

3 August 2012

Army Public Health Weekly Update

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

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Train-the-Trainer Course

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will provide a **CERC Train-the-Trainer course** at CDC Headquarters.

CERC is an approach used by scientists and public health professionals to provide information during natural or manmade disasters when an individual or an entire community has to make health-related decisions under time constraints.

The course is designed to train those who have completed the Basic CERC course to conduct future CERC trainings.

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U.S. MILITARY

Bacteria might help protect military with new vaccines



29 July - Military researchers studying radiation-resistant bacteria say they've discovered a faster way to make vaccines, which could help protect against biological warfare agents and pandemic infections. The research could eventually lead to developing methods to help protect

**Disaster Resilience:
A National
Imperative**

One way to reduce the impacts of disasters on the nation and its communities is to invest in enhancing resilience--the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from and more successfully adapt to adverse events. **Disaster Resilience: A National Imperative** addresses the broad issue of increasing the nation's resilience to disasters.



troops and others responding to nuclear disasters like last year's meltdown in Fukushima, Japan. A team of Uniformed Services University researchers who have been studying the radiation-resistant *Deinococcus radiodurans* bacterium published its findings in the scientific journal *Cell Host and Microbe* this month. [Stars and Stripes](#)

DOD leads drive toward healthier lifestyles

17 July - The Defense Department is taking a leading role in a governmentwide effort to stop the nation's obesity problem, Barbara Thompson, the director of DOD's Office of Family Policy/Children and Youth, said. DOD is one of 17 federal departments and agencies working together to identify opportunities for promoting healthy living as part of the White House's National Prevention Council strategy, she explained. "One part of that is preventing obesity," Thompson told American Forces Press Service and The Pentagon Channel. "It has a huge impact on our quality of life, both for children and adults." Thompson noted a national increase in Type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease, believed caused by increased fat, salt and sugar in Americans' diets at the same time that many children are less active than in previous generations. There was a 40 percent rise in childhood obesity between 1998 and 2008, she said. [Defense.gov](#)

Incident diagnoses of and mortality from cancer, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, January 2000 – December 2011

June 2012 - During the 12-year surveillance period, 9,368 active component members were diagnosed with at least one of the cancers of interest for this report. Over the 12-year period, the crude rate of incident diagnoses of the subject cancers was 55.2 per 100,000 person-years (p-yrs); the lowest annual incidence rate was 50.3 per 100,000 p-yrs in 2003, and the highest annual incidence rate was 60.1 per 100,000 p-yrs in 2009... Over the past twelve years, rates of diagnoses of the cancers of interest for this report have been stable among active component members of the U.S. military. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

The Military Health System wants to help you quit tobacco

24 July - While tobacco use, in any form, is highly addicting and can lead to serious health problems there is good news; effective treatments and helpful resources exist for anyone who wishes to make a change towards lifelong health and vitality...The [2008 DoD Health Related Behaviors Survey](#) indicated that smoking among service members has decreased only slightly since 2002 (three percent decrease, from 34 to 31 percent). The use of smokeless tobacco in the military remained steady from 2005 to 2008 with a mere one percent decrease (from 15 to 14 percent). Although tobacco usage can be a difficult habit to break, there is help readily available. Individual and group counseling and support groups and programs have been found to be effective in treating tobacco dependence, often in conjunction with either over-the-counter or prescription nicotine replacement products. Other treatments include brief clinical interventions and behavioral cessation therapies.

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site:

<http://phc.army.smil.mil>

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

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TRICARE offers smoking and tobacco cessation coverage for all beneficiaries not eligible for Medicare. The TRICARE Tobacco Cessation Program covers most inpatient and outpatient care that is medically necessary and considered proven. **MHS**

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GLOBAL

Amazon study reveals that untreated rabies may not be lethal

2 August - In an apparent reversal of a commonly held belief, people in two communities in a remote part of Peru's Amazonian region have survived after being exposed to rabies even without being vaccinated, according to a study by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The study, "Evidence of Rabies Virus Exposure among Humans in the Peruvian Amazon," speculates that while avoiding rabid animals and receiving injections administered after a person is exposed to rabies virus are the best way to protect oneself against the fatal disease, people living in certain communities where they are regularly exposed to the virus may develop an immune response to rabies. "Nearly all rabies virus exposures that proceed to clinical infections are fatal," said Amy Gilbert, PhD, of CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. "Our results support the idea that under very unique circumstances there may be some type of enhanced immune response in certain populations regularly exposed to the virus, which could prevent onset of clinical illness." The CDC study, which was conducted in collaboration with the Peruvian Ministry of Health, surveyed 92 people, 50 of whom reported previous bat bites. Of the 63 people whose blood was sampled, 11 percent had "rabies virus neutralizing antibodies." **Fox News Latino**

Global AIDS conference wraps up

28 July - The **19th International AIDS Conference** drew to a close in Washington, D.C., on Friday. Under the banner of "Turning the Tide Together," more than 20,000 delegates attended the six-day gathering, where speakers ranged from famous entertainers to high-level politicians to people working on the front lines of AIDS research. **VOA**

New drug combo shows promise against TB, HIV co-infections



26 July - There may be a powerful new weapon in the fight against tuberculosis, a bacterial respiratory disease that kills an estimated 1.4 million people around the world each year. Early results of a clinical trial show a novel triple-drug combination destroys nearly 100 percent of the TB bacteria

in infected patients -- within two weeks. While full treatment would take longer, the regimen promises to cut in half the duration of TB therapy for drug-resistant cases of the

disease. And it could be a life-saver for hard-to-treat HIV-positive individuals who are co-infected with TB. An estimated 25 percent of people infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, die of tuberculosis because they cannot withstand the nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite that can be the debilitating side effects of the rigorous antibiotic regimen now used to treat TB. [VOA](#)

Wrong medical equipment 'undermining aid effort'



31 July – Inappropriate equipment is undermining the medical aid effort in developing countries, experts say. A joint Lancet and Imperial College London review found poor countries were being given devices they could not use or maintain. It said richer nations should aim their efforts at lower-cost equipment tailored for the developing world. Research has shown 40% of devices in poor countries are out of service, compared to 1% in the developed world. [BBC](#)

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INFLUENZA

Australia: Perth Tamiflu stocks run out amid flu outbreak

3 August - Pharmacies across Perth have run out of Tamiflu, commonly prescribed to alleviate flu symptoms, and claim they are unable to get more amid a higher-than-normal incidence of the illness. The Australian Medical Association WA is calling on the state government to immediately release its stocks of the anti-viral drug, reserved for public hospitals, during what it says is a flu epidemic... There had been 2712 recorded cases of influenza at the end of July, compared to 529 for the same period in 2011. By comparison there were 1887 reported cases for the entire 2011 year, including 22 reported deaths. But a health department spokesperson said the 2012 season appeared to have peaked. [Sydney Morning Herald](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 29 (ending July 21, 2012), 5.6% of all deaths reported through the 122-Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia and influenza. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 6.6% for week 29. [FluView](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

2August – Estimates of flu activity based on flu-related Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere is minimal and ranges from minimal high in the southern hemisphere. Australia and New Zealand both indicate high levels of flu activity. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 28 July 2012, 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](#)

Novel H3N8 strain found in dead seals may pose human threat

31 July - A research team that analyzed the strain of H3N8 influenza linked to a baby seal die-off in New England last year found that it originated in birds and has adapted to mammals, signaling a possible threat to humans and animals alike. The study, which appeared today in *mBio*, the online journal of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), also revealed mutations that are known to make flu viruses more transmissible and able to cause severe disease. [CIDRAP](#)

Ohio, Indiana report 10 more cases of variant H3N2

2 August – Nine people in Ohio and one in Indiana, all of whom had visited county fairs or had contact with pigs, have tested positive for variant swine-origin H3N2 influenza, health officials in the two states have announced, raising the apparent number of such flu cases reported in the past year to 28. Variant H3N2 (H3N2v) flu cases have been confirmed in 9 of 10 people who were tested after they had symptoms following contact with pigs at the Butler County Fair in Hamilton, Ohio, said Robert Jennings, a spokesman for the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), today. He told CIDRAP News that the 10th person is being retested. Yesterday officials said the illnesses resembled seasonal flu, and none of the patients were hospitalized. The nine cases apparently make the Butler County outbreak the biggest one since this H3N2v strain emerged in the United States last summer. Most of the patients have been children, and most had contact with pigs. [CIDRAP](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Re-emergence of brucellosis in cattle in France and risk for human health

26 July - A case of human brucellosis was diagnosed in France in January 2012. The investigation demonstrated that the case had been contaminated by raw milk cheese from a neighbouring dairy farm. As France has been officially free of bovine brucellosis since 2005, veterinary investigations are being conducted to determine the origin of the infection and avoid its spread among other herds. Hypotheses about the source of this infection are discussed. [Eurosurveillance](#)

Study: Dispersants used in Gulf oil spill could damage marine food web

2 August - During the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which dumped nearly 5 million barrels of crude into the water, responders applied some 1.8 million gallons of chemical dispersant to break up the oil slick. The chemicals, which were sprayed on the surface and pumped near the gushing pipe on the ocean floor, largely prevented the slick from saturating delicate coastal marshes, but they had their own environmental impact that scientists are only now beginning to understand. A study published Tuesday provides one possible piece to that puzzle, indicating that chemical dispersants of the type used in 2010 hurt microorganism populations that are a key link in the marine food chain, with dire implications for fish and larger sea animals... The research conducted in a controlled lab setting showed that dispersants and dispersed oil "significantly reduced" the growth of phytoplankton and ciliates — essentially, fish food. It also showed that oil that was left alone — and thus degraded while floating on the water's surface — was found to cause no significant damage to these organisms. [NBC News](#)

U.S.: 2011 brought little change in foodborne disease incidence

30 July - The incidence of illnesses caused by the most common foodborne pathogens, with the exception of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, has stayed about the same or increased a bit over the past few years, according to 2011 data released by the Centers for Disease Control and prevention (CDC). [CIDRAP](#)

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WELLNESS

Distractions come naturally to teenage drivers



31 July - Distracted driving is a problem for all drivers, but teens are at higher risk. Yes, it's true that drivers under 25 are up to three times more likely to send text messages or emails while behind the wheel than older drivers, [according to](#) the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. But there's a deeper problem: Teenagers are also at a developmental stage where getting distracted is more problematic than it is for older drivers. Teenagers are still developing something called "regulatory competence." That's the ability to regulate their attention and emotions so they can function well under challenging circumstances. [NPR](#)

Driving sobriety tests likely to miss medical pot

27 July - A new, small study suggests medicinal marijuana may impair users' driving skills - but might be missed by typical sobriety tests. At doses used in AIDS, cancer and pain patients, people weaved side to side more and had a slower reaction time in the hours after using the drug, researchers from the Netherlands found. For people who hadn't built up a tolerance to marijuana, those effects were similar to driving with a blood alcohol content of 0.08, the point at which drivers are considered legally impaired, they said. "At this time, we know very little about the possible effects that medical marijuana may have on, say, motor vehicle crash rates, injury rates and mortality rates," said Dr. Guohua Li, who has studied marijuana and traffic accidents at Columbia University in New York but wasn't involved in the new research. "There is a concern medical marijuana may interact with other drugs such as alcohol that may further compromise driving safety," he added. [Medline Plus](#)

Mild mental illness 'raises risk of premature death'

31 July - People with mild mental illnesses such as anxiety or depression are more likely to die early, say researchers. They looked at the premature deaths from conditions such as heart disease and [cancer](#) of 68,000 people in England. The research suggested low level distress raised the risk by 16%, once lifestyle factors such as drinking and smoking were taken into account. More serious problems increased it by 67%, the University College London and Edinburgh University team said. [BBC](#)

Most Americans with celiac disease don't realize it: study

2 August - New research suggests that 1.4 million Americans have celiac disease but don't realize it, while 1.6 million people are on gluten-free diets -- a treatment for celiac disease -- even though they might not need it. The findings, which estimate that 1.8 million Americans have celiac disease -- an autoimmune condition -- suggest that a whopping 78 percent of sufferers don't realize they have the condition. "This provides proof that the disease is common in the United States," said study co-author Dr. Joseph Murray, a gastroenterologist at the Mayo Clinic, in a clinic news release. "If you detect one person for every five or six [who have it], we aren't doing a very good job detecting celiac disease." People with celiac disease have trouble digesting wheat, rye and barley. A gluten-free diet can help, but about 80 percent of people on such a diet haven't been diagnosed with celiac disease. [US News and World Report](#)

Scientists uncover gene variation linked to melanoma



29 July - New gene mutations associated with the development of melanoma have been identified by scientists who conducted what is believed to be the largest DNA-sequencing study of the deadly disease to date. Melanoma accounts for the vast majority of skin cancer deaths. The main cause of melanoma is excessive exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. The Yale Cancer Center team used DNA-sequencing technologies to analyze 147 melanomas originating on both sun-exposed and sun-shielded sites on patients' bodies. They found a large number of UV-

induced mutations in sun-exposed melanomas, but most of these are "passenger" mutations that don't have a functional role in melanoma. [Medline Plus](#)

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USAFRICOM

Uganda: Ebola outbreak kills 13

28 July - An outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus has killed 13 people in Uganda and efforts are under way to contain the hemorrhagic fever, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Saturday. There is no treatment and no vaccine against Ebola, which is transmitted by close personal contact and, depending on the strain, kills up to 90 percent of those who contract the virus. Joaquim Saweka, WHO's representative in Uganda, said that although suspected Ebola infections emerged in early July in Kibale district, about 170 km (100 miles) west of the capital Kampala, the outbreak was not confirmed until Friday. [Reuters](#)

Zimbabwe: Typhoid and cholera return



27 July - More than 100 people in the Zimbabwean capital Harare and Chitungwiza, a dormitory town 35km southeast of the city, have contracted typhoid this month, and the dilapidated water and sanitation systems are again being blamed for another round of water-borne diseases. According to health officials cited in the local media, 83 cases of typhoid have been confirmed in Chitungwiza and a further 28 in Harare, of which [25 were linked](#) to a supermarket in the Avenues area of the city centre. Portia Manangazira, the chief disease control officer in the Health Ministry, told IRIN that in June 22 cases of suspected cholera, 10 of which were confirmed, were reported in Chiredzi - a town in Masvingo Province close to neighbouring South Africa - and one confirmed case of cholera was reported in Manicaland Province, which borders Mozambique. "We are monitoring the situation very closely to make sure the cholera does not spread. The health sector is on high alert," she said. [IRIN](#)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: Disarming IEDs - big job, too few trained

29 July - Improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, remain one of the biggest killers in Afghanistan. As NATO forces prepare to withdraw from the country, Afghans are learning the special skills needed to find and disarm these deadly weapons. The training area near

the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif is a large expanse of dirt and gravel, dotted with a few beat-up old taxis and scattered bunkers... So far, the students appear to be on their way to joining the ranks of soldiers and police certified in IED disposal. But the school can train only about 30 students at a time... Ahmadullah says there is still a long way to go. He says Afghanistan needs 400 to 500 people trained for each of those levels, which he predicts will take three to four years. [KERA News](#)

Syria: Anticipating a hungry winter



24 July - The fields in the fertile al Ghab plain stretching across eastern Syria would normally be full of crops at this time of year, but this summer some are lying fallow. "The army has deployed in the fields, and there are checkpoints around our village," said Muhammad al-Ashab*, a farmer in al Madeeq Citadel. "Sometimes the soldiers let us pass, sometimes they don't." Some farmers, he said, have not been able to plant anything. Others suffered losses as their crops withered, either because they could not access them regularly, or they were lacking the means necessary to attend to them. The violent conflict in Syria appears to be hampering agriculture. Farmers are struggling with obstructions due to intermittent fighting as well as soaring prices of farming supplies and shortages of diesel. The fuel is needed not only for tractors and harvesters, but also for pumps to water the fields. [IRIN](#)

Pakistan: UN polio suspension hits 22,000 children

2 August - Around 22,000 Pakistani children are at risk in Karachi after the World Health Organization suspended polio vaccinations over a spate of shootings, a UN official warned Thursday. WHO, a partner in government efforts to eradicate the disease, suspended activities in part of Pakistan's largest city last month and has not yet been approved to take part in the next campaign due in September. On July 17, a UN doctor from Ghana working on polio eradication and his driver were shot in Gadap town and three days later a local community worker who was part of the same campaign was shot dead in the same area. "We had a successful campaign in Karachi until those attacks," said Elias Durry, senior WHO coordinator for polio vaccination in southern Sindh province. The campaign targeted 2.2 million children in Karachi, but 22,000 children in Gadap town were not administered polio drops because of security fears, he added. [AFP](#)

Yemen battles hunger while struggling with multiple crises

29 July - ... Yemen is struggling with multiple crises: If an ongoing uprising and endless clashes between Yemen's security forces and al-Qaida militants weren't enough of a challenge for the impoverished nation, nearly half of Yemen's people are going hungry, with many facing the danger of starvation. The World Food Program (WFP) estimates that nearly 10 million Yemenis are "food insecure." They fall into two categories - five million are classified as "severely food insecure," that is, those who are unable to buy or grow food themselves, and another five million who are "moderately food insecure," that is, they are at risk of going without food due to rising food prices and the ongoing civil conflict.

Combined, they account for 44.5 percent of Yemen's population of close to 25 million. [Voice of America](#)

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USEUCOM

United Kingdom: 2012 Olympics shines spotlight on mobile health and fitness apps

2 August - The 2012 Olympic Games playing out in London July 27 through Aug. 12 put a spotlight on a number of mobile apps that can help athletes and the more sedentary spectators watching them to stay fit and manage their health. Wireless devices allow people to track their heart rate, speed and geographic elevation during workouts and transmit the data to a smartphone or a cloud personal health platform such as Microsoft HealthVault. The U.S. women's cycling team is using a series of apps that track genetics, sleep patterns and blood glucose levels. Other apps incorporate GPS functionality to track distance and mix health goals with social gaming. The market for mobile health apps will exceed \$400 million in revenue by 2016, according to ABI Research. In addition, as of April 2012, more than 13,600 iPhone health and fitness apps were available to consumers. [eWeek](#)

United Kingdom: NHS considers organ donation shakeup

27 July - The NHS is considering its biggest shakeup of the ethical, legal and professional rules governing transplants, floating ideas to prolong the lives of people who have no chance of surviving in order to harvest their organs, and to make people opt out rather than in to the donor register. The options are included in a survey of medical, scientific and public opinion to be launched this week to test the boundaries of what might be acceptable, as a precursor to significant reforms. [Guardian](#)

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USNORTHCOM

Consumption of cigarettes and combustible tobacco — United States, 2000–2011

3 August - ... Despite continued decreases in cigarette smoking in the United States, consumption of pipe tobacco and large cigars has increased substantially since the federal tobacco excise tax was increased in 2009, creating tax disparities that made 1) pipe tobacco

less expensive than roll-your-own tobacco and manufactured cigarettes, and 2) large cigars less heavily taxed than small cigars and manufactured cigarettes (7,8). Because loose tobacco products are classified based on how they are labeled, the loose tobacco tax disparity of \$21.95 per pound led manufacturers to relabel roll-your-own tobacco as pipe tobacco and then market this relabeled pipe tobacco for roll-your-own use (7–9). In addition, manufacturers were able to increase the per-unit weight of certain small cigars to take advantage of a tax benefit when classified as large cigars, which are taxed based on the product price rather than per cigar (7). As a result of relatively minor increases in per-unit weight, the new "large cigar" can appear almost identical to a "small cigar," which resembles a typical cigarette and can cost as little as 7 cents per cigar. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: National biosurveillance strategy aims to detect manifold threats

2 August – The Obama Administration this week unveiled the nation's first national biosurveillance strategy, designed to detect a range of threats, including bioterror attacks, infectious disease outbreaks, agricultural threats, and foodborne illness outbreaks. In a letter prefacing the 8-page plan, which the White House unveiled on Jul 31, President Barack Obama wrote that this step is part of his National Security Strategy... The text of the strategy acknowledges that there have been dedicated efforts over the years to improve biosurveillance and that the tiered system—from federal departments to the private sector—can benefit from an approach that focuses attention on a few core functions and better integration efforts... It spells out four guiding principles: leveraging existing capabilities, taking an all-nation approach, adding value for participants without radically altering or burdening participants, and maintaining a global perspective. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S.: Only 1 in 4 Americans with HIV has virus under control

27 July - Among the 1.1 million Americans living with HIV, just one in four has the virus under control, U.S. health researchers say. In a report presented Friday at the International AIDS Conference in Washington, D.C., researchers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the problem applies to patients of all ages, races and ethnic groups, but especially to young people and blacks. "This is the first time that we have ever looked at the outcome of continuum of care across all patient groups," said CDC epidemiologist Irene Hall. "And what we found is that, overall, too few people with HIV have viral suppression." People with viral load suppression are healthy and less likely to transmit the virus to others. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: West Nile virus makes a comeback this summer



2 August - The West Nile virus is back, and it's looking like it could be particularly bad this year... There have already been at least 241 cases of West Nile disease reported in 42 states this summer, including 144 serious infections. At least four people have died. There hasn't been this many cases this early since 2004. By this time last year, only 15 severe cases had been reported. "The bulk of the West Nile cases in the U.S. generally occur in August and September," Nasci says, "and we're just entering August and we've already seen this uptick compared to previous years." Most of the cases have occurred in just three states — Texas, Mississippi and Oklahoma. But cases are occurring throughout the country. The reason for the increase is complicated. But the unusually warm winter, early spring and hot summer are playing a role, Nasci says. [NPR](#)

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USPACOM

China: Human rights group questions ethics of Chinese drug treatment study

2 August - A Chinese research team's study of drug addiction treatments published in Science on 13 April is coming under fire from Human Rights Watch (HRW), the New York City-based advocacy group. This week's issue of Science contains a letter from the group accusing the Chinese team of not making it clear whether their research subjects were held "without due process" in compulsory treatment centers and subjected to "forced labor." But a response from the study authors describes their considerable efforts to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical manner, and bioethicists based in both the United States and China have also defended the Chinese researchers, calling the accusations unfair. The researchers, led by Yan-Xue Xue of Peking University in Beijing, tested a psychological technique for reducing cravings in drug addicts that can threaten a relapse into drug abuse. Those cravings are usually triggered by specific environmental cues, such as the sight of a syringe, spoon, and tourniquet for a heroin addict. The Chinese team's goal was to weaken the link between those environmental cues and the memories of drug abuse, thus reducing the craving. [Science](#)

India confirms drought as El Nino looms

2 August - India's monsoon rains will not be enough to save the country from its first drought in three years, the weather office said on Thursday as it forecast that the El Nino weather pattern should reduce rains again in the second half of the June to September season. India, one of the world's largest food producers and consumers with a population of

1.2 billion, last suffered a drought in 2009, which forced it to import sugar, pushing global prices higher. This time around, global grain prices are soaring as the United States wilts in its own drought - the worst in the country for half a century. [Reuters](#)

Indonesia: Low health awareness deadly for children



30 July – Poor knowledge of basic healthcare and lack of sanitation are contributing to the high number of deaths among children under the age of five in Indonesia. Among poorer households child deaths are more than three times higher than in richer ones. According to Countdown 2015, a global collaboration to achieve health-related Millennium Development Goals, 151,000 Indonesian children died in 2010 before they reached the age of five - 35 out of every 1,000 live births. To reach the target of reducing child deaths by two-thirds of the 1990 death rate, seven more children out of every 1,000 births need to survive. Causes of children under five years dying in 2010 included pneumonia, which accounted for 14 percent of deaths, preterm births caused 21 percent, injuries 6 percent, and measles and diarrhoea 5 percent each, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The agency noted that 48 percent of children's deaths took place in their first 28 days of life. [IRIN](#)

North Korea hit by devastating floods

1 August - North Korea said 31 people were killed in landslides and lightning during heavy rains and flooding, in addition to the 88 killed in a typhoon that hit the nation two weeks ago. Heavy rains on Sunday and Monday destroyed or damaged more than 4,900 homes and flooded 8,530 others, leaving 21,370 people homeless, the official Korean Central News Agency said Tuesday. More than 179,000 tons of coal were washed away, and scores of pits were inundated at coal mines northeast of Pyongyang, the capital, KCNA said in a separate report. Flooding threatens the impoverished nation's ability to export its underground minerals, one of the few legitimate ways for the totalitarian regime to earn foreign currency. [San Francisco Chronicle](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

How Latin America is reinventing the war on drugs



30 July - Frustrated with US dictates, countries across the region are floating new ideas to curb drug trafficking, from 'soft' enforcement to legalization... Countries across the region are adopting a more autonomous, sometimes nationalistic, response to narcotics control that increasingly questions Washington's priorities and prescriptions. From Bolivia, where drugs are produced, to

Mexico and Guatemala, where they transit through, to Brazil, where they are increasingly consumed, officials are forging new policies or floating ideas to deal with a problem they believe 40 years of US-dictated solutions hasn't curbed... The restiveness reflects a growing political assertiveness in the region. While Latin America has always been weary of the heavy hand of the US, Bolivia and Venezuela have taken their indignation to a new level, refusing to cooperate with the DEA and other US officials. Many countries also seem less inclined to genuflect toward Washington on other issues, from trade to foreign policy. Yet it is the drug issue that will most define US relations with the hemisphere – and have the most impact around the world. Latin America remains the world's No. 1 supplier of cocaine, and how various countries deal with their coca tracts will not only affect the flow of narcotics, but might lead to new strategies in the drug fight. [Christian Science Monitor](#)

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