

9 May 2014

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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The first Army Vector-Borne Disease Report of the season is now available from **USAPHC Periodic Publications and Surveillance Reports**.



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## Mental Health Month

The Army offers an array of behavioral health services in garrison and operational environments to address the strain on Soldiers and families who have experienced multiple deployments and other demands of military life. These services include: Theater Combat and Operational Stress Control, routine behavioral healthcare, periodic assessments, and suicide prevention programs.

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

## U.S. MILITARY

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### Absolute and relative morbidity burdens attributable to various illnesses and injuries, U.S. Armed Forces, 2013

April 2014 - ...In 2013, more service members (n=596,506) received medical care for injury/poisoning than any other morbidity-related category. In addition, injury/poisoning accounted for more medical encounters (n=2,152,394) than any other morbidity category and one-fifth (20.7%) of all medical encounters overall. Mental disorders accounted for more hospital bed days (n=179,673) than any other morbidity category and about 45% of all hospital bed days overall. Together, injury/poisoning and mental disorders accounted for more than half (56.9%) of all hospital bed days and almost two-fifths (39.8%) of all medical encounters. Injuries and poisonings accounted for the most lost work time (n=288,551 lost duty days; 24.3% of the total). [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#) (page 2)

### Hagel orders DOD-wide alcohol review after sex assault report

5 May - The Pentagon is targeting alcohol consumption in its battle to curb sexual assaults in the military. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced a department-wide review of the services' alcohol policies... More than two-thirds of the sexual assault reports involved alcohol use by either the victim, the assailant or both, according to the Pentagon... Nate Galbreath, a senior adviser to SAPRO, said two state-level initiatives were "promising" models that DOD could follow. One is California's Responsible Beverage Service program, which aims to prevent bar and restaurant patrons from getting dangerously drunk. [Stars and Stripes](#)

### How women are scaling barriers to combat

4 May - ...Welcome to one of the most sweeping studies ever undertaken of the latent physical strength of men and women... The tests are part of an attempt to answer... whether women can handle the most grueling rigors of war as well as their male counterparts. The secretary of Defense has ordered the Pentagon to let women serve beside men on the front lines of battle. Now, one year into the experiment to decide if that's possible and how to do it, the military is already learning some unexpected things about how women adapt and how men interact with them. [Christian Science Monitor](#)

### In study, ecstasy shows promise for treating PTSD

6 May - A small but important study that has shown remarkable results using a combination of the drug MDMA -- known on the street as ecstasy or "Molly" -- and conventional therapy to treat post traumatic stress disorder could be of significant value to thousands of veterans in Texas. The South Carolina study, performed by Dr. Michael Mithoefer and his wife, Ann, under the auspices of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, or MAPS,

## Medical Surveillance Monthly Report

The April edition of the Medical Surveillance Monthly Report is dedicated to morbidity burdens, hospitalizations, ambulatory visits among service members, and for the first-time this year, beneficiaries of the Military Health System.



involves the short-term use, under close psychiatric care, of the drug 3,4-methylenedioxy-N-methylamphetamine, known medically as MDMA. [Military.com](http://Military.com)

## Operation Live Well marks anniversary



6 May - Since its launch in spring 2013, the Defense Department's Operation Live Well has made strides in improving the health and wellness of the defense community... The introduction of farmers markets and reconfigured dining facilities at select sites and the expansion of the department's Go for Green initiative have resulted in a wider array of healthy food choices. Increasing numbers of defense community members are participating in weight loss challenges with impressive results. At the same time, more DoD mobile tools and apps are now available to help support a healthy lifestyle. [Health.mil](http://Health.mil)

## Sexual assault in the military

2 May - The Department of Defense issued new initiatives designed to continue its efforts to eliminate sexual assault in the military, directed implementation of an updated sexual assault prevention strategy and released its annual report on sexual assault in the military for fiscal year 2013. The department's response to sexual assault is fundamentally different than it was two years ago. Since May 2013, Secretary Hagel has directed more than 28 initiatives to enhance commander accountability, ensure the appropriate command climate, improve victim support, and enhance safety.

- The new initiatives are available at: <http://sapr.mil/index.php/news>
- The updated prevention strategy is available at: <http://sapr.mil/index.php/news>
- The full report is available at <http://sapr.mil/index.php/annual-reports>
- The fact sheet is available at: <http://sapr.mil/index.php/news>.

[Federal Health Care News](#) (fifth item)

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## GLOBAL

## Antimicrobial resistance: global report on surveillance 2014

1 May - Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) threatens the effective prevention and treatment of an ever-increasing range of infections caused by bacteria, parasites, viruses and fungi. An increasing number of governments around the world are devoting efforts to a problem so

## 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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serious that it threatens the achievements of modern medicine. A post-antibiotic era – in which common infections and minor injuries can kill – far from being an apocalyptic fantasy, is instead a very real possibility for the 21st Century. [WHO](#)

## Maternal deaths falling worldwide, says WHO

6 May - Maternal deaths have fallen worldwide, dropping by 45% since 1990, according to new figures. The statistics, released by the [World Health Organization](#), also provide new evidence on the causes of women dying in pregnancy or childbirth. The WHO says most are preventable, highlighting the need for more investment in pregnancy care. In 1990, more than half a million women died in pregnancy or childbirth - by 2013 the figure was 289,000. But the WHO say the figure is still too high - with 33 maternal deaths around the world every hour. [BBC News](#)

## Parasite burden and severity of malaria in Tanzanian children

8 May - Severe *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria is a major cause of death in children. The contribution of the parasite burden to the pathogenesis of severe malaria has been controversial... Resistance to severe malaria was not acquired after one or two mild infections. Although the parasite burden was higher on average during episodes of severe malaria, a high parasite burden was often insufficient to cause severe malaria even in children who later were susceptible. The diverging rates of severe disease and high-density infection after infancy, as well as the similar parasite burdens before and after severe malaria, indicate that naturally acquired resistance to severe malaria is not explained by improved control of parasite density. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

## Saving the world's babies simply starts before birth



4 May - Every day, all over the world, newborns die when they don't have to. They die from preventable infections and because their tiny bodies can't stay warm enough... Many of these deaths are not inevitable, doctors say, but innovations aimed at preventing them are just beginning to be deployed. The U.S. Agency for International Development is among the groups trying to speed progress. In April, it announced a Global Development Lab that will focus on newborn health, especially the first two days of life. That's because while the global mortality rate among young children has dropped almost 50 percent since 1990, most of those gains have been made among toddlers, not newborns... The major causes of newborn deaths worldwide are infections, preterm births and complications during labor and delivery. [NPR](#)

## What climate change means for regions across America

6 May - Today, the Obama Administration unveiled the [Third U.S. National Climate Assessment](#) (NCA)... This NCA embodies the concept of “actionable science” called for in the President’s Climate Action Plan. It communicates the impacts of climate change according to geographic region of the United States, and by economic and societal sector—including agriculture, energy, and health. These tailored findings help translate scientific insights into practical, useable knowledge that can help decision-makers and citizens anticipate and prepare for specific climate-change impacts. For instance, the report finds that, on the whole, summers are longer and hotter, with longer periods of extended heat. Wildfires start earlier in the spring and continue later into the fall. Rain comes down in heavier downpours. People are experiencing changes in the length and severity of seasonal allergies. And climate disruptions to water resources and agriculture have been increasing. [The White House Blog](#)

## WHO debates fate of smallpox vials in US, Russia

5 May - The World Health Organization is set to vote on whether to destroy stockpiles of the smallpox virus in the only two countries that still have them – the United States and Russia. The frozen viruses went to the countries’ top labs between 1979 and the early 1980s – the height of the cold war. Although WHO had just officially declared smallpox eradicated, a few samples of the frozen virus were still needed for research. But now that smallpox is so far behind us that children aren’t even vaccinated for it anymore, WHO will decide what to do with remaining virus stockpiles. [ABC News](#)

## WHO: Spread of polio now a world health emergency

5 May - For the first time ever, the World Health Organization on Monday declared the spread of polio an international public health emergency that could grow in the next few months and unravel the nearly three-decade effort to eradicate the crippling disease. The agency described current polio outbreaks across at least 10 countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East as an “extraordinary event” that required a coordinated international response. It identified Pakistan, Syria and Cameroon as having allowed the virus to spread beyond their borders, and recommended that those three governments require citizens to obtain a certificate proving they have been vaccinated for polio before traveling abroad... Experts are particularly concerned that polio is re-emerging in countries previously free of the disease, such as Syria, Somalia and Iraq, where civil war or unrest now complicates efforts to contain the virus. [Washington Post](#)

## Why global health security matters to U.S.

5 May - The U.S. and the world now face a perfect storm of disease threats. New and virulent pathogens, such as H7N9 avian influenza and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), emerge every year. Diseases respect no borders – a fact reiterated by the confirmation, last week, of the first case of MERS-CoV in the United States.

Pathogens are becoming more resistant to antimicrobial drugs, and the possibility of bioterrorism continues to grow as new technologies make bioengineering cheaper and easier... With such threats in mind, we are in Helsinki for the first meeting on the world's Global Health Security Agenda, a partnership of the United States government and more than 30 international partners to accelerate progress toward a world safe and secure from infectious disease threats. As part of this effort, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Defense (DoD) have committed to provide a total of \$40 million this year to 12 partner countries to rapidly advance our shared global health security goals. Over the next 5 years, this initiative will enable partner countries to strengthen their ability to prevent, detect, and effectively respond to infectious disease threats and better protect at least 4 billion more people. [CNN](#)

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## **INFLUENZA**

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### **CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report**

During week 17 (April 20-26, 2014), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 4,031 specimens tested and reported during week 17, 500 (12.4%) 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:** Two influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- **Influenza-associated Hospitalizations:** A season-cumulative rate of 34.9 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported.

[FluView](#)

### **DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program - EUCOM**

29 September 2013 - 3 May 2014:

- In cooperation and agreement with U.S. Army Public Health Command Region-Europe (PHCR-E), the DoD Global, Laboratory-based, Influenza Surveillance Program has analyzed data from Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC), Germany. LRMC's laboratory is the forward lab for military sites in Europe.
- To date this influenza season, testing has been completed on 1,340 specimens from 25 locations. Of those specimens tested, 441 were positive for influenza (132 influenza

A(H1N1)pdm09, 198 influenza A(H3N2), 32 A/not subtyped, four influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) co-infections, 19 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 co-infections, 32 influenza A(H3N2) co-infections, 13 influenza A/not subtyped co-infections, and 11 influenza B).

- There have been 443 other respiratory viruses isolated (25 adenovirus, 84 human metapneumovirus, 25 parainfluenza virus, 84 RSV, 160 rhinovirus/enterovirus, and 65 non-influenza co-infections) cumulatively this season. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

For week 17/2014:

- Low intensity was reported by 24 countries and local or sporadic activity was reported by 16 countries.
- Of 93 sentinel specimens tested across 15 countries, 15 (16%) were positive for influenza virus. Fourteen (93%) were influenza A viruses.
- Fifteen hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported by Ireland and the UK, 14 of which were admitted to intensive care units.

Overall, influenza activity and associated circulation of influenza viruses in reporting countries is declining. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

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

For the week 17 ending 26 April 2014:

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among U.S. military basic trainees.
- *C. pneumoniae* found in recent FRI and pneumonia cases at Ft. Leonard Wood
- 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](#)

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### **VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

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## Coca-Cola to remove controversial drinks ingredient

6 May - The world's largest beverage-maker, Coca-Cola, plans to remove a controversial ingredient from some of its US drinks brands by the end of this year, following an online

petition. Brominated vegetable oil, or BVO, is found in Coca-Cola fruit and sports drinks such as Fanta and Powerade. Rival Pepsi removed the chemical from its Gatorade sports drink last year. In Japan and the European Union, the use of BVO as a food additive is not allowed. [BBC News](#)

## Therapy dog helps troops deal with postwar stress

8 May - After three deployments to Iraq and three to Afghanistan, Staff Sgt. Dennis Swols is agitated, prone to bouts of anger and unable to really talk about his time on the battlefield. But as Swols sits in a small office in the Robinson Health Clinic at Fort Bragg, his hand drops to the furry head beside him and his mood brightens. Settled at his feet, Lexy, a 5-year-old German shepherd, gives Swols a few moments of distraction. It's her job. And, according to Swols, she's good at it... For 82nd Airborne psychiatrist Maj. Christine Rumayor, Lexy is a partner, a conversation starter and a living, breathing medical tool that can calm a patient and make a therapy appointment a little more enjoyable. A slowly evolving form of treatment, animal therapy is used in only a few other Army installations, including Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. A small number of dogs like Lexy are being used almost as co-therapists. Others routinely work as service animals and are often used for animal-assisted therapy, including in visits to patients in the hospitals.

[NPR](#)

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### WELLNESS

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## Advocates back paid sick leave, but opponents won't cough it up

8 May - [Most] restaurant workers don't get paid when they stay home sick. But, some go to work anyway, when they've got the sniffles or worse, because they need the paycheck. For labor advocates, that's a problem... Last month, New York City began requiring employers to provide paid sick days, joining the ranks of other cities such as Washington, Seattle and San Francisco. But while several cities have been willing to impose such requirements, states have been more reluctant. Olzewski's bill attracted a majority of his fellow state House members as co-sponsors, but went nowhere this year. Instead, a number of states — particularly in the South — have passed laws that block local governments from imposing sick day requirements on businesses. [NPR](#)

## Amid the device hype, this startup is taking wearables to heart

2 May - There's been a lot of talk about wearable devices being the next big thing in the technology world. It's easy for the hype to get ahead of the products, but there's actually

some serious innovation going on... Unlike simpler step-counting bracelets, Quanttus' products will have a cluster of tiny, sophisticated sensors. An object smaller than a finger nail can measure the body's biological signals. Rice won't say exactly what all the sensors will track — that's still secret. But some will probably record metrics like heart rate, temperature and blood pressure... In the future, your doctor might do the same thing, but would get it from a wristwatch that has been quietly gathering the information about you. That's bound to create privacy concerns, but venture capitalists are pouring money into all kinds of wearable startups. [NPR](#)

## Antipsychotics, mood stabilizers may reduce violent crime

8 May - Patients with severe psychiatric illnesses are almost 50% less likely to commit a violent crime when treated with an antipsychotic, a large Swedish study suggests. "Antipsychotics have potentially large effects on real-world outcomes, such as violent crime, and this needs to be a factor in clinical decision making regarding initiating and maintaining patients on these medications," lead author Seena Fazel, MD, of the Department of Psychiatry, University of Oxford, United Kingdom, told Medscape Medical News. Mood stabilizers such as lithium or carbamazepine can also help reduce the rate of violent crime, the study suggests, although the reduction is less pronounced than with antipsychotics. [Medscape](#)

## Less nutritious grains may be in our future



8 May - In the future, the Earth's atmosphere is likely to include a whole lot more carbon dioxide. And many have been puzzling over what that may mean for the future of food crops. Now, scientists are reporting that some of the world's most important crops contain fewer crucial nutrients when they grow in such an environment... "What we found were five to ten percent reductions in nutrients like iron, zinc, and protein," he says... Worldwide, about two billion people already are getting too little iron and zinc in their diets, and it's damaging their health. [NPR](#)

## Minimalist running shoe maker Vibram moves to settle health claims suit

8 May - Vibram USA Inc., maker of those glovelike FiveFingers running shoes with separate spaces for each toe, has moved to settle a lawsuit alleging it overstated the shoes' health benefits. The privately held company offered to pay a total of \$3.75 million to people who bought the shoes and said it would stop making health claims in its advertisements. [Fox News](#)

## Most fitness apps don't use proven motivational techniques

6 May - If you downloaded a fitness app and didn't become a workout ninja, it may be that the app lacked the scientifically tested motivational techniques that would help get you off the couch. Instead, most popular fitness apps focus more on teaching you how to do the exercise... Slightly more than half of the apps offered at least a few recognized motivational techniques — mostly feedback on performance, goal-setting and planning social support. The other 46 percent focused on the how-tos... There's little incentive for app developers to use behavioral science, Conroy says, because their metric for success is downloads, not how often you exercise or if you're making progress toward your goal. [NPR](#)

## New studies show that young blood reverses effects of aging when put into older mice

4 May - ...A trio of new studies has discovered that the blood of young mice appears to reverse some of the effects of aging when put into the circulatory systems of elderly mice. After combining the blood circulations of two mice by conjoining them — one old, the other young — researchers found dramatic improvements in the older mouse's muscle and brain. After four weeks, stem cells in both those areas got a boost of activity and were better able to produce neurons and muscle tissue... Old mice who were injected with the protein or who received a blood transfusion navigated mazes faster and ran longer on treadmills. They easily outperformed their control peers, who were given only saline.

[Washington Post](#)

## Obesity by age 25 linked to severe late-life obesity

6 May - After studying the relationship between body mass index at the age of 25 and obesity later in life, researchers have found that people who are obese by 25 have a much higher risk of more severe obesity after the age of 35. The researchers, who used data from the 1999-2010 US National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), will publish their findings in the June issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. [Medical News Today](#)

## Oral HCV regimen continues strong showing

6 May - An all-oral antiviral combination led to sustained virologic response (SVR) in more than 90% of patients with the most common type of hepatitis C (HCV) infection in North America. Patients with HCV genotype 1a had a 97% SVR after 12 weeks of treatment with the ritonavir-boosted protease inhibitor ABT-450/r, the antivirals ombitasvir and dasabuvir, and ribavirin. The same regimen without ribavirin led to a 12-week SVR of 90% in patients with HCV 1a... "Equally important is the fact that the medications were extremely well tolerated, with dropout rates of less than 1% in a study of over 400 patients. [MedPage Today](#)

## Reducing just six risk factors could prevent 37 million deaths from chronic diseases over 15 years

2 May - Reducing or curbing just six modifiable risk factors -- tobacco use, harmful alcohol use, salt intake, high blood pressure and blood sugar, and obesity -- to globally-agreed target levels could prevent more than 37 million premature deaths over 15 years, from the four main non-communicable diseases (NCDs): cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory disease, cancers, and diabetes, according to new research. [Science Daily](#)

## Some e-cigarettes deliver a puff of carcinogens

3 May - Electronic cigarettes appear to be safer than ordinary cigarettes for one simple — and simply obvious — reason: people don't light up and smoke them. With the e-cigarettes, there is no burning tobacco to produce myriad new chemicals, including some 60 carcinogens. But new research suggests that, even without a match, some popular e-cigarettes get so hot that they, too, can produce a handful of the carcinogens found in cigarettes and at similar levels. [New York Times](#)

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### USAFRICOM

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## Guinea: Probable Ebola cases still rising in Guinea

6 May - Guinea's cumulative case total for Ebola virus disease (EVD) has risen by 5 since last week, to 231, with the number of deaths increasing by 6, to 155, says an update today from the WHO. Laboratory-confirmed cases held steady at 127 of the 210 patients tested, and deaths among that group rose by 1, to 82. The increase in cumulative cases has come entirely from those classified as probable, with that number now at 49, compared with 44 last week. Five of the 6 new fatalities have involved probable cases, bringing that total to 39. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

## Senegal re-opens border with Guinea as Ebola threat eases

6 May - Senegal reopened its border with Guinea on Tuesday, over a month after it sealed land crossings with its southern neighbor to try to prevent the spread of the Ebola virus that has killed dozens in Guinea. The move comes days after Guinea's President Alpha Conde said the 4-month outbreak - which has spread from Guinea's remote southeast to the capital, Conakry, and also into neighboring Liberia - was under control... The threat of the virus has put a string of weak national health systems under strain across the region and governments said it posed a threat to national security. [Reuters](#)

## Snip decision: Africa's campaign to circumcise its men

7 May - If you turn on a radio in Zimbabwe these days, it won't be long before you hear a public service spot featuring the voice of a deejay who... tells his audience that just before he got married he decided to get circumcised "so that my wife would find me clean and desirable." ...The ad is a centerpiece of an unprecedented campaign in Africa over the past several years to promote circumcision as a way to prevent HIV. This week researchers announced that the program has reached a remarkable milestone: Six million men and teenagers were convinced. But the goal is to get 14 million more to sign up by 2016, and even at the current pace, public health officials are not on track to achieve that number. So they believe they need to change their message... Over the past five months officials have enlisted a who's who of celebrities to spread the word that circumcision is cool. [NPR](#)

## West Africa: Ebola virus disease, WHO update

8 May - ...**Guinea:** As of 18:00 on 5 May 2014, the Ministry of Health (MOH) of Guinea has reported a cumulative total of 235 clinical cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), including 157 deaths. There has been no change in the number of cases confirmed by ebolavirus PCR (127 cases) since the last update of 2 May 2014, but there have been two additional deaths: one among the confirmed cases and the other among the probable cases.

**Liberia:** There has been no change in the epidemiological situation in Liberia.

**Sierra Leone:** As of 7 May, no cases of EVD have been confirmed in Sierra Leone. [WHO](#)

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## USCENTCOM

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## Afghanistan: Ending drug addiction is looking like 'mission implausible'

1 May - As U.S. troops continue to pull out of Afghanistan, the country's booming poppy crops and the opium they yield have reached unprecedented levels that will fuel Taliban insurgents and challenge the government in Kabul, the Pentagon watchdog overseeing Afghanistan says. "We don't really have an effective strategy" to counter Afghanistan's expanding narcotics industry, John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, said in an interview Thursday. "Cultivation is up, drug usage is up, production is up, seizures are down, eradication is down, corruption is up—if you look at all those indices, it's a failure." And the U.S. is running out of time to change course. The U.S. has spent \$7.5 billion trying to eradicate Afghanistan's poppy crop since invading the country on Oct. 7, 2001... But since 2008, the U.S. and its allies have succeeded in eliminating less than 4% of it, according to satellite imagery. Seizures of opium are even less, accounting for about 1% of production. [Time](#)

## Afghanistan: Scale of Afghan landslide 'absolutely devastating'



5 May - In the space of one devastating week, natural disasters killed more people in Afghanistan than they did all last year. At the heart of the destruction was the double landslide that engulfed a village in a remote northeastern province on Friday, killing more than 2,000 people. A mass of rock and mud that came crashing

down in the village of Abi Barak, in Badakhshan Province... Over the weekend, authorities gave up hope of finding anybody alive. They suspended rescue operations, and declared the site a mass graveyard. The first landslide on Friday swallowed at least 300 homes. When residents from a nearby village rushed to the scene to help dig people out, the second landslide struck, sweeping away many of the rescuers. Exact figures are difficult to come by. But IOM staff on the ground said the double landslide killed as many as 2,700 people and affected 14,000 others. [CNN](#)

## Egypt investigates suspected MERS coronavirus death

5 May - Egyptian authorities are investigating whether a 60-year-old woman who has died in the city of Port Said had the SARS-like Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). If confirmed, it would be Egypt's first death from the virus. The woman had recently returned from an Islamic pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, where the MERS coronavirus emerged in 2012, Helmi el-Efni, a Health Ministry official from the city on the Suez Canal, said on Monday... Authorities last week reported Egypt's first MERS case, a man who had recently returned from Saudi Arabia and was being treated at a hospital in Cairo. [Reuters](#)

## Pakistan: Undiagnosed hemorrhagic disease

5 May - The affected women reportedly experienced similar symptoms, which started from pain in the upper part of the body and eventually led to bleeding from the mouth and nose. All victims died within a few hours of showing these symptoms. Residents reported the deaths to health officials, who visited the area, the tribesman added. Bajaur Agency Political Agent Syed Abdul Jabbar Shah confirmed the deaths and said he had directed the agency surgeon and agricultural experts to visit the area and conduct a thorough investigation. Declaring an emergency at the Agency Headquarters Hospital, he asked the hospital administration to take special care of the women suspected to be suffering from the mysterious ailment. Agency Surgeon Dr Zakir Husain, who has already visited the area, said an investigation was currently under way and experts have narrowed the cause of death to 2 possibilities. "There could either be some poison in the area or the deaths were caused by a virus," he said. [ProMED-mail](#)

## Saudi Arabia: MERS cases reach more than 400

5 May - Eighteen more people in Saudi Arabia have contracted the potentially deadly Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), bringing the number of cases in the kingdom to 414, its health ministry said on Monday, more than a quarter of whom have died. The new cases, reported in the past 48 hours, were in the capital Riyadh, the coastal city of Jeddah, and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the ministry said on its website. The spread of the disease is a concern for Saudi Arabia which will host millions of foreign pilgrims in July in Mecca and Medina during Islam's fasting month of Ramadan. Millions more are expected in October for the annual Haj pilgrimage. [VOA](#)

## Saudi Arabia: WHO mission finds infection control gaps fueling MERS surge

7 May - Lapses in hospital infection control practices appear to be magnifying Saudi Arabia's recent steep rise in Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infections, according to an expert team from the World Health Organization (WHO) that just completed a visit to the country that included two hospitals. And, signaling a continuing surge of new cases, Saudi Arabia's health ministry today reported 28 more cases and 6 more deaths. [CIDRAP](#)

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### USEUCOM

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## Germany: A case of autochthonous human *Dirofilaria* infection, March 2014

1 May - In March 2014, an infection with the nematode *Dirofilaria repens* was diagnosed in a German citizen in the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt. The patient had developed an itching subcutaneous nodule containing a female worm, which was identified as *D. repens* by 12S ribosomal ribonucleic acid (rRNA) gene sequencing. Autochthonous human *D. repens* infections have not been described in Germany so far, but this finding is consistent with the recent detection of *D. repens* in mosquitoes from east Germany. [Eurosurveillance](#)

## Ireland's smoking ban, 10 years later

7 May - March 29 marked the 10-year anniversary of a workplace smoking ban in Ireland, extending to pubs and restaurants. Ireland was the first country worldwide to enact such a sweeping ban. The initiative made smoking in enclosed workplaces illegal, punishable by a fine of up to 3,000 euros, or about \$4,200. The ban has spawned copycat laws across the globe... Irish Minister for Health Dr. James Reilly has hailed the ban as a success, stating the

proof is in the numbers. "Recent research found 3,726 fewer smoking related deaths than would have been expected if the smoking ban had not been brought in," said Reilly. [CNN](#)

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**USNORTHCOM**

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## U.S.: CDC reports on disability, chronic disease

6 May - People with a disability were more likely to report at least one chronic illness and were less likely to participate in recommended physical activities, researchers reported. Inactive adults with a disability were 50% more likely to report one or more chronic diseases, such as coronary heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes, according to Dianna Carroll, PhD, of the CDC in Atlanta, and colleagues. Among U.S. adults, ages 18-64, 11.6% reported having a disability -- hearing, vision, cognition, or mobility -- and those adults were far more likely to report inactivity compared with adults who did not have a disability (47.1% versus 26.1%), although 44% said their healthcare provider had recommended they take part in physical activity, they wrote in the May 6 issue of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. [MedPage Today](#)

## U.S.: Confirmed Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) case in Indiana, 2014

3 May - The first case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection in the United States, identified in a traveler, was reported to CDC by the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) on May 1, 2014, and confirmed by CDC on May 2. The patient is in a hospital in Indiana after having flown from Saudi Arabia to Chicago via London. ... Healthcare providers should be alert for and evaluate patients for MERS-CoV infection who 1) develop severe acute lower respiratory illness within 14 days after traveling from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula, excluding those who only transited at airports in the region; or 2) are close contacts of a symptomatic recent traveler from this area who has fever and acute respiratory illness; or 3) are close contacts of a confirmed case. [CDC](#)

## U.S.: Employers eye moving sickest workers to insurance exchanges

7 May - Can corporations shift workers with high medical costs from the company health plan into online insurance exchanges created by the Affordable Care Act? Some employers are considering it, say benefits consultants. "It's all over the marketplace," said Todd Yates, a managing partner at Hill, Chesson & Woody, a North Carolina benefits consulting firm. "Employers are inquiring about it, and brokers and consultants are advocating for it." Health

spending is driven largely by a few patients with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, and those who need expensive treatments, such as organ transplants. Since most big corporations are self-insured, shifting even one high-cost worker out of the company plan could save the employer hundreds of thousands of dollars a year — while increasing the cost of claims absorbed by the marketplace policy by a similar amount. And the health law might not prohibit it, opening a door to potential erosion of employer-based coverage. [NPR](#)

## U.S. FDA questions use of aspirin to prevent first heart attack

5 May - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Monday questioned the value of taking aspirin to try to ward off a first heart attack or stroke in people who have never had cardiovascular problems. The FDA's statement follows its decision last week to turn down a request by German drugmaker Bayer AG to change the labeling on packages in order to market aspirin's value in preventing heart attacks in people who have never had cardiovascular disease. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Many bullied teens carry weapons to school, study finds

5 May - Large numbers of U.S. high school students who are bullied take weapons to school, a new study finds. "Victims of bullying who have been threatened, engaged in a fight, injured or had property stolen or damaged are much more likely to carry a gun or knife to school," said study senior investigator Dr. Andrew Adesman, chief of developmental and behavioral pediatrics at the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York. The researchers analyzed data from more than 15,000 U.S. high school students who took part in a 2011 survey. They found that teens who suffered many types of bullying are up to 31 times more likely to bring weapons such as guns and knives to school than those who have not been bullied. [Medline Plus](#)

## U.S.: Primary and secondary syphilis — United States, 2005–2013

9 May - In 2013, based on data reported as of April 28, 2014, the rate of reported primary and secondary syphilis in the United States was 5.3 cases per 100,000 population, more than double the lowest-ever rate of 2.1 in 2000... During 2005–2013, primary and secondary syphilis rates increased among men of all ages and races/ethnicities across all regions of the United States. Recent years have shown an accelerated increase in the number of cases, with the largest increases occurring among MSM. Among women, rates increased during 2005–2008 and decreased during 2009–2013, with different trends among different racial/ethnic groups. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## U.S.: Specter of SARS weighs on CDC as MERS virus lands in U.S.

4 May - When the SARS outbreak arrived in Toronto on Feb. 23, 2003, carried by a woman traveling from Hong Kong, the disease quickly spread to hospital workers and patients in area hospitals, ultimately infecting 257 individuals and killing 33 people. It's a memory that hangs fresh in the mind of Dr Michael Bell, deputy director of the division of healthcare quality promotion at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Atlanta-based federal agency last week sent a team of infectious disease experts to Community Hospital in Munster, Indiana, to attend to the first confirmed U.S. case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome or MERS. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Telepsychiatry brings emergency mental health care to rural areas

7 May - North Carolina is facing a very big mental health care challenge — 28 counties across the state do not have a single psychiatrist. That's despite the fact that in recent years, emergency rooms in the state have seen more patients with mental health, developmental disability or substance abuse problems. So the state is trying telepsychiatry. When a patient comes into an emergency room, they can be connected via a two-way video connection with a psychiatrist. A recent study by the nonpartisan North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research found that the method is having some success in providing more timely treatment. [NPR](#)

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### USPACOM

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## China: Dubious shrinks, political prisoners inside China's mental health care system



6 May - ...The country's public health system is struggling to keep up with the demand in mental health care. Around 173 million Chinese suffer from a mental disorder, according to a 2009 study published in British medical journal *The Lancet*. But there are only 20,000 psychiatrists, equaling 1.5 for each 100,000 people, or a tenth of the ratio in the United States. Professor Michael Phillips, director of the Shanghai Mental Health Center at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, estimated that only 5% of people who currently have a mental illness in China have received psychiatric care from a professional. "The factors that affect the low care-seeking rates are many," he said. "Lack of

awareness that they suffer from a psychiatric condition, lack of locally available mental health services, fear of stigma, belief that seeking psychological help will be useless, costs, etcetera." [CNN](#)

## WHO finds Indian cities have dirtiest air; Chinese data foggy

8 May - An effort by the World Health Organization to measure pollution in cities around the world has found New Delhi admits to having the dirtiest air, while Beijing's measurements, like its skies, are far from clear. The study of 1,600 cities found air pollution had worsened since a smaller survey in 2011, especially in poorer countries, putting city-dwellers at higher risk of cancer, stroke and heart disease. Air pollution killed about 7 million people in 2012, making it the world's single biggest environmental health risk, the WHO, a United Nations agency, said last month. Thirteen of the dirtiest 20 cities were Indian, with New Delhi, Patna, Gwalior and Raipur in the top four spots... Beijing, notorious for the smog that has prompted some Anglophone residents to dub it "Greyjng", was in 77th place with a PM2.5 reading of 56, little over one-third of Delhi's pollution level. [Reuters](#)

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### USSOUTHCOM

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## Caribbean: New effort to halt spread of HIV

8 May - ...In much of the world, giving out condoms and guidance to gay, bisexual and transgender sex workers is routine. But reaching out to men who have sex with men is practically revolutionary in parts of the English-speaking Caribbean, where homophobia and laws criminalizing gay sex have long driven people underground — turning them into the toughest group to reach with HIV prevention programs and fueling a regional epidemic. Now, there's a growing momentum to turn the tide in Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana and eight other countries that criminalize sex between adults of the same gender. Even as funding grants get tighter, HIV prevention programs to reach men who have sex with men are scaling up and advocacy groups appear energized. [ABC News](#)

## Haiti confirms 14 chikungunya cases

7 May - The 40,000-case chikungunya outbreak afflicting the Caribbean has now spread to Haiti, as officials there have confirmed 14 cases, the Associated Press (AP) reported yesterday... The story said that the arrival of the disease in Haiti was expected, as the Dominican Republic began reporting cases in March. European health officials said this week that Haiti's neighbor has more than 3,000 suspected or confirmed cases. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

## Uruguay says legal marijuana to be good and cheap

7 May - Uruguayans will be allowed to buy enough marijuana to roll about 20 joints a week at a price well below the black market rate, the government said on Tuesday as it detailed a new law legalizing the cannabis trade. Congress in December approved a law allowing the cultivation and sale of marijuana, making Uruguay the first country to do so, with the aim of wresting the business from criminals... Activists who have backed the measure said legalized marijuana would be high-grade and affordable. [Reuters](#)

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