

8 May 2015

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Burn Pit Registry Workshop

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) is convening a committee to provide recommendations on collecting, maintaining, and monitoring information collected by the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. The committee will assess the effectiveness of the VA's information gathering efforts and provide recommendations for addressing the future medical needs of the affected groups.

As part of this, the committee will comprise an analysis of the information collected by the registry in its initial months of operation. It will also offer recommendations on how to best ascertain and monitor the health effects of the exposures experienced by Service Members.

Workshop presentations, including one by USAPHC's John Kolivosky, are available at a link in the right-hand column of the [Burn Pit Registry Workshop](#) page.

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE
OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

- Long-term data on complications adds to criticism of contraceptive implant
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- Walking for an extra 2 minutes per hour can help you live longer

USAFRICOM

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- Uganda's capital blazes a trail in cutting child deaths, charity says
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- Ukraine: In Ukraine, the triumph and tragedy of battlefield medicine
- United Kingdom: Most Britons unaware of skin cancer signs – survey
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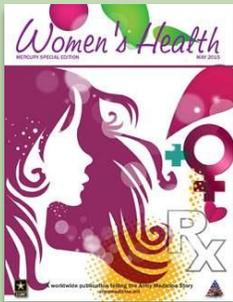
- Mexico: CDC warns travelers to Tulum, Mexico of hepatitis A risk
- U.S.: Commonly used chemicals come under new scrutiny
- U.S.: EPA's curbs on coal-burning will save thousands of lives
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- U.S.: Fracking chemicals detected in Pennsylvania drinking water
- U.S.: Hog farmers more likely to carry drug-resistant bacteria
- U.S.: Increases in hepatitis C virus infection related to injection drug use among persons aged ≤30 years — Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, 2006–2012
- U.S.: Pine Ridge Indian Reservation struggles with suicides among its young
- U.S.: The uphill battle to better regulate formaldehyde
- U.S.: Triage and treatment - untold health stories from Baltimore's unrest
- U.S.: Tuna plant charged after worker cooked to death
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- China launches new campaign against sex-selective abortions
- Japan: Hand, foot, and mouth (HFMD) disease
- Malaysia dengue death toll up to 126
- NEPAL EARTHQUAKE
- Crush syndrome - saving lives in Nepal
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- Pacific Command sending 500 troops to Nepal
- Photo feature: Nepal - outside Kathmandu
- UK agencies warn of serious disease after disaster

**Army Medical
Command releases
Special Edition of
Mercury magazine
on Women's Health**

As part of its Women's Health Month observances, the U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM) has released the first special edition of MERCURY, its official monthly publication, to report on recent women's health programs and women's health innovations in Army Medicine and across the military health system.



- [WHO issues rapid health assessment on impact of Nepal earthquake](#)

USSOUTHCOM

- [Brazil faces surge in number of dengue fever cases](#)
- [Paraguay: Health authorities confirm 1,000 cases of chikungunya virus](#)
- [Paraguay: Pregnant 10-year-old rape victim denied abortion](#)

U.S. MILITARY

Absolute and relative morbidity burdens attributable to various illnesses and injuries, U.S. Armed Forces, 2014

April 2015 - ... In 2014, as in prior years, musculoskeletal disorders (particularly of the back), injuries (particularly of the arm/shoulder, knee, and foot/ankle), mental disorders (particularly substance abuse and disorders of mood, anxiety, and adjustment), and pregnancy- and delivery-related conditions accounted for relatively large proportions of the morbidity and healthcare burdens that affected U.S. military members. For example, in 2014, substance abuse, mood, anxiety, and adjustment disorders accounted for 214,948 lost work days (20% of the total) due to hospitalization, convalescence, and limited duty dispositions. More than 11% of all lost work time was attributable to other back problems (e.g., lumbago or low back pain) and other musculoskeletal diseases; together, these two musculoskeletal disorders accounted for more than 123,000 lost work days. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Are bungled VA claims systemic? Senators want agency review

6 May - Troubled by delays in handling veterans claims, a bipartisan group of senators on Wednesday urged a wide-scale, independent review of the Department of Veterans Affairs for mismanagement and changes to improve budgeting and speed up applications. A report released by nine senators acknowledged recent efforts by the VA to reduce disability and pensions claims backlogs but said it wasn't enough. Pointing to the VA's worst performers such as the Philadelphia regional office, the lawmakers were announcing legislation that would require the Government Accountability Office to investigate all 56 regional offices for problems. [Washington Post](#)

Pentagon accused of withholding sex crimes info

4 May - The number of sex-related crimes occurring in U.S. military communities is far greater than the Defense Department has publicly reported, a U.S. senator said Monday in a scathing critique that asserts the Pentagon has refused to provide her information about sexual assaults at several major bases. The spouses of service members and civilian women who live or work near military facilities are especially vulnerable to being sexually assaulted, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., said in a report. Yet they "remain in the shadows" because

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neither is counted in surveys conducted by the Defense Department to determine the prevalence of sexual assaults within the ranks, the report said. ... The senator said her analysis of 107 sexual assault cases found punishments that were too lenient and the word of the alleged assailant was more likely to be believed than the victim. Less than a quarter of the cases went to trial and just 11 resulted in conviction for a sex crime. Female civilians were the victims in more than half the cases, according to Gillibrand, an outspoken advocate for an overhaul of the military justice system. [Military Times](#)

Suicide rates increasing for both veterans and nonveterans; veterans using VHA services have declining suicide rates

4 May - Veterans who used services provided by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) had much lower suicide rates than veterans who did not use those services, according to a new analysis of a decade of suicide data. ... This study directly compared veteran and nonveteran suicide rates while for the first time also looking at veterans who had used VHA services and those who had not. Researchers analyzed data from 23 states on more than 170,000 adult suicides over a 10-year period (2000-2010). During that time frame, the age-adjusted veteran suicide rate increased by approximately 25 percent while the comparable nonveteran rate increased by approximately 12 percent. The analysis found that the rate of suicide decreased significantly for veterans who used VHA services, while it spiked for veterans not using those services and increased for nonveterans. The suicide rate for all veterans is significantly higher than for nonveterans. [Medical Xpress](#)

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GLOBAL

C. diff used to beat C. diff infection



6 May - Potentially deadly Clostridium difficile infections have been treated with a dose of... more C. difficile. The "fight-fire-with-fire" approach by US doctors replaced aggressive versions of the bug with their friendlier cousins. Trials on 173 people, published in the Journal of the American Medical

Association, showed the odds of repeat infection were cut dramatically. ... [The] team at Loyola University Health System in Illinois tried giving patients spores of non-toxin-producing C. difficile. The friendlier bacteria should occupy the spaces in the gut that the toxic C. difficile normally inhabits and prevent it coming back. The trial showed the healthier bacteria took hold in the gut 69% of the time. In those people, just one in fifty faced another infection. [BBC News](#)

**STI Guidelines:
New Treatment,
New Challenges**

An archived PowerPoint presentation and video by Anne M. Rompalo, MD, ScM, Professor of Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Professor of Epidemiology Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health presented at the Sixth Annual Sexual and Reproductive Health Webinar.



'Cruise ship' norovirus bug can spread by air, study finds

6 May - Noroviruses -- those notorious stomach bugs that have infected scores of people and ruined countless cruise ship vacations -- can spread through the air and infect people several feet away, according to new research. These findings suggest that current safety precautions implemented to control noroviruses may not be enough. The study also helps explain why outbreaks of the illness are difficult to contain, the researchers said. "The measures applied in hospital settings are only designed to limit direct contact with infected patients," the study's leader, Caroline Duchaine, a professor at Universite Laval's Faculty of Science and Engineering in Quebec, Canada, said in a university news release. [Medline Plus](#)

Global warming may spread Lyme disease

4 May - ... The number of confirmed cases of Lyme disease in the United States has been on an upward trend, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 1995, there were 11,700 confirmed cases. In 2013, there were 27,203 confirmed cases, as well as another 9,104 probable cases. ... Climate change is increasing not only the range in which Lyme disease-carrying ticks can survive—ticks are moving into warming Canada and other northern locations—but the amount of time in which ticks can feed. ... The researchers concluded that in warmer years, ticks emerged as much as three weeks early, which poses a risk to public health. [Scientific American](#)

Progress in fight against polio, but public health emergency persists

7 May - "Strong progress" has been made in the fight against polio since the World Health Organization declared the situation a public health emergency of international concern in 2014, the WHO said in a statement. Nonetheless, the situation remains a public health emergency. In particular, Africa hasn't reported a case of wild poliovirus in 8 months. In addition, so far this year, Pakistan and Afghanistan have reported less than half the number of cases they reported during the same timeframe in 2014. And there have been no exported cases from Pakistan since October 2014. However, in late 2014, there were three documented exportations from Afghanistan into Pakistan, likely due to frequent travel between the two countries. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

Staffing an intensive care unit from miles away has advantages

6 May - ... Carolinas HealthCare System monitors ICUs in 10 of its hospitals from this command center near Charlotte. There are usually seven to nine critical care specialists on hand in the center. Nurses are here around the clock; doctors work nights, and everyone still spends time at the actual hospitals. Carolinas HealthCare started this project about two years ago and says it's good for staff and patients. For one thing, because medical staff at the command center can maintain a constant focus on patients, the command center is quiet — none of the bells and whistles going off that most ICUs need to alert nurses and

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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doctors down the hall that they're needed. [NPR](#)

Study: Measles can weaken immune system as long as 3 years

7 May - A new study says measles can continue to weaken the body's immune system for up to three years, much longer than previously known. Researchers in the journal *Science* say measles plays havoc with what they call "immune amnesia," a phenomenon that destroys the immune system's ability to remember how to fight off other illnesses, including pneumonia and meningitis. Princeton University professor Jessica Metcalf, a co-author of the study, said that "in other words, if you get measles, three years down the road, you could die from something that you would not die from had you not been infected with measles." But the researchers did have some good news: They found that vaccinating children against measles led to a drop in deaths from other potentially deadly infections.

[VOA](#)

Tracking worms troubles to monitor a country's health

4 May - To draw attention to the connection between worms and prosperity, scientists recently created a "worm index." The index ranks the world's 25 most populous countries by how big a problem they have with three types of worms: intestinal soil-borne ones that cause stunting and anemia, especially in children; water-snail-borne ones that cause bloody urine and damage the bladder, vagina, rectum and liver; and mosquito-borne worms that cause the grotesque swelling of elephantiasis. The index then compares those countries by their rankings in the United Nations human development index, which includes not just income, but years of schooling and years lived in good health. The [comparison was published](#) last week in PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases. ... Not surprisingly, the richest countries have virtually no worms, and the poorest, like Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have widespread infestations. [New York Times](#)

Whooping cough vaccine's protection fades quickly

5 May - ... [In] the past five years, state health officials have declared epidemics of whooping cough twice — in 2010 and in 2014, when 11,000 people were sickened and three infants died. Now an analysis of a recent whooping cough epidemic in Washington state shows that the effectiveness of the Tdap vaccine used to fight the illness (also known as pertussis) waned significantly. For adolescents who received all their shots, effectiveness within one year of the final booster was 73 percent. The effectiveness rate plummeted to 34 percent within two to four years. [NPR](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 16 (April 19-25, 2015), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 8,294 specimens tested and reported by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories during week 16, 542 (6.5%) were positive for influenza.
- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- **Influenza-associated Pediatric Deaths:** Five influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- **Influenza-associated Hospitalizations:** A cumulative rate for the season of 64.3 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported. [FluView](#)

China: H7N9 avian influenza case reported in Jiangxi Province

2 May - The Health and Family Planning Commission of Jiangxi Province is reporting an additional human case of avian influenza A(H7N9) in a 39-year-old woman who is hospitalized for treatment in critical condition. From 2013 to date, 635 human cases of avian influenza A(H7N9) have been reported by the Mainland health authorities. Regarding the third wave in the Mainland since November 2014, a total of 195 cases have been reported, including 72 in Guangdong, 39 in Fujian, 38 in Zhejiang, 17 in Jiangsu, seven in Anhui, seven in Xinjiang, six in Shanghai, three in Jiangxi, two in Hunan, two in Shandong, one in Guizhou and one in Hubei. In addition to the cases reported from the Mainland, imported human cases have been reported from Hong Kong-13, Taiwan-4, Canada-2 and Malaysia-1. [Outbreak News Today](#)

DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program

From 12-25 April 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 15 & 16), a total of 92 specimens were collected and received from 33 locations. Results were finalized for 42 specimens from 23 locations. During Week 15, the laboratory identified five influenza B. During Week 16, two influenza B were identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

Flu News Europe

Week 17/2015 (20–26 April 2015):

- Influenza activity continued to decrease in most of the 37 reporting countries: the proportion of influenza-virus-positive specimens from sentinel sources decreased from 25% in week 16/2015 to 20% in week 17. Since week 51/2014, the positivity rate has been over the threshold of 10%, indicating seasonal influenza activity.
- Low intensity of influenza activity was reported by 32 countries.
- Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2) and type B viruses continued to circulate in the WHO European Region, but type B viruses accounted for 92% of sentinel detections in week 17/2015.
- Low numbers of hospitalized influenza cases were reported.

[Flu News Europe](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2015 Week 17 (through 2 May 2015):

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees. Decreasing influenza activity at US military recruit sites
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated elevated FRI rates at Lackland AFB and Fort Jackson. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

U.S.: Avian flu resurfaces in Missouri, hits more Iowa farms

6 May - The H5N2 avian flu virus has reappeared in Missouri after an absence of more than a month, and Iowa reported six more poultry outbreaks today, but hard-hit Minnesota was spared any new outbreaks for the first time since mid-April. [CIDRAP](#)

WHO Influenza Update

4 May - Influenza activity declined further in the northern hemisphere with mainly influenza B virus circulation and was low in most regions globally.

- In North America, influenza activity continued to decrease and was close to inter-seasonal levels with influenza B virus predominant in the last weeks.
- In Europe, influenza activity continued to decline in most countries. Influenza B virus remained predominant in recent weeks.
- In northern Africa, influenza activity decreased almost to inter-seasonal levels.
- In western Asia, a decrease in influenza activity mainly associated with A(H1N1)pdm09 virus was observed in the last weeks.
- In the temperate countries of Asia, influenza activity of mainly influenza B virus was further declining.

- In tropical countries of the Americas, influenza activity was low in most countries.
- In tropical Asia, influenza activity and influenza-like illness (ILI) activity continued to decrease in southern Asia, where influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus predominated. Influenza activity has continued to decrease from its peak in southern China including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China. In the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.
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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Panera bread plans to drop a long list of ingredients



4 May - Acesulfame K. Ethoxyquin. Artificial smoke flavor. The first, an artificial sweetener; the second, a preservative; and the third, a flavor enhancer, are just a few of the ingredients that Panera Bread wants to banish from its kitchens by the end of 2016. In doing so, Panera would join the growing ranks of food companies and restaurants that have announced plans to eliminate a variety of artificial preservatives, flavors and colors, as well as different kinds of sweeteners and meat from animals raised with antibiotics, in response to consumer demands for transparency and simplicity in the foods they eat. ... In the last six months, at least a dozen food companies and restaurant businesses have announced plans to reformulate products to eliminate ingredients. [New York Times](#)

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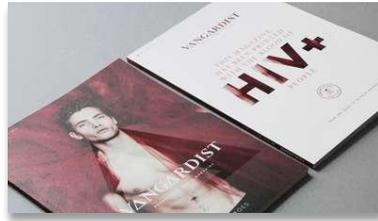
WELLNESS

For diabetes control, surgery and intensive lifestyle change about equal

7 May - Intensive medical management with supervised diet and exercise may work as well as weight-loss surgery to help diabetics get blood sugar levels under control, at least in the

short term, a small study suggests. Researchers followed 40 people with diabetes and poorly controlled blood sugar for one year, giving half of them weight-loss surgery and offering the other half a non-surgical alternative, so-called intensive medical management. Both options produced similar reductions in blood sugar. [Reuters](#)

Ink laced with HIV-positive blood used to print entire magazine



5 May - To make a big point, a small Austrian men's magazine printed an entire edition using ink laced with HIV-positive blood. The idea, said Julian Wiehl, co-publisher of The Vanguardist — a "progressive" magazine aimed at young, urban men — was to make a statement about the stigma still associated with the

virus that no one could ignore. I think you'll agree they succeeded, wildly. "If you see the magazine . . . the first question that comes to your mind is, 'Would I touch it? Would I take it in my hands?' " Wiehl said in an interview. "And the second question is, 'Why would I touch it?' or 'Why wouldn't I touch it?' "From a health and safety perspective, picking up the magazine is not a problem. As we've known for many years, the human immunodeficiency virus quickly dies outside the body. [Chicago Tribune](#)

Long-term data on complications adds to criticism of contraceptive implant

3 May - When a new contraceptive implant came on the market over a decade ago, it was considered a breakthrough for women who did not want to have more children, a sterilization procedure that could be done in a doctor's office in just 10 minutes. Now, 13 years later, thousands of women who claim they were seriously injured by the implant are urging the Food and Drug Administration to take the device off the market and to warn the public about its complications. Troubling long-term data on women using the device, called Essure, was published on Friday after an unusual eight-year delay. Several patients have sued Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals, and representatives of patient groups plan to meet with officials of Bayer, the manufacturer, on Tuesday to discuss their concerns. [New York Times](#)

Social network experiments create a tipping point to improve public health

6 May - Convincing a large group of people to change its behavior is no popularity contest, a new study shows. In a novel experiment, researchers found that certain public health interventions work best when key "influencers" in a face-to-face social network are exposed to the program. What's surprising, they say, is that those key influencers are not the most socially connected people in the network. ... The goal was to see which targeting method resulted in the greatest uptake of the health interventions. The researchers found that

targeting nominated friends—key influencers—of random villagers sparked the highest level of adoption for the nutritional program. That method increased adoption of the program by 12.2%, compared with random distribution. Meanwhile, targeting the most highly connected people produced no increase in adoption of either public health program.

[Medical Xpress](#)

Walking for an extra 2 minutes per hour can help you live longer



1 May - ... New research suggests that even casually walking for an extra two minutes each hour may help you live a longer life. For the observational study, researchers from Northwestern Medical School analyzed data from 3,626 participants in an existing

study on aging, and followed up with them for three years. They found that trading two minutes per hour of sedentary activity for normal-paced walking was associated with a one-third lower risk of dying. Among individuals with chronic kidney disease, the risk of dying was 41 percent lower. [Huffington Post](#)

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USAFRICOM

Africa: Smartphones can be smart enough to find a parasitic worm

6 May - Smartphones aren't simply an amazing convenience. In Africa they can be used to make a lifesaving diagnosis. In fact, scientists are hoping to use a souped-up smartphone microscope to help them eradicate a devastating disease called river blindness.

Onchocerciasis, as the disease is also known, is caused by a parasite that's spread by flies. Thirty years ago, it was simply devastating in parts of Africa, like Mali. [NPR](#)

Liberia confirms measles outbreak

6 May - Liberia has reported an outbreak of measles in ten of the West African country's 15 counties. "There is a measles outbreak in Liberia, so I am calling all parents to take their children aged between six and 95 months for vaccination," Health Minister Tolbert Nenswah told the state broadcaster. ... The minister admitted that the outbreak was attributable to the breakdown of the country's health sector as a result of the recent Ebola crisis. After the Ebola outbreak last year, most of the nation's public hospitals closed amid fears of infection.

[Video News](#)

Niger: At least 265 dead in Niger meningitis epidemic

5 May - At least 265 people have died so far this year in a meningitis epidemic in Niger amid a shortage of vaccines needed to prevent the disease's spread, the West African nation's health minister said on Tuesday. Some 3,856 cases of meningitis were recorded between Jan. 1 and May 4, with five of the country's eight regions, including the capital Niamey, particularly hard hit, Mano Aghali said in an address broadcast on state-owned television. The government shut all schools in the region around Niamey and launched a campaign to vaccinate children aged 2 to 15 in April at a time when the outbreak had killed 85 people. However, classrooms reopened a week later and the vaccination campaign has yet to reach the schools. "Niger is facing a shortage of vaccines on the international market," Aghali said. "We only have 50 percent of what's needed to cover our vaccination targets." [Reuters](#)

Sudan: Aid groups struggle with massive measles outbreak

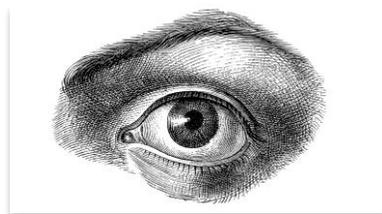
5 May - Aid agencies are struggling to contain a massive measles outbreak in Sudan. The Ministry of Health is leading a United Nations and international effort to vaccinate 8 million children under age five against the sometimes fatal disease, which so far has claimed 27 child lives. Aid agencies have just completed the first phase of an immunization campaign in which 2 million Sudanese children were vaccinated against measles. ... [The] representative for the U.N. Children's Fund in Sudan, Geert Cappelaere, ... attributes much of the problem to a lack of routine immunizations against the disease and to the inability to reach several areas of conflict. [VOA](#)

Uganda's capital blazes a trail in cutting child deaths, charity says

4 May - ... In the five years to 2011, child mortality in the East African country fell to 65 deaths per 1,000 live births from 94 deaths per 1,000 live births. Uganda has cut child mortality by 4.3 percent a year between 1990 and 2013, just below the 4.4 percent annual reduction needed to achieve a Millennium Development Goal on lowering the number of deaths of under-fives. Its neighbors Rwanda and Tanzania are among 12 African nations on track to meet the goal, according to the U.N. children's agency, UNICEF. [Reuters](#)

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

Ebola hides in the eyes of a man who was considered cured



7 May - Ebola virus has once again figured out how to surprise and confound humans. It attacked the eyes of a doctor weeks after he had been deemed cured and virus-free. ... Weeks of intensive treatment saved the man's life. But soon after leaving the hospital, he started to have problems with his eyes. ... Eye doctors call this

uveitis, an inflammation inside the eye that can cause blindness. When doctors tested the aqueous humor, the watery substance that sits atop the eye of the lens, it tested positive for Ebola. They were able to save the eye, but it took months for the man's vision to recover. "This case highlights an important complication of [Ebola] with major implications for both individual and public health." ... Because tens of thousands of people survived the Ebola outbreak in Africa, there could be thousands of people who risk blindness from delayed eye infections, Van Gelder says. [NPR](#)

Guinea and Sierra Leone: Progress against Ebola advances

6 May - The two countries still reporting Ebola infections saw a clear decline in cases last week, with illnesses reported from just a few hot spots and transmission chains, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today in its weekly epidemiologic profile of the outbreak. Guinea and Sierra Leone reported only 18 cases last week, the outbreak's lowest weekly total so far this year. The drop in cases appears to signal a break in a month-long stall in progress that saw cases fluctuate between 30 and 37 lab-confirmed cases each week, the WHO said. [CIDRAP](#)

Possible sexual transmission of Ebola virus — Liberia, 2015

8 May - On March 20, 2015, 30 days after the most recent confirmed Ebola Virus Disease (Ebola) patient in Liberia was isolated, Ebola was laboratory confirmed in a woman in Monrovia. The investigation identified only one epidemiologic link to Ebola: unprotected vaginal intercourse with a survivor. Published reports from previous outbreaks have demonstrated Ebola survivors can continue to harbor virus in immunologically privileged sites for a period of time after convalescence. Ebola virus has been isolated from semen as long as 82 days after symptom onset and viral RNA has been detected in semen up to 101 days after symptom onset. One instance of possible sexual transmission of Ebola has been reported, although the accompanying evidence was inconclusive. ... CDC now recommends that contact with semen from male Ebola survivors be avoided until more information

regarding the duration and infectiousness of viral shedding in body fluids is known. If male survivors have sex (oral, vaginal, or anal), a condom should be used correctly and consistently every time. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Tracing the Ebola outbreak, scientists hunt a silent epidemic

5 May - Scientists are using blood samples collected throughout the Ebola outbreak to map the virus's spread from country to country by tracking tiny mutations in its gene sequences. The picture is not yet complete, but intriguing discoveries have been made. Virus mutations first detected in Sierra Leone last spring were found later in Liberia and Mali, and scientists are examining whether this resulted from the chance movements of people across borders. And while some scientists think it is unlikely that the mutations made a difference in how the virus functioned, others are looking at whether this version of the virus had properties that made it more capable of causing infection. [New York Times](#)

What did the U.S. learn from Ebola? How to prepare for bioterrorist attacks

23 April - ... Today, [Arizona Rep. Martha] McSally said, the United States is still only prepared to confront a fraction of the 15 potential biological agents that could be released in an attack. What the Ebola response taught the government, she said, was that effective communication isn't optional next time. And the White House needs to prioritize the naming of a single coordinator for agencies responsible for responding to such an attack. A biological threat from the Islamic State or al Qaeda is not necessarily immediate, McSally said, but there are three phases of biological attacks to take into account: isolation, weaponization, and dispersion of the agent. She said many U.S. cities currently would be left scrambling to respond. ... The solution, she thinks, might instead be setting up regional response stations and transportation systems that could evacuate those in need of medical help. [Foreign Policy](#)

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USCENTCOM

Saudi Arabia: Hajj and Umrah

6 May - The annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, is among the largest mass gatherings in the world. It draws about 3 million Muslims from around the world, and more than 11,000 Americans make the pilgrimage each year. This year, Hajj will take place from approximately September 20–25, 2015. Umrah is a similar pilgrimage that can be undertaken at any time of the year but is likely to be more crowded during the month of

Ramadan (approximately June 17 to July 17, 2015). Because of the crowds, mass gatherings such as Hajj and Umrah are associated with unique health risks. If you plan to travel to Saudi Arabia for Hajj or Umrah, follow CDC's recommendations, such as being up-to-date on your vaccines, to help keep you safe and healthy. [CDC](#)

Syria: US seeks UN probe of Syria chlorine attacks



6 May - United Nations (United States) (AFP) - The United States wants the UN Security Council to set up an investigation on the use of chemical weapons in Syria following reports of chlorine gas attacks, diplomats said Wednesday. The investigation would be carried out by a team of experts appointed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-

moon, and tasked with establishing who is to blame for the attacks. "There is mounting evidence of repeated use of chlorine" in Syria, a Security Council diplomat said. ... Britain, France and the United States have accused President Bashar al-Assad's forces of carrying out the chlorine attacks, using barrel bombs thrown from helicopters. The three countries argue that only the Syrian regime has helicopters, but Russia maintains there is no solid proof that Damascus is behind the attacks. The move by the United States follows a Security Council meeting last month during which Syrian doctors gave graphic first-hand evidence of chlorine attacks. [Yahoo! News](#)

Yemen: Fuel shortage leads to hospital shutdowns

5 May - ... In recent weeks, the state electricity company has provided only a few hours of power per day to the capital Sana'a, even less to other cities. Yemen's telecommunications network is expected to stop working within the next week or so due to the lack of fuel. Many private hospitals have shut down because they were unable to obtain diesel for their generators, while public hospitals and the remaining private ones IRIN spoke to said they would be forced to close within two weeks if more fuel is not allowed in. ... In a joint statement on Monday, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières said the country's medical system was reliant upon drugs that were currently being blocked from entry. [IRIN](#)

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USEUCOM

Ukraine: In Ukraine, the triumph and tragedy of battlefield medicine

4 May - ... In a wide-open field on the Ukrainian steppe on a hot, end of April afternoon, about 30 soldiers of the regular army's 46th Battalion Donbas are training in Tactical

Combat Casualty Care, or TCCC. ... TCCC was created by the U.S. Army in response to casualty trends in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and is now the NATO standard for battlefield first aid. The training focuses on the immediate care of battlefield injuries while still under fire. ... Effective medical care has been among the Ukrainian army's most pressing shortfalls since the conflict with pro-Russian separatists began last spring. About 95 percent of Ukraine's combat deaths occur on the battlefield, underscoring the need to train front line soldiers in combat first-aid. According to U.S. Army data from Iraq and Afghanistan, 90 percent of U.S. battlefield deaths occur before soldiers reach a hospital. [The Daily Signal](#)

United Kingdom: Most Britons unaware of skin cancer signs – survey



4 May - More than three-quarters of Britons say they would not recognise signs of skin cancer, a survey by the British Association of Dermatologists suggests. The disease now causes about 2,100 deaths annually in the UK. The BAD said that while 95% of people it surveyed knew the disease was becoming more common it was

concerned that they appeared to be unaware of the link with sunburn. ... Skin cancer rates in the UK have been increasing since the 1960s, with cheaper foreign holidays and the popularity of outdoor activities thought to be responsible. [BBC News](#)

United Kingdom: Pertussis, increasing incidence

6 May - Cases of whooping cough in the West Midlands [England] have almost doubled during the past 2 years, new figures reveal. The number of patients diagnosed with the contagious infection has also risen across the Black Country and Staffordshire [West Midlands]. Whooping cough -- a bacterial infection of the lungs and airways -- affects all ages, but newborns and infants under 3 months of age are at highest risk of severe complications and death. During 2014 there were 135 cases in the West Midlands -- 39 of those were in the Black Country and Staffordshire. This is up by 42 per cent compared with 2013's figures when there were a total of 95 cases in the West Midlands. Health chiefs have urged pregnant women to have a vaccination to protect themselves and their unborn babies against the risk of the infection, also known as pertussis. [ProMED-mail](#)

WHO projections warn of burgeoning obesity crisis in Europe

5 May - Europe will face an obesity crisis of vast proportions by 2030, according to new World Health Organization projections, with many countries likely to see far more than half of adults above the healthy weight limit. The figures, which predict 89 percent of Irish men and 77 percent of Greek men will be overweight by 2030, present "a worrying picture of rising obesity across Europe", researchers said, with very few countries showing decreasing trends. "Although there is no silver bullet for tackling the epidemic, governments must do

more to restrict unhealthy food marketing and make healthy food more affordable," said Dr Laura Webber of the UK Health Forum, which worked with the WHO and the European Commission to produce the new projections. [Reuters](#)

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USNORTHCOM

Mexico: CDC warns travelers to Tulum, Mexico of hepatitis A risk

2 May - More than two dozen US travelers to Tulum, Mexico, along the east coast of the Yucatán Peninsula, contracted hepatitis A during a one month period earlier this year prompting US health officials to issue a travel warning for the area. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of May 1, 2015, a total of 27 cases of hepatitis A have been reported in US travelers who went to Tulum, Mexico. All of the people traveled between the dates of February 15, 2015, and March 20, 2015. CDC advises travelers to the area to get vaccinated against hepatitis A and follow all food and water precautions.

[Outbreak News Today](#)

U.S.: Commonly used chemicals come under new scrutiny

1 May - A top federal health official and hundreds of environmental scientists on Friday voiced new health concerns about a common class of chemicals used in products as varied as pizza boxes and carpet treatments. The concerted public campaign renews a years-old debate about a class of chemicals known as poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances, or PFASs. After studies showed that some PFASs lingered in people's bodies for years, and appeared to increase the risks of cancer and other health problems, the chemical manufacturer DuPont banned the use of one type of PFAS in its popular Teflon products, and other companies followed suit. At issue now are replacement chemicals developed by those manufacturers and used in thousands of products, including electronics, footwear, sleeping bags, tents, protective gear for firefighters and even the foams used to extinguish fires.

[New York Times](#)

U.S.: EPA's curbs on coal-burning will save thousands of lives

4 May - The Obama administration's proposed curbs on coal-burning power plants could prevent thousands of deaths each year from heart attack and respiratory disease, scientists said Monday in the first peer-reviewed study to examine the measure's health impacts. Many parts of the country could see immediate improvements in air quality as a side-effect

of the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed "Clean Power Plan" regulations, which are primarily intended to cut greenhouse gas emissions linked to climate change, the researchers said in a study published in *Nature Climate Change*. Depending on implementation, the proposals could prevent about 3,500 premature deaths a year, mostly from respiratory disease, said the study's authors, scientists from Harvard and Syracuse universities and four other institutions. [Washington Post](#)

U.S.: First national report on Hispanic health a mix of good and bad news

6 May - ... [Results] from the first [national study on Hispanic health](#) risks and leading causes of death in the United States ... [are] both good and bad. ... Overall, Hispanics fare better than their non-Hispanic white peers when it comes to their health, in spite of the greater socioeconomic burdens from higher poverty rates, language barriers and a lower number of insured individuals. ... The two leading causes of death in Hispanics are cancer and heart disease, respectively. For non-Hispanic whites the causes are the same but in reverse order. However, Hispanics are about 50% more likely to die from diabetes and chronic liver disease than their non-Hispanic counterparts. ... "In spite of having worse risk factors they tend to live longer than those with lower risk factors and higher socioeconomic standards," [Tom] Frieden said. But a key factor, according to other research, seems to be that Hispanics have lower smoking rates. Smoking is to blame for two out of every 10 deaths in the United States, so lower rates in this population go a long way when it comes to health. [CNN](#)

U.S.: Fracking chemicals detected in Pennsylvania drinking water



4 May - An analysis of drinking water sampled from three homes in Bradford County, Pa., revealed traces of a compound commonly found in Marcellus Shale drilling fluids, according to a study published on Monday. The paper, published in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#), addresses a longstanding question about potential risks to underground drinking water from the drilling technique known as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. The authors suggested a chain of events by which the drilling chemical ended up in a homeowner's water supply. ... The industry has long maintained that because fracking occurs thousands of feet below drinking-water aquifers, the drilling chemicals that are injected to break up rocks and release the gas trapped there pose no risk. In this study, the researchers note that the contamination may have stemmed from a lack of integrity in the drill wells and not from the actual fracking process far below. The industry criticized the new study, saying that it provided no proof that the chemical came from a nearby well. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Hog farmers more likely to carry drug-resistant bacteria

1 May - Hog farmers are six times more likely than the general population to carry an infectious bacteria that can cause skin and respiratory problems and resists treatment from multiple drugs, according to a new U.S. research study. The study, published this week in the online journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, is the largest-ever examination of infections of *Staphylococcus aureus*, or staph, in a group of livestock workers. It comes amid rising concern that widespread antibiotic use in meat production could create risks to human health. ... The study tracked more than 1,300 Iowa residents, including workers on hog farms, for 18 months starting in May 2011. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Increases in hepatitis C virus infection related to injection drug use among persons aged ≤30 years — Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, 2006–2012

8 May - ... During this period, significant increases in cases of acute HCV infection were found among persons in both urban and nonurban areas, with a substantially higher incidence observed each year among persons residing in nonurban areas. During the same period, the proportion of treatment admissions for opioid dependency increased 21.1% in the four states, with a significant increase in the proportion of persons admitted who identified injecting as their main route of drug administration (an increase of 12.6%). Taken together, these increases indicate a geographic intersection among opioid abuse, drug injecting, and HCV infection in central Appalachia and underscore the need for integrated health services in substance abuse treatment settings to prevent HCV infection and ensure that those who are infected receive medical care. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Pine Ridge Indian Reservation struggles with suicides among its young

2 May - ... Since December, the Pine Ridge Reservation, a vast, windswept land of stunning grasslands and dusty plateaus, has been the scene of an unfolding crisis: Nine people between the ages of 12 and 24 have committed suicide here. Two teenagers hanged themselves in December. In the next three months, seven more young people were found dead. ... Many more youths on the reservation have tried, but failed, to kill themselves in the past several months: At least 103 attempts by people ages 12 to 24 occurred from December to March, according to the federal Indian Health Service. ... Tribe officials, clergy members and social workers say they cannot remember such a high rate of suicides and attempts in such a short period on the reservation, which is already overwhelmed with high rates of unemployment, poverty, domestic abuse and alcohol addiction. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: The uphill battle to better regulate formaldehyde



3 May - ...[The] Environmental Protection Agency is on the verge of regulating ... formaldehyde, a chemical that can be found in commonplace things like clothes and furniture. But an unusual assortment of players, including furniture makers, the Chinese government, Republicans from states with a large base of furniture manufacturing and even some

Democrats who championed early regulatory efforts, have questioned the E.P.A. proposal. The sustained opposition has held sway, as the agency is now preparing to ease key testing requirements before it releases the landmark federal health standard. ... The proposal would not ban formaldehyde — commonly used as an ingredient in wood glue in furniture and flooring — but it would impose rules that prevent dangerous levels of the chemical's vapors from those products, and would set testing standards to ensure that products sold in the United States comply with those limits. The debate has sharpened in the face of growing concern about the safety of formaldehyde-treated flooring imported from Asia, especially China. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Triage and treatment - untold health stories from Baltimore's unrest

4 May - ... In the wake of fires and violence, the initial priority for health officials was to make sure that our acute care hospitals were protected and that staff and patients could get to them safely. In the immediate aftermath, our focus was on ensuring that injured patients got triaged and treated. ... Our health department ... worked with the Maryland health department and private partners around the city and state to provide these essential services. We set up the Baltimore Healthcare Access List to provide up-to-date and accurate information about closures and hours of operation for hospitals, clinics and pharmacies. We developed and implemented a Mental Health/Recovery Plan that included an around-the-clock mental health crisis line along with teams of licensed mental health professionals who were deployed in affected neighborhoods for group counseling and debriefing. ... We arranged for individuals affected by pharmacy closures to call one central number — 311. ... Amid all the news, our public health information wasn't getting through to all our community members. So we mobilized student volunteers from Johns Hopkins and other local universities to go door-to-door in all senior buildings in affected neighborhoods. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Tuna plant charged after worker cooked to death

28 April - Felony charges have been filed more than two years after the horrific death of a worker at a California tuna plant. Bumble Bee Foods and two of its employees have been charged with willfully violating safety rules in the death of 62-year-old Jose Melena, who was cooked to death inside an industrial oven at the company's Santa Fe Springs plant, the *Los Angeles Times* reports. Prosecutors say that workers unaware Melena was making repairs inside the pressurized steam cooker loaded 12,000 pounds of tuna into it and turned it on,

CBS Los Angeles reports. Melena cooked to death and a colleague discovered his charred remains. The company—which describes the October 2012 death as a "tragic accident"—could be fined up to \$1.5 million, and the plant's director of operations and former safety manager could get three years in prison each, CBS reports. [USA Today](#)

U.S.: Washington is the world's most dangerous rich city for babies: charity

4 May - Washington has the highest infant mortality rate of all the world's richest capitals, according to a survey highlighting the failure of the world's wealthiest country to prevent high rates of child deaths among its poorest citizens. Save the Children said in a study on Tuesday that 6.6 babies die per 1,000 live births in Washington, making the U.S. capital the most dangerous city in the developed world to be born. In contrast, only 1.6 babies die per 1,000 live births in the Czech capital Prague, which topped the charity's index measuring child survival in the world's wealthiest capitals. Prague was followed by Stockholm, Oslo, Tokyo and Lisbon. The headline figure for Washington masked huge disparities between rich and poor. Babies born in Ward Eight, just 6 km (4 miles) from the White House, were 10 times more likely to die before their first birthday than babies born in the city's most affluent Ward Three, the study showed. [Reuters](#)

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USPACOM

Cambodia project improves nutrition among rural poor

5 May - ...Malnutrition remains a serious problem in Cambodia: figures released this year by the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization show that one in three children under five suffers from stunted growth brought about by a poor diet. Although Cambodia is considered "food secure," there are still many whose diet has problems," said Professor Tim Green, a nutrition expert from Canada's University of British Columbia. "So what that really means is that they have adequate amounts of white rice. There are enough calories or kilojoules for the population, but they're missing a lot of key essential micronutrients." That lack of micronutrients, vitamins and minerals, affects both physical and mental development, and can cause lifelong problems. [VOA News](#)

China launches new campaign against sex-selective abortions

6 May - China has begun a new campaign against illegal prenatal gender tests and sex-selective abortions to help address the country's gender imbalance, state news agency Xinhua said on Wednesday. Like most Asian nations, China has a traditional bias for sons,

who are seen the only guarantee to pass on the family line. Many families abort female foetuses and abandon baby girls to ensure their one child is a son, with about 116 boys born for every 100 girls last year, against a global average of 103 to 107. The new campaign will run under November, and concentrate on health centres and family planning institutions, as well as illegal fertility agencies, clinics and itinerant doctors, the report said. The government will also tighten controls on medical equipment and medicine used in both ultrasounds and abortions, and blacklist any organisation found to be complicit in either activity, Xinhua added. [Reuters](#)

Japan: Hand, foot, and mouth (HFMD) disease

1 May - According to the World Health Organization, as of April 1, Japan has reported more than 13,800 cases of hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) in 2015. Since the middle of March, weekly case numbers of HFMD have increased and are higher than in previous years. CDC recommends that travelers to [Japan](#) follow recommendations for hygiene and cleanliness to avoid HFMD. No vaccine prevents HFMD. Travelers are advised to practice good hygiene, including handwashing, to lower the risk of getting sick. [CDC](#)

Malaysia dengue death toll up to 126

6 May - The number of dengue fever related deaths have risen by nine as the Malaysian Health Ministry is reporting 126 deaths as of May 2. In this heavy dengue year in Malaysia, the total cases are now up to 40,491 after an additional 160 cases were reported on May 5. The hardest hit states include Selangor (23,659), Perak (4,389), Johor (2,378) and Kuala Lumpur (2,304). [Outbreak News Today](#)

NEPAL EARTHQUAKE

Crush syndrome - saving lives in Nepal

2 May - A week after the earthquake hit, scores of rescue workers are still flying in to Nepal. They face a monumental task. The death toll is uncertain - it teeters around the 6,000 mark. For emergency staff though it is the living, trapped in remote areas, whom they are desperate to reach. Many have broken bones. Some face the threat of crush syndrome - where the kidneys start to fail. But the Nepalese health system was stretched even before the quake. The charity Save the Children says it is now at breaking point. Most people live in remote areas that can be difficult to access even when natural disasters do not stand in the way. Some of the most critical needs now are obvious - surgeons are arriving to fix broken bones, injured spines and head trauma. And Save the Children medical teams are hearing reports that thousands need operations. [BBC News](#)

Health workers race to prevent Nepal measles outbreak

6 May - Health workers are rushing to vaccinate more than half a million children in Nepal as fears grow that last month's massive earthquake has made youngsters more susceptible to disease. UNICEF has warned of a race against time to prevent a deadly outbreak of measles in the impoverished Himalayan nation following the April 25 quake that killed 7,652 people in Nepal. ... "Before the earthquake, one in ten children in Nepal was not vaccinated against measles, so we're going to vaccinate half a million children in the coming weeks," Kent Page, UNICEF Nepal's emergency spokesperson, told AFP. [Yahoo! News](#)

Pacific Command sending 500 troops to Nepal

6 May - The U.S. Pacific Command has activated a joint task force that will include 500 personnel deployed to Nepal in support of earthquake relief operations. Pacific Command leader Adm. Samuel J. Locklear on Wednesday appointed III Marine Expeditionary Force commander Lt. Gen. John Wissler to head Joint Task Force 505, which will follow on from the initial U.S. military response. ... "We are here at the request of, and in support of, the government of Nepal as they deal with this terrible tragedy," Wissler said in the statement. ... The Task Force will support ongoing disaster relief operations with an Air Force Contingency Response Group, three Marine Corps UH-1Y Huey helicopters, four Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, four Air Force C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and two Marine Corps KC-130J Hercules transport aircraft, as well as various ground and aviation command-and-control capabilities, the statement said. [Stars and Stripes](#)

Photo feature: Nepal - outside Kathmandu



1 May - ... IRIN travelled first to the city of Bhaktapur, a UNESCO world heritage site about 12 kilometers outside Kathmandu, then on to the smaller communities of Harisiddhi and Bungamati where residents told of devastating physical damage and personal loss. [IRIN](#)

UK agencies warn of serious disease after disaster



5 May - There is a risk of serious outbreaks of disease in the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake, aid agencies have warned. A lack of shelter, contaminated water and poor sanitation could lead to cholera, dysentery and other water-borne diseases, the charities said. The UK's Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) said in some areas people were living and defecating in the open. ... The 7.8-magnitude earthquake is now known to have killed more than 7,500 people and injured more than 14,500. More than 4,000 aid workers from around the world have been helping with relief and rescue

operations. A spokesman for the DEC, which has been running a major appeal to provide aid to the country, said there had already been reports of diarrhoea outbreaks and chest infections. ... "Cholera is endemic in Nepal, so an outbreak would not be unprecedented; last year 600 people caught cholera and in 2009 a major outbreak affected more than 300,000 people," he added. [BBC News](#)

WHO issues rapid health assessment on impact of Nepal earthquake

1 May -A rapid assessment of health-care facilities by WHO and the Ministry of Health and Population in the earthquake-stricken areas has found that hospitals in 4 of the worst-affected districts are completely destroyed or too badly damaged to function. Five other major hospitals, providing important health care in the districts, were found to be functioning but urgently in need of further medical supplies. Preliminary findings from the assessment, found that while there was a shortage of supplies, sufficient health personnel were available to treat patients arriving in the functioning hospitals. ... Teams visited 21 hospitals in 12 of the districts most severely-impacted by the 25 April earthquake to gather information and found that a total of 17 hospitals were still operational. ... WHO is coordinating the deployment of foreign medical teams and humanitarian organizations to priority districts based on the needs of affected populations and the capacities of partner organizations. [WHO](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Brazil faces surge in number of dengue fever cases

5 May - Brazil has registered nearly 746,000 cases of the mosquito-borne disease dengue fever this year with nine states experiencing an epidemic, the health ministry has announced. At 368 cases per 100,000 residents it amounts to an epidemic by World Health Organisation standards, but officials say the outbreak is not nationwide. Relaxed prevention and an increase in home water storage have been blamed. More than half of the cases were in Sao Paulo. The number of cases there - the most populous state - has tripled since last year. Nationwide there have been 235% more cases than in the same period (from January to 18 April) last year. A total of 229 people have died of the disease. [BBC News](#)

Paraguay: Health authorities confirm 1,000 cases of chikungunya virus

5 May - Positive cases of chikungunya virus in Paraguay reached 1,000 with the emergence of 100 new patients, while several thousand people are potential carriers of the disease, said

today the Ministry of Health. Agueda Cabello, Director of Health Surveillance of the Ministry, confirmed that the majority of those affected live in the metropolitan area of the capital where serious problems with solid waste collection and inefficient sewerage system are registered. [Prensa Latina](#)

Paraguay: Pregnant 10-year-old rape victim denied abortion

5 May - Paraguay's decision to deny a pregnant 10-year-old girl an abortion after she was allegedly raped by her stepfather has sparked a national debate over the country's strict abortion law. Paraguay's health minister recently refused a request from the girl's mother to terminate the pregnancy, but rights groups say the decision could put the girl's health at risk and is "tantamount to torture". The girl, who cannot be named, is more than five months pregnant. In Paraguay, abortion is only allowed when the mother's life is in danger. In all other cases the procedure is a crime. The girl's mother has been imprisoned, charged with breaching her duty of care. [Reuters](#)

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