most of them linked to an outbreak that public health officials suspect began when an infected person from outside the United States visited Disneyland in Anaheim between Dec. 15 and Dec. 20. On Wednesday, a high school in Palm Desert, California, barred dozens of non-vaccinated students from school over concerns that a classmate may have contracted the highly contagious disease. [Reuters](#)

## **U.S.: Consider Caribbean virus before treating RA**

23 January - Chikungunya virus should be included in the differential for patients who present with new-onset symmetrical arthritis, especially if the individual has recently traveled to the Caribbean, researchers advised. Among a group of 10 individuals who visited Haiti in June 2014, eight developed persistent arthritis that mimicked seronegative rheumatoid arthritis, and the use of immunosuppressive therapies could have been "deleterious because viral RNA and antigens can be found in target tissues in the chronic phase," wrote Wayne M. Yokoyama, MD, and colleagues from Washington University in St. Louis. "Serologic testing may be necessary before initiating immunosuppression," he noted. [MedPage Today](#)

## **U.S.: Florida health officials hope to test GMO mosquitoes this spring**

28 January - The FDA is considering whether to approve the experimental use of genetically modified mosquitoes in the Florida Keys to help stop the spread of dengue fever and other diseases. Mosquito control officials in the region say they hope to get approval to begin releasing the insects in the Keys as soon as this spring. ... Experiments already conducted in Malaysia, Brazil and the Cayman Islands have found that releasing bioengineered male mosquitoes can reduce the *A. Aegypti* population by 90 percent. [NPR](#)

## **U.S. government unveils goal to move Medicare away from fee-for-service**

26 January - The Obama administration on Monday unveiled an ambitious plan to control health costs by moving the \$2.9 trillion U.S. health systems away from costly fee-for-service medicine, beginning with the Medicare program for the elderly and disabled. By the end of 2018, Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell told reporters that 50 percent of traditional Medicare's \$362 billion in annual payments would go to doctors, hospitals and other providers that participate in alternative payment models which emphasize cost containment and quality of care. Officials, who hope to see the initiative matched by private insurers, employers and state Medicaid programs for the poor, said the move was intended to head off a resurgence in healthcare cost growth from an historically low 3.6 percent in 2013 to a projected 6.6 percent in 2020. [Reuters](#)

## **U.S.: Health insurers may be finding new ways to discriminate against patients**

28 January - ... [Patient] groups say they've spotted an alarming trend of some health insurance plans designing drug benefits to purposefully keep out sicker, costlier patients. ... Rather than reject coverage for sick patients altogether, some insurers are placing high-cost medications for chronic conditions into the highest-priced tiers of the drugs they cover, which would force patients to pay potentially thousands of more dollars out of pocket for essential medications. ... A new analysis published in the New England Journal of Medicine suggests that is the case. Of 48 exchange health plans Harvard School of Public Health researchers analyzed, they identified 12 plans that appeared to discriminate against HIV patients. In those plans, they found patients had to bear at least 30 percent of the cost for all NRTIs (short for nucleoside reverse-transcriptase inhibitors), one of the most commonly prescribed classes of HIV drugs. [Washington Post](#)

## **U.S.: Multi-state measles outbreak, December 2014-January 2015**

23 January - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and State Health Departments are investigating a multi-state outbreak of measles associated with travel to

Disneyland Resort Theme Parks (which includes Disneyland and Disney California Adventure). The purpose of this HAN Advisory is to notify public health departments and healthcare facilities about this measles outbreak and to provide guidance to healthcare providers. Healthcare providers should ensure that all of their patients are current on MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. They should consider measles in the differential diagnosis of patients with fever and rash and ask patients about recent international travel or travel to domestic venues frequented by international travelers. They should also ask patients about their history of measles exposures in their community. [CDC](#)

## **U.S.: New Jersey bill proposes more suicide prevention training for teachers**

25 January- Public schoolteachers would undergo more suicide prevention education under a proposal from a bipartisan group of New Jersey lawmakers. ... The bill requires public schoolteachers and staff members to receive two hours of suicide prevention training from a licensed health care professional every year, up from two hours over five years, as the rule stands now. ... Assemblywoman Pamela R. Lampitt, a Democrat, said she and her colleagues are pursuing the change because of the rise of bullying through technology. ... New Jersey has a youth suicide rate of about five per 100,000 people, compared with nearly eight per 100,000 nationally in 2012, according to statistics from the New Jersey Department of Children and Families. The report defines youths as people from ages 10 to 24. [New York Times](#)

## **U.S.: Report on polio-like illness in kids supports link to EV-D68**

29 January - A detailed report on a cluster of unexplained polio-like illnesses in Colorado children supports, but doesn't prove, the suggestion that they were linked with enterovirus D68 (EV-D68), which caused a nationwide outbreak of respiratory ailments in children in the late summer and fall of 2014. Writing in *The Lancet*, physicians from Children's Hospital Colorado describe 12 cases of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) and cranial nerve dysfunction (facial weakness and/or difficulty swallowing) that occurred in children from August through October of last year. Five of the children tested positive for EV-D68, and of 10 who had limb weakness, none have fully recovered. The cases coincided with an outbreak of EV-D68 infections at the Colorado hospital and around the country. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has counted 1,153 EV-D68 respiratory infections in 49 states and the nation's capital since mid-August, nearly all of them in children. The CDC also has reported 107 cases of the unexplained polio-like illness, which it calls acute flaccid myelitis (AFM), in 34 states since August. Some of these patients tested positive for EV-D68, but the agency has not reported any firm conclusions about a causal link between the virus and the polio-like disorder. [CIDRAP](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **Asia needs more cash, campaigns, law changes to end HIV epidemic: U.N.**

28 January - The Asia-Pacific region will not meet the goal of ending the HIV epidemic in 15 years unless it changes laws and attitudes hostile to people living with HIV, the head of the United Nations agency on AIDS said on Wednesday. Governments need to spend more on programs targeting key groups, improve access to lifesaving drugs and overhaul punitive laws that stop people seeking help, Michel Sidibé, executive director of UNAIDS, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. ... New HIV infections in the region have fallen by 25 percent since 2001, AIDS-related deaths have dropped by 27 percent since 2005 and 1.56 million people now receive lifesaving ARV drugs. However, the persistent underfunding of certain programs, the low rate of takeup of ARV drugs and policy barriers threaten these gains, he said. [Reuters](#)

## **India: Deadly Japanese encephalitis surges in northeast India**

26 January - Cases of deadly mosquito-borne Japanese encephalitis have risen nearly five-fold in five years in India's northeast Assam state as a result of warming weather and changing rainfall, health experts say. Between 2010 and 2014, the number of annual cases rose from 154 to 744, with deaths rising from 41 to 160, according to data from the Assam health department. The disease, which in 2009 was recorded in only half of the state's districts, now is seen in all of them. Doctors say climate change has played a major role in the spread of the disease, which once appear largely from May to July, but now is seen as late in the year as November, as mosquitoes survive longer in warmer conditions. [Reuters](#)

## **India: Outbreaks of unexplained neurologic illness — Muzaffarpur, India, 2013–2014**

30 January - Outbreaks of an unexplained acute neurologic illness affecting young children and associated with high case-fatality rates have been reported in the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar state in India since 1995. The outbreaks generally peak in June and decline weeks later with the onset of monsoon rains. ... Clinical and laboratory findings in 2013 suggested a noninflammatory encephalopathy, possibly caused by a toxin. A common laboratory finding was low blood glucose (<70 mg/dL) on admission, a finding associated with a poorer outcome; 44% of all cases were fatal. An ongoing 2014 investigation has found no evidence of any infectious etiology and supports the possibility that exposure to a toxin might be the cause. The outbreak period coincides with the month-long litchi harvesting season in Muzaffarpur. Although a specific etiology has not yet been determined, the 2014 investigation has identified the illness as a hypoglycemic encephalopathy and confirmed the importance of ongoing laboratory evaluation of environmental toxins to identify a potential

causative agent, including markers for methylenecyclopropylglycine (MCPG), a compound found in litchi seeds. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

[top of page...](#)

## USSOUTHCOM

---

### Brazil: Drastic water rationing may be put in place in São Paulo

28 January - The worst drought to hit São Paulo, Brazil's biggest city, in decades may leave many residents with water service only two days a week. São Paulo's water utility company, Sabesp, says a five-days-off, two-days-on system would be a last-ditch effort to prevent the collapse of the Cantareira water system. The reservoir is the largest of six that provide water to about six million of the 20 million people living in the metropolitan area of São Paulo. The utility says Cantareira is now down to 5.1 percent of its capacity of 264 billion gallons. A utility official, Paulo Massato Yoshimoto, said Wednesday that "rationing could happen if rainfall does not increase in the reservoir area soon." [New York Times](#)

### Colombia: Chikungunya cases rise by more than 22,000 in Colombia

26 January - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported 29,628 new cases of chikungunya in the Caribbean and Americas on Jan 23, the majority of which occurred in Colombia, bringing the outbreak total to 1,163,189. The new total includes 1,135,892 suspected and 24,320 confirmed locally acquired cases and 2,977 imported cases of chikungunya. Colombia, already hit hard by the outbreak over the past several months, reported 22,277 new cases of the mosquito-borne disease, bringing the country's outbreak total to 112,752. Guyana reported an increase of 5,339 cases, bringing its outbreak total to 5,415. The South American nation, which borders the Caribbean, previously had only 76 cases. PAHO also reported 4 new deaths related to chikungunya, 2 of which occurred in Puerto Rico, where 10 people have now died of the disease. One death was reported in the US Virgin Islands, bringing the territory's death total to 2, and Barbados reported its first chikungunya-related death. The fatality total for the outbreak is now 176. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

[top of page...](#)

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

[USAFRICOM](#) | [USCENTCOM](#) | [USEUCOM](#) | [USNORTHCOM](#) | [USPACOM](#) | [USSOUTHCOM](#)

The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* does not analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and is not a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence is available from the [National Center for Medical Intelligence](#).

External Links: The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the U.S. Army of this Web site or the information, products, or services contained therein. For other than authorized activities such as military exchanges and MWR sites, the U.S. Army does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations. Such links are provided consistent with the stated purpose of this product.

Although Health Information Operations avoids links to sites that may be blocked, all sites may not be accessible from all locations. While we verify the links at the time of publication, we cannot guarantee that they will be active in the future.

Articles appearing in the Update 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.

The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* is published by the Health Information Operations Program, Deputy Chief of Staff for Communication, United States Army Public Health Command.

