

3 April 2015

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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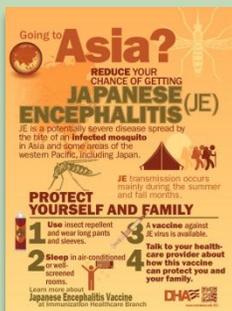
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Japanese Encephalitis Poster

A new poster for those traveling to Asia tells how to avoid Japanese encephalitis. Poster available from the [USAPHC Health Information Products eCatalog](#).



VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- Antibiotic-resistant bacteria become airborne, raise concerns
- Unsafe food is 'growing global threat', says WHO

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- Fish oil claims not supported by research
- Fluoridated water helps older adults keep teeth, study says
- GNC to strengthen supplement quality controls
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- Benin: WHO details late 2014 Lassa fever outbreak in Benin
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- Greece scraps hospital visit fee, to hire health workers
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- U.S.: Navajos fight their food desert with junk food and soda taxes
- U.S.: Resistant infections tied to endoscopes thought to be fully decontaminated
- U.S.: Scientists turn to public to gain funding for health research - passing the hat
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- U.S.: White House releases plan to curb antibiotic resistance

USPACOM

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- China: Chinese team reports novel tickborne *Anaplasma* species
- China: Lessons from the east — China's rapidly evolving health care system
- India to add more AIDS, TB drugs to essential medicines list: sources
- Vanuatu: Cyclone Pam - UN agency reports all 22 Vanuatu islands reached with relief supplies

USSOUTHCOM

- Brazil: Brazilian women risk life, liberty in having to seek backstreet abortions
- PAHO chikungunya count rises by more than 32,000

Strong & Kind Bars

The manufacturer of Kind bars has released a new line of snack bars called Strong & Kind. This product line contains hemp seeds (not all Kind products contain hemp seeds, only the Strong & Kind bars).

Soldiers:

AR 600-85 prohibits Soldiers from using hemp or products containing hemp oil. In order to avoid mistakenly ingesting a product containing hemp seeds or hemp oil, Soldiers should read the ingredients listed on product packaging.

Civilians:

Even though civilian personnel who are subject to random drug testing may not be prohibited from using hemp products, the consumption of hemp **may not be a legitimate medical explanation for verifying a marijuana test as negative.**

Also, when a positive THC test was due to ingestion or use of a legal hemp product, the Medical Review Office should **allow the donor to explain where and when the product was purchased and used.**



U.S. MILITARY

Battlefield lessons transform U.S. emergency care



29 March - ... The needle drill [for high-speed insertion of a needle directly into a bone's marrow] is among a raft of products and techniques learned on battlegrounds in Iraq and Afghanistan that have transformed how U.S. doctors and emergency personnel back home help trauma patients survive life-threatening injuries. Modern tourniquets that

can be applied with one hand and have attached turning devices are replacing the makeshift handkerchiefs and stick or belt of past decades. Clamps, needle drills and wound gauze impregnated with blood-clotting agents have been developed commercially from the hard lessons learned from more than a decade of fighting, trauma treatment experts say. Improved transfusions and airway tubes, a focus on stopping blood loss, and training to coordinate and improve care from injury site to operating room have also been critical to the new approach in emergency medicine in U.S. streets and hospitals. [Reuters](#)

Characterizing the relationship between tick bites and Lyme disease in active component U.S. Armed Forces in the eastern U. S.

March 2015 - Lyme disease (LD) is the most commonly diagnosed vector-borne illness in the U.S. Analysis of ticks that are removed from patients (rather than collected from the environment) may inform LD surveillance. In this ecological study, LD rates among active component U.S. Armed Forces in the eastern U.S. were compared with tick data from the U.S. Army Public Health Command Human Tick Test Kit Program (HTTKP) covering the same geographic region. In the population of service members in the study sample, mean annual LD incidence was 52.2 per 100,000 person-years (95% CI \pm 7.6 per 100,000) between 1 January 2006 and 31 December 2012. A 10% increase in the rate of ticks submitted to the HTTKP corresponded to an increase in LD incidence of 5.7% ($p < 0.01$). Where *Borrelia burgdorferi* infection of *Ixodes scapularis* ticks was high (20% or greater tick infection prevalence), tick removal rates explained 53.7% of the annual variation in LD incidence ($p = 0.01$). These data support using location-specific rates of ticks removed while feeding on active component service members to complement LD surveillance. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Military suicides aren't linked to deployment, study finds

1 April - Military suicides may be more likely after members leave the service than during active duty deployment, particularly if their time in uniform is brief, a U.S. study finds. ... Suicide rates were similar regardless of deployment status. There were 1,162 suicides among those who deployed and 3,879 among those who didn't, representing suicide rates

More on Hemp Products

Hemp, or *Cannabis sativa*, is the plant that naturally contains the substance tetrahydrocannabinol (THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana).

“Industrial hemp”—the kind grown for agricultural crops (including in foods, beverages, and dietary supplements)—is typically less than 1% THC.

Currently, hemp seeds are being added to a variety of foods (such as yogurt, energy bars, etc.), and based on service policies, such products are prohibited.

The **Army Substance Abuse Program**, AR600-85, section 4-2p states “this regulation prohibits Soldiers from using Hemp or products containing Hemp oil.



per 100,000 person-years of 18.86 and 17.78, respectively. Leaving the military significantly increased suicide risk, however, with a suicide rate of 26.06 after separating from service compared with 15.12 for those who remained in uniform. Those who left sooner had a greater risk, with a rate of 48.04 among those who spent less than a year in the military. Service members with a dishonorable discharge were about twice as likely to commit suicide as those who had an honorable separation. [Reuters](#)

New Department of Defense report shows increase in military suicides

1 April - The Department of Defense released the last quarterly suicide report for 2014, showing a slight increase from 2013 to 2014. In 2013, there were 254 service members who took their own lives. In 2014, this number increased slightly to 268. While many of the numbers went up, the amount of National Guard members who died from suicide decreased from a record high of 134 in 2013 to 87 in 2014. A release from U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly said in 2013 the United States lost more than three times the number killed in combat to suicide. [Fox 28](#)

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GLOBAL

Blood pressure targets loosened in coronary disease

1 April - Major heart groups recommend 140/90 mmHg goal for most hypertensive CAD patients. Treatment should target under 140/90 mmHg for most hypertensive patients with known coronary artery disease, according to a new statement from the American Heart Association, the American College of Cardiology, and the American Society of Hypertension. The last AHA recommendations in 2007 had advocated more aggressive targets of 130/80 mmHg in patients with a history of stable angina or acute coronary syndromes and of 120/80 mmHg in left ventricular dysfunction. [MedPage Today](#)

Deadly snakes 'milked' to create potent new anti-venom

2 April - A new anti-venom to treat victims of potentially deadly snake bites in sub-Saharan Africa is just a few years away from reality, according to scientists at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM). They aim to create a potent new anti-venom that can be stored safely at room temperature, without the need for refrigeration. ... [The] research team at LSTM plans to vastly improve the potency of broad-spectrum anti-venom using an innovative new technique they've dubbed 'antivenomics', which targets unique proteins in a particular snake species' venom. This, they say, will significantly expand the effectiveness of the anti-venom to cover all the poisonous snakes of sub-Saharan Africa. [Reuters](#)

Keep Your Kids Healthy Poster

A new poster on everyday measures to keep children healthy is now available from the [USAPHC Health Information Products eCatalog](#).



Enterovirus 68 may be linked to paralysis in children, study says

30 March - A new strain of a common respiratory virus may be responsible for partly paralyzing scores of children nationwide, researchers reported on Monday. Since August, 115 children in 34 states have developed polio-like paralysis in an arm or a leg. The virus, enterovirus 68, has emerged as a leading suspect. ... Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, analyzed genetic sequences of enterovirus 68 cultured from 25 children in Colorado and California with limb paralysis, also called acute flaccid myelitis. The viruses were genetically very similar, the scientists found, sharing certain mutations that resemble those found in the poliovirus genome. ... The new study also suggests that not every child infected with the new strain will develop paralysis. [New York Times](#)

Measles travel notices issued for Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ethiopia

2 April - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued three travel notices Wednesday due to ongoing measles outbreaks in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ethiopia. In **Angola**, the US federal health agency says the country is experiencing an ongoing measles outbreak. The number of confirmed measles cases increased from 6,558 in 2013 to 12,036 in 2014; cases continue to occur in 2015. In Europe, as of February 2015, the Federal Institute of Public Health in the Federation of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** has reported more than 3,800 cases since January 2014. ... Finally, on the Horn of Africa, **Ethiopia** is experiencing an ongoing measles outbreak. The number of confirmed measles cases increased from 6,100 in 2013 to more than 14,000 confirmed cases in 2014; cases continue to occur in 2015. [Outbreak News Today](#)

Pesticides result in lower sperm counts

30 March - Men who ate fruits and vegetables with higher levels of pesticide residues — such as strawberries, spinach, and peppers — had lower sperm counts and lower percentages of normal sperm than those who ate produce with lower residue levels, according to a new study by researchers at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. It is the first study to look at the connection between exposure to pesticide residues from fruits and vegetables and semen quality. [Harvard Gazette](#)

Study: *C diff* type 027 predicts severe outcome

1 April - Infection with *Clostridium difficile* ribotype 027 independently predicts severe disease and mortality, but demographic and clinical factors are stronger predictors of severe disease, according to a study yesterday in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. A US team analyzed data from 1,144 patients who had *C difficile*. They found that detection of stool toxin A or B by enzyme immunoassay did not predict severe disease or mortality, whereas infection with type 027 independently predicted both. .. However, concurrent antibiotic use, metastatic cancer, congestive heart failure, liver disease, and using a proton pump inhibitor

World Health Day

What is in your meal? Where did the ingredients come from? Were they properly - and safely - handled from every stage, from farm to plate? WHO is advocating for action in these areas on this World Health Day, 7 April 2015, as it calls on producers, policy-makers and the public to promote food safety.



were all stronger predictors of severe disease, 30-day mortality, or both. And being female was associated with a 2.48 adjusted odds ratio of severe disease. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Unequal beginnings

4 April - A child's long-term well-being is more profoundly shaped by influences in pregnancy than used to be realised. [A] growing body of research is showing that problems caused by the prenatal environment may not be apparent at birth, but can resonate throughout life. Infections, hunger, stress and air pollution have been implicated in a host of long-term problems for those exposed to them in utero, including bad health, poor school results and lower earnings. Even relatively minor exposure can increase the odds of suffering from chronic disease or disability. ... [The] the strongest evidence has come from comparing those in the womb during sudden calamities such as famines, natural disasters and environmental accidents with those born just before or after. This approach untangles the effects of environment from those of genes or upbringing. [The Economist](#)

Web searches may predict disease risk among populations

31 March - Internet search data might someday help estimate the prevalence of non-communicable diseases like stroke, heart disease or cancer, a new study suggests. Web searches are often linked with behavior, said Svetha Venkatesh, one of the study's co-authors. ... "A diagnosis or (being) suspicious of heart problems is associated with searching for symptoms, side effects and so on." ... Venkatesh and her coauthors used Google Trends to identify search terms for a one-year period and compared them to U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data on state-based prevalences of risk factors that can predict non-communicable disease. Search trends from the previous year, divided by state, were strongly tied to the CDC's measured estimates of disease risk from population data. ... In 2011, the web search model predicted that 11.2% of people in Alabama, 9.4% in New Jersey and 8.1% in Nevada had diabetes. Measured values from the CDC for the same year were 11.8%, 8.8% and 10.3%, respectively. [Reuters](#)

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

Abstinence, other steps for Ebola nations as cases top 25,000

30 March - ... Ebola survivors aren't generally considered contagious, but some studies suggest the virus might remain in semen, and WHO guidance says survivors should abstain from sex for at least 3 months after treatment. But the country's health ministry yesterday asked Ebola survivors to extend their sexual abstinence period beyond the 3-month

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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recommendation. ... Deputy health minister Tolbert Nyenswah, who leads Liberia's Ebola response, said survivors should follow WHO guidance and suggested they go a step further until the modes of transmission are better understood. He added that survivors should consider correct and consistent use of condoms for all sexual acts beyond 3 months until more information is available. [CIDRAP](#)

Guinea declares 45-day Ebola health emergency

28 March - Guinea's President Alpha Conde has announced new emergency measures enabling authorities to restrict movements in western Guinea where Ebola transmission continues a year after the epidemic was declared. More than 10,300 people have died from Ebola in West Africa and while cases are thought to have peaked, Guinea is struggling to stamp out the virus partly due to often violent resistance to officials working to end it. Following a dip in new cases in Guinea in January, they have spiked again since early March in and around the capital, prompting officials to announce a new phase of the epidemic. ... The Reuters news agency reported last week that three doctors in a Conakry hospital had been infected with the virus because of a lack of infection control in a sign that the lapses that fuelled the outbreak a year ago are dogging the final stages of the fight. Since then, a further six medical staff across three clinics in western Guinea have been infected, including two doctors, according to a report written by France's coordination team which provides technical assistance to Guinea on Ebola. [Al Jazeera](#)

Liberia's last Ebola patient dies from virus



28 March - A woman who was Liberia's sole remaining known Ebola patient has died at a treatment centre in the capital, said Francis Ketteh, acting head of the country's Ebola response team. The case was Liberia's first in weeks and it set back efforts to halt a virus that has killed more than 10,000 people in Liberia, Guinea

and Sierra Leone. Authorities say the woman, who died in Monrovia on Friday, may have contracted Ebola through sex with a survivor, the Reuters news agency reported. ... Before the woman fell ill, the Liberian government had hoped to declare the country Ebola-free next month, 42 days after the last patient tested negative for a second time, which would mark double the length of the virus's incubation period. [Al Jazeera](#)

Phase 1 trials of Ebola vaccine show good immune responses

1 April - Researchers today published the first two phase 1 trial studies on VSV-EBOV vaccine, showing good immune responses that helped with dose selection for trials under way in Liberia and Guinea and no serious safety concerns. The vaccine caused some expected reactions such as fever, but also triggered arthritis and rash in a few patients, which responders will need to keep in mind when using Ebola vaccines in outbreak settings, scientists said. [CIDRAP](#)

Sierra Leone Ebola lockdown exposes hundreds of suspected cases

30 March - A three-day lockdown in Sierra Leone has exposed hundreds of potential new cases of Ebola, aiding efforts to bring to an end an epidemic that has already killed 3,000 people in the country. Officials ordered the country's 6 million residents to stay indoors or face arrest during the period that ended late on Sunday as hundreds of health officials went door-to-door looking for hidden patients and educating residents about the virus. Reports to authorities of sick people increased by 191 percent in Western Area, which includes the capital, during the lockdown compared with the previous weekend, said Obi Sesay of the National Ebola Response Center. "Tests are being carried out on their blood samples, and the results will be in by Wednesday," Sesay said, adding that 173 of the patients in Freetown met an initial case definition for Ebola. [Reuters](#)

Two Ebola vaccines shown safe as next step pondered

27 March - Results from a Liberian trial suggest that two candidate Ebola vaccines are safe, clearing the way for the next step to test efficacy, but with hardly any new cases there, discussions are under way to move the study to Guinea or Sierra Leone, which may cause problems for other studies taking place in the region. ... The geographic footprint of the outbreak has narrowed substantially over the past few months to just the areas in and around the two national capitals, Conakry and Freetown. ScienceInsider reported yesterday that conflicts are surfacing among research teams about the testing locations. For example, one of the leaders of a group that just launched the ring vaccination trial in Guinea this week of VSV-EBOV said that moving the US-led phase 3 trial from Liberia to Guinea could jeopardize the work. [CIDRAP](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 10:

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity continues to decrease and while A/H3N2 viruses have been most common this season, an increase in influenza viruses has been identified in recent weeks.
- EUCOM: High influenza activity was seen in Germany and activity in Italy is now low.
- PACOM: Moderate influenza activity was seen in Hawaii.

- CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Influenza activity was minimal to low.
- SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity remains low. [AFHSC DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

A virus in your mouth helps fight the flu

1 April - Hidden inside all of us are likely thousands of viruses. ... [Every] once in a while, one of these viral inhabitants might help us out. Young people infected with a type of herpes virus have a better immune response to the flu vaccine than those not infected, scientists at Stanford University report Wednesday. In mice, the virus directly stops influenza itself. The findings ... add to growing evidence that some viruses may help calibrate the immune system. They tell immune cells which pathogens to assault and which ones to leave alone. Now, we're not talking about a rare virus that only a few people harbor. We're talking about a ubiquitous critter, called cytomegalovirus. About half of all Americans carry it. And so do nearly 100 percent of people in developing countries. [NPR](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 11 (March 15-21, 2015), influenza activity continued to decrease, but remained elevated in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 12,824 specimens tested and reported by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories during week 11, 1,358 (10.6%) 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:** Nine influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- **Outpatient Illness Surveillance:** The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 2.2%, above the national baseline of 2.0%. Six regions reported ILI at or above region-specific baseline levels. [FluView](#)

DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Surveillance Weeks 10 & 11, 8-21 March 2015, a total of 212 specimens were collected and received from 49 locations. Results were finalized for 131 specimens from 38 locations. During Week 10, the laboratory identified 13 influenza A(H3N2) and 18 influenza B. During Week 11, five influenza A(H3N2) and 10 influenza B were identified.
- Influenza A activity is declining with a low to moderate increase in influenza B. Influenza activity peaked during Week 51 with approximately 60% of specimens testing influenza positive. We are currently seeing a downward trend with

approximately 20% of our specimens testing positive for influenza (influenza B 13%, influenza A 7%). [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

Egypt has 10 new H5N1 cases, Indonesia 2

30 March - Egypt is seeing no let-up in its steady flow of H5N1 avian influenza infections, with 10 more reported over the past few days, and the virus recently killed an Indonesian father and son, according to official and media reports. The Egyptian cases are part of an unprecedented, sustained wave of H5N1 activities that has been under way since November, vaulting the country to the top of the list for most cases. ... An Indonesian health ministry official said H5N1 infections have been confirmed in a father and son from Tangerang in Banten province, according to a Mar 27 Jakarta Globe report. The two were hospitalized in separate facilities with severe flulike illness symptoms. The father died on Mar 24, and his son died 2 days later. ... According to the WHO's latest global flu total on Mar 3, Egypt has the most H5N1 infections—292—but Indonesia still has the highest number of deaths from the disease: 165, compared with 99 in Egypt. [CIDRAP](#)

Flu News Europe

Week 12/2015 (16-22 March 2015)

- Influenza activity is decreasing in most reporting countries but the proportion of influenza virus positive samples remains high (41%).
- Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2) and type B viruses continued to circulate in the region, with an increasing proportion of type B viruses.
- Hospitalized influenza cases were reported mainly among people aged 65 years and above (53%).
- Approximately two thirds of the A(H3N2) viruses characterized so far show antigenic differences compared to the virus included in the 2014-2015 northern hemisphere influenza vaccine. The observed reduction in effectiveness of the A(H3N2) component of the vaccine might have contributed to the excess mortality reported among older age groups. The A(H1N1)pdm09 and B components of the vaccine are likely to be effective.
- There are no indications of reduced sensitivity of influenza A or B viruses to the neuraminidase inhibitors oseltamivir or zanamivir. [Flu News Europe](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For Week 12 ending 28 March 2015:

Influenza

- One case of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza B among US military basic trainees.
- Decreasing influenza activity at US military recruit sites

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

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria become airborne, raise concerns

2 April - Texas cattle ranches could be generating antibiotic-resistant bacteria, which are becoming airborne. These airborne bacteria are potentially hazardous microorganisms. Particulate matter in the area was analyzed by Texas Tech University researchers. They found both antibiotics and antibiotic-resistant bacteria in samples taken downwind from cattle ranches. According to investigators, populated areas could get affected by this material as wind could carry it to these areas. This could interfere in treatments for potentially dangerous diseases. More than 80% of all antibiotics, which are sold in the United States, are used in cattle to extend lives and make yields better. ... The study concentrated on feedlots in the South Plains and Panhandle of Texas. Cattle are fed prior to bringing them to market, so they get exposed to huge quantities of antibiotics. [NYC Today](#)

Unsafe food is 'growing global threat', says WHO

2 April - Eating food contaminated with bugs leads to more than half a billion cases of illness a year, the World Health Organization warns. It says this "global threat" contributed to 351,000 deaths in 2010. Unsafe foods, for example undercooked meat, can cause 200 problems - from diarrhoea to cancer. But changes in food production mean there are more opportunities for meals to harbour harmful bugs or chemicals, experts say. Unsafe foodstuffs can contain many types of harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemicals. Examples include undercooked meat, fruits and vegetables contaminated with faeces and shellfish containing marine toxins. But the WHO says investigating these outbreaks has become increasingly challenging as single plates of food often have ingredients from many countries. In its first WHO report on this issue, its director-general Dr Margaret Chan warns: "A local food problem can quickly turn into an international emergency. [BBC News](#)

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WELLNESS

Fish oil claims not supported by research

30 March - Fish oil is now the third most widely used dietary supplement in the United States, after vitamins and minerals, according to a recent report from the National Institutes

of Health. At least 10 percent of Americans take fish oil regularly, most believing that the omega-3 fatty acids in the supplements will protect their cardiovascular health. But there is one big problem: The vast majority of clinical trials involving fish oil have found no evidence that it lowers the risk of heart attack and stroke. From 2005 to 2012, at least two dozen rigorous studies of fish oil were published in leading medical journals, most of which looked at whether fish oil could prevent cardiovascular events in high-risk populations. These were people who had a history of heart disease or strong risk factors for it, like high cholesterol, hypertension or Type 2 diabetes. All but two of these studies found that compared with a placebo, fish oil showed no benefit. [New York Times](#)

Fluoridated water helps older adults keep teeth, study says

30 March - Fluoridation of water supplies, long ago proved to protect children from cavities, also helps older adults keep their teeth, a new study from Ireland has shown. But fluoridation had no effect on overall bone density in the aged, a result that surprised the study's authors because fluoridation had been shown to increase bone mass. The study, part of the Irish Longitudinal Study on Aging, was done by researchers at the dentistry school of Trinity College Dublin and involved almost 5,000 adults older than 50. [New York Times](#)

GNC to strengthen supplement quality controls

30 March- GNC, the country's largest specialty retailer of dietary supplements, has agreed to institute sweeping new testing procedures on its herbal products that far exceed quality controls mandated under federal law. The action to be announced Monday comes after the New York State attorney general's office accused GNC and three other major retailers of selling herbal supplements that were fraudulent or contaminated with unlisted ingredients that could pose health risks to consumers. ... The company said it would use advanced DNA testing to authenticate all of the plants that are used in its store-brand herbal supplements, and extensively test the products for common allergens like tree nuts, soy and wheat. [New York Times](#)

Popular web videos of drunk behavior mask consequences of alcohol use

April 2015 - Drunkenness equals hilarity, according to some of the most popular videos on YouTube. Yet very few videos show the consequences of alcohol use, a recent study finds. ... The videos have more than 333 million combined views. ... Only 7 percent of videos had any reference to alcohol dependence, the study said. Humor was used in 79 percent of the videos and motor vehicles were present in 24 percent, the study said. While 89 percent of the videos pictured men, only 49 percent pictured women. What struck Primack the most, he said, was that 44 percent of the videos mentioned a brand name of alcohol. Liquor was the popular type of alcohol mentioned, followed by beer and then wine. [The Nation's Health](#)

Profiling the distracted driver: young, female and solo

30 March - People younger than 25 are more than four times as likely as older people to use a cellphone while driving, a new study reports, and a driver talking on a phone is about 63 percent more likely to be a woman than a man. Researchers in Texas estimated driver age and recorded driver and passenger characteristics and cellphone use for 1,280 drivers as they stopped at busy intersections near medical centers in Houston, Dallas, Austin, El Paso, San Antonio and Brownsville. ... During that time, the percentage of drivers talking on the phone decreased, to 16.4 percent from 20.5 percent. But texting increased, to 8.4 percent from 6.4 percent. Lone drivers were more than four times as likely to be talking on the phone as drivers carrying passengers, and women were more than twice as likely to be texting as men. [New York Times](#)

States ask U.S. Congress to launch inquiry of herbal supplements

2 April - A group of 14 state attorneys general on Thursday asked the U.S. Congress to investigate the herbal supplements industry after a New York probe of the products turned up ingredients that were not listed on labels and raised safety concerns. The group, led by New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and Illinois Attorney General Greg Zoeller, also asked Congress to consider giving the U.S. Food and Drug Administration more oversight of herbal supplements. "We believe the safety and efficacy of these supplements is a matter of deep public concern across the country," the attorneys general said in the letter, urging "swift action." [Reuters](#)

The irrationality of Alcoholics Anonymous

April 2015 - ...The 12 steps are so deeply ingrained in the United States that many people, including doctors and therapists, believe attending meetings, earning one's sobriety chips, and never taking another sip of alcohol is the only way to get better. Hospitals, outpatient clinics, and rehab centers use the 12 steps as the basis for treatment. But although few people seem to realize it, there are alternatives, including prescription drugs and therapies that aim to help patients learn to drink in moderation. Unlike Alcoholics Anonymous, these methods are based on modern science and have been proved, in randomized, controlled studies, to work. [The Atlantic](#)

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Africa: World Bank backs contraception, sexual health in Sahel region

31 March - Broadening access to contraceptives in Africa's arid Sahel region and improving women's sexual health are key parts of a \$200 million World Bank project in the conservative Muslim region, its coordinator said. The project in Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Chad, and Ivory Coast seeks to boost long-term prosperity by relieving population pressures on an environment stricken by drought. ...Christophe Lemiére ... said the project aimed at producing a demographic dividend, a rise in living standards resulting from the falling birth rates that lead to a large working-age population with fewer dependents. ... The region is struggling to sustain its fast-growing population, which has the world's highest fertility rate and has seen its infant mortality rate drop by 25 percent over the last decade. Reducing early marriage and childbirth is a priority in a region where a quarter of women aged 15 to 19 are mothers or pregnant. [Reuters](#)

Benin: WHO details late 2014 Lassa fever outbreak in Benin

1 April - A Lassa fever outbreak in Benin in West Africa involving at least 16 cases and 9 deaths in November first caused concern about possible Ebola, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday in an update. Local and WHO officials were first alerted to the outbreak after four hospital workers in Tanguieta in the northwestern part of the country died over the course of 2 weeks from a severe febrile illness, some with signs of hemorrhagic fever. After tests ruled out Ebola, Lassa fever was suspected, even though the nation had never had a confirmed case, because cases were reported last year in Nigeria, Benin's neighbor to the east. Lab tests confirmed the diagnosis... . An international team and national health officials initiated an Ebola-type response plan, and the outbreak was brought under control quickly, with no new cases since late November. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

Ethiopia: Faces of women with trachoma



23 March - Ethiopia is facing a health crisis, with 800,000 people at risk of becoming permanently blind from the infectious eye disease trachoma, if they do not receive eye surgery urgently. Another 76 million people live in areas where they are in danger of becoming infected. This is the epicentre of the trachoma scourge with the highest infection rates in the world. Trachoma is one of the world's oldest diseases which has become a modern affliction as well. Over years or decades, repeated infections make the eyelid curl

inwards. As the eyelashes scratch the surface of the eye, the damage slowly leads to blindness. Without medical care, the impairment can be irreversible. Trachoma affects overwhelmingly more women than men because it is often carried by young children, who reinfect their mothers, sisters, aunts and grandmothers. [Al Jazeera](#)

Ethiopia reports measles and diphtheria outbreaks

29 March - The country of the Horn of Africa is currently battling outbreaks in two vaccine-preventable diseases, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). To date, 2,190 suspected measles cases were reported in 61 separate outbreaks in Ethiopia, of which 929 cases were confirmed positive. ... Twenty eight per cent of cases were children under-5 and 33 per cent of those affected were above 15 years of age. In addition to measles, an outbreak of diphtheria was reported in Alle and Konso woredas (SNNPR) on 25 February. As of 7 March, there were 31 suspected cases and six deaths. [Outbreak News Today](#)

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USCENTCOM

Saudi Arabia: Saudis report another MERS case; camel serum suggested as treatment

31 March - Saudi Arabia reported another MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) case today, while researchers raised the possibility of using camel antibodies to treat MERS patients. ... The MOH also announced the death of a 57-year-old Saudi man in Hofuf whose case was reported earlier. In addition, the ministry noted the recovery of a 50-year-old male expatriate in Najran. The latest events raised the MOH's cumulative MERS count to 973 cases, with 422 deaths, 532 recoveries, and 19 patients still in treatment or home isolation. Meanwhile, researchers reported recently in the Journal of Virology that they used antibodies from camels to protect mice from MERS-CoV and to help infected mice recover from the disease. The authors, from the United States and China, wrote that serum from recovered MERS patients may be useful for treating infected persons but is not readily available, and that most camels in the Arabian Peninsula carry MERS-CoV antibodies because of past infections. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Syria: WHO pleads for funds to address Syrian health crisis

27 March - As the public health crisis in Syria continues to deteriorate, the World Health Organization (WHO) is asking for \$124 million to continue its support of health services in the war-torn country. ... The WHO estimates that more than 1.3 million people in Aleppo

governorate are in need of health assistance. Aleppo is Syria's largest governorate with about 4 million people, or about a quarter of the nation's population. Last year, the WHO delivered almost 3 million medical treatments to Aleppo, 1.2 million of which reached opposition-controlled and -besieged areas. Only 4 of 11 public hospitals remain operational in the governorate. With 57% of public hospitals across Syria shuttered or only partially functioning, health facilities remain crowded and are experiencing critical shortages of medical supplies. The number of available health professionals has fallen to about 45% of 2011 levels, and the country's water infrastructure is in shambles. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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Greece scraps hospital visit fee, to hire health workers

2 April - Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said a 5-euro fee to access state hospitals had been scrapped and 4,500 healthcare workers would be hired, the latest move by his leftist government to ease what it calls a humanitarian crisis in the country. The move is likely to further endear Tsipras to austerity-weary Greeks but represents yet another potential outlay by the cash-strapped government at a time when its European and IMF lenders are demanding a commitment to fiscal rigor. Still, the abolition of the 5 euro fee for hospital visits would hurt the budget by less than 20 million euros annually and the health workers are expected to be hired without running afoul of Greece's pledge to trim the public sector.

[Reuters](#)

Iceland: DNA of 'an entire nation' assessed



26 March - The genetic code of "an entire nation" has effectively been deduced, say researchers in Iceland.

The feat was performed by combining DNA data with family trees. The team say they could now find every woman at high-risk of breast cancer "at the touch of a button" and it would be "criminal" not to use the

information. The reports, published in the journal *Nature Genetics*, used the data to make a suite of discoveries including the age of the last common ancestor of men. DNA is passed from one generation to the next. If you knew everything about the DNA of a child and their grandparents, you could figure out a lot about the DNA of the parents too. [BBC News](#)

Spain to reinstate primary healthcare for illegal immigrants

31 March - Illegal immigrants in Spain will once again be able to get free primary healthcare at doctors' surgeries, the government said on Tuesday, doing a U-turn on an unpopular

policy in a busy election year. The government withdrew the right to general healthcare for tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants in 2012 as part of a program of spending cuts. But the policy was highly criticized by doctors, refugee activists and opposition parties, and, since the ban excluded emergency treatment, has led to pressure on emergency wards.

[Reuters](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: California getting 'second-hand smog' from Asia, researchers say

31 March - California is suffering from "second-hand smog" drifting in from Asia and other places, researchers said on Tuesday, even as the state's prolonged drought has made air quality worse. About 10 percent of ozone pollution, the main ingredient in smog, in the state's San Joaquin Valley farm region comes from other countries, mostly in Asia, said Ian Faloon, an atmospheric scientist with the University of California, Davis. ... The residents of the San Joaquin Valley have asthma at twice the rate of people in other parts of the state, the university said. Despite considerable improvement in California's notoriously troublesome air, the San Joaquin Valley recently missed a federal deadline for cleaning up its winter air of sooty particulates, a development blamed on warm, dry conditions and stagnant air. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Health emergency declared after Indiana HIV 'epidemic'

26 March - The governor of Indiana has declared a public health emergency after an HIV outbreak "reached epidemic proportions" in part of the state. Scott County, a poor area where needle-sharing by drug users is common, has seen 79 new cases in recent weeks - up from an annual average of five. Governor Mike Pence has authorized health officials to implement a needle exchange programme - a remedy he has opposed in the past. ... The outbreak was first identified in late January. Since then, officials have diagnosed 79 people with the life-threatening virus - up from 26 cases just one month ago. [BBC News](#)

U.S.: Importation and domestic transmission of *Shigella sonnei* resistant to ciprofloxacin — United States, May 2014–February 2015

3 April - In December 2014, PulseNet, the national molecular subtyping network for foodborne disease, detected a multistate cluster of *Shigella sonnei* infections. ... CDC's National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) laboratory determined that

isolates from this cluster were resistant to ciprofloxacin, the antimicrobial medication recommended to treat adults with shigellosis. ... [Approximately] half [of the 157 cases] were associated with international travel. Nine of the cases identified by PulseNet, and another 86 cases without PFGE data, were part of a related outbreak of ciprofloxacin-resistant shigellosis in San Francisco, California. Of 126 total isolates with antimicrobial susceptibility information, 109 (87%) were nonsusceptible to ciprofloxacin (108 were resistant, and one had intermediate susceptibility). Travelers need to be aware of the risks of acquiring multidrug-resistant pathogens, carefully wash their hands, and adhere to food and water precautions during international travel. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Navajos fight their food desert with junk food and soda taxes



1 April - More than 30 cities and states across the country have attempted to tax soda. Nearly all have failed. Now, a community of about 250,000 people has found a way to tax not just sugary beverages, but also junk food. At the same time, it's making fresh produce more affordable in one of the hardest regions in the

U.S. to buy it. As of April 1, products like cheese puffs and energy drinks sold inside the Navajo Nation (the 27,000-square-mile reservation extending into Utah, Arizona and New Mexico) will carry an extra 2-cent sales tax (on top of the 5-cent sales tax on most goods sold there). And since October, fresh fruits and vegetables there have been tax-free. ... Wednesday's implementation of the "junk food tax" was many years in the making, according to the Diné Community Advocacy Alliance, a group made up of volunteers grievously concerned about diabetes and obesity rates on the reservation and beyond. The group, whose name, Diné, is another name for Navajo, led the campaign for the measures. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Resistant infections tied to endoscopes thought to be fully decontaminated

31 March - Current industry standards for cleaning and maintenance of endoscopes are insufficient for complete decontamination, say the authors of a report on a cluster of antibiotic-resistant *Escherichia coli* (CRE) infections published yesterday. ... An evaluation of reprocessed ERCP scopes at the hospital showed that 2 of 8 were contaminated by the same bacteria on pulsed-field gel electrophoresis. They had all been cleaned at a level exceeding the manufacturer's guidelines. Environmental cultures were negative, and no breaks in infection-control procedures were known. A press release from SHEA says the hospital has taken "costly and extraordinary measures," including quarantining and culturing ERCP scopes after cleaning but that even that has not been entirely successful. [CIDRAP New Scan](#) (fourth item)

U.S.: Scientists turn to public to gain funding for health research - passing the hat

April 2015 - In an era of tightening budgets, scientists find themselves competing for smaller and smaller pots of research funding. ... Generally defined as raising small amounts of money from large groups of people via the Internet, crowdfunding is often associated with more artistic projects, such as filmmaking, fashion or music. But recently, crowdfunding has emerged as a viable way to fund or supplement scientific research as well, with crowdfunding sites such as Experiment.com and Petridish.org devoted to helping scientists develop dynamic campaigns in support of their research and ultimately attract donations and followers. ... a real advantage to crowdfunding is that it diversifies a researcher's funding, which offers real benefits in a time when funding is not only harder to get, but more unpredictable. ... As an example of crowdfunding's potential, Ranganathan noted that the crowdfunding site Kickstarter.com now distributes more funds than the National Endowment for the Arts. [The Nation's Health](#)

U.S.: U.S. cancer incidence, mortality largely stable or decreasing

30 March - The rate of people being diagnosed or killed by cancer in the U.S. is stable or decreasing for men and women, according to a new report. "For the main cancers, it's really pretty much good news, incidence and mortality is decreasing," said Recinda Sherman, an author of the new report from the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR) in Springfield, Illinois. ... There are areas of concern, Sherman told Reuters Health in a phone interview. For example, liver cancers are increasing, likely due to an increase in hepatitis C infections that goes back decades. ... There has also been an increase in uterine cancers, with a larger increase among black women. Sherman said it's unclear what's behind those trends. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: White House releases plan to curb antibiotic resistance

27 March - In its latest salvo in the battle against antibiotic resistance over the past year, the Obama administration today unveiled a detailed plan for addressing the threat in the next 5 years. Infectious disease groups lauded the White House's plan, but some said the measures fall short, because they don't do enough to tackle the issue of antibiotics used in raising food animals. ... Today's plan revolves around the strategy's five goals: (1) slow the emergence and prevent the spread of resistant bacteria; (2) strengthen national "one-health" surveillance efforts; (3) advance the development and use of innovative diagnostic tests; (4) accelerate basic and applied research and progress on new antibiotics, other therapeutics, and vaccines; and (5) improve international collaboration. [CIDRAP](#)

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China: China's water-energy-food roadmap

February 2015 - The water-energy-food nexus is creating a complicated challenge for China and the world. Energy development requires water. Moving and cleaning water requires energy. Food production at all stages—from irrigation to distribution—requires water and energy. As the most populous country and the world's manufacturing hub, China demands all three resources in ever increasing amounts, leading to shortages that are creating serious choke points to the country's development. Pressure on water is at the heart of these resource constraints facing China. How China can secure enough clean water to maintain agricultural and energy production to meet its population's needs is a challenge that holds far-reaching consequences for the country's future. As a systematic attempt to summarize China's choke point challenges and spark innovative thinking and pragmatic action, the Roadmap begins with an overview of the water-energy-food nexus trends in China, starting with the energy sector's thirst for water—from coal and hydropower to renewables and natural gas. The second section examines the often-overlooked energy footprint of China's water sector, and the third outlines the water and energy demands of China's food sector.

[Wilson Center](#)

China: Chinese team reports novel tickborne *Anaplasma* species

30 March - Chinese researchers have identified a new strain of tickborne *Anaplasma* species that infects humans and goats in China. ... The team collected blood samples from patients who had a history of tick bite in the preceding 2 months at a hospital in Heilongjiang province from May 1 to Jun 10, 2014. They found that 28 of 477 patients (6%) were infected with a novel strain of *Anaplasma* that differed from the *A phagocytophilum* and *A ovis* species known to infect people. Because the parasite also infects goats, the investigators dubbed it *Anaplasma capra*. All 28 patients developed non-specific febrile manifestations, including fever in 23, headache in 14, malaise in 13, dizziness in 9, myalgia in 4, and chills in 4. Ten had rash or eschar, 8 had lymphadenopathy, 8 had gastrointestinal symptoms, and 3 had stiff neck. Five patients were hospitalized because of severe disease.

[CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

China: Lessons from the east — China's rapidly evolving health care system

2 April - ... Since its birth in 1949, the People's Republic of China has undertaken a series of remarkable health system experiments that are instructive at many levels. ... [After 1984,] ... Chinese reforms left the vast majority of the population uninsured, since the government did not provide coverage and no private insurance industry existed. As of 1999, a total of 49% of urban Chinese had health insurance, mostly through government and state

enterprises, but only 7% of the 900 million rural Chinese had any coverage. ... The government kept its hand in one major aspect of health care: pricing. Presumably to ensure access to basic care, it limited the prices charged for certain services, such as physicians' and nurses' time. However, it allowed much more generous prices for drugs and technical services, such as advanced imaging. The predictable result: hospitals and health care professionals greatly increased their use of drugs and high-end technical services, driving up costs of care, compromising quality, and reducing access for an uninsured citizenry. ... By 2008, China's leaders had concluded that major reforms in both insurance and the delivery system were necessary to shore up the system and ensure social stability. In a fourth and ongoing phase of evolution, they officially abandoned the experiment with a health care system based predominantly on market principles and committed to providing affordable basic health care for all Chinese people by 2020. By 2012, a government-subsidized insurance system provided 95% of the population with modest but comprehensive health coverage. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

India to add more AIDS, TB drugs to essential medicines list: sources

2 April - India is likely to add more HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis drugs to its list of essential medicines that are subject to price caps, people directly involved in the process said, in a move to improve affordability of drugs to treat the deadly diseases. All the drugs on the government's HIV/AIDS and TB control programs are likely to be added in the list, the people said. India provides a number of key HIV/AIDS and TB medicines for free under the government's disease control programs through state-run clinics and distribution centers. But many patients, particularly those with TB, prefer more expensive private clinics as treatment is widely considered of higher quality. The private sector accounts for about 80 percent of India's healthcare delivery market. India has about 2.2 million TB patients, the highest in the world, and an estimated 2.1 million are afflicted with HIV/AIDS. [Reuters](#)

Vanuatu: Cyclone Pam - UN agency reports all 22 Vanuatu islands reached with relief supplies



27 March - Two weeks after Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu, the United Nations says it has reached all 22 storm-affected islands of the country, with food for more than 160,000 people. The World Food Programme (WFP) is supporting the Government of Vanuatu by organising food distributions, logistics services, and providing extra food to supplement government food packages where necessary... Once the initial relief phase is over, WFP plans to provide further food assistance to the most vulnerable until they can provide for themselves, with a team of food security experts deployed to the islands to build a detailed picture of the needs... A UN Flash Appeal, launched in Port Vila on 24 March, seeks \$29.9 million to cover the needs of 166,000 cyclone-affected people for three months. WFP requires up to \$6 million for food assistance activities and \$2.3 million for logistics and

telecommunications services. [UN News Centre](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Brazil: Brazilian women risk life, liberty in having to seek backstreet abortions

30 March - ... Abortion remains illegal in Brazil except in cases of rape, danger to the life of the mother or brain deformity. However, as many as 1 million women risk their health — and their freedom — by ending pregnancies illegally in the country every year. When they do so, it is often in unsafe underground clinics that frequently result in hospitalization and, for some, a prison term. While the number of women who face legal consequences for having abortions is thought to be small, those who do are often reported to the police by the hospitals they visit when abortions go wrong. A survey of arrests found 33 women were reported to police last year, including 15 in Rio de Janeiro and 12 in São Paulo. At least seven of those in São Paulo were reported by doctors. Abortion-rights campaigners argue doctors reporting women who have abortions undermine trust in the public health service, putting women at even greater risk. [Al Jazeera](#)

PAHO chikungunya count rises by more than 32,000

31 March - The number of chikungunya infections in the Americas has increased to 1,343,372, a rise of 32,504, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said in its latest update. The bump in cases was slightly higher than the 28,768-case increase recorded the week before. PAHO's latest count includes 1,310,925 suspected, 28,910 confirmed, and 3,537 imported cases. Most of the imported cases are from the United States, which has 2,549, 13 more than the previous week. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a Mar 24 update that so far 68 chikungunya cases, all of them travel related, have been reported in 19 states so far this year. No locally transmitted cases have been reported. US territories have reported 52 chikungunya cases this year, all of them locally transmitted infections in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Most of the increase this week came from Nicaragua, which submitted 10 weeks' worth of data, and Colombia. The death toll from the disease remained the same at 184. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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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.

