

4 April 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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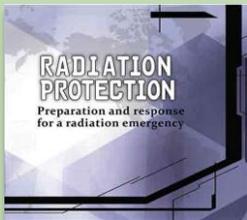
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A new radiation protection brochure that addresses preparation for and response to a radiation emergency is available from the [USAPHC Health Information Products eCatalog](#).



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**COCA Call/Webinar:
Tickborne Diseases:
A Springtime
Review of
Diagnosis,
Treatment and
Prevention**

From May through July, people get tick bites and tickborne diseases more often than any other time of year in the United States. In 2012, over 4,000 cases of Rocky Mountain spotted fever and 30,000 cases of Lyme disease were reported to CDC. Tickborne diseases can cause symptoms that range from mild to life-threatening. Early recognition and treatment of tickborne diseases decreases the risk of serious complications. During this COCA call, CDC subject matter experts will describe the signs and symptoms, treatment, management, and prevention of tickborne diseases in the U.S., with an emphasis on Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Date: April 10, 2014

Time: 2pm ET



Information

U.S. MILITARY

A legacy of pride and pain

20 March - More than half of the 2.6 million Americans dispatched to fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan struggle with physical or mental health problems stemming from their service, feel disconnected from civilian life and believe the government is failing to meet the needs of this generation's veterans, according to a poll conducted by The Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation. The long conflicts, which have required many troops to deploy multiple times and operate under an almost constant threat of attack, have exacted a far more widespread emotional toll than previously recognized by most government studies and independent assessments: One in two say they know a fellow service member who has attempted or committed suicide, and more than 1 million suffer from relationship problems and experience outbursts of anger — two key indicators of post-traumatic stress. [Washington Post](#)

Dole/Rich: Military caregivers are hidden heroes

1 April - ...The Dole foundation which helps address the needs of military caregivers, commissioned the RAND Corporation to conduct the largest study ever undertaken to help identify gaps in the policies and programs that support them. RAND found that there are 5.5 million military caregivers in America, and that 1.1 million of them are caring for those who served in the military after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. These caregivers, mostly young, face challenges that can make their mission even more daunting than that of the generations who came before them... They are more likely to be caring for loved ones with mental and cognitive impairments like PTSD and traumatic brain injury - the invisible wounds of war. Current services to support caregivers may be less relevant to this new generation in a caregiving journey that, for many, could last decades. RAND's research tells us that those caring for post-9/11 veterans are suffering adverse effects at a much higher rate than caregivers from prior war eras or civilian caregivers. They spend more time providing care and - because of the multiple and serious conditions they are caring for - consistently experience more health problems, financial challenges, strains in family relationships, and have more workplace issues than non-caregivers. These caregivers need holistic services and support. [Marshfield News Herald](#)

Gunman in Fort Hood attack was assessed by psychiatrist



3 April - Military officials testifying at a hearing on Thursday in Washington provided some detail about the soldier at Fort Hood accused of killing three people and wounding 16 others at the post on Wednesday before taking his own life. The secretary of the Army, John M. McHugh, said at a Senate

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<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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Armed Services Committee that the suspect, an Iraq war veteran identified as Specialist Ivan Lopez, was being evaluated for post-traumatic stress disorder at the time of the shooting. Army officials said that Specialist Lopez had been prescribed Ambien, a sleep aid, and other medications to treat anxiety and depression. Specialist Lopez had been examined by a psychiatrist within the last month, the Army secretary said, but had showed no signs that he might commit a violent act... Mr. McHugh also said that Specialist Lopez "had no involvement with extremist organizations of any kind." [New York Times](#)

Hagel supports review of on-base tobacco sales

31 March - Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said Monday that he supports a forcewide review of tobacco use and sales on military installations... The military's health care costs attributable to tobacco use are "astounding, well over a billion dollars" a year, Hagel said. "Dollars are one thing, but the health of your people, I don't know if you put a price on that. So I do think it needs to be looked at and reviewed," Hagel said... A Defense Department memo dated March 14 that was obtained by Military Times encourages the services to eliminate tobacco sales — and even tobacco use — on military bases, although it stops short of ordering specific actions. "Structural reforms in how and where we allow tobacco purchases to be made, as well as the need to consider tobacco-free installations, are all matters that require our near-term attention," stated the memo, signed by Jessica Wright, acting undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, and Dr. Jonathan Woodson, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. [Military Times](#)

Urinary tract infections during deployment, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2008-2013

March 2014 - Austere living conditions during deployment may put service members at greater risk for urinary tract infections (UTIs). During the 6-year surveillance period, 6.5 percent of females (n=7,214) and 0.3 percent of males (n=2,412) who were ever deployed had at least one UTI diagnosed while deployed to Southwest Asia and the Middle East. The incidence rate of first-time UTIs while deployed was 86.7 per 1,000 person-years (p-yrs) in females and 3.3 per 1,000 p-yrs in males. Of service members with at least one UTI during deployment, 13.6 percent of females and 3.6 percent of males had an additional (recurrent) UTI during the same or a follow-up deployment period. Among both females and males, rates of UTIs were highest among those who were the youngest, in armor/motor transport occupations, and "other" (e.g., separated, divorced) marital status. Throughout the surveillance period, annual overall rates of UTIs were 26-55 percent higher among nondeployed than deployed females and 130-250 percent higher among nondeployed than deployed males. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#) (page 2)

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GLOBAL

CDC Grand Rounds: Global tobacco control

4 April - During the 20th century, use of tobacco products contributed to the deaths of 100 million persons worldwide. In 2011, approximately 6 million additional deaths were linked to tobacco use, the world's leading underlying cause of death, responsible for more deaths each year than human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), tuberculosis, and malaria combined. One third to one half of lifetime users die from tobacco products, and smokers die an average of 14 years earlier than nonsmokers... In 2008, WHO introduced its MPOWER measures as practical, cost-effective ways to scale up global implementation of specific WHO FCTC provisions. The six measures of MPOWER are 1) monitoring tobacco use and prevention programs and policies; 2) protecting persons from secondhand smoke through establishment of smokefree public places; 3) offering persons help to quit tobacco use; 4) warning about the dangers of tobacco use through mass media campaigns and labels on tobacco packages; 5) enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship; and 6) raising taxes on tobacco products.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Ketamine 'exciting' depression therapy

2 April - The illegal party drug ketamine is an "exciting" and "dramatic" new treatment for depression, say doctors who have conducted the first trial in the UK. Some patients who have faced incurable depression for decades have had symptoms disappear within hours of taking low doses of the drug. The small trial on 28 people, reported in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, shows the benefits can last months. Experts said the findings opened up a whole new avenue of research... Eight showed improvements in reported levels of depression, with four of them improving so much they were no longer classed as depressed. [BBC News](#)

Panel's warning on climate risk: Worst is yet to come



30 March - ...The report [by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] attempts to project how the effects will alter human society in coming decades. While the impact of global warming may actually be outweighed by factors like economic or technological change, the report found, the disruptions are nonetheless likely to be profound. It cited the risk of death or injury on a widespread scale, probable damage to public health, displacement of people and potential mass migrations. "Throughout the 21st century, climate-change impacts are projected to slow down economic growth, make poverty reduction more difficult, further erode food security, and prolong existing and create new poverty traps, the latter particularly in urban areas and emerging hotspots of hunger," the report declared.

[New York Times](#)

Stem cell scientist guilty of falsifying data

1 April - Haruko Obokata, a stem cell scientist at the RIKEN Center for Development Biology in Kobe, Japan, has been found guilty of misconduct by a committee of investigators led by her own government-funded institute after other researchers questioned the findings. In January, Obokata, with colleagues both in Japan and in the U.S., published two papers claiming to describe a surprising new way to generate stem cells from already developed cells. [CNN](#)

WHO sees camels as MERS source, but route uncertain

28 March - Camels are the source of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), but it's still not clear how the virus is jumping to humans, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday in a summary of its latest thinking on the disease, based on cases and scientific reports. The agency also raised concerns about transmission of the disease in hospitals, which seems to be fueling a good portion of the limited human-to-human spread of the virus. [CIDRAP](#)

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INFLUENZA

Antiviral drugs cut flu deaths, study finds

28 March - During a recent flu outbreak, use of antiviral drugs reduced the death rate in hospitalized patients by as much as 50 percent, researchers report. Their study, published online in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*, evaluated the efficacy of drugs like oral oseltamivir (brand name Tamiflu) or inhaled zanamivir (Relenza) in more than 29,000 patients in 38 countries who were infected during the H1N1 flu epidemic of 2009-2010. (Tamiflu was by far the most commonly used drug of this type, called neuraminidase inhibitors.) Over all, use of these drugs reduced mortality in adults by 25 percent, compared with untreated patients. If treatment began within two days of the onset of symptoms, mortality was reduced by 50 percent. The results held for all adults, pregnant women and adults in critical care, but the drugs had no statistically significant effect on mortality rates in children... The study was paid for by F. Hoffmann-La Roche, whose subsidiary, Genentech, manufactures Tamiflu. [New York Times](#)

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

28 March:

- Northern Command - ILI and P&I activity continued to decline among service members in week 12.

- Southern Command - Among local nationals in Peru in week 12, 43 samples were tested. 2 tested positive for A/H1 and 2 for flu B.
- Central Command - The percent of encounters that were ILI decreased and was below baseline. The percent of encounters that were P&I continued to decrease and was below baseline.
- Africa Command - Among local nationals in Cameroon, 4 samples were tested and 1 was flu positive (1 B). In Uganda in week 11, 30 samples were tested and 2 were flu positive (1 A/H1, 1 A/H3).
- European Command - The percent of outpatient encounters due to ILI decreased this week and were close to baseline. Those due to P&I were stable and were at baseline.
- Pacific Command - ILI and P&I activity continued to decrease in week 12. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 12 (March 16-22, 2014), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 4,977 specimens tested and reported during week 12 by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories, 571 (11.5%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths: Four influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Weeks 11 & 12, a total of 140 specimens were collected and received from 46 locations. Results were finalized for 61 specimens from 33 locations.
- For specimens collected during Week 11, there were eight influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, three influenza A(H3N2), and eight influenza B identified. For specimens collected during Week 12, there were two influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, one influenza A(H3N2), two influenza A/not subtyped, and four influenza B identified.
- Cumulative results were finalized for 3,079 specimens from 82 locations.
- There were 989 specimens positive for influenza A (892 A(H1N1)pdm09, 79 A(H3N2), one A(H1N1)pdm09 & adenovirus, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & coronavirus, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & parainfluenza, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & RSV, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & rhinovirus/enterovirus, and 10 A/not subtyped).
- There were 58 specimens positive for influenza B (52 B/unknown lineage and six B/Yamagata).
- Other respiratory pathogens identified were 58 adenovirus, 30 Chlamydomphila pneumoniae, 202 coronavirus, 101 human metapneumovirus, 43 Mycoplasma

pneumoniae, 66 parainfluenza, 172 RSV, and 314 rhinovirus/enterovirus. To date, 138 non-influenza co-infections have been identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

For week 12/2014:

- Of the 29 countries providing clinical data, Estonia, Greece and Romania reported medium intensity and all other countries low intensity.
- Of the 662 sentinel specimens tested across 23 countries, 207 (31%) were positive for influenza virus. Of these, 198 (96%) were type A, 118 subtyped as A(H3) and 47 A(H1)pdm09, and nine (4%) were type B.
- Six countries reported 117 hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases including 67 cases admitted to intensive care units.

Influenza activity is declining, with only a few countries reporting medium intensity, wide geographical spread or increasing trends. Influenza is still circulating with a higher proportion of influenza subtype A(H3) detected than A(H1)pdm09. However, the number of specimens testing positive for influenza is declining. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Influenza vaccine cuts flu-related pediatric ICU admissions

28 March - Complete vaccination coverage against influenza (e.g., 2 doses in young children) is associated with about an 80% reduction in flu-related pediatric intensive care unit admissions, according to a case-control study in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*. Between 2010 and 2012, U.S. researchers examined data on some 45 children who were admitted to 21 pediatric ICUs with confirmed influenza, 170 ICU controls without influenza, and 90 community-based controls. Vaccination coverage was low, with just 18% of influenza cases, 31% of ICU controls, and 51% of community controls fully vaccinated. In adjusted analyses, full vaccination was 74% to 82% effective in preventing influenza-related ICU admission. Partial vaccination coverage provided no benefit. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2014 Week 12 (through 22 March 2014):

Influenza

- No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.
- Influenza activity decreasing among NHRC surveillance populations.

[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](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

All medical regions within the Army demonstrated a decrease in both influenza A testing and influenza A positive specimens.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week twelve were 22% lower than for the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: Three hospitalized influenza cases have been reported to USAPHC through DRSi in week twelve. To date, 107 cases have been reported during this influenza season: twenty-seven in Active Duty (AD) Service Members (SMs) and 80 in non-AD beneficiaries.
- Viral specimens: During week twelve, 108 of 592 (18%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. The most influenza A positive specimens were reported from ERM (53%), followed by NRM and PRM which accounted for 18% and 15%, respectively. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

GAO: Too soon to rate latest HHS countermeasure efforts

1 April - The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has spent \$440 million in the past 2 years on contracts to strengthen the manufacturing base for defenses against pandemic flu and other public health threats, but it's too early to tell how well the efforts will pay off, according to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report released yesterday. The report focuses on HHS's move to develop flexible manufacturing facilities to support the development of medical countermeasures against pandemic flu and other chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats. The effort stems from a reevaluation of US medical countermeasures activities in 2010, following the 2009 flu pandemic, when most of the pandemic flu vaccine supply arrived after the epidemic's peak. [CIDRAP](#)

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

3 April - On 31 March 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of three additional laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus. [WHO](#)

Pandemic preparedness and response – lessons from the H1N1 influenza of 2009

9 April - ...The 2009 H1N1 pandemic presented a public health emergency of uncertain scope, duration, and effect. The experience exposed strengths of the newly implemented

International Health Regulations (IHR) as well as a number of deficiencies and defects, including vulnerabilities in global, national, and local public health capacities; limitations of scientific knowledge; difficulties in decision making under conditions of uncertainty; complexities in international cooperation; and challenges in communication among experts, policymakers, and the public... Even though there were areas of outstanding performance, such as the timely identification of the pathogen, the development of sensitive and specific diagnostics, and the creation of highly interactive networks of public health officials, the most fundamental conclusion of the committee, which applies today, is not reassuring: "The world is ill prepared to respond to a severe influenza pandemic or to any similarly global, sustained and threatening public-health emergency." [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

FSIS issues public health alert for processed egg products unfit for human consumption

26 March - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is issuing a public health alert because Nutriom LLC, a Lacey, Wash. establishment, declined to expand its Feb. 15, 2014 recall to include an additional 118,541 pounds of processed egg products for which there is reason to conclude that they are unfit for human consumption. The request for expansion was based on evidence collected during an ongoing investigation conducted by FSIS at this establishment. The company has refused to recall the additional processed egg products. As a consequence, FSIS intends to take appropriate action to remove the products from commerce. [USDA](#)

Meta-analysis suggests cattle *E coli* O157 most common in Africa

2 April - Scientists who conducted what they call the first meta-analysis of the global prevalence of *Escherichia coli* O157 in cattle say their findings suggest the pathogen is most common in Africa, followed by North America, and least common in Latin America. Writing in *PLoS One* yesterday, authors from Bangladesh and South Africa said they searched seven electronic databases for relevant publications dating from 1980 to 2012. They identified 140 studies involving 220,427 cattle. Their pooled estimate of the global prevalence of the pathogen is 5.68% (95% confidence interval [CI], 5.16%-6.20%). For global regions, they came up with these prevalence estimates: Africa, 31.20% (95% CI, 12.35%-50.04%); North America, 7.35% (6.44%-8.26%); Oceania, 6.85% (2.41%-11.29%); Europe, 5.15% (4.21%-6.09%); Asia, 4.69% (3.05%-6.33%); and Latin America and the Caribbean, 1.65% (0.77%-2.53%). [CIDRAP](#) (second item)

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WELLNESS

Eating more vegetables can almost halve your risk of dying

1 April – Fruit makes a difference too, but fresh veggies have a larger effect. We've all been told to eat our vegetables, and even if we don't like it, we know they're good for us. But a new study shows just how good for our longevity they may be. Seven or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day can lower your risk of dying by an astonishing 42%, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*. [TIME](#)

Good day sunshine: Could morning light help keep us lean?



3 April - Exposure to morning light, whether it's pure sunlight or bright indoor lighting, is associated with leaner body weights, researchers say. The findings fit with a growing body of evidence that suggests keeping our internal body clocks synchronized with the natural light-dark cycle is beneficial to our health and our waistlines. To

better understand this relationship, researchers at Northwestern University recruited 54 adults (average age 30) from the Chicago area and had them wear wrist monitors that tracked their exposure to light and sleep patterns for a week. The participants recorded what they were eating in daily logs so the researchers could estimate caloric intake. "We found that the earlier this light exposure occurred during the day, the lower individuals' body mass index," says study author Kathryn Reid, a research associate professor at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. [NPR](#)

Hazards of hindsight — monitoring the safety of nutritional supplements

9 April - Epidemiologists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently confirmed what an astute liver-transplant surgeon in Honolulu already suspected: OxyElite Pro, a popular over-the-counter supplement, was responsible for a cluster of cases of severe hepatitis and liver failure. Although patients began to develop severe hepatitis in May 2013, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), whose job it is to remove dangerous supplements from store shelves, did not learn of the cases until mid-September, 4 months later. By February 2014, the CDC had linked 97 cases, resulting in 47 hospitalizations, three liver transplantations, and one death, to OxyElite Pro. This dietary supplement was recalled, but nothing has been done to prevent another supplement from causing organ failure or death. Nor have any changes been made to improve the FDA's ability to detect dangerous supplements. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

How did sleep become so nightmarish?

21 March - ...In the last year or two, an obsessive fixation on getting sleep — not just any sleep, but *good* sleep — has crept into our public consciousness. In the early 2000s, the small number of New York Times articles that referred to sleep mostly instructed new mothers on how to get their babies to nod off. Not so in 2013 and early '14, when there were articles on how insomnia makes you fat, sleep seminars, exercising for better sleep, napping for success, sleep as depression cure and an array of new, supposedly soporific devices and products... The Pentagon has even been funding studies of the physiology of migratory birds to figure out how soldiers can go up to seven days sans sleep without experiencing a decline in cognitive functioning. Pills or genetic modifications that allow us to go days without sleep might sound far-fetched now, but Cray notes how many innovations by the military — microwaves, satellites, the Internet — have been widely adopted in civilian life. [New York Times](#)

Levels of sodium intake recommended by CDC associated with harmful health outcomes

2 April - A new study published in the *American Journal of Hypertension* finds evidence that the average daily sodium intake of most Americans is actually associated with better health outcomes than intake levels currently recommended by the CDC and major health departments, which are now being viewed by many in the scientific community as excessively and unrealistically low. The study, "Compared With Usual Sodium Intake, Low- and Excessive-Sodium Diets Are Associated With Increased Mortality: A Meta-Analysis," concluded that 2,645 – 4,945 mg of sodium per day, a range of intake within which the vast majority of Americans fall, actually results in more favorable health outcomes than the CDC's current recommendation of less than 2300mg/day for healthy individuals under 50 years old, and less than 1500 mg/day for most over 50 years. [EurekAlert!](#)

Low vitamin D levels linked to disease in two big studies

1 April - People with low vitamin D levels are more likely to die from cancer and heart disease and to suffer from other illnesses, scientists reported in two large studies published on Tuesday. The new research suggests strongly that blood levels of vitamin D are a good barometer of overall health. But it does not resolve the question of whether low levels are a cause of disease or simply an indicator of behaviors that contribute to poor health, like a sedentary lifestyle, smoking and a diet heavy in processed and unhealthful foods. [New York Times](#)

Spring forward, heart attack: daylight savings ups cardiac risks



31 March – [R]esearchers say their latest study suggests rolling the clocks forward may cause more than sleep disruption; it may also accelerate cardiac events in some individuals. This research comes at a time when experts are debating whether daylight saving time is needed anymore. Some experts have questioned whether it does in fact save energy, while others have wondered whether it may have more negative health effects than simply making us feel groggy. Dr. Amneet Sandu, lead author and cardiology fellow at the University of Colorado, Denver, notes that we experience daylight saving time changes twice a year, which prompted the research team to investigate how the hour lost or gained impacts our body's natural rhythm... Results showed that the Monday after we turn the clocks forward saw a 25% increase in the number of heart attacks, compared with other Mondays of the year. [Medical News Today](#)

Too much running tied to shorter lifespan, studies find



1 April -- Running regularly has long been linked to a host of health benefits, including weight control, stress reduction, better blood pressure and cholesterol. However, recent research suggests there may be a point of diminishing returns with running... The researchers behind the newest study on the issue say people who get either no exercise or high-mileage runners both tend to have shorter lifespans than moderate runners. But the reasons why remain unclear, they added. The new study seems to rule out cardiac risk or the use of certain medications as factors. [Health Day](#)

Weight loss surgery helps many reverse type 2 diabetes – study

31 March - Bariatric weight loss surgery on obese patients with type 2 diabetes helped many get their blood sugar to healthy levels and to no longer require any diabetes medicines, including insulin, three years after the procedure, according to data presented at a major medical meeting on Monday. The surgery also helped patients reduce the need for high blood pressure and cholesterol medicines and led to quality of life improvements compared with those who received medical weight-loss therapy, researchers found... More than a third - 37.5 percent - of patients who underwent gastric bypass surgery and a quarter of those who had a sleeve gastrectomy procedure achieved blood sugar levels below the American Diabetes Association target and most no longer needed diabetes medicines, researchers said. That compared with just 5 percent of patients in the medical therapy group who got their A1c blood sugar levels down to 6 percent or less. [Reuters](#)

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Ebola virus disease: background and summary

3 April - WHO is supporting the national authorities in the response to an outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD; formerly known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever). The outbreak is now confirmed to be caused by a strain of ebolavirus with very close homology (98%) to the Zaire ebolavirus. This is the first time the disease has been detected in West Africa. Cases were first reported from forested areas in south-eastern Guinea. The outbreak has rapidly evolved and several districts and Conakry have reported cases and deaths caused by EVD. A small number of suspected cases and deaths has also been reported from neighbouring countries with all of them having crossed from Guinea. Confirmed cases have been reported from Guinea and Liberia. [WHO](#)

Guinea: Scale of Ebola epidemic unprecedented - aid agency

1 April - Guinea faces an Ebola epidemic on an unprecedented scale as it battles to contain confirmed cases now scattered across several locations that are far apart, medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres said on Monday. The warning from an organization with experience of tackling Ebola in Central Africa comes after Guinea's president appealed for calm as the number of deaths linked to an outbreak on the border with Liberia and Sierra Leone hit 80. The outbreak of one of the world's most lethal infectious diseases has spooked a number of governments with weak health systems, prompting Senegal to close its border with Guinea and other neighbors to restrict travel and cross-border exchanges. Figures released overnight by Guinea's health ministry showed that there had been 78 deaths from 122 cases of suspected Ebola since January, up from 70. Of these, there were 22 laboratory-confirmed cases of Ebola, the ministry said. [Reuters](#)

Liberia: Tests confirm Ebola infections in Liberia

31 March - Liberia's health ministry said lab tests have confirmed Ebola hemorrhagic fever in two patients from a district that borders Guinea, the country where the outbreak began, according to a statement yesterday from the World Health Organization (WHO). Also, the number of lab-confirmed cases in the outbreak continues to grow, with 24 cases now, the WHO said yesterday in a separate statement. The WHO has warned that the outbreak is a rapidly evolving event and that the numbers of cases and deaths could change. [CIDRAP](#)

New mobile health app to fight AIDS, malaria in 7 African countries

24 March - Mobilium Global has announced the launch of its mobile health app in seven African countries (Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Angola, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, and

Senegal) to fight AIDS, Malaria and TB, IT News Africa reports. The free application called "Smart Health" is the first Android "Made for Africa" mobile health and wellness platform that encourages behavioral changing practices to help reduce the transmission and infection rates of AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis. The goal is to utilize mobile health technology to enhance the health maintenance, health behaviors and ultimately the future health of individuals and their communities across the continent. [HIT Consultant](#)

South African HIV prevalence rises on soaring new infections

2 April - The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in South Africa is rising due to the world's fastest growth in new infections and a higher patient survival rate, according to a new health study. An estimated 12.2 percent of South Africa's population was infected with the HIV virus in 2012, compared with 10.6 percent in 2008, according to a survey of 38,000 people carried out by the country's Human Sciences Research Council. The percentage rise was partly due to 400,000 new HIV cases in the year studied, the highest in the world, taking the total number of people infected in South Africa to 6.4 million. Young black African women were the worst affected, with 23.2 percent of females aged 15-49 infected, compared with 18.8 percent of men, the study showed. [Reuters](#)

West Africa: Ebola virus disease, WHO update

1 April - ...As at 31 March 2014, the Ministry of Health of Guinea has reported 122 clinically compatible cases of EVD, of which 24 are laboratory confirmed by PCR, and 98 are probable (78) or suspected (22) cases....Case investigation and contact tracing are continuing, with 400 contacts under medical follow-up at present. Further strengthening of infection prevention and control in health-care facilities is a priority intervention. In addition, efforts are continuing to raise awareness in the community about the importance of personal protective measures to prevent Ebola virus transmission including hand washing, caring for the sick safely in the community, the use of personal protective equipment when handling potentially contaminated blood and body fluids and during environmental cleaning and disinfection, and safe burials. [WHO](#)

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Iraq: 'Environmental poisoning' of Iraq is claimed

26 March - An advocacy group representing American military veterans and Iraqi civilians arrived [in Washington DC] on Wednesday armed with a message for the United States government: Washington must do something for the thousands of people suffering from what the group called the "environmental poisoning" of Iraq during the war. The group,

[Right to Heal](#), says that veterans and civilians continue to feel the effects of the burn pits — banned by Congress four years ago — that were used to dispose of military waste, and that new health problems arise every day for Iraqis... Right to Heal wants large-scale cleanup efforts in Iraq and American reparations for the civilians who lived near the pits, inhaling smoke from the burning of paint, plastics, metal cans, rubber tires, munitions and chemicals. [New York Times](#)

Syrian refugees hit million mark in Lebanon

3 April - The number of Syrian refugees registered in Lebanon has exceeded one million, in what the UN refugee agency calls a "devastating milestone" for a small country with depleted resources and brewing sectarian tension. Refugees from Syria, half of them children, now equal a quarter of Lebanon's resident population, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said in a statement, warning that most of them live in poverty and depend on aid for survival. UNHCR chief Antonio Guterres described the figure as "a devastating milestone worsened by rapidly depleting resources and a host community stretched to breaking point"... The influx has put severe strains on Lebanon's health and education sectors as well as on electricity, water and sanitation services. [Al Jazeera](#)

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Spain/Morocco: A borderline where women bear the weight



30 March- There is probably no more abrupt economic fault line in the world than the fences that surround Melilla and Ceuta, Spain's enclaves on the North African coast. Here just a few rows of chain link and barbed wire separate the wealth of Europe from the despair of Africa. So faint a barrier it is, and so tempting to breach, that migrants from

Africa regularly try to swarm the defense. The latest attempt was a coordinated assault by about 800 people who tried to scale the fences on Friday. But the women like Mrs. Rmamda, known as "mule ladies," are among the lucky few Moroccans who live in the region immediately surrounding Melilla (pronounced meh-LEE-yah) who do not need a visa to cross the border. Over the last two decades, they have turned the privilege to their meager advantage, hauling goods like used clothing, toilet paper and small electronics into Morocco from Spain, sometimes earning as little as three euros per trip, sometimes as much as 10. Most make no more than 15 or 20 euros a week, or \$20 to \$27. [New York Times](#)

United Kingdom: Increase in scarlet fever notifications, 2013/2014

27 March - Increases in scarlet fever above usual seasonal levels are currently being seen across the United Kingdom. Medical practitioners have been alerted to the exceptional increase in incidence. Given the potential for this to signal a population increase in invasive group A streptococcal disease, close monitoring of invasive disease is essential.

[Eurosurveillance](#)

United Kingdom: Smog blanketing Britain set to clear

3 April - The smog that has blanketed Britain this week is likely to lift during the next day or so, Al Jazeera's senior meteorologist has said... A combination of local emissions, light winds and pollution from continental Europe, compounded with dust blown across from the Sahara, have prompted health warnings about poor air quality across southern and central England. Data from Britain's environment ministry showed pollution levels were "very high" - 10 on a scale of 10 - in London and nine in parts of eastern England on Thursday morning. British authorities warned people with heart or lung conditions to stay indoors, as motorists woke to find their cars covered in a film of red dust. [Al Jazeera](#)

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Canada/U.S.: Measles threatens in Canada, U.S

2 April - Health officials in Canada's westernmost province are battling a large measles outbreak that is now threatening to spill over the border into Washington state. As many as 330 cases of the highly contagious disease have been reported since early March in British Columbia's lower Fraser Valley, near Vancouver, according to Paul Van Buynder, MD, chief medical officer of Fraser Health. All but two of those cases have occurred among members of an orthodox Protestant sect that doesn't believe in vaccination, Van Buynder told *MedPage Today*. Five ill members of the congregation live across the U.S. border in Washington state and have been isolated, but Whatcom County officials now say a sixth person -- a woman in her 20s who is not part of the church but who visited the afflicted family — has been infected. [MedPage Today](#)

U.S.: Death toll in Washington mudslide rises to 30

3 April - The death toll rose to 30 on Thursday in the Washington state mudslide that obliterated a community last month, the Snohomish County medical examiner's office said. On March 22, a rain-soaked hillside collapsed without warning above the north fork of Stillaguamish River, unleashing a torrent of mud that roared over the river and across state

Highway 530, engulfing some three dozen homes on the outskirts of the tiny town of Oso.

[Reuters](#)

U.S.: Ethicists tell NASA how to weigh hazards of space travel



2 April - NASA is hoping to soon venture out farther into space than ever before. But these long journeys mean astronauts could face greater risks to their physical and mental health than the space agency currently allows. Now, an independent group of experts convened by the Institute of Medicine, the health arm

of the National Academy of Sciences, has weighed in on how NASA should make decisions about the kinds of risks that are acceptable for missions that venture outside low Earth orbit or extend beyond 30 days. Some of the recommendations involve making sure that women get a fair chance at going on these missions and that former astronauts who take risks are guaranteed health care even after they leave the space agency... Risks to astronauts include vision impairment, weakened bones and radiation exposure. Plus, there are psychological risks of facing extreme danger while being stuck inside a small, confined space with other crew members. Astronauts on unprecedented missions might also face unknown health risks. [NPR](#)

U.S.: F.D.A. approves portable drug overdose treatment

3 April - The Food and Drug Administration on Thursday approved an emergency drug overdose treatment for use in homes and other community settings outside hospitals. Federal regulators said that the treatment, an injector filled with a medication that reverses the effects of an overdose, can fit in a pocket or medicine cabinet, and could help stem the rising number of drug overdoses. The device, called Evzio, delivers a single dose of the drug naloxone through a hand-held device to treat someone who has stopped breathing or lost consciousness from an opioid drug overdose. Naloxone is the standard treatment for an overdose, but until now, has been available only in hospitals and other medical settings, when it is often too late for the patient. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Mental health groups split on bill to overhaul care

2 April - Lawmakers, patient advocates and the millions of Americans living with a psychiatric diagnosis agree that the nation's mental health care system is broken, and on Thursday, Congress will hear testimony on the most ambitious overhaul plan in decades, a bill that has already stirred longstanding divisions in mental health circles... And its backing of the expanded use of involuntary outpatient treatment has drawn opposition from some advocacy groups... Last week, both houses of Congress adopted one of its central provisions, expanding funding for outpatient treatment programs through other legislation.

[New York Times](#)

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Cambodia: Hundreds of garment workers faint



3 April - More than 200 Cambodian garment workers have been hospitalised after episodes of mass fainting at three factories, highlighting problems within an industry that is critical to the kingdom's fledgling economy. The three factories make clothes for brands such as sportswear giants Puma SE and Adidas. Puma and Adidas said they were investigating the incidents and would respond soon, a Reuters news agency report said. Tainted food, poor working conditions and the spraying of insecticide are suspected causes, AFP news agency reported, citing Khim Sunsoda, deputy governor of Pur Senchey district, where the incidents happened... Mass fainting is common in Cambodia, which has become an important manufacturing centre for many high street fashion brands including Gap, Nike, H&M and Marks & Spencer. [Al Jazeera](#)

Clinical malaria along the China–Myanmar border, Yunnan Province, China, January 2011–August 2012

April 2014 - Passive surveillance for malaria cases was conducted in Yunnan Province, China, along the China–Myanmar border. Infection with *Plasmodium vivax* and *P. falciparum* protozoa accounted for 69% and 28% of the cases, respectively. Most patients were adult men. Cross-border travel into Myanmar was a key risk factor for *P. falciparum* malaria in China. [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#)

Japan: Fukushima meltdown unlikely to lead to large number of cancers, U.N. scientists

2 April - Japan's Fukushima nuclear disaster is unlikely to lead to a large number of people developing cancer like after Chernobyl in 1986, even though the most exposed children may face an increased risk, U.N. scientists said on Wednesday. In a major study, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) said it did not expect "significant changes" in future cancer rates that could be attributed to radiation exposure from the reactor meltdowns. [Reuters](#)

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Caribbean: Chikungunya

1 April - The number of confirmed and suspected chikungunya cases in the Caribbean continues to increase; in fact, some new cities on the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe have reported cases for the 1st time, according to a European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) update today [28 Mar 2014]. To date, there have been 3211 confirmed/probable chikungunya cases reported in the region, including 5 deaths and 15 282 suspected cases. [ProMED-mail](#)

Chile declares disaster in quake-hit regions

2 April - Chile has declared two northern regions hit by a magnitude 8.2 earthquake to be disaster areas. At least six people are known to have died and tens of thousands of people have been evacuated. The quake struck at 20:46 local time (23:46 GMT) about 86km (52 miles) north-west of the mining area of Iquique, the US Geological Survey said...Waves of up to 2.1m (about 6ft) have hit some areas and there have been power cuts, fires and landslides. Dozens of aftershocks have been reported throughout the night, including a 6.2 tremor. [BBC News](#)

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