

20 April 2012

Army Public Health Weekly Update

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U.S. Army Public Health Command



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A new poster on staying hydrated and maintaining a healthy weight to help prevent kidney stones is now available in the **Health Information Products eCatalog**.



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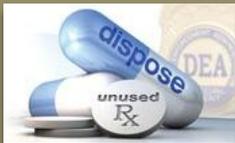
- Brazil health study shows growing weight problem
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National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has scheduled another National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day for Saturday, April 28, 2012, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Americans who participated in the DEA's third National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on October 29, 2011, turned in more than 188.5 tons of unwanted or expired medications for safe and proper disposal at the 5,327 take-back sites.

Collection Site Locator



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U.S. MILITARY

Predictive value of surveillance case definitions of Guillain-Barré Syndrome in vaccine safety assessment

March 2012 - ...Population-level surveillance for adverse events after vaccination often relies on administrative data bases for initial identification of possible cases through the use of ICD-9-CM diagnosis codes. However, the positive predictive value (PPV) of unverified diagnosis codes can vary greatly. For example, in a study evaluating seizure events after receipt of a pneumococcal vaccine, the PPV was 97 percent if the seizure related ICD-9-CM diagnostic code was assigned in an emergency department visit, but only 64 percent if the code was assigned during a hospitalization.⁶ Recently, Jones et al. reported on the poor specificity of hospital discharge diagnoses of GBS in a state health department hospital discharge dataset and reported that the PPV of a GBS diagnostic code (ICD-9-CM: 357.0) in a hospital record was only 30 percent.⁷ GBS was one of several outcomes that MILVAX monitored as part of its pandemic influenza A/H1N1 vaccine safety assessment. This report summarizes the results of the MILVAX chart confirmation of possible GBS cases (identified by AFHSC) and based on these findings, estimates the sensitivity, specificity, and PPV of different surveillance case definitions of GBS. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Veterans Department to increase mental health staffing

19 April - The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) will announce on Thursday that it plans to hire about 1,600 additional [psychiatrists](#), [psychologists](#), social workers and other [mental health](#) clinicians in an effort to reduce long wait times for services at many veterans medical centers. The hiring, which would be augmented by the addition of 300 clerical workers, would increase the department's mental health staff by nearly 10 percent at a time when the veterans health system is being overwhelmed not just by veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, but also by aging veterans from the Vietnam era. "History shows that the costs of war will continue to grow for a decade or more after the operational missions in Iraq and Afghanistan have ended," Eric K. Shinseki, the secretary of veterans affairs, said in a statement to be released Thursday. "As more veterans return home, we must ensure that all veterans have access to quality mental health care." [New York Times](#)

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GLOBAL

'Aid helps more children reach five', says ODI report



16 April - Four million more children a year are living beyond their fifth birthday than in 1990, a new report for Save the Children and Unicef has found. Research by the Overseas Development Institute shows that aid is a key factor in improving children's well-being around the world.

It says economic growth and good government policies also help improve their life-

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chances. Children in Brazil, Bangladesh and Vietnam have made great improvements. [BBC News](#)

Live experiment shows that MRSA dies on antimicrobial copper surfaces

12 April - Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) has met its match against antimicrobial copper. A live webcast experiment (<http://www.antimicrobialsurface.com/>) demonstrated that antimicrobial copper effectively kills MRSA within two hours while it readily survives on stainless steel. "Antimicrobial copper is part of the solution in the fight against healthcare-acquired infections – it kills 99.9 percent of bacteria* within two hours of exposure," says Harold Michels, senior vice president of technology and technical services for the Copper Development Association (CDA). The experiment was sponsored by the International Copper Association and the European Copper Institute. Professor William Keevil, microbiological researcher and head of Environmental Research at the University of Southampton (UK), who conducted the experiment notes, "We know that 80 percent of all infections are spread by touch and a contaminated hand will contaminate at least another seven touch surfaces," Keevil said during the webcast. MRSA is a type of staph bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics called beta-lactams, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Between 2005 and 2008, 17,508 cases of invasive MRSA infections contracted in healthcare facilities were recorded in the U.S. alone. [Infection Control Today](#)

Naturally drug-resistant cave bacteria possible key to new antibiotics



14 April - New research findings suggest the key to finding a whole new variety of antibiotics to treat drug-resistant infections may lie with the resident bacteria in one of the most isolated caves in the world. The U.S. scientists who conducted the study say bacteria collected from Lechuguilla Cave in the state of New Mexico appear to possess an innate resistance to antibiotics, despite never having been exposed to any human sources. Some of the bacteria had a pre-existing defense against as many as 14 different antibiotics. In all, the scientists say the cave-dwelling organisms showed a naturally-developed resistance to virtually every antibiotic currently used to treat bacterial infections. [VOA News](#)

Researchers say WHO multi-prong interventions work in improving hand hygiene compliance

13 April - During the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak, high compliance in healthcare workers with hand hygiene was primarily driven by fear. However, the post-SARS period confirmed that this practice was not sustainable. At the Singapore General Hospital, a 1,600-bedded acute tertiary care hospital, the hand hygiene program was revised in early 2007 following Singapore's signing of the pledge to the World Health Organization (WHO) "Clean Care is Safer Care" program. A multi-prong approach was used

in designing the hand hygiene program. This included system change; training and education; evaluation and feedback; reminders in the workplace; and institutional safety climate. Hand hygiene compliance rate improved from 20 percent (in January 2007) to 61 percent (2010). Improvement was also seen annually in the compliance to each of the 5 moments as well as in all staff categories. Healthcare-associated MRSA infections were reduced from 0.6 (2007) to 0.3 (2010) per 1000 patient-days. The researchers say that leadership's support of the program evidenced through visible leadership presence, messaging and release of resources is the key factor in helping to make the program a true success. [Infection Control Today](#)

Using AIDS drugs to prevent infection: a bargain?



16 April - Giving an AIDS-fighting drug to men who are at high risk of HIV infection would cost billions, but it might be worth it terms of reducing infection rates, U.S. researchers said on Monday. Since 2010, when a landmark study in the New England Journal of Medicine found that giving a daily dose of Gilead Sciences' Truvada to men who have sex with men can reduce HIV infection rates by 44 percent, researchers have been trying to work out how to make this treatment approach financially feasible. [Reuters](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

18 April:

- Influenza activity remains low to moderate in overseas DoD laboratory surveillance networks and the influenza activity continues to decrease within the MHS from previous weeks.
- The influenza vaccination rate for the DoD (Active Duty component only) was 97% (final update of the season). [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 14 (1-7 April 2012), influenza activity was elevated in some areas of the United States, but declined nationally and in most regions. [FluView](#)

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

During week 14 (2-8 April 2012), low intensity was reported by 22 countries and medium intensity by four countries, while none reported high intensity. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

14 April – Influenza activity appears to be decreasing and overall activity remains lower than last year. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

China: H5N1 hits cluster of chicken farms

18 April - An outbreak of H5N1 avian influenza has hit several farms in China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region, Chinese officials said in a report filed with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). It said 10,468 of 23,880 affected chickens died, and another 84,532 were destroyed to arrest the outbreak, for a total of 95,000 chickens lost in the Yuanzhou district of the city of Guyan. The virus's presence was confirmed by the Harbin Veterinary Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. Officials said the source of the infection was unknown. The Ministry of Agriculture said the outbreak was under control, according to a China Daily report today. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Dole recalls bagged salad for salmonella risk

16 April - Dole Food Co.'s fresh vegetables division is recalling 756 cases of bagged salad, because they could be contaminated with salmonella. The bags of Seven Lettuces salads were distributed in Alabama, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin. The company said the bags are being recalled, because a random sample tested by the State of New York came back positive for Salmonella. No other Dole salads are included in the recall. The recalled salads are stamped with a use-by date of April 11, 2012, UPC code 71430 01057 and product codes 0577N089112A and 0577N089112B, the company said. The product code and use-by date are located in the upper right-hand corner of the package, while the UPC code is on the back of the package, below the

barcode. Dole said that it's coordinating with regulatory officials and that no illnesses have been reported. Consumers should throw out the recalled salads. Dole said it's also contacting retailers to make sure the bags in question are not available for sale. The most common symptoms of salmonella are diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever within eight to 72 hours of eating the contaminated food. [ABC News](#)

FDA wants drug firms to limit the use of antibiotics in farm animals

13 April - Joel Petrus is a farmer who loves his beef cattle enough to see that they get medical attention -- but only when they are sick. Petrus, president of Petrus Feed & Seed in Alexandria, said giving antibiotics to cattle when not needed does nothing to help the animals. He wasn't shocked to learn that the Food and Drug Administration called on drug companies Wednesday to help limit the use of antibiotics in farm animals, a decades-old practice that scientists say has contributed to a surge in dangerous, drug-resistant bacteria. "There needs to be some limitations, but I don't think getting rid of antibiotics for cattle and farm animals is the answer," he said. "This all started because people have been misusing the antibiotics. I only give my cattle antibiotics, like a penicillin shot, when they are sick." An estimated 80 percent of all antibiotics sold in the U.S. wind up on animal farms. Neither the livestock industry nor the government tracks what percentage of those drugs are used to boost animal weight, but many experts believe the vast majority go toward non-medical uses. [The Town Talk](#)

Moon Marine USA Corp. recalls 30 tons of raw tuna

18 April - A Cupertino seafood importer is recalling nearly 60,000 pounds of raw ground yellowfin tuna linked to 116 salmonella infections in February and March. Moon Marine USA Corp., also known as MMI, sold the "Nakauchi Scrape," a frozen back-meat product scraped from the fish bones, to retailers and distributors across the country. The product probably passed through several distributors before arriving at restaurants and grocery stores, and each package may not have been marked with the company's name or lot information, the Food and Drug Administration said. People in 20 states and the District of Columbia were infected with the bacteria, most after eating spicy tuna sushi made with MMI's tuna. Most people recovered after a few days of suffering from diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps. Twelve people were hospitalized, and no one has died, the FDA said. [San Francisco Chronicle](#)

Salmonella tuna sushi outbreak

16 April - In the wake of an April, 2012 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announcement that at least 116 people have become ill in a Salmonella outbreak linked to Sushi, the attorneys at Marler Clark are distributing a FAQ list for consumers who may have been exposed in the outbreak. A total of 116 persons infected with the outbreak strain of Salmonella Bareilly have been reported from 20 states and the District of Columbia. The number of ill persons identified in each state is as follows: Alabama (2), Arkansas (1), Connecticut (5), District of Columbia (2), Florida (1), Georgia (5), Illinois (10), Louisiana (2), Maryland (11), Massachusetts (8), Mississippi (1), Missouri (2), New Jersey (7), New York (24),

North Carolina (2), Pennsylvania (5), Rhode Island (5), South Carolina (3), Texas (3), Virginia (5), and Wisconsin (12). 12 ill persons have been hospitalized, and no deaths have been reported. Collaborative investigation efforts of state, local, and federal public health agencies indicate that a frozen raw yellowfin tuna product, known as Nakauchi Scrape, from Moon Marine USA Corporation is the likely source of this outbreak of Salmonella Bareilly infections. [Food Poison Journal](#)

U.S.: Low water flows cause avian cholera outbreak

17 April - More than 10,000 migrating birds have died from an avian cholera outbreak blamed on reduced water flows through vast marshlands of southern Oregon and northern California known as Western Everglades, federal wildlife officials said. Avian cholera, which poses virtually no risk to human health, surfaces in the region nearly every year in wetlands of the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, but the recent waterfowl die-off there is the worst in over a decade, said Matt Baun, a spokesman for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "We estimate 10,000 to 15,000 birds will die, after everything is said and done," he said, adding that snow geese, American coots, American wigeon ducks, white-fronted geese and Northern pintail ducks have been the hardest hit. [Reuters](#)

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WELLNESS

Children's soft drink use linked to disease

10 April – Precursory signs of cardiovascular disease can be seen in children as young as 12 who have a high intake of sugary drinks, Sydney researchers have found, which could have implications for the rates of the disease in the future. While narrowed blood vessels inside the eye are a known precursor to cardiovascular disease in adults, researchers from the Westmead Millennium Institute for medical research have for the first time looked at the link between carbohydrates, which includes sugars, and the retinal health of children. Nearly 2000 12-year-olds had retinal images taken at the Centre for Vision Research at the University of Sydney. Narrowing of the retinal arteries was seen in those children with an intake of more than 274 grams of carbohydrate a day. A major source of those carbohydrates was soft drinks or cordial, found the study published in this month's American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, with high-risk children consuming one or more glasses a day. The study leader, Bamini Gopinath, said the health of retinal blood vessels gave a "very accurate" indication of blood vessel health throughout the entire body. [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)

Gum disease doesn't cause heart attacks, experts say



19 April - Preventing heart disease is not as easy as brushing your teeth. While numerous studies have linked [gum disease with an increased risk of heart disease](#) and stroke, there is no proof that bad gums actually cause heart disease or strokes, an American Heart Association committee said after reviewing 500 journal articles and studies. Moreover,

claims that dental treatment may prevent heart attack or stroke are unwarranted, the committee of doctors, dentists and infectious-disease researchers said in a statement. "The message sent out by some in health care professions – that heart attack and stroke are directly linked to gum disease – can distort the facts, alarm patients and perhaps shift the focus of prevention away from well-known risk factors for these diseases," said committee member Dr. Peter Lockhart, a professor of oral medicine at the Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, N.C. It is biologically plausible, the committee acknowledged, that oral bacteria infections could cause **heart disease**. Mouth bacteria can enter the bloodstream during dental procedures and tooth brushing. However, **gum disease** and heart disease share many common risk factors, including cigarette smoking, age and diabetes, and these factors are more likely to explain why diseases of the blood vessels and mouth occur in tandem. **Fox News**

Insect bite medicine warning

12 April - Over-the-counter medicines for insect bites may be ineffective - despite being packed with powerful pharmaceuticals, experts say today. Creams include substances such as anti-histamines, steroids and anaesthetics. About 3,000 people a week are thought to consult GPs about insect bites, from creatures such as midges, fleas and bedbugs. According to the Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin, there is little evidence to support their claimed benefits. Some products have been studied in clinical trials - but none of these are licensed for use in the UK, the bulletin says. Even worse steroid creams are sold for itching and inflammation - but they should not be used on the face or broken skin, it says. Meanwhile pain-killing creams are only "marginally effective" and may be counterproductive by causing sensitisation - meaning the patient becomes more sensitive to future bites or to the chemicals used in the cream. Antiseptic creams are also backed by little evidence - but a counter-irritant made from dilute ammonium may help relieve itching, according to journal deputy editor David Phizackerley. **Englemed**

Opium study raises questions about painkillers



17 April - About 20 million people are using the drug opium or one of its derivatives. A new study suggests new reasons for viewing this as problematic. **Research in the British Medical Journal** finds strong connections between people using opium and conditions such as cancer, circulatory diseases and respiratory conditions. "Long term recreational opioid use, even at relatively modest levels, causes important increases in death from multiple different causes," said study co-author Paul Brennan, head of the Section of Genetics at the International Agency for Research on Cancer in Lyon, France. Although this study focused on opium for recreational purposes, the research also has significant implications for medicinal uses of opium-derived painkillers - such as morphine and codeine, Irfan Dhalla, assistant professor at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, wrote in an accompanying editorial. **CNN**

Positive feelings may help protect cardiovascular health

17 April - Over the last few decades numerous studies have shown negative states, such as depression, anger, anxiety, and hostility, to be detrimental to cardiovascular health. Less is known about how positive psychological characteristics are related to heart health. In the first and largest systematic review on this topic to date, Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) researchers found that positive psychological well-being appears to reduce the risk of heart attacks, strokes and other cardiovascular events. The study was published online April 17, 2012 in *Psychological Bulletin*. [Science Daily](#)

Social factors may affect lifespan more than race, location

17 April - A group of socioeconomic factors such as education, income and work are better indicators of your chances of living to age 70 than race or geography, a new study shows. The findings challenge the long-held belief that race or the region of the country where you reside are the best markers of how long you may live, according to researchers from Stanford University School of Medicine in Stanford, Calif. Previous research has found large differences in life expectancy in various regions of the United States. For example, people tend to die younger in large urban areas and in the South. A study published last year found that men in five counties in Mississippi lived an average of 66.5 years, several years less than the national average of 75.4 years for men. [Medline Plus](#)

Study: Menthol smokers double stroke risk



16 April - People who smoke menthol cigarettes have a much higher risk of stroke than those who smoke regular cigarettes, according to a new study. "Current mentholated cigarette smokers have an over two times greater risk of having stroke," says Nicholas Vozoris, a Canadian scientist who conducted the research. "And particularly driving this association were women and non-African Americans." Vozoris is a clinical associate at Saint Michael's Hospital in Toronto, and his study used data from more than 5,000 smokers in a U.S. government survey. [VOA News](#)

The guide to beating a heart attack

16 April - Here's the good news: Heart disease and its consequences are largely preventable. The bad news is that nearly one million Americans will suffer a heart attack this year. Deaths from coronary heart disease in the U.S. have been cut by 75% during the past 40 years. Hospital admissions for heart attack among the elderly fell by nearly 25% in a five-year period during the last decade, a remarkable feat when many experts had expected the aging population to cause an increase in the problem. Still, cardiovascular disease remains the leading killer of both men and women. Doctors worry that the steady progress from an intense public-health campaign beginning in the 1960s is in jeopardy thanks to the obesity epidemic and rising prevalence of diabetes. Only a relative handful of people are fully compliant with recommendations for diet, exercise and other personal habits well proven to

help keep hearts healthy. Particularly troubling are increasingly common reports of heart attacks among younger people, even those in their 20s and 30s, says Donald M. Lloyd-Jones, a cardiologist and chief of preventive medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. There is a lot a person can do to help prevent a heart attack. One international study found that about 90% of the risk associated with such factors as high cholesterol and blood pressure, physical activity, smoking and diet, are within a person's ability to control. [The Wall Street Journal](#)

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USAFRICOM

Eritrea: Effective environmental hygiene program implemented in She'ib sub-zone

16 April - The inhabitants of 10 Administrative areas of She'ib sub-zone explained that the environmental hygiene activities carried out in the locality have been effective with the morbidity of communicable diseases caused by lack of hygiene showing significant drop. Ms. Amna Idris Salm and Mr. Ibrahim Omer expressed conviction that earlier the awareness of the community as regards the use of latrines was limited and that various sensitization programs implemented in the locality have altered the weak aspects effectively. Mr. Girmai Mebrahtu, Administrator of She'ib sub-zone, commended the impressive community participation and receptiveness. Dr. Yohannes Tekeste, head of the Health Ministry's branch in Southern Red Sea sub-zone, indicated that endeavors to eradicate diseases caused by lack of hygiene began in 2009, and that the program has now been extended to 10 villages. The head of environmental health department in the Ministry, Dr. Tekeste Araya, on his part asserted that the achievement scored in safeguarding public health can be correlated with the nation's development stride and commended the nationals' growing awareness regarding prevention of diseases through environmental hygiene. [All Africa](#)

Nigeria: Benue tops HIV/AIDS chart with 6 million cases

16 April - Benue State tops HIV/AIDS chart with 600,000 cases in the country, Executive Secretary, Benue State AIDS Control Agency (BENSACA), Mrs. Ashi Wende, has disclosed. The executive secretary was speaking at a 3-day workshop on "Stigma Reduction and Discrimination for Producers, Reporters and Duty Continuity Announcers" organized by the state Ministry of Information in conjunction with BENSACA. She attributed the menace to inability of the people to change their behaviours, saying that a situation in the past where attention was given to treatment and care at the expense of prevention was not giving the desired result. "Let me appeal to the Benue State government to key properly into its development plans as it is a major underlining factor of the reckless sexual behaviours especially among the youth of the state," she said. Mrs. Wende, who called for public-private partnership for enhanced funding, also urged civil society involvement especially in the rural areas where, she said, recent studies found higher prevalence rates of the disease than the urban centres. [All Africa](#)

South Africa: 'Technical glitch' sees clinics running out of chronic medication

16 April - Some chronically ill patients in the Western Cape have had to go for days without taking their prescribed medication at some state hospitals as a new contractor appointed to provide prepackaged chronic medication has been experiencing "technical glitches". At the beginning of the month the Western Cape Provincial Department of Health appointed UTi Pharma to take over the management of the Chronic Dispensing Unit (CDU) from Institutional Pharmacy Management (IPM) whose five year contract had come to an end. On Friday, two weeks later, Western Cape Minister of Health Theuns Botha said there had been "some operational problems" in transferring the details of about 200 000 patients from the old CDU system to the new operator which resulted in problems in the dispensing of chronic medication to patients. However, he said on Friday that the situation had just been resolved. But the technical glitches created a "huge" backlog in the dispensing of chronic medication at some state hospitals. At Retreat Community Hospital, a senior health official who spoke on condition of anonymity said because UTi Pharma was unable to provide pre-packaged chronic medication, they had a week-long backlog. "We have asked patients who have a supply of medicines to come back next week. Those (patients) who have nothing, we are trying to assist them," he said. [All Africa](#)

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USCENTCOM

Saudi Arabia: Vaccination against cervical cancer stressed

12 April - Currently around 2.2 percent of the female population in Saudi Arabia suffers from cervical cancer, according to an oncology expert in Riyadh yesterday. Dr. Ismail Al-Badawi, section head of the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Oncology at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre in Riyadh, was speaking at a media roundtable conference at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Riyadh to discuss the importance of vaccinations and how they work. The event organized by MSD was arranged ahead of the EMRO Vaccination Week, which will take place throughout the region from April 24 to 30. The week is dedicated to celebrating and promoting immunization for people of all ages through advocacy, education and communication activities. The gynecologist said cervical cancer is the 11th most common cancer in Saudi Arabia amongst women in general and the eighth most common amongst women aged between 15 and 44. "Whilst the actual prevalence of cervical cancer in comparison to other countries in the region is relatively low, the rates of mortality are extremely high," Al-Badawi said. In the Kingdom, some 3.4 percent were proven positive for every 100,000 cases. [Zawya](#)

Yemen: Rising landmine death toll in Hajjah Governorate



18 April – Mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) have killed 27 people and injured at least 36 in the last two months in Hajjah Governorate, northwestern Yemen, according to a 14 April Interior Ministry report. Many of the injured will be left permanently disabled. Children are particularly at risk and the situation is hampering the return of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs), according to Hajjah Deputy Governor Ismail Mahim. "Given the lack of mine-maps and experts, more children will be at high risk if displaced families return home," Mohammed Rashid, a child protection specialist at Hajjah Social Affairs and Labour Office, told IRIN. "We fear the tragic stories of landmine-hit children in Sa'dah [Governorate] may be repeated in Hajjah." Mansour al-Azi, director of Yemen's National Mine Action Programme (NMAP), said there were plans to deploy teams this week to carry out mine risk education campaigns in two badly affected districts, Kusher and Mestaba, but no decision had been taken because "the situation is still fluid." [IRIN](#)

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USEUCOM

Serbia: Q fever outbreak, January to February 2012

12 April - From 27 January to 10 February 2012, a total of 43 cases of Q fever were notified in the village of Noćaj, Srem county, Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Republic of Serbia. Q fever was laboratory confirmed in 37 notified cases. Although, the outbreak is considered over, the outbreak investigation is still ongoing in order to identify aetiologic factors relevant for this outbreak. [Eurosurveillance](#)

United Kingdom: Drought may last until Christmas, environment agency

16 April - Official drought zones have been declared in a further 17 English counties, as a warning came that water shortages could last until Christmas. The Environment Agency said dry weather over the past few months had left some rivers in England exceptionally low. It has now extended its "drought map" into the Midlands and the South West. Officials say public water supplies are unlikely to be affected by the continuing drought, but are reiterating calls for water to be used wisely. England's South West and the Midlands have moved into official drought status after two dry winters "left rivers and ground waters depleted", the agency said. The Midlands region covers Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, West Midlands, Warwickshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. The South West region covers Cornwall, Devon, Dorset,

Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, parts of Hampshire and most of Wiltshire. Drought restrictions were already in place in south-east England, East Anglia, parts of the South and Yorkshire. The Environment Agency said the dry weather was taking its toll on the environment and farmers. [BBC News](#)

United Kingdom: Vaccine call after increase in whooping cough cases

13 April - Parents have been urged to have their children vaccinated against whooping cough after 665 laboratory confirmed cases were recorded in England and Wales in the first three months of 2012, it was revealed today (April 13). The Health Protection Agency (HPA) in England and Wales said the number of cases between January and March compared to total of 1,040 incidences recorded in 2011. The increase has been reported across all regions, with some areas reporting clusters in schools, universities and healthcare settings, and there has been a rise in the number of very young children being affected by it. Although whooping cough in older people can be unpleasant, it does not usually lead to serious complications. However, there is a risk of severe complications and death among very young children. Dr Mary Ramsay, head of immunisation at the HPA, said: "Whooping cough can spread easily to close contacts such as household members. Vaccination is the most effective way to protect people from this infection and uptake of the vaccine is very good. [Englemed](#)

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USNORTHCOM

Farm group seeks U.S. halt on "dangerous" crop chemicals

18 April - A coalition of more than 2,000 U.S. farmers and food companies said Wednesday it is taking legal action to force government regulators to analyze potential problems with proposed biotech crops and the weed-killing chemicals to be sprayed over them. "These are the most dangerous chemicals out there," said John Bode, a Washington lawyer and lobbyist hired by the Save Our Crops Coalition. Unlike past protests of new biotech crops, the coalition comprises many grower groups that use and support biotechnology. This is not a biotech complaint, they say, but one focused on the danger of the chemicals to be used with the biocrops. [Reuters](#)

Fast food in the U.S. has way more salt than in other countries



16 April - Want extra salt with that fast-food meal? Then buy it in the United States, where chicken dishes, pizzas, and even salads are loaded with far more salt than in Europe and Australia, according to new research. The McDonald's Chicken McNuggets in the United States have more than twice as much salt as their sister nuggets in the United Kingdom. That's 1.6 grams of salt for every 100 grams of

American nugget, compared to 0.6 grams in the U.K. You could say Americans are getting more for their money. You could also say they're getting more high blood pressure and premature death. McNuggets sold in Canada were about as salty as those in the U.S., while Australian, French, and Kiwi nuggets had significantly less salt, but not as little as in the U.K. That may be because the United Kingdom has set voluntary limits on salt in processed food, according to Elizabeth Dunford. She's the lead author of this study, which was [published](#) today in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, and global database manager for the Australian arm of World Action on Salt and Health. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Interpreters in ER may help limit medical errors

17 April - Having professional translators in the emergency room for non-English-speaking patients might help limit potentially dangerous miscommunication, a new study suggests. The study, done at two pediatric ERs, found that when Spanish-speaking families had access to a professional interpreter, 12 percent of translation slips -- such as adding or omitting certain words and phrases -- could have had "clinical consequences," like giving a wrong medication dose. But mistakes like that were about twice as likely if there was no interpreter or if the translator was an amateur, like a family member or a bilingual member of the hospital staff. Twenty to 22 percent of all of their translation errors had potential health risks to the child. "The findings document that interpreter errors of potential clinical consequence are significantly more likely to occur when there is an 'ad hoc' or no interpreter, compared with a professional interpreter," lead researcher Dr. Glenn Flores, of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, said in an email. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: Measles, 2011

20 April - ...During 2011, a total of 222 measles cases (incidence rate: 0.7 per 1 million population) and 17 measles outbreaks (defined as three or more cases linked in time or place) were reported to CDC, compared with a median of 60 (range: 37–140) cases and four (range: 2–10) outbreaks reported annually during 2001–2010. This report updates an earlier report on measles in the United States during the first 5 months of 2011 (2). [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Test links strains of common parasite to severe illness in newborns

12 April - Scientists have identified which strains of the *Toxoplasma gondii* parasite, the cause of toxoplasmosis, are most strongly associated with premature births and severe birth defects in the United States. The researchers used a new blood test developed by scientists at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health, to pinpoint *T. gondii* strains that children acquire from their acutely infected mothers while in the womb. Pregnant women can become infected with *T. gondii* through contact with cat feces that contain infectious forms of the parasite or by eating undercooked meat. Women who become infected while pregnant may miscarry, give birth prematurely, or have babies with eye or brain damage. "If undetected or untreated, congenital toxoplasmosis can have serious consequences for a child's quality of life," noted NIAID director Anthony S. Fauci, MD. "The findings from this study support the value of

screening for toxoplasmosis to identify patients who could benefit from treatment." Currently available blood tests can determine whether a person has ever been infected with any strain of Toxoplasma parasite. The experimental test developed at NIAID improves upon the older tests because it can detect the presence of strain-specific antibodies that distinguish infecting strains from one another. [Infection Control Today](#)

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USPACOM

Australia: Silent epidemic calls out for cure

15 April - When healthcare worker Kerri-Anne Smith started feeling constantly exhausted, she put it down to being a single mother raising four children while working and studying. It was only during a course on blood-borne viruses that Ms Smith, from Toongabbie, west of Sydney, suspected she might have contracted an infection from a blood transfusion many years earlier. She saw her doctor and her suspicions were proved correct: she had contracted hepatitis C, a slow-acting virus that can cause severe liver damage. Two new treatments, approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration this year and described as a medical breakthrough will give hope to patients such as Ms Smith, who was devastated by her diagnosis in 1994, 10 years after her blood transfusion. "I was really shocked. I went to pieces, actually, and I felt I couldn't tell anyone," she said. The stigma of having a condition closely associated with intravenous drug use was almost as bad as the symptoms, Ms Smith said, which included extreme fatigue and aches and pains. [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)

Burmese powder sparks arsenic warning

15 April - A traditional Burmese medicine being sold in Sydney may contain dangerously high levels of arsenic, NSW Health has warned. Tests were carried out on the powder, which is said to aid digestion and boost strength in babies, after health experts in America found high levels of lead in some Burmese children. NSW Health and the NSW Food Authority discovered the powder, which is sold under a number of brand names, in Burmese grocery shops across Sydney and believe it may be widely used by the local Burmese community. The two NSW authorities carried out their own testing and found dangerously high levels of arsenic. "Further toxicology testing of the product is required, however in the meantime the NSW Food Authority is requesting Burmese grocery shops withdraw the product from sale," NSW Health's Dr Wayne Smith said in a statement. So far there have been no cases of illness identified in NSW as a result of the powder being ingested, NSW Health said. [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)

China: Toxic plants and endangered animal traces found in traditional Chinese medicines

13 April - DNA sequencing technology has revealed that some traditional Chinese medicines contain potentially toxic plant ingredients, allergens, and traces of endangered animals. Researchers at Murdoch University, Perth, Australia, discovered that some therapies contained plants of the genus Ephedra and Asarum, which contain chemicals that can be toxic if the wrong dosage is taken. They also found traces from animals that are classified as vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered, including the Asiatic black bear and Saiga antelope. The 15 samples they analysed had been seized by Australian border officials and comprised powders, tablets, capsules, flakes, and herbal teas. "TCMs [traditional Chinese medicines] have a long cultural history, but today consumers need to be aware of the legal and health safety issues before adopting them as a treatment option," said Dr Mike Bunce, research leader and Murdoch University Australian Research Council Future Fellow.

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Brazil health study shows growing weight problem

10 April - Almost half of Brazil's population is now overweight or obese, a government study has found. From 2006 to 2011, the proportion of Brazilians who were overweight went up from 42.7% to 48.5%. The health ministry described the trend as "worrying", but said it was not a direct result of rising prosperity. It highlighted major programmes to promote healthier eating and increased physical exercise, saying now was the time to confront the problem. The study was based on 54,000 telephone interviews in all the country's state capitals as well as Brasilia. It found that 52.6% of men and 44.7% of women were overweight. The proportion of people with obesity increased from 11% in 2006 to 15.8% in 2011. The health ministry said the consumption of high-fat food was a major cause, particularly among men. But Health Minister Alexandre Padilha rejected the idea that the increase in the proportion of overweight people was linked to Brazil's rising prosperity. "Eating habits have not changed much over the last six years, it wasn't in this period that people started consuming full-fat milk and fatty meat," he said. [BBC News](#)

Haiti health workers to give cholera vaccine

13 April - A manager for the Boston-based Partners in Health says the humanitarian group will launch a vaccination campaign for cholera in Haiti this weekend. Jonathan Lascher said Friday that health workers from the organization will distribute the Shanchol oral vaccine to about 50,000 people outside Saint Marc, a port city in western Haiti. The vaccination program is also being carried out by Gheskio Center, a Haitian group funded by the U.S. International Agency for International Development. Critics say the \$1.3 million being used

for the project would be better spent on developing Haiti's infrastructure. Haitian officials say cholera has killed more than 7,000 people and sickened 530,000 since it emerged after the 2010 earthquake. Scientific studies have blamed United Nations peacekeepers from Nepal for inadvertently bringing the disease. [Official Wire](#)

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