

6 February 2015

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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

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## NOTICE

The Army Public Health Weekly Update will not be published next week. We will resume publication on 20 February 2015.

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## Contents

### U.S. MILITARY

---

- [Bill to address veterans' suicide heads to White House](#)
- [Update: Malaria, U.S. Armed Forces, 2014](#)
- [US to destroy its largest remaining chemical weapons cache](#)

### GLOBAL

---

- [Birth control access key means of reaching climate goals: experts](#)
- [Children who get vitamin A may be less likely to develop malaria](#)
- [Could this virus be good for you?](#)
- [Duration of MRSA colonization might be shorter than thought](#)
- [FDA approves first tissue adhesive for internal use](#)
- [Lyme disease costs up to \\$1.3 billion per year to treat, study finds](#)
- [Measles is a killer: It took 145,000 lives worldwide last year](#)
- [Paramedics may be first line of treatment for stroke](#)
- [Study finds no safety concerns over MMR vaccine in adults](#)
- [EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE](#)
- [CDC Response to 2014 Ebola in the United States and West Africa](#)
- [Ebola drug aids some in a study in West Africa](#)
- [Ebola vaccine trial opens in Liberia](#)
- [Free from Ebola, survivors complain of new syndrome](#)
- [Military Ebola mission in Liberia coming to an end](#)
- [MSF says lack of public health messages on Ebola 'big mistake'](#)
- [New Ebola cases show first rise in 2015](#)
- [Secret burials thwarting efforts to stamp out Ebola: U.N.](#)
- [West Africa: MSF warns critical gaps remain in Ebola fight](#)
- [West African Ebola epidemic after one year — Slowing but not yet under control](#)

### INFLUENZA

---

- [Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)
- [CDC posts avian flu update, guidance on possible human disease](#)
- [CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report](#)
- [Flu News Europe](#)
- [H7N9 hospitalizes two more in Guangdong province](#)
- [Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

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**Hazard Alert for  
Handheld and  
Weapon-Mounted  
Searchlights**

A new USAPHC fact sheet addresses retinal burns and other hazards presented by searchlights and control measures.



- Study: Obese elderly have greater risk of flu-related death
- Study: Oseltamivir shortens flu symptom duration but not viral shedding
- Trial: One dose of H3N2v vaccine immunogenic in most adults
- USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

**VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

---

- Obama proposes creation of stand-alone U.S. food safety agency
- Study: H3N2 viruses isolated from canine nasal swabs

**WELLNESS**

---

- Americans are ignoring the science and spending billions on dietary supplements
- E-cigarette exposure impairs immune responses in mouse model, new research finds
- Exposure to secondhand smoke cut in half
- How much sleep do you really need?
- Jogging and longevity
- Reformulated Zohydro OK'd
- Review finds no evidence of testosterone harm
- Unlocking fat
- What's in those supplements?

**USAFRICOM**

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- Could a \$34 smartphone device improve HIV diagnosis in Africa?
- Madagascar: Experts raise alarm as plague kills dozens

**USCENTCOM**

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- Egyptian doctors demand army explain what happened to promised cure for AIDS and hepatitis
- Saudi Arabia: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

**USEUCOM**

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- United Kingdom: Armed forces alcohol abuse strategy criticised
- United Kingdom: Britain votes to allow world's first "three-parent" IVF babies

**USNORTHCOM**

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- U.S.: Effects of ancient custom present new challenge to U.S. doctors
- U.S.: Infectious-disease programs fare well in Obama's 2016 budget
- U.S.: Little progress seen in adult vaccination rates from 2012 to 2013
- U.S. measles cases now exceed 100: CDC
- US senator questions forcing food workers to wash hands
- U.S.: Sexual assault under-reported on U.S. college campuses: study
- U.S.: Why are Americans getting bigger?

**USPACOM**

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- China eyes food safety, modern farms in 2015 rural policy
- Malaysia: 6,000 dengue cases recorded in Selangor last month

**USSOUTHCOM**

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- Brazil: Dengue cases increase in Brazilian state of Sao Paulo
- Colombia: Chikungunya cases rise by more than 14,000 in Colombia
- Haiti, Dominican Republic: Cholera declined overall during 2014
- New clues to mysterious kidney disease afflicting sugar cane workers

**Hazard Alert for  
Ultraviolet  
Germicidal Lamps  
Used in Air  
Handling Units**

This new USAPHC fact sheet discusses the safe use of ultraviolet germicidal lamps to reduce mold and bacteria growth in heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.



**U.S. MILITARY**

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**Bill to address veterans' suicide heads to White House**

3 February - A bill aimed at reducing a suicide epidemic among military veterans is on its way to the president for his signature. The Senate unanimously approved a bill Tuesday named for Clay Hunt, a 26-year-old Iraq and Afghanistan veteran who killed himself in 2011. The bill comes in response to suicides that on average claim the lives of 22 military veterans every day. White House spokesman Josh Earnest said President Barack Obama strongly supports the bill and will sign it. ... The measure would require the Pentagon and Veterans Affairs Department to submit to independent reviews of their suicide prevention programs and offers financial incentives to psychiatrists and other mental health professionals who agree to work for the VA. It also would help military members as they transition from active duty to veteran status. [Yahoo! News](#)

**Update: Malaria, U.S. Armed Forces, 2014**

January 2015 - U.S. service members are at risk of acquiring malaria infection when they are present in endemic areas... The number of malaria cases in 2014 (n=44) was slightly higher than in 2012 and 2013, but remained relatively low compared to 2005–2011. In 2014, more than one-third of cases were linked to Africa (n=15); 10 cases to Korea; and eight to Afghanistan. More than half (52%) of the 2014 cases were caused by *Plasmodium falciparum* (n=23) and 16% by *P. vivax* (n=7); one-third were reported as “unspecified” malaria. Malaria was reported from 30 different medical facilities in the U.S., Afghanistan, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, and the U.K. The relatively low numbers of cases during 2012–2014 likely reflect a decrease in the number of troops who served in Afghanistan in those years. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

**US to destroy its largest remaining chemical weapons cache**

4 February - The United States is about to begin destroying its largest remaining stockpile of chemical-laden artillery shells, marking a milestone in the global campaign to eradicate a debilitating weapon that still creeps into modern wars. The Pueblo Chemical Depot in southern Colorado plans to start neutralizing 2,600 tons of aging mustard agent in March as the U.S. moves toward complying with a 1997 treaty banning all chemical weapons. "The start of Pueblo is an enormous step forward to a world free of chemical weapons," said Paul Walker, who has tracked chemical warfare for more than 20 years, first as a U.S. House of Representatives staffer and currently with Green Cross International, which advocates on issues of security, poverty and the environment. ... Pueblo has about 780,000 shells containing mustard agent. [Gazette](#)

[top of page...](#)

## Ready and Resilient

Ready and Resilient enables and empowers commands and unit leaders to take care of Soldiers, Army civilians and their families. Commands and Army leaders must be able to identify risks and support the overall personal and professional growth of those in their organizations.

They must foster an environment based on Army values where individuals treat themselves and others with dignity and respect, build trust, encourage help-seeking behaviors and enable their teams to recognize warning signs and become interveners instead of bystanders.

A Ready and Resilient force is optimized and able to thrive in uncertain and complex environments.

**STAND-TO!**  
THE OFFICIAL FOCUS OF THE U.S. ARMY

## Birth control access key means of reaching climate goals: experts

3 February – [The] rising population in Pakistan – and elsewhere around the world - is creating more climate-changing emissions and putting more people in the path of extreme weather, food and water shortages, and other climate change pressures. That suggests that giving more women who want it access to birth control to limit their family size – in both rich and poor countries – could be a hugely effective way to curb climate change and to build greater resilience to its impacts, according to population and climate change researchers and policy experts. [Reuters](#)

## Children who get vitamin A may be less likely to develop malaria

3 February - Children under age 5 living in sub-Saharan Africa were 54 percent less likely to develop malaria if they had been given a single large dose of vitamin A, new research led by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health suggests. The researchers say their findings, published Feb. 3 in the online journal *eLife*, indicate that vitamin A may protect children against the mosquito-borne malaria parasite, especially if administered under certain conditions, such as during the wet season, when malaria-infected mosquitoes are most prevalent. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

## Could this virus be good for you?

30 January - ... [Scientists] have been following the curious story of a particular virus that might actually be good for you. The virus is called GB Virus-C, and more than a billion people alive today have apparently been infected with it at some point during their lives, says Dr. Jack Stapleton, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Iowa. ... Some studies in recent years have hinted that persistent infection with this virus might slow disease progression in some people infected with HIV. ... In a widely reported study last summer, [Pardis Sabeti's] team sifted through [plasma from Ebola patients] looking for RNA (the genetic material in Ebola viruses). And they posted the genetic sequence of all the RNA they found in a public database at the National Institutes of Health. David O'Connor ... found the genetic fingerprints of [GBV-C] in the records of 13 samples of blood plasma from the Ebola study. Though six of the 13 people who were co-infected with Ebola and GBV-C died, seven survived. [NPR](#)

## Duration of MRSA colonization might be shorter than thought

4 February -The median duration of colonization with community-based methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in ambulatory patients is 21 days, shorter than the

## Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

## Links

[A-Z Index](#)

[About USAPHC](#)

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[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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previously thought duration of 6 to 9 months, and treatment with clindamycin is associated with more rapid clearance of the infection, say findings of a study published yesterday in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. ... In 19.8% of patients, MRSA had not been cleared at 6 months. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## FDA approves first tissue adhesive for internal use

4 February - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today approved TissuGlu, the first tissue adhesive approved for internal use. TissuGlu is a urethane-based adhesive that a surgeon can use to connect tissue flaps made during surgery to remove excess fat and skin or to restore weakened or separated abdominal muscles (abdominoplasty surgery). Connecting the tissue flaps with an internal adhesive may reduce or eliminate the need for postoperative surgical draining of fluid between the abdominoplasty tissue flaps. [FDA](#)

## Lyme disease costs up to \$1.3 billion per year to treat, study finds

5 February - Lyme disease, transmitted by a bite from a tick infected by the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria, had long been considered easy to treat, usually requiring a single doctor's visit and a few weeks of antibiotics for most people. But new research from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health suggests that a prolonged illness associated with the disease in some patients is more widespread and serious than previously understood. With an estimated 240,000 to 440,000 new cases of the tick-borne illness diagnosed every year, the researchers found that Lyme disease costs the U.S. health care system between \$712 million and \$1.3 billion a year — or nearly \$3,000 per patient on average — in return doctor visits and testing, likely to investigate the cause of some patients' lingering symptoms of fatigue, musculoskeletal pain and memory problems. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

## Measles is a killer: It took 145,000 lives worldwide last year



30 January- The number of measles cases from the outbreak linked to Disneyland has now risen to at least 98. But measles remains extremely rare in the United States. The rest of the world hasn't been so fortunate. Last year roughly 250,000 people came down with measles; more than half of them died. Currently the Philippines is experiencing a major measles outbreak that sickened 57,000 people in 2014. China had twice that many cases, although they were more geographically spread out. Major outbreaks were also recorded in

Angola, Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Vietnam. ... [Stephen Cochi's] team tracks flare-ups of measles around the world. He says, ... "It's really traveling Americans who are unvaccinated, then return to the United States with the measles virus, that are causing most of the measles in the U.S. currently," he says. [NPR](#)

## Paramedics may be first line of treatment for stroke

4 February - NIH study demonstrates feasibility of getting drugs to stroke patients faster. There is no time to waste when it comes to stroke. The more time that passes between stroke onset and treatment, the worse the outcome is for the patient. A study designed to test the benefits of early administration of magnesium sulfate suggests that stroke patients may not have to wait until they get to the hospital for treatment -- paramedics may be able to start therapy as soon as stroke is suspected. Although the drug did not improve outcome in stroke patients, the study demonstrated the feasibility of early therapy in the ambulance.

[NIH](#)

## Study finds no safety concerns over MMR vaccine in adults

2 February - A federal study reported in *Clinical Infectious Diseases* found no new or unexpected safety concerns over administering the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine in adults. The review covered 3,175 reports of events after MMR vaccination logged in the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) database from Jan 1, 2003, through Jul 31, 2013. ... Of those events, 168 (5.3%) were classified as serious, including 7 deaths. The most common signs and symptoms for all reports—serious and not—were fever (19%), rash (17%), pain (13%), and joint pain (13%). The authors also noted that at least 131 pregnant women received the MMR vaccine even though it is contraindicated for this group. Most of the women received the vaccine during their first trimester, and 38% reported at least one adverse event. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (sixth item)

## EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

### CDC Response to 2014 Ebola in the United States and West Africa

**NEW:** [Q&A's about the Transport of Pediatric Patients \(< 18 years of age\) Under Investigation or with Confirmed Ebola](#)

**Updated:** [Case Counts](#)

**NEW:** [Guidance for U.S. Laboratories for Managing and Testing Routine Clinical Specimens When There is a Concern About Ebola Virus Disease](#)

**NEW:** [Non-CDC Laboratory Resources](#)

**NEW:** [Interim Guidance for U.S. Businesses, Employers, and Business Travelers to Prevent Exposures to Ebola](#)

## Ebola drug aids some in a study in West Africa

4 February - For the first time, a drug is showing promising signs of effectiveness in Ebola patients participating in a study. The medicine, which interferes with the virus's ability to copy itself, seems to have halved mortality — to 15 percent, from 30 percent — in patients with low to moderate levels of Ebola in their blood, researchers have found. It had no effect in patients with more virus in their blood, who are more likely to die. The drug, approved as an influenza treatment in Japan last year, was generally well tolerated. "The results are encouraging in a certain phase of the disease," Dr. Sakoba Keita, director of disease control for the Guinean Ministry of Health, said in a telephone interview. The drug is being tested in Guinea, one of the three West African countries most affected by the Ebola crisis. [New York Times](#)

## Ebola vaccine trial opens in Liberia

2 February - A large clinical trial to assess the safety and efficacy of two experimental vaccines to prevent Ebola virus infection is now open to volunteers in Liberia. The trial is being led by a recently formed Liberia-U.S. clinical research partnership and is ... designed to enroll approximately 27,000 healthy men and women aged 18 years and older. One vaccine candidate, cAd3-EBOZ, uses a chimpanzee-derived cold virus to deliver Ebola virus genetic material from the Zaire strain of virus causing the outbreak in Liberia. ... The other candidate, VSV-ZEBOV, employs vesicular stomatitis virus, an animal virus that primarily affects cattle, to carry an Ebola virus gene segment. [NIH](#)

## Free from Ebola, survivors complain of new syndrome

4 February - Romeo Doe, a 29-year-old tailor who survived Ebola in Liberia, is struggling to cope with the impact of a disease that killed seven members of his family and now threatens his livelihood. Since he was released from an Ebola center in the capital Monrovia in November, pressure is rising in his eyes and affecting his vision - a complaint some doctors say is common among survivors of the West African outbreak. There are a growing number of survivors of the disease in the region, between 5,000 and 10,000 according to the United Nations, and some complain of side effects months after their recovery - a condition some doctors are calling "post-Ebola Syndrome" (PES). ... Some of those who have survived the disease report a mixture of symptoms after their recovery, including vision problems, joint pain, hair and memory loss and anxiety attacks. Margaret Nanyonga, a doctor who treated Ebola patients in the town of Kenema in Sierra Leone, said she had seen survivors go blind. Overall about half of those she saw recover reported declining health, she said. [Reuters](#)

## Military Ebola mission in Liberia coming to an end

4 February - President Obama is all but ending the U.S. military mission to Liberia to fight Ebola next month, as infection rates there fall to near zero. The number of troops deployed to the West African country, which reached nearly 3,000 in December, will fall to 1,300 this

week and decline through the end of March as soldiers head home, according to a U.S. official familiar with the U.S. government efforts. The official declined to be identified because the government is not ready to disclose its plans to the public. The official said the returning troops would be replaced by a force of about 100 for at least the near term. ... In the five months U.S. troops have served in West Africa building clinics, providing medical training and testing for the presence of Ebola in blood and swab samples, there have been no cases of viral infection among service members, a major concern when Obama sent the military in to fight the disease. [Military Times](#)

## MSF says lack of public health messages on Ebola 'big mistake'

4 February - Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) made the "big mistake" of focusing too much on treatment early on in the Ebola epidemic rather than speaking to people about tackling the disease, a senior member of the medical charity said. MSF's response to the worst ever outbreak of Ebola, which has killed more than 8,800 people mainly in West Africa, has been praised by the World Health Organization and governments. With 20 years of experience of treating Ebola, MSF deployed hundreds to the Ebola "hot zones" and was quick to isolate patients and trace their contacts. However, Claudia Evers, MSF's Ebola emergency coordinator in Guinea, said: "MSF made a big mistake. We advocated for an increase in beds for too long, and everyone listened to MSF." "Instead of asking for more beds we should have asked for more sensitization activities," Evers told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview. [Reuters](#)

## New Ebola cases show first rise in 2015

4 February - The number of new cases of Ebola went up in all three of West Africa's worst-hit countries in the last week of January, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Wednesday. It is the first weekly increase in 2015, ending a series of encouraging declines. The WHO says Sierra Leone registered 80 of the 124 new cases, Guinea 39 and Liberia the remaining five. Almost 9,000 people have died from Ebola since December 2013. Dr David Nabarro, the United Nations special envoy on Ebola, said the small rise in Ebola cases was a concern but they knew there would be flare-ups. "We're on a good path, this is coming down, but we really have to be vigilant because there are still pockets of infection," he said. [BBC News](#)

## Secret burials thwarting efforts to stamp out Ebola: U.N.

5 February - Efforts to stamp out West Africa's Ebola epidemic are being thwarted by villagers touching and washing the infectious bodies of dead victims at secret burials and difficulty in tracing those exposed to the virus, U.N. officials said on Thursday. The number of new cases rose for the first time this year in the past week, coinciding with a looming funding shortfall and the approach of the rainy season that will hamper aid efforts from April, they warned. ... Dr. Bruce Aylward, the World Health Organization's special representative on Ebola, said that the 124 new cases recorded in the week to Feb. 1, up

from 99 the previous week, also reflected the virus' spread to border areas near Mali and Senegal. [Reuters](#)

## West Africa: MSF warns critical gaps remain in Ebola fight

3 February - The humanitarian aid group Doctors Without borders confirms reports of a downward trend of new Ebola cases in West Africa. However the group -- also known by the French acronym MSF -- cautions that critical gaps remain in the hardest hit countries: Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Jens Pedersen, MSF's humanitarian policy advisor, said it's important to keep in mind that it's not yet the end of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. "We need to strengthen the focus on... surveillance which includes contact tracing, which is people who have been in contact with an Ebola positive patient. They need to be registered, monitored and to follow-up," he said. "We're still seeing issues of stigma which are preventing patients from coming forward. So there is a greater need for much more social mobilization as well in order to make sure that the number of decreasing cases actually will lead to a hold in the Ebola outbreak." [VOA](#)

## West African Ebola epidemic after one year — Slowing but not yet under control

5 February - During the period from early June to mid-September 2014, the epidemic of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone grew exponentially, with national doubling times of between 16 and 30 days. On the basis of case reports through mid-September, and assuming no change in the trajectory of the epidemic, we predicted a cumulative total of 21,000 cases in these three countries by November 2. In fact, the epidemic did change course in September: the increase in case incidence appears to have halted in Guinea and Sierra Leone and has reversed in Liberia. Now, 1 year after the first case was reported in December 2013, we report updated epidemiologic findings for the three countries that have been most affected, using data recorded through December 14. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

[top of page...](#)

### **INFLUENZA**

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

For Week 3:

- Influenza activity remained elevated throughout most of NORTHCOM.
- Low to Moderate influenza activity was seen for the majority of EUCCOM. There was high

influenza activity in Italy.

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

## CDC posts avian flu update, guidance on possible human disease

3 February - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today published a summary of the recent US outbreaks of avian flu in birds in western states, and late last week it published two guidance documents in response to those detections. The CDC said today in a special update in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* that 14 instances of Asian-origin, highly pathogenic avian flu have been reported from Dec 15 to Jan 16 involving H5N2 (7 detections), H5N8 (6), and H5N1 (1)—the first time these strains have been confirmed in wild or domestic US birds. The report does not include an outbreak of H5N8 at a California turkey farm that was first noted on Jan 24. "Although these viruses are not known to have caused disease in humans, their appearance in North America might increase the likelihood of human infection in the United States," federal officials said in the report. [CIDRAP Avian Flu Scan](#) (first item)

## CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 3 (January 18-24, 2015), influenza activity remained elevated in the United States.

**Viral Surveillance:** Of 23,339 specimens tested and reported by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories during week 3, 4,651 (19.9%) were positive for influenza.

**Novel Influenza A Virus:** One human infection with a novel influenza A virus was reported.

**Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was above the epidemic threshold.

**Influenza-associated Pediatric Deaths:** Five influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.

**Outpatient Illness Surveillance:** The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 4.4%, above the national baseline of 2.0%. All 10 regions reported ILI at or above region-specific baseline levels. [FluView](#)

## Flu News Europe

Week 4/2015:

- The influenza season is well under way, particularly in western and central European countries.

- For week 04/2015, 26 countries reported increasing influenza activity and the overall proportion of influenza-positive sentinel specimens reached 48%, the same level as in the previous week.
- The circulation of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) seems to have decreased across Europe, with activity peaking during the first two weeks of 2015.
- Excess all-cause mortality among the elderly (aged  $\geq 65$  years), concomitant with increased influenza activity and A(H3N2) viruses predominating, has been observed during recent weeks in France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom (England, Scotland and Wales).
- Although the majority of A(H3N2) viruses characterized so far exhibit antigenic differences to the virus included in the 2014–2015 northern hemisphere influenza vaccine, vaccination of the elderly and other risk groups is still recommended, since the A(H3N2) component is expected to induce some cross-reactive immunity that can reduce the likelihood of severe outcomes related to influenza infection. [Flu News Europe](#)

## H7N9 hospitalizes two more in Guangdong province

5 February - Two more H7N9 avian influenza infections have been reported from China's Guangdong province, both men from Shenzhen, according to two separate government sources today. ... In what appears to be a third wave of H7N9 infections that began in the fall, the Guangdong province city of Shenzhen has now reported 11 cases. The two new infections lift the global H7N9 total to 546, according to a case list kept by FluTrackers. [CIDRAP Avian Flu Scan](#) (second item)

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

For the week ending 31 January 2015:

### Influenza

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

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

## Study: Obese elderly have greater risk of flu-related death

3 February - Obese elderly people have a greater risk of death related to respiratory symptoms during flu seasons, regardless of body mass comorbidities and other risk factors, according to a study yesterday in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. The population-based cohort study involved 66,820 Chinese people age 65 and older receiving services at Elderly Health Centres in Hong Kong from 1998 through 2012. Before the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic, obese elderly people were 19% more likely to die of respiratory causes during flu seasons when compared with normal-weight people (hazard ratio [HR], 1.19; 95% CI, 1.01-1.42). The association between flu and mortality was 11% higher for obese elderly people from 2009 to 2012 (HR, 1.11; 95% CI, 1.01-1.22). Increased risk remained the same even when adjusted for age, health status, presence of other circulating respiratory viruses, and comorbidities like chronic illness, smoking, or alcohol abuse, the researchers note. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

## Study: Oseltamivir shortens flu symptom duration but not viral shedding

3 February - Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) taken within 24 hours of flu symptom onset shortened the duration of all symptoms by 56%, but had no effect on household flu transmission or viral shedding, according to a study yesterday in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*. The observational study comprised 582 people with lab-confirmed influenza and their household members living in Hong Kong from 2008 to 2013. Children under 5 years old made up 21% (121) of the study population, while 43% (250) were children from 6 to 12. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## Trial: One dose of H3N2v vaccine immunogenic in most adults

4 February - An experimental vaccine provided protection against variant H3N2 influenza (H3N2v) after one dose in healthy adults 18 years and older, according to a study yesterday in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*. H3N2v viruses first emerged in 2011, but concern spiked in the summer of 2012 when the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 306 cases. The incidence of known cases has since declined dramatically. The study comprised 211 people, 104 of whom were 18 to 64 years old, and 107 of whom were age 65 and older. Researchers administered two doses of the H3N2v vaccine (15 micrograms of hemagglutinin per dose) 21 days apart to measure serum hemagglutinin inhibition (HAI) titers, neutralizing antibody (Neut Ab) titers, and memory B cell response. ... The authors said that, because 93% of the study population already had antibodies to H3N2v prior to vaccination, one dose of the vaccine should prove effective for a healthy adult population. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

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

For the week ending 24 January 2015 (Week 3)

- During week three, the number of specimens testing positive for influenza A declined in all regions except for WRMC.
- Influenza-like illness (ILI) activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week three were 3% lower than for the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: 5 hospitalized influenza cases were reported to USAPHC in week three, 1 in an Active Duty (AD) service member (SM) and 4 in non-AD beneficiaries. To date, 39 cases have been reported during this influenza season: 6 AD SM and 33 non-AD beneficiaries.
- Viral specimens: During week three, 891 of 2621 (34%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens; 711 of 2264 (31%) specimens tested for influenza A were positive. SRMC reported the most influenza A-positive specimens (46%), followed by NRM (17%), WRMC (15%), ERM (14%), PRM (8%), and CENTCOM (0%). [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

[top of page...](#)

### VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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## Obama proposes creation of stand-alone U.S. food safety agency

2 February - U.S. President Barack Obama has proposed bringing together the country's food safety operations into one agency to better monitor food quality in a move that would reshape the Food and Drug Administration. The proposal was put forward as part of the President's 2016 budget plan. The new agency would combine the food safety responsibilities of the FDA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other agencies. "A single Federal food safety agency would provide focused, centralized leadership, a primary voice on food safety standards and compliance with those standards, and clear lines of responsibility and accountability that will enhance both prevention of and responses to outbreaks of food-borne illnesses," the budget proposal noted. The President's proposal reflects provisions in draft bill introduced last month by Democratic Senator Richard Durbin from Illinois and Representative Rosa DeLauro, a Democrat from Connecticut. The bill, introduced as the Safe Food Act of 2015, is designed to improve safety at a time more and more food is being sourced from overseas. [Reuters](#)

## Study: H3N2 viruses isolated from canine nasal swabs

4 February - Chinese researchers found two H3N2 influenza subtypes in pet dogs that contain both human and swine characteristics, according to a study yesterday in *Virology*

*Journal.* Researchers obtained 261 nasal swabs and 315 blood samples from pet dogs in eight Chinese provinces during 2013. After identifying influenza A canine isolate virus (CIV) in 35 nasal swabs from dogs in Guangxi province, subtyping showed the presence of H3N2 in two samples. During subtyping, the viruses clustered with the human H3N2 Moscow/10/99 strain and most swine flu viruses. All blood samples were negative for CIV. The findings suggest that dogs may be regarded as intermediate H3N2 hosts, even though the virus has not firmly established itself in canine populations, the authors said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

[top of page...](#)

## WELLNESS

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### Americans are ignoring the science and spending billions on dietary supplements

4 February – [A] series of studies and investigations ... have cast serious doubt on the safety and reliability of [dietary supplements]. ... There's a common public misperception that these products face the same rigorous oversight that pharmaceuticals receive from the FDA. They don't, thanks to a federal law that's been in place since 1994. Manufacturers of dietary supplements are required to attest their products are safe and accurately tested, but unlike prescription drugs, they're not tested by the FDA before they go to market. A 2012 report from the Inspector General's office recommended that the FDA seek out this authority through legislation and to expand its limited surveillance of products once they're available to consumers. Researchers from the same Inspector General's report found that 20 percent of the weight loss and immune system support supplements they purchased made illegal claims about their ability to treat and cure disease. A year later, Harvard researchers found that between 2004 and 2012, there were 237 recalls of dietary supplements — accounting for more than half of FDA recalls of Class 1 drugs, which mean the products contain substances that can cause death or serious health problems. [Washington Post](#)

### E-cigarette exposure impairs immune responses in mouse model, new research finds

4 February - In a study with mice, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health researchers have found that e-cigarettes compromise the immune system in the lungs and generate some of the same potentially dangerous chemicals found in traditional nicotine cigarettes. ... The mice exposed to e-cigarette vapor were significantly more likely to develop compromised immune responses to both the virus and the bacteria, which in some cases killed the mice, the researchers found. ... As part of their study, the researchers also determined that e-cigarette vapor contains "free radicals," known toxins found in cigarette smoke and air pollution. Free radicals are highly reactive agents that can damage DNA or

other molecules within cells, resulting in cell death. Cigarette smoke contains 1014 free radicals per puff. Though e-cigarette vapor contains far fewer free radicals than cigarette smoke – one percent as much – their presence in e-cigarettes still suggests potential health risks that merit further study, the researchers say. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

## Exposure to secondhand smoke cut in half

3 February - The number of people exposed to secondhand smoke dropped by half over the last decade, but one in four nonsmokers, or some 58 million people, are still exposed, a CDC report said today. Declines in exposure haven't been uniform across the board, with two in five children, and seven in 10 black children still being exposed. ... In 1999-2000, about one in two nonsmokers were exposed to secondhand smoke, but by 2011-2012, the number had dropped to approximately one in four. Exposure was higher in African Americans, among whom about half of nonsmokers were exposed to secondhand smoke. Those who lived below the poverty level were also at increased risk -- two in five poor nonsmokers were exposed. Higher than average exposure was also seen in nonsmokers living in rental housing, of whom more than one in three were exposed. [MedPage Today](#)

## How much sleep do you really need?

3 February - The National Sleep Foundation has updated its recommendations for how much sleep a person really needs. A panel brought together 6 sleep experts and 12 other medical experts from the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Geriatrics Society, American Psychiatric Association and other organizations. Together they reviewed 312 peer-reviewed sleep studies from the past ten years. They found children need up to 2 hours more sleep than previously recommended. They created new categories for younger and older adults, but found the recommendations are the same for older teens and their middle-age parents. For the first time, the sleep recommendations acknowledge sleeping an hour or two more or an hour or two less "may be appropriate" for some people. [ABC 2 WBAY](#)

## Jogging and longevity

3 February - Jogging may help extend your life, but tying on those sneakers too many times a week may not be optimal for your health, according to a new study. Researchers tracked more than 1,000 healthy joggers and more than 400 healthy, but sedentary people over a 12-year span. The joggers recorded hours of jogging, frequency and perception of pace. All of the participants filled out questionnaires about their lifestyle and medical history, and underwent cardiac exams and blood tests. The data showed that strenuous joggers, those who engaged in heavy, vigorous exercise, were as likely to die as sedentary men and women. Jogging 1 to 2.4 hours per week was associated with the lowest mortality and the ideal frequency was no more than three times per week. One of the authors says these findings suggest there may be an upper limit for exercise that is optimal for health benefits. The study authors add that when performed for decades very heavy vigorous exercise may pose health risks, especially to the cardiovascular system. [Medline Plus](#)

## Reformulated Zohydro OK'd

31 January - A new formulation of the extended-release hydrocodone drug Zohydro that resists certain types of abuse won approval from the FDA, said Zogenix, the product's manufacturer. The new product uses a technology called BeadTek under which the capsule contents, when crushed and mixed into liquids, form a viscous gel that can't easily be injected -- a common way to abuse extended-release opioids to get a quick "high." However, for the time being at least, the product's label will not include an abuse-deterrence claim. [MedPage Today](#)

## Review finds no evidence of testosterone harm

30 January - A group of researchers who have long been defending the benefits of testosterone has published a large-scale review showing there's no evidence that testosterone therapy increases cardiovascular risk. "That's not to say it's perfectly safe," lead author Abraham Morgentaler, MD, of Harvard, said in a statement. "But we cannot find evidence, and the headlines that jumped out on recent retrospective studies appear to be too strong." Only four studies have suggested increased cardiovascular risk with testosterone, and Morgentaler said these studies were low-quality, with "serious methodological limitations." That includes the two studies -- one by Vigen et al., the other by Finkle et al. -- that sparked an FDA investigation into testosterone-heart risks last year. On the other hand, Morgentaler said, "several dozen" studies have found a beneficial effect of normal testosterone levels on cardiovascular risk and death, and that low testosterone levels are tied to worse mortality and complications such as atherosclerosis and heart disease. [MedPage Today](#)

## Unlocking fat

4 February – ... [Humans] are evolutionarily programmed to crave fatty foods, which offer the biggest bang for the buck, nutritionally speaking, with more than twice the calorie density of protein- or starch-rich food. But a new Harvard study suggests that it's a uniquely human practice — cooking — that allows humans to more fully access that energy. ... Among mice used in the study, those that ate a diet of cooked fat-rich foods weighed, on average, significantly more than those that ate the same amount of a raw diet. [Harvard Gazette](#)

## What's in those supplements?

3 February - The New York State attorney general's office accused four national retailers on Monday of selling dietary supplements that were fraudulent and in many cases contaminated with unlisted ingredients. The authorities said they had run tests on popular store brands of herbal supplements at the retailers — Walmart, Walgreens, Target and GNC — which showed that roughly four out of five of the products contained none of the herbs listed on their labels. In many cases, the authorities said, the supplements contained little more than cheap fillers like rice and house plants, or substances that could be hazardous to

people with food allergies. [New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **USAFRICOM**

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### **Could a \$34 smartphone device improve HIV diagnosis in Africa?**

4 February - A \$34 device that plugs into the audio jack of a smartphone was nearly as effective as far more costly diagnostic blood testing equipment in identifying antibodies for HIV and syphilis in a pilot study in Africa, U.S. researchers said on Wednesday. The mobile lab device, known as a dongle, cost \$34 to make, compared with more than \$18,000 for the gold standard diagnostic equipment. In a pilot study, the device performed all of the mechanical, optical and electronic functions of a lab-based blood test in 15 minutes, using only power drawn from the smartphone. ... The test has a sensitivity of 92 to 100 percent, a measurement of how often the tests accurately identified the target antibodies, and it had a specificity of 79 to 100 percent, an indicator of how well the test did at ruling out people who were not infected. [Reuters](#)

### **Madagascar: Experts raise alarm as plague kills dozens**

31 January - An outbreak of the plague has killed dozens in Madagascar, and experts fear those numbers could go up. At least 119 cases were confirmed by late last year, including 40 deaths, the World Health Organization said in a statement. And the disease is taking an alarming turn. "The outbreak that started last November has some disturbing dimensions," the WHO said this week. "The fleas that transmit this ancient disease from rats to humans have developed resistance to the first-line insecticide." It's especially spreading in densely populated slums in the capital of Antananarivo. [CNN](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **USCENTCOM**

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### **Egyptian doctors demand army explain what happened to promised cure for AIDS and hepatitis**

3 February - Some two dozen demonstrators gathered at the Doctors' Association in the Egyptian capital on Tuesday, demanding that the army release information about a promised cure for AIDS and hepatitis it has delayed since last year. The military's

engineering wing made the widely ridiculed claim that it had invented devices that could detect and cure the diseases, but last summer said it needed until the end of December to carry out further tests before releasing them to the public. Last month, prosecutors ordered an investigation into the devices, after a lawyer filed a complaint against the inventors, who include a now-retired army chief engineer and another military officer. The complaint accused the inventors of misleading the public. [U.S. News & World Report](#)

## Saudi Arabia: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

3 February - Between 14 and 22 January 2015, the IHR National Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (SAU) notified WHO of 9 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, including 4 deaths. ... The IHR National Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also notified WHO of the death of 2 previously reported MERS-CoV cases. The cases were reported in previous DONs on 5 January (Case n. 2) and on 15 January (Case n. 3). Globally, WHO has been notified of 965 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 357 related deaths. [WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

### USEUCOM

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## United Kingdom: Armed forces alcohol abuse strategy criticised



3 February - The government's strategy for combating alcohol abuse in the armed forces is ineffective, a top psychiatrist says. Prof Neil Greenberg, lead on military health at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said educating personnel about dangers did not stop them from excessive drinking. Some personnel told the BBC drinking was integral to forces' culture, and could strengthen group cohesion. The Ministry of Defence said it had launched a review of its policy. A 2013 study carried out by the King's Centre for Military Health Research suggested the alcohol consumption of 65% of the 325 personnel sampled was categorised as "higher risk". The study also suggested that those with more risky drinking habits were more likely to have mental health problems. [BBC News](#)

## United Kingdom: Britain votes to allow world's first "three-parent" IVF babies

3 February - Britain voted on Tuesday to become the first country to allow a "three-parent" IVF technique which doctors say will prevent some inherited incurable diseases but which

critics see as a step towards creating designer babies. The treatment is known as "three-parent" in vitro fertilisation (IVF) because the babies, born from genetically modified embryos, would have DNA from a mother, a father and from a female donor. It is designed to help families with mitochondrial diseases, incurable conditions passed down the maternal line that affect around one in 6,500 children worldwide. After an emotionally charged 90-minute debate that some lawmakers criticised as being too short for such a serious matter, parliament voted 382 to 128 in favour of the technique, called mitochondrial donation.

[Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

## **USNORTHCOM**

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### **U.S.: Effects of ancient custom present new challenge to U.S. doctors**

5 February - ... As the number of African immigrants in the United States has grown, so has the number of women living in this country who have undergone genital cutting. About half a million women in the United States have experienced the procedure or are likely to be subjected to it by their families, according to a preliminary report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That figure is about three times the last government estimate, made in 1997. ... Public health officials, however, are warning that some doctors and nurses are not prepared to deal with the physical and emotional complications associated with the procedure — sometimes called female genital mutilation or F.G.M./C — and in some cases may unintentionally traumatize the women they are trying to help. "More and more health providers are going to be taking care of women who've undergone F.G.M./C," said Dr. Nawal Nour, the director of the African Women's Health Center in Boston, considered by many to be the leading clinic in the United States for women who have undergone genital cutting. Many of her patients, she said, describe "a humiliating time with health providers." [New York Times](#)

### **U.S.: Infectious-disease programs fare well in Obama's 2016 budget**

3 February - In releasing its proposed 2016 budget yesterday, the Obama administration offered an array of generous increases in infectious-disease (ID)-related programs, and seasoned them with a suggestion to unify federal food safety activities under one agency, a long-discussed idea that has never gained traction in Congress. ... On the ID front, including antibiotic resistance, foodborne diseases, and bioterrorism preparedness, "We did very well," said Jeff Levi, PhD, executive director of the Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a nonprofit public health advocacy group in Washington, DC. ... He noted that the administration is proposing to slash funds for several programs for preventing chronic

diseases, such as the Preventive Services Block Grant, which he said is used by health departments to maintain their capabilities and services. [CIDRAP](#)

## U.S.: Little progress seen in adult vaccination rates from 2012 to 2013

5 February - Adult coverage in the United States for six routinely recommended vaccines, not including influenza, remains low and increased only modestly or not at all from 2012 to 2013, according to an analysis published today in Morbidity Mortality Weekly Report of data from the 2013 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). Modest increases in coverage were seen for three vaccines. Tetanus and diphtheria with acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccination in adults 19 or older increased by 2.9 percentage points, to 17.2%; herpes zoster (shingles) vaccination in adults 60 and older increased 4.1 points, to 24.2%; and human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination among 19- to 26-year-old men rose by 3.6 points, to 5.9%. Coverage for pneumococcal disease, hepatitis A, and hepatitis B did not increase appreciably from 2012. Racial and/or ethnic disparities in coverage persisted for all six vaccines, with higher coverage seen in whites than other groups. The largest differences were for Tdap and herpes zoster vaccination. Coverage rates for all six vaccines are well below the goals set in the Healthy People 2020 federal initiative. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

## U.S. measles cases now exceed 100: CDC

2 February - The number of measles cases in the United States has climbed to 102, federal health officials reported Monday, with most of the cases part of the ongoing outbreak traced to Disney amusement parks in southern California. The vast majority of cases have occurred in California and they involve people who weren't vaccinated against the highly contagious disease, officials said. But cases have also been reported in 13 other states: Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and Washington, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Medline Plus](#)

## US senator questions forcing food workers to wash hands

4 February - A US senator has suggested that restaurants should not have to make their employees wash their hands after toilet visits. Senator Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican, made the comments on Monday during a speech criticising business regulations. "Let them decide" such issues, the newly elected lawmaker said. His argument was that restaurants which did not require workers to wash their hands would quickly go out of business. "But I think it's good to illustrate the point, that that's the sort of mentality we need to have to reduce the regulatory burden on this country," Mr Tillis said. He suggested that restaurants that did not require hand washing would have to alert customers with prominently displayed signs - itself a regulation. [BBC News](#)

## U.S.: Sexual assault under-reported on U.S. college campuses: study

2 February - Some U.S. universities and colleges appear to be under-reporting sexual assaults on their campuses, a new study concludes. Researchers looked at data about on-campus sexual assaults reported by 31 large private and public universities and colleges during audits by the federal government. During the audits, the number of reported sexual assaults rose an average of 44 percent compared to previously reported figures. After the audits ended, the reported number of sexual assaults fell to pre-audit levels. This finding suggests that some schools provide accurate statistics about sexual crimes only when they're under government scrutiny, according to the study. [Medline Plus](#)

## U.S.: Why are Americans getting bigger?

1 February - ... According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, since 1980 the nation's obesity rate among adults has doubled - for children, it tripled. And we're talking about everybody - men and women, rich and poor, all races and ethnicities, in every state. It seems like every day there's news of another study to explain our collective weight-gain. Charles Courtemanche is an economist at Georgia State University. He says the problem with looking at all these studies individually is that the variables tend to be related. Economists are used to juggling multiple variables in their analyses. So Courtemanche and three other economists decided to look at 27 different factors, like concentration of restaurants, grocery stores and food prices. ... The two factors that really jumped to the top, that win the horse race - the first one is big-box grocers. So that's a Walmart Supercenters and warehouse clubs like Costco and Sam's Club. The other factor that jumps up is restaurants. So essentially, you know, the story here is cheaper and more readily available food. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

### USPACOM

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## China eyes food safety, modern farms in 2015 rural policy

1 February - China has listed food safety and modernizing farms as among key priorities this year, its 2015 rural policy outline showed, as it tackles falling agricultural productivity that has raised concerns about its future food supply. The "number one document", issued every January and released by state news agency Xinhua on Sunday, showed China will also protect farmland and lend more to farmers to narrow a wealth gap between rural and urban areas. Attempts to clean up land that has been damaged by heavy metal mining and processing will be widened this year, and "permanent farmland" that is off-limit to industrial

and urban development will be created, the document said. Modern farms will be set up, and regulation of the quality of food and other farm products will be enhanced, it said.

[Reuters](#)

## Malaysia: 6,000 dengue cases recorded in Selangor last month

5 February - Selangor Menteri Besar Mohamed Azmin Ali has cautioned that dengue cases have reached a critical level in the state, especially in the Petaling district. A total of 6,686 dengue cases had been recorded in the state last month, compared to 3,813 cases within the same period in 2014, which is an increase of 75%. At the same time, 17 deaths due to dengue were recorded last month compared to two deaths in January last year. Mohamed Azmin said Petaling district is the most affected out of the nine districts in Selangor, with 3,212 cases or 48% of the cases recorded in the area. [Rakyat Post](#)

[top of page...](#)

**USSOUTHCOM**

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## Brazil: Dengue cases increase in Brazilian state of Sao Paulo

4 February - The prefecture of the city of Sao Paulo confirmed today the cases of dengue in that region tripled during the first month of 2015, with about 120 persons reported infected. According to a partial balance, there are over one thousand 300 patients suspected of being infected, while between January 4 and 24 some 45 cases were detected, informed the portal G1. Authorities are on alert before the water crisis that is affecting Sao Paulo, one of the worse hit states by the drought affecting the country for several months now, described as one of the worst of the last eight decades. Sao Paulo could face a critical situation this year, with a maximum of 90 thousand cases of dengue, added the source.

[Prensa Latina](#)

## Colombia: Chikungunya cases rise by more than 14,000 in Colombia

2 February - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported 19,668 new cases of chikungunya in the Caribbean and Americas on Jan 30, and more than 14,000 cases occurred in Colombia, bringing the outbreak total to 1,182,857. The new total includes 1,155,354 suspected and 24,521 confirmed locally acquired cases and 2,982 imported cases of chikungunya. Colombia reported 14,009 new cases, bringing the country's outbreak total to 127,370. Other areas with substantial increases in case numbers over the previous week include El Salvador, which reported 2,272 new cases, and French Guiana, with 2,209 new

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

## Haiti, Dominican Republic: Cholera declined overall during 2014

2 February - Both Haiti and neighboring Dominican Republic reported big overall declines in cholera cases in 2014 compared with 2013, but both countries had increases late in the year, according to a Jan 30 update from PAHO. Haiti had 27,753 cholera cases and 296 deaths in 2014, which represented decreases of 53% and 50% from the previous year's levels, PAHO reported. But weekly cases were sharply higher in the fall than in the rest of the year. ... The Dominican Republic reported a total of 597 suspected cholera cases for the year, with 10 deaths, PAHO reported. That was a 69.5% drop in cases and a 76% decline in deaths from the 2013 numbers. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fifth item)

## New clues to mysterious kidney disease afflicting sugar cane workers

4 February - Something is destroying the kidneys of farm workers along the Pacific coast of Central America. Over the past two decades, more than 20,000 people in western Nicaragua and El Salvador — mostly men and many of them in their 20s and 30s — have died of a mysterious form of kidney failure. ... Now a new study from Boston University finds a clear connection between the disease and the work these men are doing. "The decline in kidney function during the harvest and the differences [in kidney function] by job category and employment duration provide evidence that one or more risk factors of CKD (chronic kidney disease) are occupational," the report says. In 2011 the study followed 500 sugar cane workers at one plantation, El Ingenio San Antonio in Nicaragua. The researchers found that the kidney function of field workers declined over the course of the six-month harvest. Sugar cane cutters and planters saw the sharpest drop. ... The researchers also found that dehydration among workers with the most physically demanding job — cutting cane — could contribute to the illness. Cutters who drank more of a generic energy drink while on the job had less of a drop in kidney function than co-workers who drank less of the beverage. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

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

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