

6 September 2013

Army Public Health Weekly Update

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

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Women's Health beyond Reproduction - A New Agenda

The September issue of the Bulletin of the World Health Organization includes articles on the following topics:

- Health systems need to adapt to addressing women's health across the life-course
- The environmental causes of breast cancer
- Interview with Ana Langer: the new women's health agenda
- The sexual health of older women
- Opportunities for action on breast and cervical cancer in the Americas
- Noncommunicable diseases among women in China
- Breast and cervical cancer in poor countries
- Older women's health in the post-MDG agenda
- Universal coverage of health services for older women
- Addressing women's cancers in Africa
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U.S. MILITARY

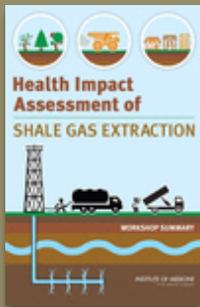
Army releases July 2013 suicide information

23 August - The Army released suicide data today for the month of July 2013. During July, among active-duty soldiers, there were 19 potential suicides: One has been confirmed as a

Health Impact Assessment of Shale Gas Extraction

The governmental public health system lacks critical information about environmental health impacts of hydraulic fracturing, and is limited in its ability to address concerns raised by federal, state, and local regulators, as well as employees in the shale gas extraction industry and the general public.

The IOM Roundtable on Environmental Health Sciences, Research, and Medicine discusses the human health impact of shale gas extraction through the lens of health impact assessment.



suicide and 18 remain under investigation. For June 2013, the Army reported 14 potential suicides among active-duty soldiers: six have been confirmed as suicides and eight are under investigation. For CY 2013, there have been 94 potential active-duty suicides: 46 have been confirmed as suicides and 48 remain under investigation. Updated active-duty suicide numbers for CY 2012: 185 (169 have been confirmed as suicides and 16 remain under investigation). [Defense.gov](#)

Defense Department releases crisis support guide for families

3 September - September is recognized as national Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and the Defense Suicide Prevention Office has published a guide to help military family members better understand how to help their service members in need. "The best way to mitigate suicide is by getting help and getting help early," said Jacqueline Garrick, head of the Defense Suicide Prevention Office. "We are hoping this guide will help families understand better the signs and symptoms of suicide, how to ask for help and what help looks like." Supporting Military Families in Crisis empowers family members to take action by equipping them with the tools, tips and resources they need to prevent suicide. [MHS](#)

Picatinny researching nontoxic armor-piercing rounds



28 August - Researchers at Picatinny Arsenal, N.J., are working to remove two harmful chemicals from .50-caliber armor-piercing incendiary projectiles, which can be fired from the M2, M3 and M85 machine guns. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command is developing a replacement incendiary mix for these rounds to eliminate the chemicals barium nitrate and potassium perchlorate, which can leech into ground water and cause health problems... Barium nitrate can cause serious digestive, cardiac, respiratory and muscular problems. Potassium perchlorate can interfere with thyroid function, which regulates the metabolism, and it can be harmful to pregnant women and their unborn children. [Army Times](#)

Routine screening for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus, civilian applicants for U.S. Military Service and U.S. Armed Forces

August 2013 – Among civilian applicants, annual rates of prevalence of HIV infection showed a continuing downward trend. Rates among black, non-Hispanic applicants were higher than other racial/ethnic groups but have declined sharply since 2008. Among service members, annual rates have varied by service and component, with higher rates in the Army and Navy and lower rates in the Marine Corps and Air Force. Members of the Army and Air Force Reserves have had consistently higher rates than members of their respective active components. For both civilian applicants and service members, rates among men are notably higher than among women. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site: <http://phc.army.smil.mil> Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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GLOBAL

Analysis: Sex workers bear brunt of war on trafficking



3 September - Laws and interventions aimed at reducing human trafficking by targeting commercial sex workers can, whatever their good intentions, actually endanger their health and result in human rights violations, experts say. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 58 percent of human trafficking cases are for sexual exploitation, a number that activists worry has led the public and policy-makers to conflate trafficking with sex work, to the detriment of effective responses. Part of the problem, say activists, is that anti-trafficking programmes often take the form of "raid and rescue" missions - in which brothels or other locations identified by the authorities as potentially housing trafficking victims are forcefully entered. These operations can invade privacy and reduce public health outreach efficacy by scattering networks of sex workers who, in some cases, had implemented successful sex worker-led health programming, according to UN Development Programme (UNDP) research from 2012 on sex work in Asia and the Pacific. [IRIN](#)

Chronic illnesses outpace infections as big killers worldwide

4 September - People around the world are getting healthier and living longer. Infectious diseases are declining around the globe. But at the same time, chronic health problems are on the rise, particularly in developing nations. These are some of the key findings in the latest reports [released](#) by the World Bank and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. [NPR](#)

Creating a 'window' to the brain

3 September - A team of University of California, Riverside researchers have developed a novel transparent skull implant that literally provides a "window to the brain", which they hope will eventually open new treatment options for patients with life-threatening neurological disorders, such as brain cancer and traumatic brain injury. The team's implant is made of the same ceramic material currently used in hip implants and dental crowns, yttria-stabilized zirconia (YSZ). However, the key difference is that their material has been processed in a unique way to make it transparent. Since YSZ has already proven itself to be well-tolerated by the body in other applications, the team's advancement now allows use of YSZ as a permanent window through which doctors can aim laser-based treatments for the brain, importantly, without having to perform repeated craniectomies, which involve removing a portion of the skull to access the brain. [EurekAlert](#)

Global gaps in high blood pressure knowledge, treatment

5 September - It's the leading contributor to deaths worldwide yet most people with high blood pressure don't know they have the condition and even for those who do, treatment is mostly ineffective, according to a large new study. Researchers examined more than 140,000 adults in 17 countries and found that about 41 percent had consistently high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, but fewer than half of those people knew it. "We found that surprisingly many people didn't realize their blood pressure was high," lead author Clara Chow, from The George Institute for Global Health in Sydney, [Australia](#), said. Less than a third of those aware of their condition and getting treatment had their blood pressure under control, with poor and rural populations faring the worst. [Reuters](#)

Global mortality trends and patterns in older women

September 2013 - In both developed and developing countries, the leading causes of death among older women were cardiovascular diseases and cancers. In countries with death registration data, cardiovascular and (to a lesser extent) cancer mortality appears to have declined in older women in recent decades and this decline has resulted in improved life expectancy at age 50. If these trends continue, deaths in older women are still expected to increase in number because of population growth and ageing. [Bulletin of the WHO](#)

Health landscape in 6 global regions reveals rapid progress and daunting challenges

4 September - In the Middle East and North Africa, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes are causing a massive amount of premature death and disability. People in Latin America and the Caribbean are living longer on the whole, yet they face increasing threats from chronic diseases. Mortality has declined in many South Asian countries, yet the number of deaths by non-communicable diseases and self-harm has skyrocketed since 1990. These are some of the findings released by the World Bank Group and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) in six regional reports as part of The Global Burden of Disease: Generating Evidence, Guiding Policy... The reports explore changes in the leading causes of premature mortality and disability in different parts of the world and compare the performance of countries in a range of health outcomes. Individually, they document how each region is working to reduce health loss from most communicable, newborn, nutritional, and maternal conditions and what new challenges lie ahead. [EurekAlert](#)

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INFLUENZA

Better flu vaccine on the horizon



3 September - During the heat of summer, people tend to forget about the flu. Yet as high temperatures begin to decline, we're reminded that influenza, a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death, will soon return. For the past several months, pharmaceutical companies and U.S. public health officials have been busy making and planning for the distribution of millions of doses of the flu vaccine to protect Americans in the upcoming season. The American Academy of Pediatrics released a new recommendation this week that all children ages 6 months or older be immunized against influenza as soon as the vaccine is available. Getting vaccinated each year remains the best way to protect yourself against the seasonal flu and lessen the chance you will spread the infection to others... [CNN](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 34, 5.8% of all deaths reported through the 122-Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia and influenza. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 6.1% for week 34. [FluView](#)

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

For weeks 33–34/2013:

- All nineteen countries providing clinical data reported low intensity influenza activity.
- Five countries tested thirteen sentinel specimens, none of which was positive for influenza virus.
- Since week 21/2013, six hospitalised confirmed influenza cases have been reported by two countries. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Flu activity up slightly Down Under, WHO says

3 September - Influenza activity in most parts of the world is at low levels but is picking up in Australia and New Zealand, the World Health Organization (WHO) said in an update late last week. Flu activity remains at inter-seasonal levels in temperate Northern Hemisphere regions and has declined in temperate South American and in South Africa, as well as in tropical Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean, the agency reported on Aug 30. Peru saw a "significant" increase in 2009 pandemic H1N1 (pH1N1) in mid July, the WHO added. In Australia and New Zealand, the number of flu viruses detected was lower than in recent years but showed an increasing trend. H3N2 and type B were much more common than pH1N1 in those two countries, the WHO reported. [CIDRAP](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

4 September – Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere ranges from minimal to low and in the southern hemisphere ranges from minimal to high (New Zealand). [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 24 August 2013:

- Influenza: No cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were moderately elevated at Fort Benning, GA. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

H7N9 studies affirm pathogenesis, transmission data

30 August - Chinese research teams yesterday reported new findings about the H7N9 flu virus that reveal more about cytokine patterns seen in severely ill patients and affirm again that the virus has the capacity for airborne transmission in a ferret model... In the cytokine study, researchers examined serum samples from 16 patients with lab-confirmed H7N9 infections who were hospitalized in Jiangsu province, one of the areas most affected by the virus, during the height of the epidemic this spring. Blood samples were collected 6 to 9 days after patients became ill, and researchers compared them with serum samples from healthy people and from those who had mild seasonal H3N2 infections and healthy controls... When compared with patients who had less severe illness, the sicker H7N9 patients had higher IP-10 chemokine and IL-6 cytokine levels, which the team said could play a role in tissue destruction and serve as markers for severe disease. They noted that the pattern fits the profile of an intense response to virus infection, as well as one seen with autoimmune and inflammatory disease. Another recent study of cytokine responses to different flu viruses reported similar findings, that H7N9 provoked a higher response than the 2009 H1N1 virus, but lower than H5N1. [CIDRAP](#)

Swine study suggests flu vaccination may sometimes backfire

29 August- During the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, Canadian researchers identified a greater risk of infection in those who had been vaccinated against seasonal flu, a puzzling finding that researchers are still unraveling, including a group yesterday that revealed more about a

mechanism for the process through experiments on pigs... In the new study, researchers explored the phenomenon in pigs that were infected with the 2009 H1N1 virus after receiving a vaccine against H1N2 influenza... The researchers vaccinated piglets that were younger than 6 months old and hadn't been exposed to flu before against H1N2 to explore whether vaccine-induced antibodies might play a role in exacerbating respiratory symptoms. They found some of the piglets got sick with severe pneumonia and had severe lung damage after they were infected with the 2009 H1N1 virus, suggesting that cross-reactive antibodies triggered by the flu vaccine made symptoms worse after infection with a different flu strain. [CIDRAP](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Chinese chicken processors are cleared to ship to U.S.

30 August - The Department of Agriculture on Friday approved four Chinese poultry processors to begin shipping a limited amount of meat to the United States, a move that is likely to add to the debate over food imports. Initially, the companies will be allowed to export only cooked poultry products from birds raised in the United States and Canada. But critics predicted that the government would eventually expand the rules, so that chickens and turkeys bred in China could end up in the American market. China does not have the best track record for food safety, and its chicken products in particular have raised questions. The country has had frequent outbreaks of deadly avian influenza, which it sometimes has been slow to report. [New York Times](#)

Designing programs for eliminating canine rabies from Islands: Bali, Indonesia as a case study

22 August - Canine rabies is one of the most important and feared zoonotic diseases in the world. In some regions rabies elimination is being successfully coordinated, whereas in others rabies is endemic and continues to spread to uninfected areas... The Indonesian island of Bali was rabies-free until 2008 when an epidemic in domestic dogs began, resulting in the deaths of over 100 people... Using data from Bali, we estimated the basic reproductive number, R_0 , of rabies in dogs, to be ~ 1.2 , almost identical to that obtained in ten-fold less dense dog populations and suggesting rabies will not be effectively controlled by reducing dog density. We then developed a model to compare options for mass dog vaccination. Comprehensive high coverage was the single most important factor for achieving elimination, with omission of even small areas ($< 0.5\%$ of the dog population) jeopardizing success. Parameterizing the model with data from the 2010 and 2011 vaccination campaigns, we show that a comprehensive high coverage campaign in 2012 would likely result in elimination, saving ~ 550 human lives and $\sim \$15$ million in prophylaxis costs over the next ten years. [PLOS](#)

Mammals harbour 'at least 320,000 new viruses'



2 September - There could be at least 320,000 viruses awaiting discovery that are circulating in animals, a study suggests. Researchers say that identifying these viral diseases, especially those that can spread to humans, could help to prevent future pandemics. The team estimates that this could cost more than £4bn (\$6bn), but says this is a fraction of the cost of dealing with a major pandemic. The research is published in the journal *mBio*. [BBC News](#)

U.S.: Chobani recalls moldy yogurt after complaints, FDA probe

5 September - U.S. yogurt-maker Chobani is officially recalling moldy cups of Greek yogurt after customers complained that the product tasted runny and fizzy and some reported illnesses. The recall, announced on Thursday, follows nearly a week after Chobani sought to quietly remove the yogurt from store shelves without alerting the public, a strategy the U.S. Food and Drug Administration called "unusual." Privately-held Chobani said it is removing the product "due to some claims of illness," though a spokeswoman, Amy Juaristi, downplayed the claims, saying the mold, which can occur in dairy, "is unlikely to have ill health effects." Juaristi said tainted cups would be replaced. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Cyclospora outbreak has sickened 641, hospitalized 41

4 September - The nationwide [cyclospora outbreak](#) has now sickened 641 people and hospitalized 41, according to the latest update by the CDC. That's an increase of five since the last update last week, which indicates the outbreak may be slowing down. No deaths have been reported. The number of cases in [the three states with the most cases] is as follows: Texas (282), Iowa (156), Nebraska (86)... The patient age range remains from less than one year to 92 years, with a median age of 51 years. Fifty-six percent of ill persons are female. The case count includes anyone who became ill before July 28, 2013. The cases in Iowa and Nebraska are linked to a salad mix produced by [Taylor Farms de Mexico](#) and served at Red Lobster and Olive Garden restaurants. [Food Poisoning Bulletin](#)

U.S.: GAO - USDA took shortcuts in poultry inspection plan

4 September - The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) cut corners in evaluating pilot projects that were used in developing a proposal to streamline the agency's food safety inspection systems in poultry processing plants, according to the US Government Accountability Office (GAO). Under the proposal, unveiled in 2012, USDA inspectors would spend less time visually inspecting poultry carcasses and more time focusing on other safety variables, with the aim of saving money and improving food safety. But the plan, which would allow faster production line speeds, has drawn objections from many health, labor,

and consumer groups. [CIDRAP](#)

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WELLNESS

Facebook peer groups may be useful for HIV education

2 September - Groups on the popular networking site Facebook may help educate men about HIV prevention and testing, a new study suggests. Researchers found that specially-created Facebook social media groups helped encourage men who have sex with men to reach out for information about testing themselves at home for HIV. The study is "really demonstrating a way to take what we already know to be effective... and translating it into the digital realm," Sheana Bull, professor and chair of the Department of Community and Behavioral Health at the Colorado School of Public Health in Denver, said. "I think it does have a lot of potential and a lot of promise," said Bull, who wasn't involved with the new study. [Medline Plus](#)

Graphic images 'don't deter young smokers'



4 September - Picture warnings on cigarette packets depicting the dangers of smoking make little impact on teenage smokers, a study suggests. The UK introduced the images, which depict things such as diseased lungs and heart surgery, in 2008. But the Stirling University study, which involved 2,800 children, found the images have had almost no effect on deterring 11 to 16-year-old smokers. However, they did have an effect on non-smokers and experimental smokers. [BBC News](#)

Insomniacs' brains lose focus, scans suggest

30 August - Brain scans of people who say they have insomnia have shown differences in brain function compared with people who get a full night's sleep. Researchers at the University of California, San Diego, said the poor sleepers struggled to focus part of their brain in memory tests. Other experts said that the brain's wiring may actually be affecting perceptions of sleep quality... People with insomnia struggle to sleep at night, but it also has consequences during the day such as delayed reaction times and memory. The study compared 25 people who said they had insomnia with 25 who described themselves as good sleepers. MRI brain scans were carried out while they performed increasingly challenging memory tests. One of the researchers, Prof Sean Drummond, said: "We found that insomnia subjects did not properly turn on brain regions critical to a working memory task and did not turn off 'mind-wandering' brain regions irrelevant to the task. [BBC News](#)

Oral infections causing more hospitalizations

30 August - Left untreated, a serious tooth abscess can eventually kill... But a new study suggests that deaths from these preventable infections may not be as rare as once thought and that the number of Americans hospitalized with them may be on the rise. Studies have shown that dental problems account for hundreds of thousands of emergency room visits each year. The new analysis, published in the September issue of the Journal of Endodontics, focused on patients who had to be hospitalized because of an infection of the tip of the tooth's root, called a periapical abscess. It is a common consequence of untreated tooth decay, and it can be dangerous if it spreads. After reviewing national patient data from 2000 to 2008, researchers in Boston found that the people hospitalized for dental abscesses increased by more than 40 percent, to 8,141 in 2008 from 5,757 in 2000. Some 66 patients died after they were hospitalized, according to the new analysis... Last year, a Pew Charitable Trusts report estimated that preventable dental conditions, including abscessed teeth, were the primary reason for 830,590 emergency room visits in 2009 — a 16 percent increase from 2006. [New York Times](#)

Scientists find possible new way of fighting high blood pressure

3 September - Scientists experimenting with rats have found that de-activating certain nerves in the neck can effectively treat high blood pressure - a discovery that could be an advance in tackling one of the world's biggest silent killers. Researchers at Britain's Bristol University found that in rats with high blood pressure, when they removed nerve links between the brain and the carotid body - a nodule about the size of a grain of rice on the side of each carotid artery - the animals' blood pressure fell and remained low. The researchers' results, published in the journal Nature Communications on Tuesday, have already led the team on to conduct a small human trial of the technique, with results expected at the end of this year. [Reuters](#)

Sleep 'boosts brain cell numbers'

3 September - Scientists believe they have discovered a new reason why we need to sleep - it replenishes a type of brain cell. Sleep ramps up the production of cells that go on to make an insulating material known as myelin which protects our brain's circuitry. The findings, so far in mice, could lead to insights about sleep's role in brain repair and growth as well as the disease MS, says the Wisconsin team... Dr Chiara Cirelli and colleagues from the University of Wisconsin found that the production rate of the myelin making cells, immature oligodendrocytes, doubled as mice slept. The increase was most marked during the type of sleep that is associated with dreaming - REM or rapid eye movement sleep - and was driven by genes. In contrast, the genes involved in cell death and stress responses were turned on when the mice were forced to stay awake. [BBC News](#)

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Chad: "Ten-fold rise" in new cases of malaria



4 September - An emergency operation is under way in the Salamat region of Chad after an "alarming" rise in cases of malaria. Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said the number of reported new cases rose from 1,228 in the first week of August to 14,021 by the end of the month. Cases of the mosquito-borne disease do peak during the July to November rainy season. But MSF Health Advisor for Chad Dr Turid Piening said the sudden high spike in this area is unusual. She said: "More than 80% of people who are coming for consultations are coming because they are infected with malaria, normally its 30%-40% at this time of year. [BBC News](#)

South Africa: Roll-out of community voluntary male circumcision is linked to reduced HIV infection levels

3 September - Roll-out of voluntary male circumcision services into the community of Orange Farm, South Africa is linked to substantial reductions in HIV infection levels, according to a study published in this week's PLOS Medicine. The study, (ANRS-12126), conducted by Bertran Auvert and colleagues from the University of Versailles (France), also reported that substantial uptake of voluntary male circumcision in one community was not linked to changes in sexual behavior that might affect HIV infection rates. [EurekAlert](#)

Sub-Saharan Africa: Childhood diseases remain major threat

5 September - Despite welcome progress, childhood diseases remain major threat in sub-Saharan Africa, a new report published by the World Bank and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) in Washington revealed Wednesday. A release issued here says children in sub-Saharan Africa are now less likely to die from diarrhea and pneumonia, but these illnesses are still common causes of childhood death and sickness in most African countries. The report reveals that loss of health due to diarrheal diseases dropped by 34% between 1990 and 2010, while lower respiratory infections (LRIs) such as pneumonia dropped by 22%, and protein-energy malnutrition was down by 17% respectively. [All Africa](#)

Uganda rejects HIV prevention tool on moral grounds

3 September - Activists in Uganda, where some 400 people are infected with HIV every day, have called on the government to rethink its dismissal of an emerging prevention protocol demonstrated to be effective in a trial conducted partly in Uganda, and which has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration. The protocol in question is a form of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) involving a daily dose of two antiretroviral drugs - marketed as Truvada - taken by an uninfected person who is in a sexual relationship with an HIV-positive partner... The World Health Organization guidelines issued in 2012 called for a cautious and gradual rollout. Uganda has no such plans, according to Alex Ario, programme

manager in the Ministry of Health's AIDS Control Programme, who said public misunderstanding of the protocol could encourage "reckless sex". [IRIN](#)

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USCENTCOM

Questions raised about MERS-CoV bat report

30 August - In the week and a half since scientists announced they had found a fragment of virus in a bat that seemed to match the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), many have raised questions about whether the fragment really was from the same virus that is striking people in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East. The discovery was reported by a team of US and Saudi scientists, who said that a fecal sample from one Egyptian tomb bat (*Taphosous perforatus*) in Saudi Arabia yielded a 190-nucleotide fragment that was a 100% match for the MERS-CoV from the first human case in the country. The sample was collected 12 kilometers from the man's home. But the doubters say that the piece of genome was so small that, even though the sequence was a match for the corresponding piece of MERS-CoV, it might represent only a related virus. The MERS-CoV genome consists of about 30,000 nucleotides. [CIDRAP](#)

Saudi Arabia: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – WHO update

30 August - WHO has been informed of an additional four laboratory-confirmed cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection in Saudi Arabia... Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 108 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 50 deaths. Based on the current situation and available information, WHO encourages all Member States to continue their surveillance for severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) and to carefully review any unusual patterns. [WHO](#)

Saudi Arabia reports recovery of four MERS patients

1 September - In a pair of puzzling statements, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health (MOH) on Sep 1 reported the recovery of four patients from Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infections, though two of them had previously been described as asymptomatic. One statement announced the recovery of a 7-year-old girl and a 16-year-old boy in Hafr Al-Batin. They apparently are the two patients whose asymptomatic cases were announced by the MOH on Aug 29; they are family members of a 38-year-old man who died of MERS on Aug 17. Without giving any other details, the MOH said the two children "left the hospital fully cured." The other two patients who recovered are a 26-year-old from Hafr Al-Batin and a 19-year-old from Riyadh, according to the other MOH statement. It gave no details on their illnesses. No recent reports from Saudi Arabia have

mentioned MERS patients of those ages. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

Syria crisis: UN says more than 2m have fled

3 September - More than two million Syrians are now registered as refugees, after the total went up by a million in the last six months, the UN's refugee agency says. More Syrians are now displaced than any other nationality, says the UNHCR... The UNHCR said in a statement on Tuesday: "Syria is haemorrhaging women, children and men who cross borders often with little more than the clothes on their backs." Around half of those forced to leave are children, UN agencies estimate, with about three-quarters of them under 11. Just 118,000 refugee children have been able to continue in some sort of education, and only one-fifth have received some sort of counselling, with agencies warning of a "lost generation" of child refugees ill-equipped to help rebuild Syria in the future. [BBC News](#)

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USEUCOM

Netherlands: Large ongoing measles outbreak in a religious community since May 2013

5 September - Despite vaccination coverage over 95%, a measles outbreak started in May 2013 in the Netherlands. As of 28 August, there were 1,226 reported cases, including 82 hospitalisations. It is anticipated that the outbreak will continue. Most cases were orthodox Protestants (n=1,087/1,186; 91.7%) and unvaccinated (n=1,174/1,217; 96.5%). A unique outbreak control intervention was implemented: a personal invitation for measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccination was sent for all children aged 6–14 months living in municipalities with MMR vaccination coverage below 90%. [Eurosurveillance](#)

United Kingdom: Nurses warned about nail extensions

2 September - Nurses have been warned about wearing nail extensions and using nail polish after a poll suggested infection control was being put at risk by fashion-conscious NHS staff. Guidance states that fingernails should be short and free of varnish. But an online poll of nearly 500 student nurses found lapses were commonplace with 60% reporting nail extensions and polish being used... The researchers, writing in the American Journal of Infection Control, said the survey showed lapses were widespread... "Nail varnish and extensions harbour bacteria and prevent good hand hygiene. [BBC News](#)

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U.S.: Gender income gaps persist among doctors, study

3 September - Female doctors earn an average of \$56,000 less each year than male doctors, according to a new study, which found that gap hasn't budged since the late 1980s. Researchers used a nationally-representative survey conducted in 1987 through 2010 and found that although earning gaps shrank over time among non-healthcare workers, that was not the case for doctors and certain other health professionals. "There is something that's intrinsically going on within the physician workforce," Dr. Anupam B. Jena, the study's senior author from Harvard Medical School's Department of Health Care Policy, said. "We would have suspected that the gender gap between males and females would have converged somewhat over the years, and what we found was that it was relatively constant."

[Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: Mass. health officials warn patients may have been exposed to measles at two hospitals

3 September - Hundreds of Massachusetts residents may have been inadvertently exposed to measles, a highly contagious disease, while visiting two hospitals in Greater Boston last month, state health officials said Tuesday evening. The alert covers anyone who may be showing early symptoms of the disease, which resembles a cold at first, and visited Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston between August 17—23 or MetroWest Medical Center in Framingham on Aug. 23 and 24. Two people infected with measles, who apparently had no connection to each other, went to those hospitals for medical care, said Dr. Alfred DeMaria, an infectious disease specialist at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. One was a child who had been too young to be vaccinated; the other was an older person who may not have been vaccinated. [Boston Globe](#)

U.S.: One in four U.S. deaths from heart disease could be prevented, CDC

3 September - About one in four U.S. deaths from heart disease could be avoided with better prevention efforts and treatment which President [Barack Obama's](#) healthcare reforms will make possible, a report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. The first-of-its-kind report estimated that preventable deaths from heart disease in 2010 amounted to as many as 200,000 individuals who might have been spared an early death from a heart attack or stroke. CDC officials said that the launch of Obama's [healthcare reform](#) law in 2014, which is expected to provide better access to treatment for millions of uninsured Americans and routine coverage of preventive screenings, could help bring those numbers down. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Oral infections causing more hospitalizations



30 August - Left untreated, a serious tooth abscess can eventually kill. In 2007, Deamonte Driver, a 12-year-old boy in Maryland, died after bacteria from an abscessed tooth spread to his brain. The case drew widespread media attention, and his is the cautionary tale cited whenever politicians and advocates discuss access to oral health care. But a new study suggests that deaths from these preventable infections may not be as rare as once thought and that the number of Americans hospitalized with them may be on the rise. Studies have shown that dental problems account for hundreds of thousands of emergency room visits each year. The new analysis, published in the September issue of the *Journal of Endodontics*, focused on patients who had to be hospitalized because of an infection of the tip of the tooth's root, called a periapical abscess. It is a common consequence of untreated tooth decay, and it can be dangerous if it spreads. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Study - Healthcare-linked infections cost US \$10 billion a year

3 September - Five of the most common, costly, and preventable healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) cost the United States nearly \$10 billion per year, according to a meta-analysis of 27 years' worth of data by a team from Harvard Medical School and affiliated institutions. The team reviewed data spanning 1986 to 2013 concerning surgical site infections (SSIs), central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSIs), catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs), ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP), and *Clostridium difficile* infections (CDIs), according to their report, released yesterday by *JAMA Internal Medicine*... On a per-case basis, CLABSIs were found to be the most expensive HAI at \$45,814 each, followed by VAP, \$40,144; SSIs, \$20,785; CDIs, \$11,285; and CAUTIs, \$896, the report says. SSIs, however, accounted for the largest share of costs, at 33.7%. The second largest contributor was VAP, at 31.6%, followed by CLABSIs, 18.9%; CDIs, 15.4%; and CAUTIs, less than 1%. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S.: Surveillance for waterborne disease outbreaks associated with drinking water and other nonrecreational water — United States, 2009–2010

6 September - ...During 2009–2010, the most recent years for which finalized data are available, 33 drinking water-associated outbreaks were reported, comprising 1,040 cases of illness, 85 hospitalizations, and nine deaths. *Legionella* accounted for 58% of outbreaks and 7% of illnesses, and *Campylobacter* accounted for 12% of outbreaks and 78% of illnesses. The most commonly identified outbreak deficiencies in drinking water-associated outbreaks were *Legionella* in plumbing systems (57.6%), untreated ground water (24.2%), and distribution system deficiencies (12.1%), suggesting that efforts to identify and correct these deficiencies could prevent many outbreaks and illnesses associated with drinking water.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S. teen use of e-cigarettes doubled, CDC reports

5 September - Twice as many U.S. middle and high school students used electronic cigarettes, which mimic traditional cigarettes and deliver nicotine as a vapor, in 2012 than a year earlier, and these teens could be on the way to a lifelong addiction, according to a government report released on Thursday. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 10 percent of high school students surveyed reported using e-cigarettes in 2012, up from 4.7 percent in 2011. Some 2.7 percent of middle school students surveyed had used e-cigarettes in 2012, up from 1.4 percent in 2011. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: West Nile virus

3 September - As of September 3, 2013, 45 states and the District of Columbia have reported West Nile virus infections in people, birds, or mosquitoes. A total of 497 cases of West Nile virus disease in people, including 20 deaths, have been reported to CDC. Of these, 243 (49%) were classified as neuroinvasive disease (such as meningitis or encephalitis) and 254 (51%) were classified as non-neuroinvasive disease. [CDC](#)

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USPACOM

Japanese government prepared to take reins of Fukushima response



2 September - The head of Japan's nuclear regulatory agency says it is possible that radioactive water from the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant will have to be released into the sea. Nuclear Regulation Authority chairman Shunichi Tanaka told reporters Monday the toxic water would be filtered to bring the radiation levels below internationally accepted limits before it is discharged into the sea. Engineers have been struggling to store water used to cool the plant's nuclear reactors, which sustained a meltdown after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Officials with Tokyo Electric Power Company, Fukushima's operator, announced Sunday that a pipe connecting two other tanks is leaking contaminated water.

[VOA](#)

Japan: Radiation levels hit new high near Fukushima water tanks

4 September - Radiation levels around tanks storing contaminated water at Japan's crippled Fukushima nuclear plant have risen by a fifth to a new high, officials say. Ground readings near one set of tanks stood at 2,200 millisieverts (mSv) on Tuesday, the plant operator and

Japan's nuclear authority said. Saturday's reading was 1,800 mSv. Last month, plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Company (Tepco) said it had found highly contaminated water leaking from a storage tank. Other leaks have also been reported, prompting the government on Tuesday to pledge 47bn yen (\$473m, £304m) in funding to tackle the problem... The readings are thought to be high enough to provide a lethal radiation dose to someone standing near contaminated areas without protective gear within hours. But Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) also said the areas were easily contained. [BBC News](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Cuba: Cholera outbreak

3 September - The Ministry of Health and Public Health Officials are urging travelers to Cuba to take measures to prevent cholera following confirmation of a renewed outbreak of the disease in Cuba. As at 23 August 2013, 163 cholera cases have been confirmed in the provinces of Havana, Santiago de Cuba, and Camaguey, as well as other municipalities, where cases were found to be associated with these three provinces. The National International Health Regulation (IHR) focal point of Cuba also noted that, following the outbreak recorded in early 2013, cholera cases are analysed regularly. [Cayman Net News](#)

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