5 June 2015

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command

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Subscription or Comments

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

The U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center launches an Army-wide campaign each June, to mark National Safety Month. Media products supporting the month, including feature articles, posters and informational videos, are made available on the USACRC home page.

The spring and summer months are among the most dangerous times of year for Soldiers off-duty, especially regarding accidents involving private motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal watercraft.

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Ciprofloxacin- and Azithromycin-Nonsusceptible Shigellosis in the United States

CDC continues to receive new reports of infections with Shigella strains that are not susceptible to ciprofloxacin and/or azithromycin, the antimicrobial agents most commonly used to treat shigellosis. Most cases have been reported among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men.

Shigellosis is very contagious and can spread quickly through communities and across different segments of the population.

CDC recommends meticulous handwashing and other hygiene practices to prevent shigellosis and encourages patients with symptoms of shigellosis such as diarrhea and fever to visit a healthcare provider.

U.S. MILITARY

Anthrax: As many as 51 labs in 17 states, 3 countries, received live samples

3 June - An Army testing facility in Utah mistakenly sent live anthrax samples without proper safeguards to as many as 51 commercial companies, academic institutions and federal laboratories, and that total is expected to increase, a widening Pentagon investigation has found. Officials said Wednesday that the labs identified so far are scattered across 17 states and the District of Columbia, as well as in Canada, Australia and South Korea, suggesting a systemic lapse in the military’s program to study and build defenses against biological weapons agents, including anthrax. ... Officials say no one has developed an anthrax infection from the shipments, but 31 military and civilian lab workers who handled the vials are being treated with antibiotics for potential exposure. Los Angeles Times

Case series: Chikungunya and dengue at a forward operating location

May 2015 - ... The U.S. Forward Operating Location (FOL), 429th Expeditionary Operations Squadron, is based in Curaçao, a tropical island nation in the Caribbean located approximately 50 miles north of the coast of Venezuela. The FOL operations include U.S. Air Force (USAF) and U.S. Navy active duty personnel. The epidemic of chikungunya extended to several active duty personnel located at the FOL. Based on reported cases, the outbreak was the largest single cluster of chikungunya cases in USAF active duty personnel to date. This report describes a case series and discusses the significance of this disease in the Americas and diagnostic challenges when other arboviruses such as dengue are present.

Between November 2014 and January 2015, six active duty USAF personnel from the FOL presented with signs and symptoms compatible with chikungunya and dengue fever. ... Serum samples from all patients were tested for chikungunya and dengue IgM at a local hospital in Curaçao. All six personnel were male; none required hospitalization or evacuation to the U.S. Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

Researchers assess non-fatal suicidal behaviors in US Army administrative records

28 May - Although the U.S. Army suicide rate is known to have risen sharply over the past decade, information about medically documented, non-fatal suicidal behaviors is far more limited. [A new] study used data from the Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers (Army STARRS), the largest study of mental health risk and resilience ever conducted among U.S. Army personnel. ... In this study, from 2004-2009, the investigators report on 21,740 unique Soldiers who had a suicide attempt, suspicious injury, or suicide ideation. This includes 9,791 suicide attempts. The rate of definite and probable suicide attempt was 319 per 100,000 person years. The annual rates of definite suicide attempts
were approximately three to eight times higher than those of suicide deaths. When probable suicide attempts are included, the attempt-to-death ratio was in the range 13-22. Unlike suicide attempts and suicide ideation, the Army's annual incidence rate of suspicious injuries remained stable and was not correlated with any other outcomes. ... For each non-fatal event category (suicide attempts, suicide ideation and suspicious injury), the study found higher odds among those who are female, Non-Hispanic White, never married, lower ranking enlisted, have less than a high school education, and entered Army service prior to age 21. Medical Xpress

Study: Bomb blasts may cause early aging in brains of troops

1 June - VA scientists have discovered signs of early aging in the brains of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans caught near roadside bomb explosions, even among those who felt nothing from the blast. Years after coming home from war, veterans are showing progressive damage to the brain's wiring. ... "Generally as we age, the connections (in the brain) deteriorate. But with those people with blast exposure it appears as though it's happening faster," said Benjamin Trotter, a bio-medical engineer with the Department of Veterans Affairs and lead author of the study. USA Today

GLOBAL

A new U.N. health goal targets folks 69 and under. Ageism or realism?

3 June - In September, the U.N. will vote to adopt 17 Sustainable Development Goals (aka SDGs). They cover issues like poverty, health and climate change. The idea is to encourage the 192 U.N. member states to establish policies that will make the world a better place over the next 15 years. At least one SDG is turning out to be a bit controversial. This particular goal calls for a reduction in "premature mortality" from non-communicable diseases like cancer, stroke and dementia by half in people younger than 50 and by a third among people from 50 to 69. What about people over 70? Shouldn't they get a shout-out? Welcome to the under/over 70 debate. NPR

Cancer drug combination 'shrinks 60% of melanomas'

1 June - A pair of cancer drugs can shrink tumours in nearly 60% of people with advanced melanoma, a new trial has suggested. An international trial on 945 patients found treatment with ipilimumab and nivolumab stopped the cancer advancing for nearly a year in 58% of cases. ... Harnessing the immune system is a rapidly developing field in cancer research. The
immune system is a powerful defence against infection. However, there are many "brakes" built in to stop the system attacking our own tissues. Cancer - which is a corrupted version of healthy tissue - can take advantage of these brakes to evade assault from the immune system. Ipilimumab, which was approved as an advanced melanoma treatment by the UK's health service last year, and nivolumab both take the brakes off. An international trial on 945 people showed that taking both drugs led to tumours shrinking by at least a third in 58% of patients - with the tumours stable or shrinking for an average of 11.5 months. 

BBC News

Gates Foundation to double spending on hunger to $776 million over six years

3 June - Melinda Gates announced on Thursday that her and husband Bill's foundation will spend $776 million tackling hunger over the next six years, doubling existing commitments. Gates made the announcement in Brussels, where she urged European leaders to make the nutrition of women and children a priority. The huge pledge also unlocks $180 million in matched funding from Britain's Department for International Development. "Malnutrition is the underlying cause of nearly half of all under-5 child deaths," said Gates. ... Much of the money will be spent in India, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Burkina Faso, where there is serious malnutrition and a real chance to make positive changes, the foundation said. 

Reuters

New research leads to FDA approval of first drug to treat radiation sickness

22 May - As a result of research performed by scientists at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UM SOM), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the use of a drug to treat the harmful effects of radiation exposure following a nuclear incident. The drug, Neupogen®, is the first ever approved for the treatment of acute radiation injury. ... "Our research shows that this drug works to increase survival by protecting blood cells," said Dr. MacVittie, who is considered one of the nation's leading experts on radiation research. "That is a significant advancement, because the drug can now be used as a safe and effective treatment for the blood cell effects of severe radiation poisoning."

ScienceDaily

Scientists identify 2 new bunyavirus groups, note arthropod origin

3 June - German researchers discovered two new groups of viruses within the bunyavirus family in Ivory Coast, and their whole-genome analysis of bunyaviruses collected from mosquitoes indicates an arthropod origin for the viruses, according to results published yesterday in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The family Bunyaviridae contains important human pathogens such as Rift Valley fever virus, Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever virus, and hantaviruses, as well as viruses that cause serious animal
Single test for all virus exposure opens doors for researchers

4 June - Using less than a drop of blood, a new test can reveal nearly every virus a person has ever been exposed to, scientists reported on Thursday. The test, which is still experimental, can be performed for as little as $25 and could become an important research tool for tracking patterns of disease in various populations, helping scientists compare the old and the young, or people in different parts of the world. It could also be used to try to find out whether viruses, or the body’s immune response to them, contribute to chronic diseases and cancer, the researchers said. ... The test can detect past exposure to more than 1,000 strains of viruses from 206 species — pretty much the entire human "virome," meaning all the viruses known to infect people. New York Times

The truth behind the suicide statistic for older teen girls

2 June - ... [In] September, 2014, the World Health Organization released its report on "Health for the World's Adolescents: A Second Chance in the Second Decade." ... “The number one cause of death had changed [from maternal mortality],” she says. "It was suicide." ... But curiously, the shift doesn't reflect a sudden increase in self-harm. What it does reflect is a bit of good news: Maternal mortality has been dropping. NPR

UNAIDS: 95% of African children with AIDS lack access to treatment

2 June - Nearly 95 percent of African children living with AIDS do not have access to treatment, the executive director of UNAIDS said during a visit to Cameroon Tuesday. UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibe said there has been nearly a 60 percent decrease in the number of HIV infections among children under the age of 15, but more than 90 percent of the more than 3 million children living with the disease are in sub-Saharan Africa, where access to treatment has been a major obstacle to stopping its spread. VOA

Who's addicted to what? The first worldwide guide

31 May - ... Worldwide, some 5 percent of the world's population — about 240 million people — are dependent on alcohol. The accepted mental health definitions of dependence speaks of compulsive use, loss of control over substance use and a failure to stop using even when people are aware of the problems alcohol is causing. More than a billion people, or 20 percent of the human race, smoke tobacco. Statistics on the use of illegal drugs are more difficult to gather, says Gowing. But one point of comparison is that, from the limited estimates available, some 15 million people around the world use injection drugs, such as heroin. ... It's undeniable that both tobacco and alcohol increase the risk of early death. But the overuse of alcohol, the report found, takes a greater toll in what public health officials
CDC issues health advisory on protecting humans during bird flu outbreak

4 June - The CDC is warning clinicians that humans could be infected by highly-pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A H5 viruses that have been circulating among U.S. poultry flocks. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that 40 million poultry across 20 states have been infected with or exposed to HPAI H5N2, H5N8, or H5N1. It’s the first time these strains have been identified in U.S. flocks. ... The CDC recommends the following:

- Clinicians should consider these HPAI H5 viruses in people with new-onset influenza-like illness or acute respiratory infection (which could include conjunctivitis), who’ve also had close contact with birds that may be infected or surfaces contaminated by potentially-infected birds within 10 days of illness onset.
- After a potential exposure, people should be monitored for 10 days for signs of illness.
- Antiviral prophylaxis may be considered after exposure.

There are currently no human vaccines available against these strains.

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 20 (May 17–23, 2015), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 6,337 specimens tested and reported by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories during week 20, 185 (2.9%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.

DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program: Respiratory Highlights

For 3-30 May 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 18-21):

During 3–30 May 2015, a total of 117 specimens were collected and received from 38 locations. Results were finalized for 88 specimens from 32 locations. A total of six influenza viruses were identified. Four influenza B viruses were identified during Week 19, with one
influenza B and one influenza A/H3 identified during Week 20. There were no influenza viruses identified during Week 18 and 21. DoD Global Influenza Summaries and Reports

Influenza activity — United States, 2014–15 season and composition of the 2015–16 influenza vaccine

5 June – During the 2014–15 influenza season in the United States, influenza activity increased through late November and December before peaking in late December. Influenza A (H3N2) viruses predominated, and the prevalence of influenza B viruses increased late in the season. This influenza season, similar to previous influenza A (H3N2)–predominant seasons, was moderately severe with overall high levels of outpatient illness and influenza-associated hospitalization, especially for adults aged ≥65 years. The majority of circulating influenza A (H3N2) viruses were different from the influenza A (H3N2) component of the 2014–15 Northern Hemisphere seasonal vaccines, and the predominance of these drifted viruses resulted in reduced vaccine effectiveness. ... The Food and Drug Administration's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee has recommended that the 2015–16 influenza trivalent vaccines used in the United States contain an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus, an A/Switzerland/9715293/2013 (H3N2)-like virus, and a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (B/Yamagata lineage) virus. It is recommended that quadrivalent vaccines, which have two influenza B viruses, contain the viruses recommended for the trivalent vaccines, as well as a B/Brisbane/60/2008-like (B/Victoria lineage) virus. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2015 Week 21 (through 30 May 2015):

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.

- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated moderately elevated FRI rates at MCRD San Diego. NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

U.S. agency refuses farmers' requests on bird flu vaccine

3 June - The U.S. Department of Agriculture said on Wednesday that it would not allow commercial release of a poultry vaccine to fight the worst outbreak of bird flu in U.S. history because it was not effective enough. The agency said in a notice that additional criteria must be met before a vaccine can be approved for emergency use. The USDA has been developing a vaccine against bird flu and was weighing whether to release it to drug makers for widespread production. Reuters
U.S.: Avian flu hits four more turkey farms in Midwest

1 June - Avian influenza has invaded four more turkey farms in the Upper Midwest: two in Iowa, one in Minnesota, and one in South Dakota, according to state and media reports. In Iowa, the virus hit turkey farms in Hamilton and Calhoun counties, marking the second outbreak in each. Iowa has now had 65 outbreaks in 18 counties, with 28.6 million poultry affected, according to IDALS data. In Minnesota, the affected farm is in the south-central county of Brown. Minnesota now has 103 farms hit by avian flu in 23 counties, the DPS said. More than 8.3 million birds have been affected, not counting farms for which flock size estimates are not yet available. The South Dakota outbreak was reported May 29 in Moody County, which borders Minnesota. A farm with about 50,000 birds had a presumptive positive test for avian flu, according to a May 29 Associated Press (AP) story. The outbreak is South Dakota’s 10th recent avian flu incident and the second in Moody County. The South Dakota outbreaks have affected a total of 1.7 million birds, according to the AIB.

WHO Influenza Update

1 June - Globally, influenza activity has decreased from its peak of influenza activity in early 2015 to low levels.

- In North America, influenza activity continued to decrease and was nearing inter-seasonal levels. Influenza type B has increased in recent weeks resulting in a slowed decline in overall influenza activity. In North America, influenza activity continued to decrease and was nearing inter-seasonal levels. Influenza type B has increased in recent weeks resulting in a slowed decline in overall influenza activity.
- In Europe, influenza activity continued to decline with all countries reporting low levels. Although influenza A(H3N2) virus dominated for the season, influenza B continued to dominate in recent weeks.
- In northern Africa, influenza activity has continued to decrease and remained low in general, with influenza A viruses predominant.
- In western Asia, overall influenza activity, mainly associated with influenza A viruses, continued to decrease or remained low.
- In the temperate countries of Asia, influenza activity continued to decrease and remained low in most countries.
- In tropical countries of the Americas and Asia, influenza activity continued to decrease remained low in most countries. However, influenza activity increased in Sri Lanka.
- In the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.

CIDRAP

WHO
Acrylamide in food is a public health concern

4 June - Following a comprehensive review, EFSA has published its scientific opinion on acrylamide in food. Experts from EFSA’s Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM) have reconfirmed previous evaluations that acrylamide in food potentially increases the risk of developing cancer for consumers in all age groups. This conclusion has not changed since the draft opinion was made available for an open public consultation in July 2014. Medical Xpress

FDA releases rule putting animal antibiotics under veterinary oversight

3 June - The US Food and Drug Administration (FDAD) yesterday released its final Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD), a rule that aims to put all uses of medically important antibiotics in food animals under veterinary supervision by the end of next year. The rule is part of the FDA’s strategy to promote the “judicious use” of antimicrobials in food animals so as to limit the development of bacterial resistance to the drugs. It aims to stop the use of medically important antimicrobials for production purposes such as promoting animal growth. CIDRAP News Scan (first item)

A NICE delivery — the cross-Atlantic divide over treatment intensity in childbirth

4 June - … After completing an evidence-based review, the United Kingdom’s National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) concluded that healthy women with straightforward pregnancies are safer giving birth at home or in a midwife-led unit than in a hospital under the supervision of an obstetrician. … The safety argument against physician-led hospital birth is simple and compelling: obstetricians, who are trained to use scalpels and are surrounded by operating rooms, are much more likely than midwives to pick up those scalpels and use them. For women giving birth, the many interventions that have become commonplace during childbirth are unpleasant and may lead to complications, including hospital-acquired infections. For babies, the interventions rarely appear to be helpful. New England Journal of Medicine
Bullied teens often become depressed adults

4 June - Young adults who thought they were bullied in their early teen years were more likely to show symptoms of depression, a large, population-based study from the U.K. indicated. An odds ratio of 2.96 for depression symptoms (95% CI 2.21-3.97, \( P<0.001 \)) was seen among 18-year-olds who reported frequent “peer victimization” (i.e., bullying) at age 13 versus those without such experiences, reported Lucy Bowes, PhD, of Oxford University, and colleagues. The association remained even after adjusting for confounders such as sex, baseline emotional and behavioral problems, and concurrent depressive symptoms (OR 2.32, 95% CI 1.49-3.63, \( P<0.001 \)), they wrote in The BMJ. MedPage Today

Don't take a seat: Panel says you should stand for 2 hours

1 June - ... In the first advice of its kind, British experts are recommending office workers stand for at least two hours a day, in a warning against the dangers of prolonged sitting. The guidelines were developed by a group of experts invited by Public Health England and an advocacy group and were published online Monday in the British Journal of Sports Medicine. The experts recommend people start with two hours of standing or light activity, adding they should eventually double that to four hours. ... According to the guidelines, people who sit the most have more than twice the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, a 13 percent increased risk of cancer and a 17 percent increased risk of premature death, compared to those who sit the least. ABC News

Drinking too much? One-third of Americans say yes

3 June - “Alcohol use disorder” ... [is] a big problem. Almost 30 percent of Americans say they’ve had enough trouble with drinking to qualify at some point in their lives, according to a study from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, published Wednesday in JAMA Psychiatry. That's 68 million people. The researchers polled 36,309 adults in 2012 and 2013 on their drinking habits and health. Almost 14 percent said they’d had two or more of the 11 symptoms of alcohol use disorder in the past, year, including:

- Alcohol is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended.
- There is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control alcohol use.
- Recurrent alcohol use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school or home.
- Craving, or a strong desire or urge to use alcohol. (This one's new.)
- Recurrent alcohol use in situations where it is physically hazardous. NPR

Gene panel confirms high rate of BRCA mutations

4 June - A diagnostic panel that looks for mutations in 25 genes determined that women with triple-negative breast cancer had about 50% more "dangerous mutations" than women with hormone-sensitive cancers, researchers said here. "The overall mutation prevalence in patients with triple-negative breast cancer was 14.7% compared with 9.2% in patients with other types of breast cancer," reported [researchers]. MedPage Today
Teenagers seek health information online, but don’t always trust it

2 June - Four out of five teenagers turn to the Internet for health information, but they don’t always put much stock in what they find, according to a national survey released on Tuesday. The source they really trust with questions about health? Surprise: their parents. The new report, “Teens, Health and Technology,” is an expansive look at how teenagers use technology to learn about health by researchers at Northwestern University. The findings are based on a nationally representative sample of 1,156 adolescents aged 13 to 18. New York Times

Wearable device provides continuous fetal monitoring

1 June - Israeli medical experts have developed a wearable mobile monitor to keep a close watch on pregnant women and their fetuses as they go about their everyday lives. The PregSense monitor has sensors woven into an elastic harness to provide data around the clock on the status of the fetus and the mother’s health in the later stages of pregnancy. A bluetooth-enabled device attached to the monitor collects and transmits data such as the mother and baby’s heart rates to a smartphone and stores it on a secure cloud-based database accessible only to expectant mothers and their physicians. Reuters

Wondering how long you have? Simple score gives five-year death risk

3 June - Health researchers have developed a scientifically rigorous death risk calculator that predicts a person’s risk of dying within five years and say they hope people will use it to improve their health. Using a simple set of around a dozen questions about such things as the number of cars you own or whether you tend to be a slow or, better, a fast walker, the predictor can give a five-year death risk calculation for any Briton aged between 40 and 70 years old. The researchers … say it could improve health awareness and also in future be used by family doctors to identify high-risk potential patients. … As well as the five-year death risk, the calculator -- available at a dedicated interactive website www.ubble.co.uk -- gives users a so-called "Ubble age". Reuters

USAFRICOM

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Ebola activity heats up as West Africa's rainy season begins

3 June - In its weekly epidemiologic profile of the outbreak today, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Ebola activity in Guinea and Sierra Leone has become more
intense and widespread since May 10, when the region saw cases hit a 10-month low. Last week the two countries reported 25 new lab-confirmed cases, 13 in Guinea and 12 in Sierra Leone. The number is up from 12 reported the week before. CIDRAP

Guinea Bissau: Ebola threat rises as border zone heats up

1 June - Violent protests against Ebola controls in a north Guinea town have prompted the Red Cross to withdraw workers, undermining efforts to stop the spread of Ebola into neighboring Guinea Bissau. The Ebola epidemic was detected in Guinea over a year ago and has since killed more than 11,000 people in West Africa. But in a huge relief to officials and aid workers, it has not yet spread to Guinea Bissau, whose health system is deemed vulnerable even by low regional standards. Now, a spike in new cases in Guinea’s Boke border province combined with violent resistance to efforts to control it there are stoking concerns it could spread. Reuters

Kenya: Message for U.S. citizens - Nairobi (Kenya), cholera outbreak

3 June - The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi wishes to inform American citizens in Kenya that there is an ongoing outbreak of cholera that has affected at least nine counties in Kenya and has produced over 3,000 reported cases and over 60 reported deaths. The counties affected by the Cholera outbreak are Nairobi, Homa Bay, Mombasa, Nakuru, Muranga, Kirinyaga, Baringo, Kiambu and Embu. Overseas Security Advisory Council

Niger meningitis epidemic has peaked, 545 dead: WHO says

2 June - An epidemic of meningitis has killed 545 people in Niger, out of 8,234 people who caught the disease, but has now peaked, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday. The WHO had said that the epidemic was worrying and unprecedented because it was a strain not normally found in Africa and the appropriate vaccine was in short supply. In early May, cases were tripling every two weeks. But the number of new cases slowed in the second half of May amid a vaccination campaign in affected areas. The spread of the disease peaked in the week to May 10, when there were 2,189 cases and 132 deaths. In the last week of the month there were 264 cases and 8 deaths, WHO spokesman Cory Couillard said in an emailed response to Reuters. Reuters

Sierra Leone reports another spurt of Ebola cases

1 June - Sierra Leone is reporting a spate of new Ebola cases in a new hot spot in the Kaffu Bullom part of Port Loko district, located in the western part of the country, according to official and media reports. Five lab-confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Kaffu Bullom chiefdom, as well as three in the Western Area Urban district, according to May 29 and Jun 1 updates from the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER). The reports also noted that a new lab-confirmed case has been reported in
Guinea’s Fria district, north of Conakry. The outbreak in Kaffu Bullom has resulted in at least 5 deaths, and the transmission chain is thought to be linked to a sick person who arrived in the area from Kambia district. ... The World Health Organization (WHO) said in an update today that the overall Ebola outbreak total in the hardest-hit countries is at 27,135 confirmed, probable, or suspected cases and 11,145 deaths. The numbers include illnesses reported from Guinea and Sierra Leone, the two countries still reporting cases, as of May 30. CIDRAP News Scan (first item)

**Zimbabwe: Diarrhea and typhoid numbers rise, fingers pointed at water, food vendors**

3 June - With nearly 200,000 cases of diarrheal disease reported as of mid-May in Zimbabwe’s capital of Harare and surrounding areas, which have resulted in some 200 deaths, health officials are looking at sources like lack of potable water and a plethora of street food vendors. According to the Zimbabwe news source, News Day, a recent weekly disease surveillance report from the Ministry of Health for the week ending May 17, indicated there were 9,985 cases of diarrhea reported in that week and six deaths. In addition to the problem with diarrheal diseases, typhoid fever cases are also flourishing in the capital. For the week ending May 17, there were 36 new suspected cases of typhoid, and 33 of those were in Harare with the remaining from Nyanga district. Since the beginning of the year there has been 301 confirmed typhoid and 559 suspected cases. Outbreak News Today

**USCENTCOM**

Kuwait: Patterns of suicide in Kuwait - a retrospective descriptive study from 2003–2009

4 June - Prior to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990, suicides were almost unheard of in Kuwait. However, there has been a notable increase in the referrals of suicide cases to the forensic authorities since then. ... A total of 347 cases were retrieved and studied. Hanging was found to be the most common suicide modality used by subjects (60 %). Non-citizens constituted 87 % of cases, and no significant difference was found between married and single subjects or between Muslims and non-Muslims. Regions that were more populated with an expatriate labour force had the highest suicide prevalence. The government of Kuwait needs to investigate the dire conditions in which some expatriates live and to improve their situation. BMC Public Health
Qatar: The human toll of FIFA’s corruption

27 May - ... The decision to award the 2022 World Cup to the rich Gulf state [Qatar] with a terrible human rights record was a controversial one right out of the gate. ... Human rights advocates' worst fears about Qatar seemed to be confirmed as Qatar began building the infrastructure to host the Cup, and reports of migrant worker deaths started to pile up. The numbers, to the extent that we know them, appear startling: A Guardian investigation last year revealed that Nepalese migrant workers were dying at a rate of one every two days. In sum, the Guardian put the total Qatar death toll of workers from Nepal, India and Bangladesh at 964 in 2012 and 2013. ... Hundreds of thousands of migrant workers come to Qatar each year, and there could be hundreds of deaths even without a World Cup. Washington Post

Pakistan: Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever

2 June - There was another patient at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) on 17 May 2015 who later on expired on 21 May 2015. Mansehra, Abbottabad and other parts of KPK are endemic for the disease. Previously, many cases have been reported with the death of a doctor; a physician resident of Mansehra, who got infected during treatment of a positive patient at Ayub Medical Complex Abbottabad. ... There is immense need to enhance the capacity of doctors to identify cases at initial stages to avoid unnecessary exposure of other health staff and persons. Capacity building workshops must be arranged to refresh the knowledge of doctors at all levels to avoid nosocomial spread, especially in endemic areas. Every time, when such cases present to any doctor, initially they are treated without observing any IPC precautions, which is a great risk for infection transmission, especially in hospital settings. ProMED-mail

Pakistan: Polio drops 70% this year

3 June - Polio cases in Pakistan have dropped by 70% this year as troops make territorial advances in the north against militants opposed to vaccination programmes, government officials have told the BBC. They say that so far in 2015 there have been about 25 cases. In October officials said that Pakistan had its highest number of cases for 15 years, mostly due to militant attacks. At that time they said there were more than 200 cases across the country. ... Most polio infections are in the north-western tribal region where militants have targeted health teams. BBC News

Saudi Arabia, Oman: Saudis report 6 more MERS cases; Oman notes 1

1 June - A string of MERS cases in the eastern Saudi Arabian city of Hofuf continued with six more in 3 days, while Oman reported its sixth case yesterday, keeping the growing MERS outbreak in South Korea from stealing all of the spotlight. The Saudi Ministry of Health (MOH) reported four MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) cases, one of them fatal, on May 30, and two more today. Four other deaths were reported in...
previously announced cases. ... With the latest cases and deaths, the MOH’s MERS tally has climbed to 1,016, which includes 447 deaths and 7 patients still being treated. The new MERS patient in Oman is a 75-year-old who has severe pneumonia and a high fever but is in stable condition in a hospital. ... [The] case is only the country's sixth MERS infection, which agrees with the FluTrackers case list. The last previous case was reported in January.

CIDRAP

Syria: Assad regime's barrel bombs kill more than 400, claim monitors

4 June - Syrian officials say the assault is targeting rebel forces in the country’s second city and surrounding towns and villages. But the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and other groups say the majority of those killed are civilian. It said that among the dead were 117 children, some in bombing raids on schools, and more than 30 women. The attacks follow a pattern of air raids on civilian areas following losses on the ground for the Syrian army. ... The campaign, now into its eleventh day, has been remarkable for the number and size of the home-made “barrel bombs” - crude devices made from metal tubes and containers filled with TNT - that have been deployed, mostly dropped from helicopters. Telegraph

War casualties in Afghanistan, Pakistan total 149,000, new study says

2 June - ...A new study from the Costs of War project at Brown University estimates 149,000 war-related deaths, with an additional 162,000 serious injuries, in Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2001. And even these numbers don’t tell the whole story, which includes significant destruction of infrastructure, displacement of people, and indirect deaths from malnutrition and disease. Civilian casualties have been particularly high, according to the report, totaling around 26,270 deaths in Afghanistan and 21,500 in Pakistan. The study says that most of the civilian casualties in Afghanistan are caused by militant groups, but the number caused by Afghan and international forces has been increasing since 2012. CNN

USEUCOM

EU drug agency sees no U.S.-like cannabis legalization moves

4 June - European Union countries are unlikely to legalize marijuana any time soon as some parts of the United States have done recently, EU drug monitoring agency chief Wolfgang
Gotz said on Thursday. He did not spell out why he expected no corresponding EU moves. But in a statement, his agency said a key finding in its latest annual report was a “marked rise in the potency and purity of Europe’s most commonly used illicit drugs, fuelling concerns for the health of users who, wittingly or unwittingly, may be consuming stronger products”. It also pointed out an increase in the numbers of cannabis-related health emergencies in Europe between 2008 and 2012. Reuters

Germany passes Japan to have world's lowest birth rate – study

29 May - A study says Germany's birth rate has slumped to the lowest in the world, prompting fears labour market shortages will damage the economy. Germany has dropped below Japan to have not just the lowest birth rate across Europe but also globally, according to the report by Germany-based analysts. ... In Germany, an average of 8.2 children were born per 1,000 inhabitants over the past five years, according to the study by German auditing firm BDO with the Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI). It said Japan saw 8.4 children born per 1,000 inhabitants over the same time period. BBC News

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5 June - ... [CDC] collaborated with Cambodia, Haiti, Kenya, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe to conduct national household surveys of children and youth aged 13–24 years to measure the extent of violence against children. The lifetime prevalence of experiencing any form of sexual violence in childhood ranged from 4.4% among females in Cambodia to 37.6% among females in Swaziland, with prevalence in most countries greater than 25.0%. In most countries surveyed, the proportion of victims that received services, including health and child protective services, was ≤10.0%. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report

U.S.: Second case of rare Bourbon virus found in U.S.

29 May - The second case of Bourbon virus in the United States has been confirmed in Oklahoma, about a year after the death of the first patient confirmed to have it. The tick-borne Bourbon virus was discovered in December following the death in late spring 2014 of a previously healthy man in Kansas. The virus was named for the county the man lived in. ... Among the two cases of Bourbon virus, the Kansas case did die and our Oklahoma patient recovered fully. UPI
**U.S.: Texas puts brakes on telemedicine — and Teladoc cries foul**

2 June - ... Teladoc [is] the largest telemedicine provider in the U.S. ... Patients whose employers or insurers have deals with the Dallas-based company can call any time and be connected with a physician on duty within minutes. ... Jason Gorevic, Teladoc's chief executive officer, says such encounters use familiar technology, "whether it’s your cellphone, your laptop that has a webcam built in to it, or simply the phone." In Texas, hundreds of employers offer Teladoc’s services to more than 2 million employees, Gorevic says. But new rules from the Texas Medical Board could make it a lot harder for [telemedicine companies]. In response to the board’s restrictions, Teladoc has filed a lawsuit that accuses the medical board of artificially limiting supply and increasing prices. NPR

**U.S.: White House seeks to fight antibiotic overuse**

2 June - The U.S. government will hold a forum on Tuesday to help find ways to ensure the responsible use of antibiotics, whose overuse is creating drug-resistant "superbugs" that pose a serious risk to public health. The White House Forum on Antibiotic Stewardship will bring together some 150 representatives from food companies, retailers, drugmakers, farmers, medical societies and others involved in human and animal health to discuss limiting the overuse of antibiotics in livestock, animal feed and humans. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that drug-resistant bacteria, which stop responding to the medicines designed to kill them, cause 2 million illnesses and about 23,000 deaths each year in the United States alone. CDC Director Thomas Frieden said antibiotic resistance might be the single most important infectious disease threat today. Reuters

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**China launches campaign to snuff out smoking in Beijing**

1 June - ... Under the new rules in Beijing, one of the world’s most populous cities with 21.5 million people, anyone who violates a ban on smoking in restaurants, hotels, schools, hospitals and in certain outdoor public places must pay a 200 yuan ($32.25) fine. That is 20 times the current, albeit seldom enforced, penalty. Anyone who breaks the law three times will also be named and shamed on a government website. And businesses can be fined up to 10,000 yuan ($1,600) for failing to stub out smoking on their premises. Smoking has created a serious health crisis in China, where more
than 300 million smokers have made cigarettes part of the social fabric, with millions more exposed to secondhand smoke, heightening the rate of respiratory and heart diseases.

Reuters

China: Over 400 still missing from capsized cruise ship

2 June - As the Eastern Star cruise ship listed heavily amid pounding rain on the Yangtze River, tour guide Zhang Hui told a colleague, "Looks like we are in trouble." The vessel capsized in the storm Monday night with 458 people aboard, touching off a frantic rescue effort. At least 15 people were brought to safety, including three pulled from the overturned hull Tuesday, and five people were confirmed dead, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. The vessel was carrying mostly elderly tourists from Nanjing to the southwestern city of Chongqing when it overturned in China's Hubei Province. ... The survivors included the ship's captain and chief engineer, both of whom were taken into police custody, CCTV said. MSN News

India: Acute encephalitis outbreak claims 5 lives, 15 under treatment

3 June - Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) outbreak has claimed lives of five children in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar. Fifteen others are undergoing treatment in hospitals there, said Muzaffarpur Civil Surgeon Dr Gyan Bhushan. ... "AES outbreak has been reported in East Champaran, Sitamarhi, Sheohar and Muzaffarpur districts and the ailing children have been brought to Muzaffarpur, as specialised treatment is available here," he added. Business Standard

India: Holding your breath in India

29 May - ... Delhi’s true menace [comes] from its air, water, food and flies. These perils sicken, disable and kill millions in India annually, making for one of the worst public health disasters in the world. Delhi, we discovered, is quietly suffering from a dire pediatric respiratory crisis, with a recent study showing that nearly half of the city’s 4.4 million schoolchildren have irreversible lung damage from the poisonous air. ... Delhi [is] — among the most populous, polluted, unsanitary and bacterially unsafe cities on earth. ... The city’s air is more than twice as polluted as Beijing’s, according to the World Health Organization. (India, in fact, has 13 of the world’s 25 most polluted cities, while Lanzhou is the only Chinese city among the worst 50; Beijing ranks 79th.) New York Times

Myanmar says persecution not the cause of migrant crisis

4 June - Myanmar said on Thursday that persecution of its Rohingya Muslim population was not the cause of Southeast Asia’s migrant crisis, a day after the United States called on the country to give full rights to the minority to help end the exodus. ... Myanmar’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Wunna Maung Lwin ... pointed to the number of Bangladeshis on board a migrant boat that landed in May as proof that the influx of “boat people” was a regional problem linked to human trafficking. ... The current crisis blew up last month after a Thai
crackdown on trafficking camps along its border with Malaysia made it too risky for people smugglers to land their human cargo. Smugglers abandoned boats full of migrants at sea. Myanmar was in the process of verifying the place of origin of 734 migrants the navy brought ashore on Wednesday, Wunna Maung Lwin said. They were found drifting in the Andaman Sea on Friday in an overloaded fishing boat that was taking on water. Reuters

South Korea reports third MERS death as alarm grows
4 June - South Korea on Thursday confirmed that a man who died a day earlier had been infected with Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), the third fatality in a virus outbreak that has fueled growing alarm in the country. The 82-year old South Korean, in hospital with asthma and bacterial pneumonia, had shared a room with others infected with MERS and died on Wednesday night, the health ministry said in a statement. The victim became the 36th confirmed MERS infection in South Korea, which has the most cases outside the Middle East. More than 1,100 schools were closed in South Korea on Thursday, while North Korea called for border checks. South Korean President Park Geun-hye has demanded that everything be done to halt the outbreak, which began two weeks ago, brought into the country by a South Korean man returning from a business trip to the Middle East... About 1,600 people have been quarantined in South Korea, most of them at home but some in medical institutions, a health ministry official said. Soldiers have been confined to base in areas near hospitals where outbreaks have occurred, while parents from those areas may not visit children in the armed forces, a defense ministry official said. Reuters

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In search of the Red Cross' $500 million in Haiti relief
3 June - When a devastating earthquake leveled Haiti in 2010, millions of people donated to the American Red Cross. The charity raised almost half a billion dollars. It was one of its most successful fundraising efforts ever. The American Red Cross vowed to help Haitians rebuild, but after five years the Red Cross' legacy in Haiti is not new roads, or schools, or hundreds of new homes. It's difficult to know where all the money went. NPR

PAHO reports 17,000-case jump in chikungunya outbreak
1 June - The Americas have had 17,165 new chikungunya cases, bringing the outbreak total to 1,463,915, according to the Pan American Health Organization’s (PAHO's) weekly update on May 29. The numbers again include a big jump in Colombia, which has been the outbreak hot spot for weeks, although many nations have not reported for weeks. CIDRAP News Scan (third item)
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