

3 February 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 MRSA Products Available

Products on the causes, symptoms and prevention of community-associated methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureas* are now available on the **Health Information Products e-Catalog.**



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IOM Perspectives

The IOM has launched a new **Perspectives** section on iom.edu. This new product allows experts to offer their observations and opinions on innovations and challenges in health and health care. Perspectives are not reports of the IOM or the National Research Council, and therefore are not subjected to their review processes.

You can already find this paper by Harvey Fineberg on the website:

Deadly Sins and Living Virtues of Public Health

U.S. MILITARY

DoD mulls TRICARE changes for future retirees

30 January - The Pentagon could require future working-age retirees to take employer-provided health care as a way to tackle the Defense Department's cost growth, one top official said Monday. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy said DoD won't try to change the system for current retirees or serving troops, but she said recasting the benefits for future generations of retirees must be on the table if the department is to get control of its spending. Military.com

Military health in a period of transformation say Woodson, Rooney, Horoho

31 January - Healthcare to health was the topic of discussion at the opening plenary session of the 2012 Military Health System Conference this morning at the Gaylord National Hotel and Convention Center at National Harbor, Md. An audience of some 3000 military medical professionals from across the Department of Defense (DoD) joined three top defense officers in the conversation about transitioning the military medical community towards a focus on health and readiness in addition to treatment of illness and injury. Dr. Jonathan Woodson, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, opened the plenary with his presentation of "Healthcare to Health; A Model for the Nation." He focused on the transformation the armed services face and the challenges a smaller, leaner force will pose for the military medical community. MHS

Soldier deaths during training prompt military probe into supplement use



2 February - The deaths of two U.S. soldiers who collapsed during physical training in the last few months have prompted a military investigation of a popular body-building supplement that was found in their systems. The dietary supplement Dimethylamylamine, or DMAA, has been banned for sale at stores and commissaries in military bases across the country pending the results of the probe. DMAA is derived from geranium oil and is classified by the Food and Drug Administration as a food additive. The supplement acts as a stimulant, giving users that extra boost of energy during a workout or training. Many soldiers use it to meet the strong physical demands of their training and service. Fox News

Update: Malaria, U.S. Armed Forces, 2011

January 2012 - U.S. service members are at risk of malaria when they are assigned to endemic areas (e.g., Korea), participate in operations in endemic areas (e.g., Afghanistan, Africa) and visit malarious areas during personal travel. In 2011, 124 service members were

MILVAX: Anthrax Vaccine Expiration

All units with anthrax vaccine lots **FAV285** and **FAV286**, please be reminded that the lots have expired. Activities that were not able to complete supply of vaccine prior to expiration date should follow the destruction procedures on the **USAMMA Distribution Operations Center website**.



reported with malaria. Nearly three-fourths of cases were presumably acquired in Afghanistan (n=91) and one-fifth were considered acquired in Africa (n=24). One-quarter of cases were caused by *P. vivax* and one-fifth by *P. falciparum* (including 6 Afghanistan-acquired infections); most cases were reported as "unspecified" malaria. Malaria was diagnosed/reported from 51 different medical facilities in the United States, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Iraq, Germany and Korea. Providers of care to military members should be knowledgeable regarding and vigilant for clinical presentations of malaria outside of endemic areas. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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GLOBAL

Bacterial disguise evades vaccine



29 January - Some bacteria can evade efforts to vaccinate against them by wearing a new disguise, researchers say. A study, published in *Nature Genetics*, tracked how pneumococcus bacteria responded to the introduction of a vaccine in the US in 2000. Doctors said the evasion would make some vaccines less successful in the long term. An updated pneumococcus vaccine is already in use. Vaccines train the immune system to attack something unique to an infection. In the case of tetanus, it results in the body making antibodies which target the toxin produced. [BBC News](#)

Cancer link to processed meat, claim

31 January - Having too much processed meat, such as sausages and bacon, in the diet may increase the risk of cancer of the pancreas, according to research published today. Although processed meat increases the risk of disease by nearly a fifth - but fewer than one in 50 people will contract the disease. It compares with smoking, which increases the risk of developing the disease by 74 per cent. The research published today in the *British Journal of Cancer* claims that for every 50 grams of processed meat eaten every day, which equates to a sausage or two rashers of bacon, there was a 19 per cent rise in the risk of pancreatic cancer compared with those who ate no meat. [Englemed](#)

Joint effort announced against tropical diseases

30 January - Thirteen drug companies, the governments of the United States, Britain and the United Arab Emirates, the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Lions Club and other smaller charitable organizations on Monday announced a joint effort to tackle 10 neglected tropical diseases in a coordinated fashion. The diseases, with multisyllabic names like lymphatic filariasis, visceral leishmaniasis and dracunculiasis, are almost never found in rich countries... Although the diseases have different causes (like

MILVAX: Training Opportunities

Immunization Basic Course

Ford Island, HI: 7 February

Bangor, ME: 2 March

Salt Lake City, UT:
12 March

Cape May, NJ: 22 March

Camp Lejeune, NC: 2 April

Immunization Leaders Course

Ford Island, HI:
8-10 February

Salt Lake City, UT:
13-15 March

Camp Lejeune, NC:
3-5 April



worms, flukes or parasites) and are spread by different vectors (like sandflies, tsetse flies or drinking water), some drugs that work against one will work against others... Some of these drugs lack markets in rich countries and so must be subsidized — although there are, for example, large sales of deworming drugs for pets and farm animals. [The New York Times](#)

Latrines cut parasite infections in half

27 January - A new study shows that infection with hookworm, ringworm, and similar parasites can be dramatically reduced with a sanitation program. The researchers found even installing simple latrines can cut infection rates in half. Parasitic worms thrive in tropical and subtropical climates - areas that are home to some of the world's poorest communities... The World Health Organization has endorsed a program of preventive medication. The pills, given once or twice a year, are very effective. But researcher Jürg Utzinger, of Switzerland's Tropical and Public Health Institute, says that's not enough. "Problem with this strategy is of course, after successful de-worming, the next day you can become re-infected," he said. Removing the source of the infection can have an immediate and more lasting impact. Utzinger and his colleagues analyzed three dozen published studies and reported their findings in [PLoS Medicine](#). [Voice of America](#)

Skin transformed into brain cells

30 January - Skin cells have been converted directly into cells which develop into the main components of the brain, by researchers studying mice in California. The experiment, reported in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, skipped the middle "stem cell" stage in the process. The researchers said they were "thrilled" at the potential medical uses. Far more tests are needed before the technique could be used on human skin. [BBC News](#)

Study looks at possible HIV drugs-birth defect link



30 January - Pregnant women with HIV can prevent passing the AIDS-causing virus to their babies by taking antiretroviral drugs, but there remains a possibility that some of these medications might cause birth defects, such as cleft lip and palate, according to a new study. Antiretroviral drugs have been found to reduce the risk of mothers passing HIV on to their children from between 15 and 25 percent to less than 1 percent. These drugs, however, are still under investigation and not considered safe during pregnancy, the study authors noted. [Medline Plus](#)

The perpetual challenge of infectious diseases



Interactive Timeline

2 February - Infections have distinct characteristics that, when considered together, set them apart from other diseases. Paramount among these characteristics is their unpredictability and their potential for explosive global effect, as exemplified by the bubonic-pneumonic plague pandemic in the 14th century,^{1,12} the 1918 influenza pandemic,^{13,14} and the current pandemic of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and the acquired

Armed Forces Public Health Conference

The Armed Forces Public Health Conference for 2012 has been postponed. All AFPHC registrants who reserved a hotel room (with their own travel credit card) in anticipation of the 2012 AFPHC should cancel their hotel room to ensure they are not charged a fee for non-cancellation.

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.

immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS),¹⁵ among others. Infectious diseases are usually acute and unambiguous in their nature. The onset of an infectious illness, unlike the onset of many other types of disease, in an otherwise healthy host can be abrupt and unmistakable. Moreover, in the absence of therapy, acute infectious diseases often pose an all-or-nothing situation, with the host either quickly dying or recovering spontaneously, and usually relatively promptly, often with lifelong immunity to the specific infecting pathogen. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

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INFLUENZA

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

1 February 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 except in South America.
- The influenza vaccination rate for the DoD (Active Duty component only) is 95%.

[AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 3 (15-21 January 2012), influenza activity in the United States remained relatively low. [FluView](#)

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

During week 3 (16-22 January 2012), low influenza activity was notified by 23 of the 27 countries reporting while Bulgaria, Iceland, Italy and Spain reported medium activity. Eight countries reported local or regional spread and nine countries reported increasing clinical activity trends relative to the previous week. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 28 January 2012:

Clusters of H1N1v influenza cases have been identified at U.S. clinics near the Mexican border in mid-January 2012.

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Adenovirus

- Vaccination against types 4 and 7 adenovirus was instituted at all basic training centers by mid-November 2011 (week 45).
- The proportion of FRI cases positive for adenovirus has decreased since vaccine was reintroduced.
- 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 at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

28 January – Influenza activity appears to be increasing, although overall activity this season is lower than the 2010-2011 season. Of 224 specimens submitted for week four of 2012, 8% were positive for influenza A. Sixty-six influenza cases have been reported in DRSI through week four of the 2011-2012 season. Eleven cases of influenza were hospitalized; there have been no fatalities. ILI activity within ESSENCE indicates both AD and beneficiary visits remain lower this year than last year. Increases in the proportion of influenza positive tests have been noted in DRSi and Army MEDCEN testing, including a 5% increase in Influenza A percent positives for week four. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Egypt: Anti-bird flu campaign planned



26 January - A nationwide campaign to stop the spread of H5N1 avian influenza in Egypt is to be launched by the government in a few weeks, say officials, but details are still sketchy. The new plan, which will involve coordination between the Health Ministry, the Agriculture Ministry and poultry producers, requires close monitoring and various bio-safety measures. "These measures are just a small part of a more general plan to curb the spread of the virus in our country," Saber Abdel Aziz, a senior official from the state-run General Organization for Veterinary Services, told IRIN. [IRIN](#)

Mexico: Influenza

30 January - An ongoing swine flu [influenza A/H1N1pdm09 virus infection] outbreak in Mexico has left at least 29 people dead and nearly 1500 others infected, health officials confirmed on Saturday [29 Jan 2012]. Thousands more are also ill as the country faces several types of influenza this season [2011-2012]. Since the start of the ongoing winter season [2011-2012], at least 7069 people have reported suffering from symptoms similar to

those of swine flu [influenza A/H1N1pdm09 virus infection]. Lab tests are still underway and have so far confirmed 1456 cases of the disease [swine flu], which is officially known as A/H1N1pdm09 virus infection. According to Mexico's Health Ministry (SSA), at least 29 people have died of swine flu so far this season. While no health emergency has been declared, officials expect the death toll will rise in the coming weeks as Mexico also faces A/H3N2 and B type influenza [virus infection]. [ProMED-mail](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

EU experts to assess health risk of new animal disease

31 January - The European Union's food safety watchdog said on Tuesday it has been asked to assess the health risks posed by a new virus that has infected animals in Britain, [France](#), Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. The Schmallenberg virus, named after the German town where it was first discovered in November, has infected cattle, sheep, and goats, causing birth defects in offspring including deformation of the head, neck and limbs. "The European Commission has requested urgent scientific and technical assistance for possible risks resulting from the Schmallenberg virus," the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

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WELLNESS

Blood pressure check in both arms could catch silent disease

30 January - Measuring blood pressure in both the right and left arm may be an effective way of catching a silent but serious disease of the blood vessels, a new review says. The findings showed that a difference in systolic blood pressure between the arms was linked with an increased risk of peripheral artery disease (PAD), a condition that involves a narrowing of the arteries in the extremities, particularly the legs and feet. When researchers examined study participants' systolic blood pressure readings, those who had a difference between their right and left arms of 15 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg) or more were 2.5 times more likely to have PAD than those who had a smaller difference between their arms, the researchers said. [FOX News](#)

Calories count, but not where they come from: study

29 January - Sticking to diets with strict proportions of fat, carbs and protein may not be more effective for people who want to lose weight and fat mass than simply cutting back on calories, according to a new comparison of four diets. The results suggest that it doesn't matter where the calories come from, as long as dieters reduce them. "If you're happier doing it low fat, or happier doing it low carb, this paper says it's OK to do it either way. They were equally successful," said Christopher Gardner, a Stanford University professor who was not involved in the study. Dr. George Bray, who worked on the new study, said earlier research had found certain diets -- in particular, those with very little carbohydrate -- work better than others. Diet books also often guide consumers to adopt a particular type of meal plan, such as low-fat or low-carb-high-protein diets. But there hasn't been a consensus among scientists. [Medline Plus](#)

CDC study of an unexplained dermatopathy

25 January - Unexplained medical conditions can cause serious illness and disability among individuals, as well as demands on health care resources. In January 2008, CDC began an investigation that sought to better understand an unexplained apparent dermatopathy, commonly referred to as Morgellons. CDC partnered with Kaiser Permanente (KP) - Northern California, a large group health plan in an area where many possible cases had been reported, and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, to begin a comprehensive clinical and laboratory study of this condition... This comprehensive study of an unexplained apparent dermatopathy demonstrated no infectious cause and no evidence of an environmental link. There was no indication that it would be helpful to perform additional testing for infectious diseases as a potential cause. Future efforts should focus on helping patients reduce their symptoms through careful attention to treatment of co-existing medical, including psychiatric conditions, that might be contributing to their symptoms.

[CDC](#)

Communities learn the good life can be a killer



30 January - Developers in the last half-century called it progress when they built homes and shopping malls far from city centers throughout the country, sounding the death knell for many downtowns. But now an alarmed cadre of public health experts say these expanded metropolitan areas have had a far more serious impact on the people who live there by creating vehicle-dependent environments that foster **obesity**, poor health, social isolation, excessive stress and depression. As a result, these experts say, our "built environment" — where we live, work, play and shop — has become a leading cause of disability and death in the 21st century. **Physical activity** has been disappearing from the lives of young and old, and many communities are virtual "food deserts," serviced only by convenience stores that stock nutrient-poor prepared foods and drinks. [New York Times](#)

Oral HPV rates higher in men than women

30 January - A study published in JAMA reveals that among men and women between the ages 14 to 69 years in the U.S., the overall prevalence of oral human papillomavirus (HPV) infection is around 7%. In addition, the researchers found that the prevalence of HPV is higher among men than women... The researchers discovered peaks in the prevalence of oral HPV infection in different age ranges: The first peak was found among participants aged between 30 to 34 years old (7.3%). The second among participants aged between 60 to 64 years old (11.4%)... In analysis inclusive of people aged 14 to 69 years, the researchers found that sex, lifetime number of sexual partners, as well as current number of cigarettes smoked per day, were factors independently linked to prevalent oral HPV. [Medical News Today](#)

Statins equally effective in women and men

30 January - Cholesterol-lowering drugs known as statins are equally effective in men and women, a new study finds. For both males and females, these drugs lowered the risk of a heart attack by about 20 percent, the researchers say. [Medline Plus](#)

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USAFRICOM

Carter Center gets \$40M to eradicate Guinea worm

30 January - The Carter Center on Monday announced it received \$40 million in donations to help fuel its mission to eradicate Guinea worm disease, a debilitating parasite that once plagued millions of people across the developing world. The Atlanta-based center said the funding comes from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation and President Sheik Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates. It said the grants, along with \$31 million committed last year by the United Kingdom, will help eradicate the disease by 2015... On Monday, the center said an early tally showed that only 1,060 cases of the disease occurred worldwide in 2011. Most of the cases occurred in the African nations of South Sudan, Mali and Ethiopia. There was also an isolated outbreak in Chad. [Boston Globe](#)

Congo-Kinshasa: 85 percent of AIDS patients lack treatment

27 January - Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is alarmed by the situation of HIV/AIDS patients in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the lack of priority given by the Congolese authorities and the withdrawal of donors, all occurring as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis prepares to celebrate its tenth anniversary on 28 January. The conditions surrounding access to care for people living with HIV/AIDS in DRC

are horrific. At the Centre Hospitalier de Kabinda (CHK) in Kinshasa, MSF has observed an excessively high number of patients arriving with serious complications resulting from lack of treatment. [All Africa](#)

Cote d'Ivoire: Government scraps free health care for all

26 January - Côte d'Ivoire is abandoning free health care for all after a brief experiment because of skyrocketing costs. "In nine months the government had to pay 30 billion CFA francs [about US\$60 million] under difficult circumstances," Ivoirian Health Minister Yoman N'dri said in Abidjan on 24 January. As of February, the free service would only be available to mothers and their children. [All Africa](#)

South Africa: More than a million condoms recalled

31 January - The party may be over, but the trouble may just be starting in South Africa. The health department in Free State province is recalling 1.35 million condoms that may not be up to snuff. The affected condoms — a government brand called Choice — were distributed early this month as part of the festivities marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of the African National Congress... But quite a few of the "revolutionary rubbers," as the *City Press* newspaper called the freebies, reportedly broke during sex. "People would claim that the condoms burst," AIDS activist Sello Mokhalipi, of the Treatment Action Campaign, told the paper. "When we investigated the complaints it turned out the condoms are porous."

[NPR](#)

Uganda: Government on the spot over nodding disease

20 January - The escalation of the nodding disease syndrome in northern Uganda could have been avoided if government had implemented research recommendations availed to it in 2009 by health experts, *Daily Monitor* has learnt... The government was for instance required, more than three years ago, to build the capacity of the health systems in the affected areas, especially by training health workers to detect, manage and report head nodding disease cases and determine an accurate case counts against which care and treatment would be planned. Other recommendations included securing specialised care and treatment centres for the nodding disease in the affected counties and to determine the best or combination treatment options to control the head nodding episodes. [All Africa](#)

Zimbabwe: Typhoid stalks Harare



30 January - Over the past few weeks some 900 residents of the Zimbabwean capital Harare have been diagnosed with typhoid, and about 60 have been admitted to hospital, say health authorities. "Initially, we were focusing on Dzivarasekwa high density suburb as being the source of the disease outbreak but we are now receiving patients from different high density suburbs in Harare such as Kuwadzana and Warren Park," Harare's health director, Propser Chonzi, told IRIN. There have been no confirmed fatalities from the disease, although senior health officials, who

declined to be identified, told IRIN they were investigating the cause of some deaths at hospitals. [IRIN](#)

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USCENTCOM

Pakistan shuts drugs factory after deaths

2 February - Pakistan has closed at least temporarily a pharmaceutical factory accused of manufacturing medicine suspected to have killed more than 100 heart patients, an official said Thursday. "We recovered raw material weighing 48 kilograms used for the medicine Isotab from the Efroze Chemicals factory and sealed it for 14 days on Wednesday," said Akbar Baloch from the Federal Investigation Agency. The factory was closed after a London laboratory appeared to find Isotab responsible for the deaths of more than 100 people in a hospital of the country's most populous Punjab province. Punjab's chief minister Shahbaz Sharif said Wednesday that the drug had been contaminated with an anti-malarial chemical.

[AFP](#)

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USEUCOM

Deaths in Ukraine and Poland in freezing Europe weather



31 January - At least 30 people have died in Ukraine and 10 in Poland after heavy snow fall and a drop in temperatures across much of central and eastern Europe. Three deaths were also reported in Serbia and one in Bulgaria. Ukrainian health officials said more than 600 people had sought treatment for frostbite and hypothermia in just three days. And over that time, nearly 24,000 people sought refuge in some 1,590 shelters, the officials say. Temperatures have plunged to -16C (3F) during the day and -23C (-10F) at night. [BBC News](#)

Germany: Two invasive mosquitoes species, *aedes albopictus* and *aedes japonicas japonicas*, trapped in south-west Germany, July to August 2011

26 January - Adult females of two invasive species, *Aedes albopictus* and *Aedes japonicas*, were collected for the first time in July and August 2011 in Germany. Previously, only immature stages of these species had been found in the country. Repeated detection of

these species reveals the Upper Rhine Valley in south-west Germany to be a particularly sensitive region for the introduction and establishment of exotic mosquito species that needs careful observation. [Eurosurveillance](#)

Israel near bottom of list in OECD hospital bed rates

25 January - Aside from Mexico, Israel has the lowest rate of general hospital beds per population in the 28 Western OECD countries, according to a document prepared by the Knesset research and information center for the Labor, Social Affairs and Health Committee session initiated by MK Haim Oron. There are only 1.98 hospital beds per 1,000 residents, compared to 8.2 in Japan and 5.7 in Germany, the report states. In Israel, according to the report, beds are not distributed in an equitable way. In the Tel Aviv and Haifa districts, there are 2.5 beds per 1,000 residents, compared to just 1.5 beds in the northern and southern districts. The total number of beds in the general hospitals is 14,582, and no new public hospitals have been built in decades. According to the report, written by Shelly Levy under the supervision of Sharon Sofer, internal medicine departments - which treat the oldest and sickest patients - are filled to 113 percent capacity. [The Jerusalem Post](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: 2012 Adult immunization schedule - The key changes

1 February

Human Papillomavirus - The new HPV recommendation: routine vaccination for males aged 11 through 21 years.

Hepatitis B - Hepatitis B vaccination is now recommended routinely for adults with diabetes who are younger than age 60 years.

Tdap and Pertussis Protection - Recommendations for adult tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) vaccination concern pertussis protection and, specifically, cocooning infants and young children by vaccinating family and household contacts, including those over age 65 years. The new change is when to vaccinate pregnant mothers, which should be during pregnancy, after 20 weeks' gestation. Timing the vaccination this way will allow the mother's antibodies to pass on to the fetus.

Influenza - Egg allergy is no longer a contraindication to the influenza vaccination, although egg-allergic patients must get the inactivated shot because that is what has been studied. In addition, the new intradermal influenza vaccine, with its microinjector apparatus and ultrafine needle, is an option for adults aged 18 through 64 years. Finally, everyone over 6 months old should be vaccinated for flu, and this includes healthcare workers. [Medscape](#)

U.S., California: Recovery of a patient from clinical rabies, 2011

3 February - In May 2011, a girl aged 8 years from a rural county in California was brought to a local emergency department (ED) with a 1-week history of progressive sore throat, difficulty swallowing, and weakness. After she developed flaccid paralysis and encephalitis, rabies was diagnosed based on 1) detection of rabies virus-specific antibodies in serum and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), 2) a compatible clinical syndrome in the patient, and 3) absence of a likely alternative diagnosis. The patient received advanced supportive care, including treatment with therapeutic coma. She was successfully extubated after 15 days and discharged from the hospital 37 days later to continue rehabilitation therapy as an outpatient. The public health investigation identified contact with free-roaming, unvaccinated cats at the patient's school as a possible source of infection... Rabies prevention efforts should highlight the importance of domestic animal vaccination, avoidance of wildlife and unvaccinated animals, and prompt PEP after an exposure.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: CDC study of an unexplained dermatopathy

25 January - ...In January 2008, CDC began an investigation that sought to better understand an unexplained apparent dermatopathy, commonly referred to as Morgellons. CDC partnered with Kaiser Permanente (KP) - Northern California, a large group health plan in an area where many possible cases had been reported, and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, to begin a comprehensive clinical and laboratory study of this condition... n January 2008, CDC began an investigation that sought to better understand an unexplained apparent dermatopathy, commonly referred to as Morgellons. CDC partnered with Kaiser Permanente (KP) - Northern California, a large group health plan in an area where many possible cases had been reported, and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, to begin a comprehensive clinical and laboratory study of this condition. [CDC](#)

U.S.: EPA offers free apps to check air quality, UV index



30 January - If you wanted to know the air quality Monday morning in Tulsa, Oklahoma. (good), Baton Rouge, Louisiana. (moderate), or Modesto, California. (unhealthy for sensitive groups), a new smart phone app from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency could have helped. The

EPA's free AIRNow app for Apple or Android phones allows users to enter a Zip Code and receive the pollutant and ozone levels for more than 400 cities across the country. You can also choose to check your current location. The app gives levels for ozone and particle pollution such as automotive exhaust and an overall assessment of "good," "moderate," "unhealthy for sensitive groups," "unhealthy," "very unhealthy" and "hazardous." [CNN](#)

U.S.: Monsanto accused in suit tied to Agent Orange

1 February - For about two decades, ending in 1971, a former Monsanto chemical plant in West Virginia produced the herbicide 2,4,5-T which was used in "Agent Orange" — the defoliant the military sprayed over Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Now, Monsanto faces a class-action lawsuit, filed on behalf of people living where the herbicide was manufactured in Nitro, W.Va. Nitro became a town during World War I, named after the type of gunpowder workers produced there. Later private companies like Monsanto manufactured other chemicals in Nitro, employing thousands of people... The class-action lawsuit was filed on behalf of tens of thousands of people who lived, worked and went to school in Nitro after 1949. The suit claims the company spread toxic substances all over town, mainly dioxins, which have been linked to cancer. [NPR](#)

U.S.: New silica rules languish in regulatory black hole

1 February - Any job that involves breaking up rock or concrete or brick can potentially expose workers to dangerous silica dust, and last year it looked like the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration was about to put stricter controls in place to limit this health hazard. But for almost a year, the proposed regulations have been stalled at the White House Office of Management and Budget. Worker safety advocates are growing increasingly frustrated. They say instead of having a public debate, officials are meeting behind closed doors with industry stakeholders who want to stop new rules... The government does limit the amount of silica workers can be exposed to, he says, but that exposure limit dates to the 1960s. Guidotti says a safe limit would be half of what's currently allowed... Jackson Morrill, who heads [the American Chemistry Council's Crystalline Silica Panel, a] coalition of companies and industry associations, says they asked officials not to lower the level that workers can be exposed to. Morrill says the current level is adequate to protect worker health and safety, and that any changes could cost billions. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Screening for cancer missing the mark

1 February - The percentage of Americans screened for cancer isn't meeting national targets, and the numbers are even worse for minorities, according the first federal study looking at disparities among Asian and Hispanic groups. The report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Cancer Institute showed breast cancer screening rates were 72.4 percent, below the 81 percent target set in a national health plan called Healthy People 2020. It was 83 percent for cervical cancer, missing the 93 percent mark, and colorectal screening was 58.6 percent, missing the 70.5 percent target. [Sun Herald](#)

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China: Yunnan's tobacco boom

28 January - In tobacco-rich Yunnan, the cigarette industry is a local pillar... On health warnings however, progress has been slight: packets bear a simple, generic message printed in text, with no eye-catching images. That is because the cigarette-makers want it that way. China's tobacco industry is both owned and regulated by the government. It makes and sells more than two-fifths of the world's cigarettes—2.4 trillion in 2011, 3% more than in 2010. The government says the industry took in profits and tax receipts of 753 billion yuan (\$119 billion) in 2011, an annual increase of over a fifth. Production, sales and tax receipts are likely to increase for years to come. As a signatory to a World Health Organisation tobacco-control treaty, China is, rather awkwardly in the face of these projections, meant to reduce smoking. The country has more than 300m smokers, close to a third of the global total. Cigarettes are still the currency of masculinity, especially in rural China, and more than half of Chinese men smoke. About 1m Chinese die each year from smoking-related illnesses. [The Economist](#)

Japan: No big Fukushima health impact seen: U.N. body chairman



31 January - The health impact of last year's Fukushima nuclear disaster in [Japan](#) appears relatively small thanks partly to prompt evacuations, the chairman of a U.N. scientific body investigating the effects of radiation said on Tuesday. The fact that some radioactive releases spread over the ocean instead of populated areas also contributed to limiting the consequences, said Wolfgang Weiss of the U.N. Scientific Committee on the effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR). "As far as the doses we have seen from the screening of the population ... they are very low," Weiss told Reuters. This was partly "due to the rapid evacuation and this worked very well." [Reuters](#)

Philippines: Geo-hazard maps go public

31 January - The Philippine government has made geo-hazard maps, which outline areas prone to natural disasters, publicly available in a bid to reduce vulnerability at community level. The geo-hazard map developed by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (MGB-DENR) uses colour to classify areas as either low, moderately or highly susceptible to floods, flash floods and landslides. Some areas are marked as being prone to riverbank erosion. These codes are superimposed on the topographic map of the Philippines. "Every square unit of the country was covered. We identified disaster-prone areas with the help of base maps, satellite imagery and fieldwork. Historical accounts [of past disasters] were also taken into consideration," MGB director Leo Jasareno told IRIN. Tips on handling emergencies in the event of natural disasters are also part of the information on the geo-hazard map. [IRIN](#)

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Bolivia: Bolivian hemorrhagic fever

29 January - The head of Epidemiology of the departmental [state of province equivalent] Health Services (SEDES), Wilfredo Camargo, stated on Thursday [26 Jan 2012] that so far this January the cases of hemorrhagic fever have increased in Mamore and Itenez provinces in Beni. He indicated that a patient contracted the disease [virus infection] on the Penas Verdes ranch in Mamore province and died in Cochabamba, after which laboratory tests confirmed that he was infected with Machupo virus that is transmitted by *Calomys callosus* mice. He stated that in the same ranch, the daughter of a domestic employee currently has symptoms compatible with the disease and is interned in the hospital in Magdalena, with bloody vomit. Camargo expressed his concern because in recent hours 6 suspected cases of hemorrhagic fever have been reported in Mamore and Itenez provinces, of whom 3 are hospitalized in San Ramon and one in Magdalena.. [ProMED-mail](#)

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