

8 November 2013

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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Guard Your Health

Guard Your Health provides a central place for Army National Guard Soldiers and family members to find information and resources on health and medical readiness.

The site supports the Army National Guard Chief Surgeon's efforts to build and sustain a resilient, adaptable and medically ready Citizen-Soldier force.



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U.S. MILITARY

Additional implementation details would increase transparency of DOD's plans

November 2013 - GAO determined that the Department of Defense's (DOD) March and June 2013 submissions on establishing a Defense Health Agency (DHA) to reform the governance of the Military Health System (MHS) met three statutory requirements to

CDC Blog

Do 1 Thing: Power

Because you never know when the power can go out, it is important to be prepared to able to meet your basic needs without electricity.

√ Learn how to safely use a portable generator.

√ Know what food is safe after a power outage.

√ Send text messages (under 140 characters) instead of making phone calls to save your battery.

√ Put together an emergency kit with enough food and water to last from 3 days to 2 weeks.

√ Keep your car's gas tank full.

√ Learn more about water safety in a power outage.



include information on goals, performance measures, and staffing; partially met one requirement to include information on timelines; and was not required to include information on shared services because the reporting time frame was not applicable... Without more clear, complete, and transparent information on DOD's plan for establishment of the DHA, it will be difficult for decision makers to gauge progress and identify areas of risk that will need to be monitored during implementation. [GAO](#)

Anxiety disorders, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2000-2012

October 2013 - ... During the 13-year surveillance period there were 217,409 incident diagnoses of anxiety disorders among active component service members. The unadjusted incidence rate was 117.2 per 10,000 person-years (p-yrs). For most incident cases (n=205,717, 94.6%), their first anxiety disorder-related diagnosis was a “non-specific anxiety disorder” ...Many of these individuals later received more specific anxiety-related diagnoses: generalized anxiety disorder (n=29,504, 14.3%); panic disorder without agoraphobia (n=16,789, 8.2%); specified phobic disorders (n=9,234, 4.5%); and obsessive-compulsive disorder (n=3,278, 1.6%). Of note, however, more than three-fourths (n=157,549, 76.6%) of those whose incident diagnoses were one of the “non-specific anxiety disorders” did not receive more specific anxiety-related diagnoses.

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Army releases September 2013 suicide information

31 October - The Army released suicide data today for the month of September 2013. During September, among active-duty soldiers, there were nine potential suicides: One has been confirmed as a suicide and eight remain under investigation... For CY 2013, there have been 115 potential active-duty suicides: 58 have been confirmed as suicides and 57 remain under investigation... [A]mong reserve component soldiers who were not on active duty, there were eight potential suicides (four Army National Guard and four Army Reserve): None have been confirmed as suicide and eight remain under investigation... For CY 2013, there have been 112 potential not on active duty suicides (70 Army National Guard and 42 Army Reserve): 81 have been confirmed as suicides and 31 remain under investigation.

[Defense.gov](#)

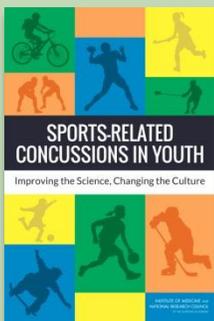
Extra care curbs MRSA in hospitals

1 November - The life-threatening bacterial infections known as MRSA, or methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, don't respond well to antibiotics, but a new study in Veterans Affairs hospitals suggests they do respond to infection control techniques. Efforts like screening every patient for MRSA, using gowns and gloves when caring for infected patients, washing hands often, and creating a conviction among hospital staff that everyone is personally responsible for infection control were found to help reduce the rate of infections. For the first 33 months of the program, beginning in 2007, rates of people infected after 48 hours in the hospital declined by 45 percent in the hospitals and by 62 percent in intensive care units. [New York Times](#)

Sports-Related Concussions in Youth: Improving the Science, Changing the Culture

The IOM and the National Research Council reviewed the science of sports-related concussions in youth from elementary school through young adulthood, as well as in military personnel and their dependents.

The report finds that while some existing studies provide useful information, much remains unknown about the extent of concussions in youth; how to diagnose, manage, and prevent concussions; and the short- and long-term consequences of concussions as well as repetitive head impacts that do not result in concussion symptoms.



Military, CIA compelled medics to abuse detainees, report says

4 November - Defense Department and CIA interrogation policies after 9/11 forced medical professionals to abandon their ethical obligations to "do no harm" to those in their care and some prohibited practices, including force-feeding of hunger strikers, continue today, a report issued Monday alleges. The report, "Ethics Abandoned: Medical Professionalism and Detainee Abuse in the War on Terror," was carried out by a 19-member task force of Columbia University's Institute on Medicine as a Profession and the Open Society Foundations. The researchers spent two years examining public records of medical professionals' involvement in military and intelligence interrogations and treatment of detainees. It accuses the counterterrorism operations of having "improperly demanded that U.S. military and intelligence agency health professionals collaborate in intelligence gathering and security practices in a way that inflicted severe harm on detainees in U.S. custody." [Stars and Stripes](#)

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GLOBAL

Bisphenol A is affecting us at much lower doses than previously thought

7 November - Bisphenol A (BPA) is a known endocrine disruptor that hijacks the normal responses of hormones. Yet, traditional toxicology studies indicate that only very high doses of this chemical affect exposed animals—doses as high as 50 mg/kg/day... Because of increased understanding of the mechanisms by which hormones and chemicals that mimic hormones work, it has recently become clear that endocrine disruptors need to be studied at much lower doses... The findings are striking. When looking at the "low dose" literature as a whole, reproducible effects were seen in animals after exposure to incredibly low doses of BPA. In fact, effective doses were ten to forty times lower than the doses identified in traditional toxicology studies. Several dozen "low dose" studies show effects of BPA at doses that humans are thought to encounter in their everyday lives. [EurekAlert](#)

Depression: 'Second biggest cause of disability' in world

5 November – Depression is the second most common cause of disability worldwide after back pain, according to a review of research. The disease must be treated as a global public health priority, experts report in the journal PLOS Medicine. The study compared clinical depression with more than 200 other diseases and injuries as a cause of disability. Globally, only a small proportion of patients have access to treatment, the World Health Organization says. Depression was ranked at number two as a global cause of disability, but its impact

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

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varied in different countries and regions. For example, rates of major depression were highest in Afghanistan and lowest in Japan. In the UK, depression was ranked at number three in terms of years lived with a disability... "The burden is different between countries, so it tends to be higher in low and middle income countries and lower in high income countries." [BBC News](#)

Health of 200 million threatened by pollution



5 November - A new [report](#) has found that the health of up to 200 million people worldwide is threatened by pollution. Two independent environmental organizations - Green Cross Switzerland and the U.S.-based Blacksmith Institute -- have just published a list of 10 of the world's most dangerously polluted places. The top 10 most

polluted places are spread over eight countries located in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. They are cited for threatening the lives of the millions of people who live there by exposing them to dangerous environmental toxins. [VOA](#)

Natural disasters, armed conflict, and public health

7 November - ...The effects of armed conflict and natural disasters on global public health are widespread. Much progress has been made in the technical quality, normative coherence, and efficiency of the health care response. But action after the fact remains insufficient. In the years ahead, the international community must address the root causes of these crises. Natural disasters, particularly floods and storms, will become more frequent and severe because of climate change. Organized deadly onslaughts against civilian populations will continue, fueled by the availability of small arms, persistent social and political inequities, and, increasingly, by a struggle for natural resources. These events affect the mortality, morbidity, and well-being of large populations. Humanitarian relief will always be required, and there is a demonstrable need, as in other areas of global health, to place greater emphasis on prevention and mitigation. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Neglected diseases still are, well, neglected

28 October - Despite much progress in the last 35 years, a new study has found that major gaps persist in the effort to prevent and treat the "neglected diseases" of the poor. The [study](#), a survey of the 850 new drugs and vaccines approved in the last 12 years, found that only 4 percent were for the 49 diseases the authors consider neglected, including obscure worm and diarrheal diseases and well-known killers like malaria and tuberculosis. Another 4 percent of newly approved products were for AIDS, which the authors do not consider neglected... While 4 percent may seem small, the earlier findings were far more bleak: only 1 percent of all pharmaceutical research focused on neglected diseases. [New York Times](#)

Spanish MERS case triggers flight contact tracing

7 November - European and Spanish health officials released new details today about a Spanish woman who is hospitalized with a Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection after visiting Hajj holy sites in Saudi Arabia, plus efforts under way to identify those who flew with her from Jeddah to Madrid. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said today in an updated risk assessment that the 61-year-old woman with no known underlying health conditions was in Saudi Arabia from Oct 2 to Nov 1. She visited Medina, then Mecca and had no known contact with animals... The patient is still listed in stable condition and has not required intensive care, according to the health ministry... The ECDC said the Spanish woman's case is Europe's 10th imported MERS-CoV case and the 13th to be reported outside of the Middle East. [CIDRAP](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

- 1 November - Across the overseas DoD laboratory surveillance network, influenza activity remains low and comparable to past influenza seasons.
- The influenza vaccination coverage for the DoD (active duty component only) is 60%. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 43 (October 20-26, 2013), influenza activity remained low in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 3,241 specimens tested and reported during week 43, 145 (4.5%) 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: No influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.2%, below the national baseline of 2.0%. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Week 43 (20 - 26 October 2013), 43 specimens were received from 26 locations. Results were finalized for 13 specimens from 10 locations. There was one influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 identified. Other respiratory pathogens detected were one adenovirus, three parainfluenza, five rhinovirus/enterovirus, one human metapneumovirus, one *Mycoplasma pneumonia*, and one RSV & rhinovirus/enterovirus co-infection.
- Cumulative results were finalized for 116 specimens from 42 locations. There were four specimens positive for influenza (two A(H1N1)pdm09, one A(H3N2), and one B/unknown lineage). Other respiratory pathogens identified were five adenovirus, one coronavirus, two human metapneumovirus, seven *Mycoplasma pneumonia*, 14 parainfluenza, and 46 rhinovirus/enterovirus. To date, three non-influenza co-infections have been identified (two adenovirus & rhinovirus/enterovirus, one RSV & rhinovirus/enterovirus).
- Of 116 ILI cases, 56 are service members (48.3%), 40 are children (34.5%), and 20 are spouses & other beneficiaries (17.2%). There are no unknown beneficiary types. The median age of ILI cases with known age (n=116) is 23 (range 0, 64) and 42 (35.9%) of these specimens are from ILI cases 18 years of age or younger.

[USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

During week 43/2013:

All 27 reporting countries experienced low intensity of clinical influenza activity.

- Of 351 sentinel specimens tested by 21 countries, four specimens (1%) were positive for influenza virus.
- Three hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported by the UK.

During the first few weeks of the 2013–2014 influenza season, there has been no evidence of sustained influenza activity in Europe. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

6 November – Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere ranges from minimal in Bulgaria to moderate in Russia and in the southern hemisphere ranges from minimal to low.

[Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 2 November 2013:

- Influenza: One case of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (B) among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 26 October 2013 (Week 43)

Overall influenza-like illness (ILI) activity remains low in both Army and civilian populations. The deadline for achieving $\geq 90\%$ vaccination coverage in Service Members is 16 December 2013.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 43 were 19% lower than for the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: Two hospitalized influenza cases were reported to USAPHC in week 43; three cases have been reported to date during this influenza season for Army MTFs.
- Viral specimens: During week 43, 71 of 573 (12%) laboratory specimens tested were positive for respiratory pathogens. RSV accounted for 41% of positive specimens. The majority of influenza A-positive specimens were submitted by MTFs in SRMC.
- Army Vaccination Rates: Army (COMPO 1) compliance in week 43: USAREUR 83%, MEDCOM 80%, TRADOC 66%, USARPAC 63%, FORSCOM 57%, USARSO 37%. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

23rd new human case of avian influenza H5N1 in Cambodia in 2013

5 November - The Ministry of Health (MoH) of the Kingdom of Cambodia wishes to advise members of the public that one new human case of avian influenza has been confirmed for the H5N1 virus. This is the 23rd case this year and the 44th person to become infected with the H5N1 virus in Cambodia. The 23rd case died on 26th October 2013. Of the 44 confirmed cases, 33 were children under 14, and 27 of the 44 were female. In addition, only 11 cases out of the 23 cases this year survived. The 23rd case, a 2-year-old girl... was confirmed positive for H5N1 human avian influenza on 30th October 2013... Investigations... revealed that two months before the girl's illness, poultry had suddenly died at her grandparent's

house. The child often stayed with her grandparent in this house. Human and animal investigations are underway to determine if the girl had direct exposure or handled the dead chickens. [WHO](#)

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

6 November - The National Health and Family Planning Commission, China notified WHO of two new laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus. The first patient is a three-year-old boy from Guangdong Province who had contact with live poultry. He became ill on 29 October 2013, was admitted to a local hospital on 31 October 2013, and transferred to another hospital on 4 November 2013. He is currently in a stable condition. The second patient is a 64-year-old woman from Zhejiang Province who is a farmer and had contact with live poultry. She became ill on 30 October 2013, was admitted to a local hospital on 31 October 2013, and was transferred to another hospital on 3 November. She is currently in a critical condition. To date, WHO has been informed of a total of 139 laboratory-confirmed human cases with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus infection including 45 deaths. Currently, six patients are hospitalized and 88 have been discharged. So far, there is no evidence of sustained human-to-human transmission. [WHO](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

China: ‘Gutter oil’ video goes viral



4 November - Radio Free Asia’s shocking [video](#) exposé on China’s black market production of “gutter oil” has gone viral on social media and websites around the world. The video, part of RFA’s investigative series on food safety in China, has reached more than 1.3 million views on YouTube, while news organizations, bloggers, and social media users have picked it up and shared it online with their audiences, networks, and friends... The video, originally produced by RFA’s Cantonese Service, shows rare footage of China’s black market production of “gutter oil.” The substance is first harvested as a waste product from grease traps and sewers before being processed in plants that mix it with animal fat and other products. The finished product is eventually sold to street food vendors, restaurants, and hotels to be used as cooking oil. [Radio Free Asia](#)

FDA puts trans fat on the chopping block

7 November - The FDA has taken the first step toward eliminating the use of partially hydrogenated oils -- the main dietary source of artificial trans fat -- in processed foods, the

agency announced in a notice scheduled for publication in the Federal Register on Friday. On the basis of a review of scientific evidence and findings from expert panels, the agency made a preliminary determination that the oils "are not generally recognized as safe for use in food" and should be eliminated, FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg, MD, said on a conference call with reporters. [MedPage News](#)

Preserving out-of-this-world food

5 November - ... The depletion of vitamins in astronauts' food during lengthier missions in outer space is one of the reasons NASA requires a five-year shelf life at 70 degrees Fahrenheit for stabilized foods. The Department of Defense Combat Feeding Directorate, or CFD, at the Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center is looking at compressed bars and dried drink mixes to study essential vitamins in nutrient-dense foods and develop packaging that will better preserve essential vitamins for NASA... Blueberry granola bars and chocolate drink mixes have already been developed by CFD to be used in this study. Since vitamins naturally chemically degrade through time, CFD will encapsulate vitamins in these food products with a protective shell material and also adjust the chemistry of the food based on its chemical environment... CFD is also analyzing different packaging prototypes to better preserve food's shelf life. [Army.mil](#)

U.S.: Cargill to change beef labeling in wake of 'pink slime' furor

5 November - Cargill Inc, one of the world's largest beef processors, will begin labeling when its finely textured beef is used in the making of its U.S. ground beef products, the company told Reuters on Tuesday. The move by the U.S. meat manufacturer comes as consumers increasingly demand more transparency in how agribusiness companies make the food they eat and how these products are disclosed on the packaging. The debate over food labeling has roiled for months, from last year's public and media furor over a rival beef product - which critics had dubbed "pink slime" - to Tuesday's vote in Washington state over whether to require labeling of genetically modified foods. [Reuters](#)

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WELLNESS

Ditty bag of condoms, home-use instructions lead to improved comfort and consistency with condom use

6 November - A new and successful strategy for combating the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV draws from an old idea: Practice is fundamental to learning, even when it involves using condoms correctly. The Kinsey Institute Homework

Intervention Strategy gives men a "ditty bag" full of condoms and lubricants, makes sure the men understand how to apply condoms correctly, and then assigns homework. The men are expected to try out at least six condoms solo, paying particular attention to their own pleasure and which condoms they like best... "These are pilot studies. But even with small samples, the results are really good. Men become more motivated to use condoms; they use them more correctly and consistently. They also appreciate learning that there are different condoms available." [EurekAlert](#)

Health begins at work



6 November - ...[R]ecent research has poked holes in the theory that wellness programs reduce healthcare costs or encourage employees to change their behaviors. In fact, some consumer advocates have said that employers' connecting insurance premiums to factors like weight loss might end up hurting the least-healthy employees by making health insurance pricy for those who need it most... A study by the Rand research institute released in May found that fewer than half of employees at offices with wellness programs undergo clinical screenings and assessments, and less than 20 percent take part in either weight loss or smoking cessation programs... And just 2 percent of the employers Rand surveyed had reported measurable cost savings through the programs. [Atlantic](#)

Herbal supplements are often not what they seem

3 November - Americans spend an estimated \$5 billion a year on unproven herbal supplements that promise everything from fighting off colds to curbing hot flashes and boosting memory. But now there is a new reason for supplement buyers to beware: DNA tests show that many pills labeled as healing herbs are little more than powdered rice and weeds. Using a test called DNA barcoding, a kind of genetic fingerprinting that has also been used to help uncover labeling fraud in the commercial seafood industry, Canadian researchers tested 44 bottles of popular supplements sold by 12 companies. They found that many were not what they claimed to be, and that pills labeled as popular herbs were often diluted — or replaced entirely — by cheap fillers like soybean, wheat and rice. Consumer advocates and scientists say the research provides more evidence that the herbal supplement industry is riddled with questionable practices. [New York Times](#)

Her biggest save

2 November - Briana Scurry couldn't be sure if it was the painkillers or the fact that surgeons had just plucked pea-size balls of damaged tissue from the back of her head. But when the two-time Olympic goalkeeper and Women's World Cup champion awoke at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital on Oct. 18, the headache that had hijacked her life for the past 3-1/2 years was gone... [A] growing body of research suggests that - counter to the popular imagery of young men smashing into each other in football and hockey - female athletes suffer relatively more concussions than their male counterparts, and they

struggle with more dramatic symptoms when they do. In high school sports that have similar rules for boys and girls, girls get concussions at twice the rate, according to a 2011 study in the American Journal of Sports Medicine. Another study found that among all collegiate athletes, female soccer players had the highest overall concussion rates.

[Washington Post](#)

Mindfulness: Getting its share of attention

1 November - ...The Marine Corps is testing Mind Fitness Training to help soldiers relax and boost “emotional intelligence,” the buzzwords of the hour. Nike, General Mills, Target and Aetna encourage employees to sit and do nothing, and with classes that show them how. As the high priestess of the fully aware, Arianna Huffington this year started a mindfulness conference, a page dedicated to the subject on The Huffington Post and a “GPS for the Soul” phone application with a built-in heart sensor to alert you when you’re calm or stressed. [New York Times](#)

Prevalence of doctor-diagnosed arthritis and arthritis-attributable activity limitation

8 November - ...CDC analyzed 2010–2012 data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) [and] found that 52.5 million (22.7%) of adults aged ≥ 18 years had self-reported doctor-diagnosed arthritis, and 22.7 million (9.8%, or 43.2% of those with arthritis) reported arthritis-attributable activity limitation (AAAL), matching and exceeding previous projected increases... Among persons with heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, the prevalences of doctor-diagnosed arthritis were 49.0%, 47.3%, and 31.2%, respectively; the prevalences of AAAL among persons with these specific conditions were 26.8%, 25.7%, and 15.2%, respectively. Greater use of evidence-based interventions, such as chronic disease self-management education and physical activity interventions that have been proven to reduce pain and improve quality-of-life among adults with chronic diseases might help reduce the personal and societal burden of arthritis. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Testosterone products linked with heart risks, strokes in older men: study

6 November - Testosterone treatments may increase risks for heart attacks, strokes and death in older men with low hormone levels and other health problems, a big Veterans Affairs study suggests. The results raise concerns about the widely used testosterone gels, patches or injections that are heavily marketed for low sex drive, fatigue and purported anti-aging benefits, the authors and other doctors said. Men who used testosterone were 30 per cent more likely to have a heart attack or stroke or to die during a three-year period than men with low hormone levels who didn't take the supplements. Hormone users and nonusers were in their early 60s on average, and most had other health problems including high blood pressure, unhealthy cholesterol and diabetes. [CTV News](#)

Welcomed with kisses, Stanford freshmen risk the 'kissing disease'



31 October - ...Full Moon on the Quad... is an event unique in American education: an orgy of interclass kissing reluctantly but officially sanctioned by [Stanford] university. It is a domestic example of a new field in public health, "mass-gathering medicine." ...Since officials can't outlaw it (yes, they have tried), how can they make it safer? The first step, said Dr. Ira M.

Friedman, director of the Vaden Student Health Center, is to make consent paramount... His center also offers shots against what it can fight: flu and meningococcal meningitis... To make it safer, the evening is overseen by student sobriety monitors... But the most crucial role is played by the "peer health educators" who live in each dorm. They meet with freshmen before, and ask any with cold symptoms to feel free to watch, but not to kiss anyone. And they teach safe kissing. "We tell them, 'Don't floss beforehand, don't brush, don't do anything that could create microabrasions in your gums for germs to get in,'" said Michelle Lee Mederos, a former educator who graduated in 2011. "And we have tables where we offer mints and little Dixie cups of mouthwash." [New York Times](#)

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USAFRICOM

Nigeria cholera outbreak grows: 1,623 cases and 86 deaths

3 November - The outbreak of cholera is growing and expanding in the west African country of Nigeria as the bacterial disease is being reported in higher numbers from more states. According to the Nigerian news source, The Guardian, statistics from the Ministry of Health Thursday indicated that 1,623 cases had been recorded, while 86 deaths had been reported. [Global Dispatch](#)

Sub-Saharan Africa: Antenatal syphilis screening using point-of-care testing

5 November - Untreated syphilis in pregnancy is associated with adverse clinical outcomes for the infant. Most syphilis infections occur in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where coverage of antenatal screening for syphilis is inadequate. Recently introduced point-of-care syphilis tests have high accuracy and demonstrate potential to increase coverage of antenatal screening... Use of [immunochromatographic strip (ICS)] tests for antenatal syphilis screening is highly cost-effective in SSA. Substantial reduction in [disability-adjusted life years

(DALYs)] can be achieved at a relatively modest budget impact. In SSA, antenatal programs should expand access to syphilis screening using the ICS test. [PLOS Medicine](#)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: That other big Afghan crisis, the growing army of addicts

2 November - ...In western Herat Province, held up as an island of stability and progress in Afghanistan, this forlorn border town is instead a showcase for an intensifying crisis: Long the global leader in opium production, Afghanistan has now also become one of the world's most addicted societies. The number of drug users in Afghanistan is estimated to be as high as 1.6 million, or about 5.3 percent of the population, among the highest rates in the world. Nationwide, one in 10 urban households has at least one drug user, according to a recent report from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. In the city of Herat, it is one in five. From 2005 to 2009, the use of opiates doubled, [according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#), putting Afghanistan on par with Russia and Iran, and the number of heroin users jumped more than 140 percent. Most drug experts think the rate of drug use has only increased since then. In a country troubled by adversity, from its long-running war to rampant corruption, drug addiction ranks low among national priorities. Government funding for treatment and outreach is less than \$4 million a year. There are just under 28,000 formal treatment slots available nationwide, officials say, and such programs rely heavily on roughly \$12 million a year in extra international funding for treatment. [New York Times](#)

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

4 November - WHO has been informed of an additional laboratory-confirmed case of infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) from Saudi Arabia. The patient is a 56-year-old woman with underlying medical conditions from the Eastern Region. She became ill on 26 October 2013 and died on 30 October 2013. She had no contact with animals, but had contact with a previously laboratory confirmed case. Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 150 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 64 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](#)

Syria: WHO cites polio risk as groups seek 'vaccination ceasefire'

5 November - As Syria begins large-scale vaccination efforts to combat polio, the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe said in a statement today that the situation increases the risk of international spread of wild poliovirus, and aid groups called for a truce to help stem the disease. The WHO said the Syrian situation, as well as frequent population movements and vaccination gaps in some European nations, heightens the risk of the disease returning to Europe. The WHO confirmed 10 polio cases in the country on Oct 29... The WHO is coordinating a campaign to provide oral polio vaccine to 2.5 million children under 5 years old in Syria, *BMJ* reported. In addition, it will provide doses to another 25 million children across western Iraq, southern Turkey, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and Egypt over the next 6 to 8 months. [CIDRAP](#)

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France issues rabies warning after kitten's death

1 November - French authorities are warning of a rabies threat after a cat died of the disease, previously thought to have been eliminated from the country. The two-month-old black and tan kitten was found last Friday in Argenteuil, near Paris. It died three days later. France's Ministry of Agriculture has begun an investigation and vaccinated five people as a precaution. France was declared free of rabies in 2001 but a dog imported from Morocco infected other dogs in 2008. [BBC News](#)

United Kingdom: Health professionals must screen for genital mutilation

3 November - Nurses, midwives and GPs in the UK must be much more aware of female genital mutilation (FGM) and treat it as child abuse, says a report. The recommendation is among nine in a document produced by several royal colleges and health visitors' representatives. It also says female patients who have had their sexual organs cut should be referred to police and other services... Genital mutilation is thought to have affected at least 66,000 women in the UK - but this is a conservative estimate. A helpline set up by the NSPCC this year received more than 100 inquiries in its first three months, resulting in 38 referrals to the police. The practice is illegal, but so far no criminal cases have been brought. [BBC News](#)

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U.S.: CDC warns of rise in imported malaria

1 November - Despite the slowly decreasing global malaria burden, US malaria cases hit a 40-year high in 2011, part of a rise that likely reflects growth in international travel and lapses in precautions among overseas travelers, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a report today. The CDC said 1,925 malaria cases were reported in 2011, up 14% from the previous year, and up 48% since 2008. Five of the patients in 2011—the most recent year for which data are available—died from malaria or its complications... Nearly two thirds of the patients were infected in West African countries, but for the first time India was the country from which most cases were imported, the CDC said. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S.: New York reports two Powassan virus infections

4 November - New York state health officials have confirmed two infections, both in Putnam County, with Powassan virus, a tickborne disease that can lead to encephalitis, according to a Nov 1 statement from the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDH). Both patients are recovering at home. The disease is most common in the northeastern Great Lakes regions, and 5 of the 16 cases reported in New York so far have occurred in Putnam County, the PCDH said... Powassan virus is unusual, because it can be transmitted in 15 minutes, much quicker than bacterial Lyme disease, which generally requires that the tick be attached for 36 to 48 hours for transmission to occur. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

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China: An 8-year-old girl's lung cancer is blamed on air pollution

5 November - An 8-year-old girl in Jiangsu Province is the youngest person in China to have received a diagnosis of lung cancer, which a doctor treating her has attributed to air pollution, according to an official news report. The report, which circulated widely online Tuesday, said the girl had been living near busy streets and inhaling dirty air... It quoted Dr. Feng Dongjie, of Jiangsu Tumor Hospital in Nanjing, where the girl is being treated, as saying that fine particulate matter, known as PM 2.5, could lead to inflammation once it accrues in the lungs and result in malignant changes... The news report said cities in Jiangsu, a relatively wealthy province bordering Shanghai, have been shrouded in haze this month. Many factories sit in the Yangtze River Delta area of Jiangsu, and the area is one of the most polluted outside of northern China. [New York Times](#)

India: Dengue outbreak of 2013 worst in 6 years

3 November - ...This year's dengue outbreak in the country was the worst in at last six years, with 55,063 cases reported till October 28. According to health ministry data, the number of dengue cases has been steadily rising since 2008 — when the count was 12,561 — witnessing a dip only in 2011. The number of deaths due to the disease has increased from 80 in 2008 to 138 this year, although it is far lower than 242 recorded last year. Health specialists attribute the steady increase in dengue cases to a number of factors, including heavy rains, intense construction activity in cities and a better surveillance system that enables detection of more cases... India is in category A countries, along with Thailand and Indonesia, where dengue is a major public health problem and a leading cause of hospitalization and death. [Times of India](#)

Philippines: 9,593 dengue cases, 60 deaths recorded in Davao

4 November - The Department of Health (DOH) in Davao Region recorded a total of 9,593 cases and 60 deaths due to dengue from January to October 30 this year. DOH regional information officer Mary Divine C. Hilario, speaking on Monday's Kapehan sa Dabaw at SM City Davao Annex, said the cases recorded from the 10 sentinel hospitals and epidemiology surveillance unit in the region from January until October 30, 2013 revealed that the number of cases this year increased by 14 percent from 8,412 cases from January to October in 2012 to 9,593 this year... Most of the victims are aged five to nine years old with 2,173 while those aged 10 to 14 years old and 15 to 19 years old have 1,660 and 1,470 cases, respectively. [Sun Star](#)

Philippines braces for incoming super typhoon

5 November -- The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) asked cities and provinces expected to feel the wrath of a brewing super typhoon to prepare. Placed on red alert were Metro Manila and the regions of Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas, Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Caraga and Northern Mindanao, said NDRRMC spokesperson Major Rey Balido. Under this status, disaster units are advised to take pre-emptive evacuation of residents and for local government units to prepare shelters and preposition relief goods. The storm, with international name "Haiyan," is set to be called "Yolanda" once it enters the Philippine area of responsibility on Thursday. [Sun Star](#)

Vietnam: Dengue-blocking mosquito released; bacteria could be key to fighting disease



5 November - ...All [of researchers Nguyen Thi Yen's] mosquitoes have been intentionally infected with bacteria called Wolbachia, which essentially blocks them from getting dengue. And if they can't get it, they can't spread it to people...

Wolbachia is commonly found in many insects, including fruit flies. But for reasons not fully understood, it is not carried naturally by certain mosquitoes, including the most common one that transmits dengue, the *Aedes aegypti*... One of his research students figured out how to implant the bacteria into a mosquito so it could be passed on to future generations. The initial hope was that it would shorten the insect's life. But soon, a hidden benefit was discovered: Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes not only died quicker but they also blocked dengue partially or entirely, sort of like a natural vaccine... [In the wild, after] two and a half years, the Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes had overtaken the native populations and remained 95 percent dominant.

[Washington Post](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Nicaragua's dengue death toll rises to 16

3 November - A dengue epidemic sweeping Nicaragua has claimed the life of a 13-year-old boy, raising the disease's death toll there to 16 people, according to officials. The death is the second in less than 24 hours due to dengue, health authorities reported. The disease has infected some 5,795 people in Nicaragua this year. The boy was from Matagalpa, located 127 kilometers (79 miles) north of Managua, said presidential spokeswoman and first lady Rosario Murillo. A total of 1,128 people have been hospitalized suspected of having dengue, with 43 of the instances confirmed by laboratories and 36 serious cases, according to official reports. Murillo also announced the arrival of specialists from Cuba to assess whether a product, which she did not identify but that has been used in other countries, could be used in Nicaragua.

[GMA News](#)

Trinidad and Tobago: TT's high rate of cancer deaths

7 November - Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Cancer Society, Dr Jacqueline Pereira-Sabga, says the new Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO)/ World Health Organisation's (WHO) report stating that Trinidad and Tobago was one of three countries in

the region with the highest cancer mortality rates, should be a “wake up call” to citizens, to get themselves screened... The report, released at the 5th International Cancer Control Congress in Lima, Peru, stated that Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, and Argentina, had the highest cancer mortality rates in the Americas, while Mexico, Nicaragua and El Salvador had the lowest. The report stated that there were 1,741 cancer deaths in TT in 2008 and obesity, an important cancer risk factor, was highest in the English-speaking Caribbean countries, including Trinidad and Tobago. A prevalence of adult and adolescent tobacco smokers was also listed as a risk factor as well as Human papillomavirus (HPV) for women. [Newsday](#)

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