

20 January 2012

Army Public Health Weekly Update

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

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New Fact Sheet: Selecting the Appropriate Eye and Face Protection

For eye and face protection, properly fitted and well maintained personal protective equipment (PPE) that is appropriate for the tasks and hazards is very important.

The new ANSI Z87.1-2010, "American National Standard for Occupational and Educational Personal Eye and Face Protection Devices," is organized according to hazards. This was done to make selection of protective eyewear easier.



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U.S. MILITARY

Army reports mixed picture on soldier mental health _ suicides decline, but violence climbing

19 January - The number of suicides among soldiers has been leveling off but there's been a dramatic jump in domestic violence, sex crimes and other destructive behavior in a force that has been stressed by a decade of war, a new Army report said Thursday. "There's a lot of good news in this report, but there's also some bad news," Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Chiarelli told a Pentagon press conference. "We know we've got still a lot of work to do." Suicides among soldiers in the active duty, Guard and Reserve totaled 278 last year, down 9 percent from 2010. "I think we've at least arrested this problem and hopefully will start to push it down," Chiarelli said. But violent sex crimes and domestic violence have increased more than 30 percent since 2006 and child abuse by 43 percent. "After 10 years of war with an all-volunteer force, you're going to have problems that no one could have forecasted before this began," he said. Chiarelli was releasing a 200-page report for commanders, health care providers and other military leaders and meant to assess the physical and mental health condition of the force, disciplinary problems, and any gaps in how the Army deals with them. It follows up on a 2010 report that said the Army was failing some soldiers by missing signs of trouble or by looking the other way as commanders tried to keep up with tight deployment schedules needed to fight in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Chiarelli said commanders are now getting more troops into substance abuse programs; are kicking more out of the service for misconduct, and are barring others with alcohol and drug convictions from joining in the first place. [The Washington Post](#)

Former NFL players help Marines, sailors tackle stress

17 January - For an NFL player, a multi-million dollar contract may seem like it takes care of everything in comparison to the average Marine's daily lifestyle and pay check. What some may not realize, however, is that the lifestyle of a professional football player and a service member are not as different as they seem. "Being an [NFL player] is a very structured environment; kind of like the military," said Skip Kicks, a former running back for the Washington Redskins. "You never have to think about things like health insurance, in case you get hurt or sick. The transition [from the NFL] was a huge culture shock." Hicks, along with other former players from the NFL Players Association came to Camp Pendleton's South Mesa Club to discuss common reintegration challenges service members are faced with as well as the tools and resources available to address them, Jan. 15. The "Game Day" event was hosted by the Real Warriors Campaign, an initiative of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and traumatic brain injury, to help former NFL players join Marines, sailors and their families to watch football, socialize and discuss the importance of reaching out for support during life transitions. [Marines.mil](#)

IOM Partners in 'The Weight of the Nation'

As obesity continues to diminish the quality of people's lives and raise health care costs, the Institute of Medicine is joining HBO, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, and Kaiser Permanente in developing "The Weight of the Nation," a new national campaign tackling the obesity crisis.

More information



Armed Forces Public Health Conference

The US Army Public Health Command and the Navy & Marine Corps Public Health Center will host the Armed Forces Public Health Conference from **1-8 June 2012** at the Town & Country Resort in San Diego, CA.

Poster abstracts must be uploaded to the **AFPHC website** by **19 March 2012**.



Uterine fibroids, active component females, U.S. Armed Forces, 2001-2010

December 2011 - Uterine fibroids are benign tumors of the uterus that can cause significant morbidity in symptomatic women. From 2001 to 2010 there were 11,931 incident cases (incidence rate: 57.6 per 10,000 person-years) of uterine fibroids among active component females. The incidence rates were highest among black, non-Hispanic females and increased with advancing age. The observed decline in the number and percentage of inpatient hysterectomies for fibroids may reflect changes in overall treatment patterns during the period. Uterine fibroids commonly affect the health and military operational effectiveness of women on active duty; research to identify causes and preventive interventions is warranted. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Vets' PTSD, violence a growing problem

17 January - A man opens fire in a national park, killing a ranger who was attempting to stop him after he blew through a vehicle checkpoint. A second man is suspected in the stabbing deaths of four homeless men in Southern California. Both men, U.S. military veterans, served in Iraq -- and both, according to authorities and those who knew them, returned home changed men after their combat service. A coincidence -- two recent high-profile cases? Or a sign of an increase in hostile behavior as U.S. troops complete their withdrawal from Iraq, similar to that seen when U.S. troops returned home from the Vietnam War? "You're going to see this more and more over the next 10 years," said Shad Meshad, founder of the National Veterans Foundation, who has been working with veterans since 1970. "... There's a percentage that come back, depending on how much trauma and how much killing they're involved in, they're going to act out." [CNN](#)

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GLOBAL

Abortions are more common in countries that outlaw them

19 January - Abortion rates are higher in countries where the procedure is illegal and nearly half of all abortions worldwide are unsafe, with the vast majority in developing countries, a new study concludes. Experts couldn't say whether more liberal laws led to fewer procedures, but said good access to birth control in those countries resulted in fewer unwanted pregnancies. The global abortion rate remained virtually unchanged from 2003 to 2008, at about 28 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44, a total of about 43.8 million abortions, according to the study. The rate had previously been dropping since 1995. About 47,000 women died from unsafe abortions in 2008, and another 8.5 million women had serious medical complications. Almost all unsafe abortions were in developing countries,

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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where family planning and contraceptive programs have mostly leveled off. "An abortion is actually a very simple and safe procedure," said Gilda Sedgh, a senior researcher at the U.S.-based Guttmacher Institute, designated by the World Health Organization as an official Collaborating Center for Reproductive Health. "All of these deaths and complications are easily avoidable," said Sedgh, the study's lead author. [TIME](#)

Fake malaria drugs could 'put millions at risk'



16 January - Fake and poor quality anti-malarial drugs are threatening efforts to control the disease in Africa and could put millions of lives at risk, scientists say. The counterfeit medicines could harm patients and promote drug resistance among malaria parasites, warns the study, funded by the Wellcome Trust. Malaria is believed to kill about 800,000 people a year. Some of the fake tablets are said to have originated in China. [BBC News](#)

New drug combo for hepatitis C shows promise

19 January - A new cocktail of two investigational drugs appears to have successfully cleared the hepatitis C virus in people who don't respond to standard treatment. What's more, the approach seems to work without the need for injections with interferon alpha, an onerous medication that causes serious side effects in many patients. Scientists from seven U.S. medical centers and drug maker Bristol-Myers Squibb published the small study in the Jan. 19 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine that is being heralded as "landmark" research. "We saw a sustained virologic response -- the virus was undetectable in the patients -- during treatment and remained undetectable after the drugs were stopped," said study author Dr. Anna Lok, director of clinical hepatology at the University of Michigan Medical School in Ann Arbor. [USA Today](#)

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INFLUENZA

Are you at high risk for serious illness from flu?



17 January - ...Flu seasons are unpredictable. Each year in the United States, estimates of flu-associated deaths range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000. Anyone infected with the flu virus can potentially develop serious complications, like pneumonia. **Certain people are at high risk** for developing flu-related complications if they get sick with the flu. For those living with certain health conditions, like heart disease, diabetes, asthma or HIV/AIDS, the flu can be particularly dangerous. In addition, older people, especially those 65 or older, as well as

pregnant women, also are more susceptible to flu-related complications. Your best defense against influenza – and its possible complications – is to receive an annual vaccination. In fact, CDC recommends that everyone 6 months and older get an [annual flu vaccination](#). The flu vaccine is [safe](#) and can't cause the flu. [CDC](#)

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

18 January 2012:

- Influenza-like illness (ILI) incidence rates continued to decrease within the MHS and influenza activity remains low across all overseas DoD laboratory surveillance networks.
- The influenza vaccination rate for the DoD (Active Duty component only) is 94%.
[AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 1 (1-7 January 2012), influenza activity increased in the United States, but remains relatively low. [FluView](#)

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

During week 1 (2-8 January 2012), low influenza activity was notified by all 26 of the 27 countries reporting (Malta reported medium activity) with five countries (Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden) now indicating local or regional spread. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 14 January 2012:

Adenovirus

- Vaccination against types 4 and 7 adenovirus was instituted at all basic training centers by mid-November 2011 (week 45).
- Type 4 adenovirus remains the predominant adenoviral serotype at all training centers.
- Type 3 adenovirus is present at Ft. Jackson.
- Type 14 adenovirus is present at MCRD Parris Island.

FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were moderately elevated at CGTC Cape May. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

7 January – The 2011-2012 data continue to show a lower burden of respiratory disease than in 2010-2011. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Avian influenza situation in Cambodia, WHO

16 January - The Ministry of Health (MoH) of the Kingdom of Cambodia has announced a confirmed case of human infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) virus. The case was a 2 year-old male from Banteay Meanchey Province. He developed symptoms on 3 January 2012 and was admitted to hospital on 9 January 2012. He is on Tamiflu and has been ventilated. There have been reports that the boy was exposed to sick poultry in his village. He is the 19th person in Cambodia to become infected with the H5N1 virus; to date, 16 of these cases have died from complications of the disease. The National and local Rapid Response Teams (RRT) are conducting outbreak investigation and response following the national protocol. Hospital staff who had contact with the case have been offered oseltamivir. To date, none of the human contacts have tested positive for A (H5N1). [WHO](#)

The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO)–pandemic influenza connection: coincident or causal?

17 January (published online before print) - We find that the four most recent human influenza pandemics (1918, 1957, 1968, and 2009), all of which were first identified in boreal spring or summer, were preceded by La Niña conditions in the equatorial Pacific. Changes in the phase of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation have been shown to alter the migration, stopover time, fitness, and interspecies mixing of migratory birds, and consequently, likely affect their mixing with domestic animals. We hypothesize that La Niña conditions bring divergent influenza subtypes together in some parts of the world and favor the reassortment of influenza through simultaneous multiple infection of individual hosts and the generation of novel pandemic strains. We propose approaches to test this hypothesis using influenza population genetics, virus prevalence in various host species, and avian migration patterns. [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#)

WHO enters weaponized H5N1 fight

18 January - The World Health Organization recently announced its intention to hold an international forum to discuss whether scientific research should be published if some nations fear doing so could help terrorists acquire biological weapons. The meeting is considered to be in direct response to recent requests by a U.S. government biodefense panel that two journals not publish portions of independent studies that involved the creation of a strain of H5N1 bird flu that is easily transmissible to humans, according to NTI.org. WHO Assistant Director General Keiji Fukuda said that the goal of the forum would

be to bring together the views of science and technology, as well as those of politics and public health. Reaction to the panel's requests has been mixed within the scientific community. Neither study has been published so far. Some scientists have argued that a determined individual would be able to duplicate the studies regardless of whether they appeared in the journals, while legitimate public-interest in the field would be discouraged. Other experts have supported the decision based on the interests of national security.

[BioPrepWatch](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Antibiotics breed drug resistance in pigs



17 January - Pigs given low doses of antibiotics had more *E. coli* in their guts, and that bacteria showed an increased resistance to antibiotics, according to new research. The study confirms the routine practice of feeding antibiotics to food animals increases drug resistance in the bacteria living in those animals. The practice is common at large livestock operations worldwide. But experts say it is helping spawn new types of antibiotic-resistant disease organisms, fueling a global public health crisis. [VOA News](#)

Europe, Belgium: Schmallenberg virus

17 January - Since the 1st detection (23 Dec 2011), an increasing number of farms with abortions, stillbirth, and congenital malformations have been observed in ruminants in Belgium. These included 13 cattle farms (all found negative), 34 sheep farms (of which 23 tested positive) and 2 negative goat farms. So far, suspect samples from 94 lambs, 17 calves and 5 newborn goats have been tested, among which 49 lambs proved positive. At the farm level, the average percentage of ewes giving birth to SBV-positive lambs is around 32 per cent, with even 3 of the 4 ewes in one outbreak. [ProMED-mail](#)

Processed meat 'linked to pancreatic cancer'

12 January - A link between eating processed meat, such as bacon or sausages, and pancreatic cancer has been suggested by researchers in Sweden. They said eating an extra 50g of processed meat, approximately one sausage, every day would increase a person's risk by 19%. But the chance of developing the rare cancer remains low. The World Cancer Research Fund suggested the link may be down to obesity. Eating red and processed meat has already been linked to bowel cancer. As a result the UK government recommended in 2011 that people eat no more than 70g a day. Prof Susanna Larsson, who conducted the study at the Karolinska Institute, told the BBC that links to other cancers were "quite controversial". She added: "It is known that eating meat increases the risk of colorectal

cancer, it's not so much known about other cancers." The study, published in the British Journal of Cancer, analysed data from 11 trials and 6,643 patients with pancreatic cancer.

[BBC News](#)

U.S.: More than 5 million bats dead from white-nose syndrome



18 January – An animal apocalypse is happening right beneath our noses in the Northeast. [Since 2006](#), bats throughout New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, New Jersey, Indiana and other states have been infected with a deadly white-nose fungus that has decimated animal populations. But because it is hard to track bat numbers—and because the disease causes afflicted bats to act strangely, often flying far from their nests where they may never be found—it's been difficult to pin down just how severe the disease has become. [TIME](#)

U.S.: The failure of the FDA - why we're still using antibiotics on livestock

17 January - Over the past several weeks, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been in the news for its stance on antibiotic use in farm animals. Yet instead of making good on its 1977 promise to limit these drugs in livestock, the agency is moving in the opposite direction. The latest developments reveal that the FDA is actively trying to avoid protecting Americans from a known health hazard that the agency itself acknowledges. Anyone who has ever watched a child recover from strep throat or a parent rebound from pneumonia knows the healing power of antibiotics. Yet over the last few decades, we have been squandering the power of these medicines. Roughly 70 percent of all antibiotics used in the United States are given to healthy farm animals to foster rapid growth and make up for unhygienic living conditions. Many bacteria that live on animals adapt and transfer to humans, spreading superbugs that are often resistant to treatment. For more than 35 years, the FDA has recognized that giving antibiotics to farm animals poses a risk to human health, yet the agency has done almost nothing to stop it. Indeed, it has mastered the art of making inaction look like action. Last May, NRDC and our partners sued the FDA to prompt it to take action. Instead, the agency retrenched. [The Atlantic](#)

Zimbabwe: Anthrax outbreak hits national park

10 January - More than 165 animals are believed to have recently died in an ongoing anthrax outbreak in a Zimbabwe national park. Caroline Washaya-Moyo, a public relations manager for the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, said that dozens of elephants, buffaloes and hippos have died in the Mana Pools National Park, according to AllAfrica.com. "Our Chinhoyi office has since confirmed the anthrax outbreak following the death of the animals in Mana Pools," Washaya-Moyo said, AllAfrica.com reports. "The Authority engaged the Vet Offices who later collected samples from hippos for lab testing. The lab test confirmed that 88 hippopotamus died of anthrax." Washaya-Moyo said that the situation was now under control, but also expressed concern that the outbreak might have

spread to other areas of the protected reserve, which lies around the lower Zambezi River, according to DailyMail.co.uk. Dr. Chris Foggin, a veterinary officer in the Department of Veterinary Services (Wildlife), confirmed the outbreak and detailed some of the measures that are being taken. [BioPrepWatch](#)

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WELLNESS

Conquering the chilly workouts of winter



16 January - The short days, the weak sun, and the warm beds of winter can wreak havoc on your fitness routine. As the outside temperature plummets, so too can the will to brave the elements for outdoor exercise. Experts say as long as you layer up, drink up and tune into how cold is just too cold it shouldn't impact your fitness. "Come with a different game plan for the winter," advises Jessica Matthews, an exercise physiologist with the American Council on Exercise (ACE). "Motivation tends to wane a bit, so explore different activities, including things you can do in your own home. Have a flexible approach to your fitness routine as the weather changes." If you're keen to exercise outside in all seasons, says Matthews, learn to dress for workout success.

[Reuters](#)

Dieting for dollars

18 January - According to a 2008 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, those who had a financial incentive to lose weight were almost five times more likely to reach their target than dieters who had no money at stake. Sam Espinosa, StickK's director of marketing, says that 70 percent of those who have put money on the line through StickK reached their intended goal. The financial incentive, he explains, puts the goal in perspective. "You might want to stop and get a \$5 cheeseburger, but if you know that it may make you gain weight and lose \$50 at the weigh-in the next day, it becomes a \$55 cheeseburger," he says. "Would you really eat a \$55 cheeseburger?" That logic worked for Jacob Kosoff, an assistant vice president in the risk management department at PNC Bank, who set a goal of losing 20 pounds in 40 weeks through StickK last year. He says that he avoided donating to his anti-charity, a pro-life organization, by studying numbers. [The](#)

[Inquirer](#)

Workouts have their limits, recognized or not



16 January - ...While public health officials bemoan the tendency of most people to do little exercise, if any, physiologists are fretting over the opposite trend: an increasing focus on extreme exercise among some recreational athletes. Weight lifting with no rest

between sets and with no days off. Endurance training with no easy days or days off. Competitions that encourage excess...And there is no shortage of commercial fitness programs promising to push people beyond their limits. "People think a good workout is, 'I am in a pile of sweat and puking,'" said William Kraemer, a professor of kinesiology at the University of Connecticut. But if that happens, he said, "it means you went much too quickly, and your body just can't meet its demands." [New York Times](#)

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USAFRICOM

Africa: Yaws treatment study prompts WHO review

11 January - Findings that a one-time oral treatment to cure yaws, a neglected tropical disease, is as effective as the currently recommended penicillin injection have prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) to convene a meeting on how the disease may be wiped out. "We may be closer now than we have been in decades," Kingsley Asiedu, a yaws expert with WHO's Department of Neglected Tropical Disease Control, told IRIN, calling the study on the bacterial skin disease, which leads to chronic disfigurement and disability in 10 percent of untreated cases, the most significant in half a century. [All Africa](#)

Niger: More than five million going hungry in Niger

18 January - More than five million people are going hungry in Niger, the impoverished west African country's premier said Wednesday. A survey in December showed that "34.9 percent of Niger households, or over 5.456 million people, are in a situation of food and nutritional insecurity," Brigi Rafini told national radio. Among them "1.324 million people are affected by severe food insecurity," said the prime minister. "We must act right now," stressed Rafini during a visit to Tillaberi, a western Niger region that has been hard hit by the food crisis. Niger is short of 519,639 tonnes of cereals -- or 14 percent of what it needs to feed 15 million people in 2012, said the agriculture ministry. Poor harvests, drought and cricket attacks have been blamed. European humanitarian aid commissioner Kristalina Georgieva, who is visiting Niger, warned of the situation plaguing the country and the Sahel region. Some 1.7 million children are in a "vulnerable situation," she said. [All Africa](#)

Somali famine 'will kill tens of thousands'



15 January - The UN in Somalia says tens of thousands of people will have died of starvation by the time the famine in the Horn of Africa ends. The food crisis was declared in Somalia six months ago and levels of need are expected to remain high until July or August. UN aid chief in Somalia,

Mark Bowden, told the BBC malnutrition rates there were the highest in the world. He said a quarter of a million Somalis were still suffering from the famine. "We know that tens of

thousands of people will have died over the last year," Mr Bowden, said, describing the rates of malnutrition as "amazingly high". "Children will have suffered the most, malnutrition rates in Somalia were the highest in the world, and I think the highest recorded... up to 50% of the child population suffered from severe or acute malnutrition." Mr Bowden said malnutrition rates have begun to drop but the crisis was likely to continue for the next six or seven months. "Fortunately they've started to come down across the board, but that does mean that there will have been a very high mortality," he said. [BBC News](#)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: After years of decline, polio cases triple in a year

17 January - It has often been called the [polio](#) cease-fire. In a country where insurgents have for years attacked and killed people working for the government or the international community, a small army of vaccination teams connected to both has, year after year, fanned out through some of Afghanistan's most dangerous areas, quietly and mostly safely. Appointed by the government, paid for by international agencies and given free passage by the Taliban in one of the last three countries in the world where polio is endemic, the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative's](#) 65,000 volunteers and workers had seemed to have nearly wiped out the disease — until recently. After years of steady decline, only 25 polio cases were reported in the country in 2010, prompting one international health care official to declare that "the Afghans are heroes." Then last year, the number tripled to 76, the Afghan Ministry of Public Health said. While the total remains small, polio is highly contagious, and health experts say that each detected case is an indicator of hundreds of "silent" ones, mainly children with mild infections who become carriers. [New York Times](#)

Afghanistan: Avalanches cut off parts of drought-hit northeast



17 January - Avalanches in northeastern Afghanistan have cut off tens - if not hundreds - of thousands of people already at risk of hunger due to drought, opening the door to a potential humanitarian crisis if aid cannot reach them, says a provincial official. "If the snow continues to keep the roads to rural and remote districts closed and we don't get any assistance, we would face a severe humanitarian crisis," Abdul Maroof Rasekh, a government spokesperson from mountainous Badakhshan Province, told IRIN. The snow has cut off 14 of the province's 28 districts from the provincial capital Faizabad, preventing people from accessing markets to get food for themselves and their cattle, he said. At least 70 families are trapped in their homes in Eshkashim District, where rescue teams are trying to help them, Rasekh added. Altogether, hundreds of families are trapped in different districts, he said. [IRIN](#)

Yemen: Coping with unrest - aid workers turn to the community

11 January - Unrest in Yemen for almost a year has affected the government's capacity to function, forcing aid agencies to work more closely with, and through, community-level partners and volunteers, says a senior aid worker with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). "The government commitment at the central level [line ministries] to allocate resources and implement and monitor routine activities is inadequate; the capacity of decentralized government institutions to fulfill their obligations is very weak," said Geert Cappelaere, a UNICEF representative in Yemen. Across the Middle East, aid workers have complained of the challenges of effectively designing and executing programmes while political instability surrounds their national counterparts, due to mass anti-government protests which have swept the region since the beginning of last year. In Egypt, ministers change every few weeks and in Libya, the interim government has been hesitant to take action on certain issues, preferring to leave long-term decisions to an elected government. [IRIN](#)

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USEUCOM

European Union: Silicone implants

17 January - In March 2010, Poly Implant Prothèse (PIP) silicone implants were withdrawn from the European Union (EU) market following an observed increase in implant ruptures, and confirmation of the use of substandard silicone in the manufacture of the implants by French regulator AFSSAPS (Agence Française de Sécurité Sanitaire des Produits de Santé). Regulatory authorities in other jurisdictions were also notified, leading to product withdrawal from a number of non-EU countries. PIP implants have also been sold under the trade name of M-Implants and in April 2010 the Dutch Health Care Inspectorate prohibited all trade and usage of both products in the Netherlands. On 23 December 2011, the French authorities published a recommendation that French residents with PIP breast implants should consider having these removed as a preventive measure. Following this, other national health authorities have issued their own recommendations that have ranged from preventive removal of PIP silicone breast implants, to close monitoring and follow up of persons with these implants. Adverse events of approved breast implants include implant rupture and leakage. While the rupture rate of PIP prostheses was observed to be higher than expected in France, rates reported by other national authorities vary. [WHO](#)

London 2012: Mass gathering risks disease spreading

15 January - Mass gatherings, such as the London 2012 Olympics, can be a hotbed of diseases from across the world, public health experts have warned. They say it can have consequences for the host nation and for people when they return to their own countries. There are also important issues to consider in handling large numbers of people, they say. A

series of reports, in The Lancet Infectious Disease journal, has been highlighting the risks. The theory is that so many people, packed closely together, increases the risk of diseases spreading. Prof Ibrahim Abubakar, from the University of East Anglia, writes that there are risks from diseases already in the host country and from the home countries of the visitors. He highlighted religious or music festivals and major sporting events as mass gatherings which could have a public health risk, such as an influenza outbreak during World Youth Day in 2008 in Australia. One report said increased air travel and the spread of diseases could have "potentially serious implications to health, security, and economic activity worldwide". [BBC News](#)

Ukraine declares measles outbreak, 883 people infected

16 January - The Ukrainian Health Ministry on Monday declared an outbreak of measles, with 883 cases of the infectious disease so far reported. "It is still too early to talk about the epidemic, but we have recorded outbreaks of measles in some regions of Ukraine," said Sergey Platov, chief expert of the ministry's Public Health and Epidemiological Welfare Department. Platov told a press conference here alerts had been issued in the country's western and central regions and in Kiev, Ukraine's capital. [Xinhua](#)

United Kingdom: Fruit and vegetables 'lacking' in diets



14 January - Britons are not eating enough fruit and vegetables despite nutritional advice being widely available, a study suggests. A review of eating habits in 19 EU countries put the UK in 14th place. The analysis was carried out by the European Food Information Council (EUFIC). It says that on average, Britons eat 258g (9.1oz) of fruit and vegetables a day, compared with a European average of 386g (13.6oz). The UK average also falls short of the 400g (14.1oz) minimum consumption recommended by the World Health Organisation. Only four European countries met this target: Poland (577g), Italy (452g), Germany (442g) and Austria (413g). The EUFIC report said: "A majority of Europeans do not reach WHO recommendations on vegetables and fruit consumption." Consumption varies, with higher intakes in southern compared to the northern regions." The EUFIC said that high intakes of fruit and vegetables were associated with a lower risk of chronic diseases, particularly cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

Mexico food aid sent to crisis-hit Tarahumara Indians

17 January - Emergency aid is being sent to northern Mexico where indigenous communities are suffering severe food shortages. The indigenous Tarahumara, famed for their long-distance running ability, have been hit by a prolonged drought and now freezing

temperatures. Mexicans began donating supplies at the weekend amid reports, later denied, of suicides among the Tarahumara. Officials say they are stepping up their aid efforts given the seriousness of the situation. The plight of the Tarahumara, who call themselves the raramuris, came to national notice at the weekend. A video posted on social media showed a local official saying 50 Tarahumara men and women had committed suicide after their crops failed. The official from Carichi, a town in the Tarahumara Mountains in Chihuahua state, later said he did not have first-hand information about this. [BBC News](#)

U.S.: Drop in melanoma deaths limited to educated whites, study

16 January - Recent declines in death rates due to the skin cancer melanoma among white Americans appear to be limited to those with higher levels of education, researchers have found. The findings reveal a widening education-related disparity in melanoma death rates and highlight the need for early-detection strategies to effectively target high-risk, low-educated whites, the American Cancer Society researchers said. The investigators noted that overall melanoma death rates among white men and women aged 25 to 64 in the United States have been declining since the early 1990s, but it hasn't been known if death rates among whites might vary depending on a person's socioeconomic status, a term used to describe their levels of income and education. [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: Injuries to pedestrians wearing headphones tripled since 2004

17 January - Folks who walk to work or school while listening to music via headphones may want to unplug, with a new U.S. study finding injuries to this group of people tripling since 2004. The reason, University of Maryland researchers say, is that use of iPods and other MP3 players makes people much less aware of their environment, including oncoming traffic. "MP3 usage is common in young adults and teenagers and we found that people wearing headphones are at risk of getting hit and having injury or death," said lead researcher Dr. Richard Lichenstein, an associate professor of pediatrics in Pediatric Emergency Medicine Research at the University of Maryland Children's Hospital. "These are pedestrians getting hit by cars, trains, trucks, vans, buses and things like that," he said. "About 70 percent of the injuries were fatal and more than 50 percent of the victims were hit by trains." [Medline Plus](#)

U.S.: Prepregnancy contraceptive use among teens with unintended pregnancies resulting in live births — PRAMS, 2004–2008

20 January - To learn why teens wishing to avoid pregnancy become pregnant, CDC analyzed data from the 2004–2008 Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS). This report describes estimated rates of self-reported prepregnancy contraceptive use among white, black, and Hispanic teen females aged 15–19 years with unintended pregnancies resulting in live births. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Rate of obesity in youth and adults may be leveling off, study finds

17 January - The growth in the nation's obesity rate appears to be slowing and in some groups leveling off, according to new research. Yet, the rate is still more than double the government's goal for 2010. "This seems to be happening all over the world," researcher Katherine Flegal, PhD, a senior research scientist at the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, says of the stabilization of the obesity rate among adults. Flegal and her colleagues published a report on adult obesity trends and a paper on obesity trends in children and teens in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The proportion of obese U.S. adults changed little in the 1960s and 1970s, but grew nearly eight percentage points between the 1976-1980 and 1988-1994 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, or NHANES. [WebMD](#)

U.S. wants effective Alzheimer's treatment by 2025

17 January - Effective treatments for Alzheimer's by 2025? That's the target the government is eyeing as it develops a national strategy to tackle what could become the defining disease of a rapidly aging population. It's an ambitious goal — and on Tuesday, advisers to the government stressed that millions of families need better help now to care for their loved ones. "What's really important here is a comprehensive plan that deals with the needs of people who already have the disease," said Alzheimer's Association president Harry Johns, one of the advisers. Already families approach the advisory committee "reminding us of the enormity of our task," said Dr. Ron Petersen, an Alzheimer's specialist at the Mayo Clinic who chairs the panel. The Obama administration is developing the first National Alzheimer's Plan to address the medical and social problems of dementia — not just better treatments but better day-to-day care for dementia patients and their overwhelmed caregivers, too. [Associated Press](#)

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India doctor's claim of "totally" drug resistant TB disputed

17 January - A tuberculosis strain among a dozen patients in India's financial hub and most populous city has been disputedly declared as "totally drug resistant" by a doctor who said on Tuesday the cases highlight the need for more research. Zarir Udawadia, a tuberculosis (TB) doctor at the Hinduja National Hospital in Mumbai, said compared to classifications used by the government and the World Health Organization (WHO) to describe malicious strains - multi-drug resistant (MDR) and extensively drug-resistant (XDR) TB - the patients diagnosed at his hospital were different. "It is an untreatable form of TB in the sense that

there are no available first- and second-line drugs for it in the world," he said in a telephone interview. But India's government said on Tuesday the laboratory at Hinduja hospital was not accredited for some of the tests that Udhwadia's team carried out and questioned the term "totally drug resistant TB." "The term ... is neither recognized by the WHO nor by the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme," it said in a statement. Such cases can be managed by national XDR-TB treatment guidelines, according to the WHO. [Reuters](#)

Vietnam: Meningitis, meningococcal

17 January - Doctors in Ho Chi Minh City [HCMC] have warned of the outbreak of a fatal type of encephalitis [sic] that has affected 5 co-workers. The disease was caused by *Neisseria*, a large genus of commensal bacteria that colonize in the mucosal surfaces of many animals, and quickly kill the infected body. HCMC Tropical Diseases Hospital is treating a 29 year old patient with the disease. He was admitted with red spots from underskin bleeding and fever, news website VnExpress reported. Nguyen Van Vinh Chau, director of the hospital, said a woman who is a co-worker of the man at a company in District 7 was also received at the hospital around 3 weeks ago with the disease. Doctors at the hospital suspected the coincidence and contacted the district health authorities, who then confirmed that 3 other workers from the company had fallen sick with similar symptoms. Authorities are taking steps to quarantine the outbreak. Doctors said the condition spreads through the respiratory tract and will lead to meningitis and blood infection. [ProMED-mail](#)

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Brazil: Beer 'must be sold' at Brazil World Cup, says Fifa

19 January - Beer must be sold at all venues hosting matches in the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, football's world governing body, Fifa, has insisted. Fifa General Secretary Jerome Valcke said the right to sell beer must be enshrined in a World Cup law the Brazilian Congress is considering. Alcoholic drinks are currently banned at Brazilian stadiums and the country's health minister has urged Congress to maintain the ban in the new law. Brewer Budweiser is a big Fifa sponsor. Mr Valcke is visiting Brazil to press for progress on the much-delayed World Cup law. Fifa has become frustrated because voting on the legislation has been held up in Congress by the dispute over alcohol sales. [BBC News](#)

Chile: Alarming organ donor rate prompts government proposal

17 January - A bill discussed in Congress on Tuesday addressed lack of successful organ transplants. Legislation was proposed and discussed in the Senate on Tuesday looking to solve issues arising from lack of organ donors in Chile. The topic came to a head following

recent findings that over two million Chileans are not willing to be organ donors. Enacted in January 2010, the Universal Law of Organ Donation stipulates that all Chilean citizens would be considered organ donors unless specified otherwise in their will. The pending legislation seeks to change the process of becoming a non-donor and looks to implement a "clean slate," rendering all prior indications of non-donorship ineffective. [The Santiago Times](#)

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The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* is published by the Health Information Operations Program, Deputy Chief of Staff for Communication, United States Army Public Health Command.

