

8 February 2013

# 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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## International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation

The International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation is observed each year to raise awareness about this practice.

Female genital mutilation of any type has been recognized as a harmful practice and violation of the human rights of girls and women.

WHO is committed to the elimination of female genital mutilation within a generation and is focusing on advocacy, research and guidance for health professionals and health systems.



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**U.S. MILITARY**

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## 325 Army suicides in 2012 a record



2 February - The U.S. Army reported Thursday that there were 325 confirmed or potential suicides last year among active and nonactive military personnel. "Our highest on record," said Lt. Gen. Howard Bromberg, deputy chief of staff, manpower and personnel for the Army. The grim total exceeds the number of total U.S. Army deaths (219) and total military deaths (313) in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, according to figures published by the military's Defense Casualty Analysis System. For all of last year, 182 potential active-duty suicides were reported, 130 of which have been confirmed and 52 of which remain under investigation, it said. And 143 potential not-on-active-duty suicides were reported (96 Army National Guard and 47 Army Reserve), 117 of which have been confirmed and 26 remain under investigation. [CNN](#)

## Confirmed malaria cases among active component U.S. Army personnel, January-September 2012

Of 26 cases of malaria reported among active component U.S. Army personnel during January through September 2012, 16 were laboratory-confirmed according to electronic medical records. Medical records and responses on postdeployment health assessment questionnaires were used to assess demographic and clinical characteristics, adherence to malaria prevention measures, and compliance with prescriptions for chemoprophylaxis. All but two cases were confirmed by peripheral blood smears. Twelve cases were caused by *Plasmodium vivax*, one by *P. falciparum*, and three unspecified diagnoses were deemed likely to be due to *P. vivax*. Fourteen cases were associated with deployment to Afghanistan. Adherence to Army malaria prevention measures during deployment and compliance with post-deployment primaquine chemoprophylaxis were poor. Prescribed doses of primaquine oft en varied from current clinical or Department of Defense policy guidelines. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

## GAO: DOD needs policy to ensure confidentiality for sex assault victims

4 February - Military medical providers may not understand their duties to maintain the confidentiality of sexual-assault victims because of outdated command policies that conflict with or fail to mention how to deal with "restricted" reports, according to a Government Accountability Office report. Service members and dependents who are sexually assaulted have the option of making a restricted report and, confidentially, getting physical and mental health care without triggering an intrusive investigation by law enforcement or the chain of command. However, the GAO "found that military health care providers do not have a consistent understanding of their responsibilities in caring for sexual assault

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victims."... "These inconsistencies can put DOD's restricted reporting option at risk, undermine DOD's efforts to address sexual assault issues, and erode service members' confidence," the report said. "As a consequence, sexual assault victims who want to keep their case confidential may be reluctant to seek medical care." [Stars and Stripes](#)

## Study seeks biomarkers for invisible war scars

6 February - ... Though PTSD is hardly new, diagnoses still largely rely on self-reported symptoms. And while severe brain injuries are often clearly diagnosable, finding evidence of mild T.B.I.'s, particularly older ones, can be all but impossible. It means that for a soldier who, five years after duty in Iraq, still feels "not right," with symptoms from headaches to sleeping problems to irritability, doctors can only guess at the cause. Maybe PTSD. Maybe T.B.I. Maybe both. Now, in one of the largest studies of its kind, a team of researchers based out of New York University's medical school have begun a five-year study to find biological signals, known as biomarkers, that could provide reliable, objective evidence of those so-called invisible injuries of war. "We want to elevate mental health to standard physical health," said Dr. Charles R. Marmar, chairman of the psychiatry department at NYU Langone Medical Center, and the lead investigator on the project. [New York Times](#)

## U.S. Army to build soldier "resilience" to fight suicides, violence

4 February - The U.S. Army, grappling with a spike in military suicides, plans to take steps to improve soldiers' resilience to mental health problems to combat such deaths as well as depression, substance abuse, and violent behavior, Army Secretary John McHugh said on Monday. McHugh ordered Army officials to lay out detailed plans by February 15 to boost soldiers' "physical, emotional and psychological resilience," but did not reveal program specifics, such as estimated costs or goals. "Interventions are not coming as soon as I would like to see them," McHugh told a news conference at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state. "Taking care of soldiers is one of our top priorities. It is not just a necessity but a moral imperative." [Reuters](#)

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## GLOBAL

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## Got a superbug? Bring in the robots

3 February - Drug-resistant bacteria are a growing problem at hospitals across the country. The bacteria, such as Staphylococcus and Clostridium difficile, are difficult to prevent and impossible to treat... At Johns Hopkins, doctors have turned to a new technology to prevent the so-called superbugs: robots. The machines spray toxic doses of hydrogen peroxide into sealed hospital rooms, killing any bacteria. Before the robots can be switched on, the rooms are made ready by... closing off air vents and opening up drawers. "We want to get the hydrogen peroxide on all the surfaces," he said. The last step in the process is to tape the door to the room shut to keep the toxic hydrogen peroxide mist from getting out. For 30

minutes, the robots spray a colorless, odorless vapor. If a person walked in, he wouldn't be able to breathe or open his eyes. When the robots are done infecting, the room looks the same, but is clean and safe for patients. Since Johns Hopkins started using the machines, it has seen the number of untreatable infections fall by a stunning 64 percent. [NPR](#)

## Improving mapping of infectious disease

5 February – Since the mid-nineteenth century, maps have helped elucidate the deadly mysteries of diseases like cholera and yellow fever. Yet today's global mapping of infectious diseases is considerably unreliable and may do little to inform the control of potential outbreaks, according to a new systematic mapping review of all clinically important infectious diseases known to humans. The study recommends new tools to improve global mapping of infectious disease. [Homeland Security Newswire](#)

## Ministers urge religious chiefs to oppose genital mutilation

4 February - Religious leaders must convince women carrying out female genital mutilation that it is not required by scripture and it can cause infection, infertility or even death in young girls, African ministers said on Monday. The practice is prevalent in 28 African countries and parts of the Middle East and Asia, notably Yemen, Iraqi Kurdistan and Indonesia. There are several types including partial or total removal of the genitalia and narrowing of the vaginal opening. It is usually arranged by other women in the family for girls between infancy and 15, and performed by traditional cutters who use anything from razor blades to scissors or tin can lids. The United Nations passed a resolution in December urging countries to ban the practice that an estimated 100 to 140 million girls worldwide have been subjected to, putting them at risk of serious physical and psychological problems. [Reuters](#)

## Pneumonia strain has spread

4 February - Infection with *Klebsiella pneumoniae* is a serious danger to older hospitalized patients, with an estimated mortality rate as high as 40 percent. It has generally been treated with broad-spectrum cephalosporin antibiotics. Another class of antibiotics, carbapenems, is used as an antibiotic of last resort for the most persistent infections. But now carbapenem-resistant *Klebsiella* strains, or CRKP, are appearing across the nation, even outside of health care facilities. A study in the March issue of *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology* reports that the proportion of *Klebsiella* cases resistant to cephalosporins increased to 11.6 percent in 2010 from 5.3 percent in 1999. The proportion resistant to carbapenems increased to 4.5 percent in 2010 from less than 0.1 percent in 2002. [New York Times](#)

## Researchers discover key to cancer's spread

31 January - If cancer cells did not metastasize, says Georgia State University's Dr. Zhi-Ren Liu, many tumors would not be deadly. "Usually in many cases, it does not interfere with normal function," says the Atlanta-based biology professor. "But if you have metastasis, it

interferes with multi-organ function and that kills a patient.” Liu and co-researcher Jenny Yang, a Georgia State biochemist, have discovered they can stop cancers from spreading by disrupting the interaction of two proteins within cells. Proteins, which act as switches to activate or stop cellular activities — including migration, or metastasis, around the body — are necessary for healing and immune response. But when cancer cells metastasize, the disease can become deadly. [VOA](#)

## WHO: One-third of all cancer deaths are preventable

4 February - The World Health Organization reports one-third of all cancer deaths are preventable. But, a global survey prepared for World Cancer Day, Monday, finds more than half of all countries do not have a comprehensive cancer plan that could save lives. Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide. The World Health Organization reports 7.6 million people died from cancer in 2008 and almost 13 million new cases of the disease are diagnosed every year. WHO says more than two-thirds of these new cases and deaths occur in developing countries and are continuing to increase at an alarming rate. The medical officer in WHO's Department for Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion, Andreas Ullrich, says the future outlook is grim. [VOA](#)

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## INFLUENZA

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### Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

- In Week 4 (through 26 January 2013), Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) and Pneumonia & Influenza (P&I) incidence rates decreased for the majority of US and PACOM populations. The proportions of all outpatient visits due to ILI and P&I continued to increase this week, except for P&I visits among US Other Beneficiaries (dependents) and PACOM populations.
- Across the overseas DoD laboratory surveillance network, influenza activity is at moderate levels except in East Africa, where influenza activity remains low; sites reported variable co-circulation of influenza A/H1, A/H3, and B.
- The influenza vaccination coverage for the DoD (Active Duty component only) is 96%.  
[AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

### CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 4 (January 20-26), influenza activity remained elevated in the United States, but decreased in some areas.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 10,581 specimens tested and reported by collaborating laboratories, 2,701 (25.5%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was above the epidemic threshold.

- Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths: Eight pediatric deaths were reported.
- Geographic Spread of Influenza: Forty-two states reported widespread geographic influenza activity; 7 states reported regional activity. [FluView](#)

## DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Week 4, 125 specimens were tested from 32 locations. There were 43 influenza A viruses (33 influenza A(H3N2) and 10 A(H1N1)pdm09) and 12 influenza B viruses detected.
- To date, 2,064 specimens have been tested from 70 locations of which 687 were positive for influenza A (635 A(H3N2), 47 A(H1N1)pdm09, two co-infections of A(H3N2) & B, one co-infection of A(H3N2) and Parainfluenza, and two A/not subtyped); and 117 were positive for influenza B (14 B/Yamagata, two B/Victoria, and 101 B/lineage undetermined).
- There have been 133 other respiratory viruses isolated (51 Parainfluenza, 37 Adenovirus, 36 RSV, and nine Enterovirus). [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

- In week 4/2013, (21–27 January 2013), approximately two-thirds of the 29 countries reporting indicated medium-intensity transmission, wide geographic spread and increasing trends in a range of combinations, as reported for week 3/2013.
- The proportion of influenza-positive sentinel specimens was high (52%), representing an increase on week 3/2013 (45%).
- Among influenza A viruses, an increasing proportion of A(H1)pdm09 over A(H3) has been reported during the past two weeks.
- 71 hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported by five countries, 36 (51%) tested positive for influenza A viruses and 35 (49%) for type B viruses.

Influenza activity continued to rise in week 4/2013 across Europe, although the epidemic may have passed its peak in some north-western countries such as Norway and the UK.

[Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

## Flu patients can emit virus up to 6 feet away, study finds



1 February - Even when flu patients aren't sneezing, they can still spread the virus as far as six feet away, according to a new study from the Wake Forest School of Medicine. The study also showed that some people, who researchers called "super-emitters," emit more of the virus than others. The findings are

hugely important for people working in the health and medical fields who have regular contact with flu-infected people -- and how they protect themselves from becoming

infected... Researchers took air samples around the flu patients, and found flu virus present in the area up to six feet away from the patients' heads. Right now, health workers who care for flu patients wear masks to protect themselves when the patients engage in "aerosol-generating procedures," such as CPR, intubation and bronchoscopy. But in this new study, researchers found that these health workers may want to wear a mask even when the patient isn't engaging in these aerosol-generating procedures. [Huffington Post](#)

## Google.org: Flu Trends

6 February – Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere ranges from low in Bulgaria to intense in the France, Sweden, and Japan and in the southern hemisphere ranges from minimal to low. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

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

For the week ending 2 February 2013:

- Influenza: Among basic trainees, 14 new cases of A/H3 influenza were confirmed at the NHRC laboratory this week.
- Adenovirus: Type 14 adenovirus cases continue at MCRD Parris Island, though FRI rates remain low
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

## USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 26 January 2013 (Week 4):

- Influenza-like illness activity remained elevated in most of the country. Key indicators reflecting severity, such as hospitalizations and deaths, also remain elevated. Dependents were the most severely affected.
- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 4 were 37% lower than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: 8 hospitalized influenza cases were reported to USAPHC in week 4. 59 hospitalized cases have been reported during this influenza season, 52 in dependents and 7 in Active Duty Service Members.
- Acute Respiratory Disease at BCT sites: While ARD rates remain low at all Army BCT sites after the initiation of the adenovirus vaccine in 2011, decreasing activity was noted at all sites.
- Viral specimens: During week 4, 458 of 1791 (26%) laboratory specimens tested were positive for respiratory pathogens. Influenza A accounted for 56% of positive specimens. Most of the influenza positive specimens were from SRMC (32%); 26% were from WRMC, and 22% from NRMC. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

## PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

### Cambodia: Avian influenza – situation in Cambodia – update

1 February – The Ministry of Health (MoH) of the Kingdom of Cambodia reported five new human cases of avian influenza that were confirmed positive for the H5N1 virus in January 2013... Four of the cases died, with 1 case, the 8 month old male, recovering after only experiencing mild ILI. Laboratory samples were tested by the National Institute of Public Health's laboratory and by the Institut Pasteur du Cambodge. Preliminary evidence does not support human-to-human transmission and four of the cases are known to have had close contact with sick/dead poultry. [World Health Organization](#)

### CDC: Pandemic vaccine prevented 1 million cases, 300 deaths

1 February - The influenza vaccine that was developed to fight the 2009 pandemic saved roughly 300 lives and prevented about 1 million illnesses and 6,000 hospitalizations, or under 3% of the estimated total burden in each category, according to new estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Those benefits would have been substantially higher if the vaccination program had begun a week or two earlier, the authors calculated. Because of difficulties growing the vaccine virus in eggs, the vaccine supply didn't flow freely until after the pandemic peaked in the fall of 2009. [CIDRAP](#)

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## VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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### Ireland: Horse DNA found in burgers at second major Irish plant

4 February - Burgers containing horse DNA have been discovered at a second major plant in Ireland, the country's agriculture department said on Monday, again pointing the finger at Poland as the country of origin for the raw materials... Results of tests on a Polish meat ingredient at Ireland's Rangeland Foods, a supplier of frozen burgers to restaurants, caterers and pubs including local fast food chain Supermac's, contained 75 percent horse DNA, the agriculture department said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

### Sales of antimicrobials for animals edged higher in 2011

6 February - Total US sales of antimicrobials intended for use in animals increased about 2.3% in 2011, according to data in an annual report released by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) yesterday. The total for the year came to about 29.9 million pounds

(13.5 million kilograms), compared with 29.2 million pounds in 2010... To help the FDA track resistance to antimicrobials used in both humans and animals, the animal Drug User Fee Amendments of 2008 require drug companies to report to the agency the amounts of antimicrobials they sell each year for use in animals. [CIDRAP](#)

## U.S.: As moose disappear, Minnesota cancels hunting season



6 February - Moose are missing — and the state of Minnesota doesn't want hunters to find them. Minnesota officials banned moose hunting indefinitely on Wednesday because of a dramatic drop in the animal's numbers. The number of

moose in the Gopher State has fallen by 52 percent since 2010, for reasons no one can figure out, although the Department of Natural Resources said hunting had nothing to do with it. It cited a variety of possible explanations, including a tick-borne disease and Minnesota's recent unusually hot summers, which moose don't handle well. "The state's moose population has been in decline for years, but never at the precipitous rate documented this winter," said Tom Landwehr, Minnesota's natural resources commissioner.

[NBC News](#)

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### WELLNESS

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## Adults with mental illness smoke at higher rate, CDC

5 February - Mentally ill adults in the United States smoke cigarettes at a 70 percent higher rate than adults without any kind of mental illness, according to a report released by federal health agencies on Tuesday. Statistics show smoking by the mentally ill is a "very serious health issue that needs more attention" and should prompt mental health facilities to ban the habit, said Dr. Thomas Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "We need to do more to help smokers with mental illness quit," Frieden told reporters during a telephone briefing. [Reuters](#)

## Aging poorly: Another act of baby boomer rebellion



4 February – [Dana E. King and his colleagues] mined data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, a big federal survey, to compare baby boomers — those who are now in their late 40s to 60s — with people from two decades ago who were in that age bracket... Baby boomers are healthier in some important ways. They are much less likely to smoke, have emphysema or get heart attacks. But in lots of other ways, the picture's not so great. "The proportion of people with diabetes,

high blood pressure and obesity [is] increasing. And perhaps even more disturbing, the proportion of people who are disabled increased substantially," King says. Double the percentage of baby boomers, as compared with the previous generation, need a cane or a walker to get around. And even more have problems so bad that they can't work. [NPR](#)

## Chain restaurants boost sales with lower-calorie foods

7 February - Lower-calorie foods are driving growth and profits for chain restaurants, according to fresh research, suggesting that people are making smarter choices when it comes to burgers and fries. We're still ordering the burger and fries, mind you. But we're going for smaller portions and shunning sugary drinks. French fry sales dropped about 2 percent from 2006 to 2011, while sales of lower-calorie beverages rose 10 percent, the study found. That should make for happy restaurant chains, which have argued that Americans really don't want salads and other healthy offerings pushed by public health officials... Restaurants that offered more lower-calorie services saw a 9 percent increase in food and beverage sales from 2006 to 2011, while restaurants that didn't saw sales drop by 16 percent. The researchers defined lower calorie as a main item with fewer than 500 calories, a side dish with fewer than 150 calories, and a beverage below 50 calories for an eight-ounce serving. [NPR](#)

## Eat to dream: Study shows dietary nutrients associated with certain sleep patterns

7 February - ...With the increasing prevalence of obesity and its consequences, sleep researchers have begun to explore the factors that predispose individuals to weight gain and ultimately obesity. Now, a new study from the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania shows for the first time that certain nutrients may play an underlying role in short and long sleep duration and that people who report eating a large variety of foods – an indicator of an overall healthy diet – had the healthiest sleep patterns. [Medical Express](#)

## Sharp drop in drink deaths follows alcohol price rise

6 February - Increasing the minimum price of alcohol by 10 percent can lead to immediate and significant drops in drink-related deaths and may also have long-term beneficial health effects, according to a study published on Thursday. Canadian researchers found that deaths caused by alcohol between 2002 and 2009 in the western province of British Columbia dropped when the minimum alcohol price was increased, while alcohol-related deaths rose when more private alcohol stores were opened. [Reuters](#)

## Sperm counts lower with more TV time

5 February - Men who watch television for 20 hours per week have almost half the sperm count of those who watch very little television or none at all, a new study has found. US researchers recruited 189 young men aged between 18 to 22, questioned them about their exercise, diet and TV habits and asked them to provide a sperm sample. Men in the top quarter of TV-watchers — those who watched for 20 hours or more — had a 44-per cent

lower sperm count than those who watched least, meaning they said they watched "none or almost none." Another big factor was exercise, according to the study, published online in the British Journal of Sports Medicine. Men who exercised for 15 or more hours weekly at a "moderate to vigorous" rate had a 73-per cent higher sperm count than those who exercised less than five hours per week. [CBC News](#)

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## **USAFRICOM**

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### **Nigeria moves to clean up lead pollution from gold mines**

6 February - Finally, the Nigerian government is fulfilling its promise to help thousands of kids, who have been exposed to toxic levels of lead. After months of delay and red tape, the government has released \$4 million to clean up lead in soil near illegal gold mines in northern Nigeria... For nearly a year now, [Ivan Gayton, who directs Doctors Without Borders in Nigeria] and his medical team have wanted to treat roughly 1,500 children in the town of Bagega for lead poisoning. But the doctors didn't have a safe place to set up clinics. Gayton also says it would have been useless to try to clear lead out of kids' systems only to send them back to a contaminated village. The release of the funds will allow soil remediation to begin around Bagega, and then kids will have a safe place to return to after treatment. Gayton says the contamination levels at Bagega are particularly high. "It may be one of the worst lead contamination sites in the world," he tells Shots. Lead poisoning in northern Nigeria has already killed more than 400 children and sickened thousands more. [NPR](#)

### **Somalia: With increased security, healthcare improves in Somalia**

5 February – With security improved following the retreat of Al-Shabab insurgents from urban areas of south and central Somalia, aid agencies have increased health services and expanded emergency healthcare, reaching previously inaccessible areas. "Somalia has experienced a relatively increased humanitarian space, and this has helped aid agencies to increasingly [provide] health services to the population who were earlier inaccessible," Omar Saleh, UN World Health Organization (WHO) emergency coordinator for Somalia, told IRIN. Epidemiological surveillance, too, has increased. "This has helped in detecting and dealing with possible disease outbreaks and putting adequate measures to control any outbreaks that might occur," he added. [IRIN](#)

### **South Sudan: Hepatitis E outbreak escalating in refugee camps**

6 February - An epidemic of hepatitis E is escalating across refugee camps in Maban County, South Sudan. So far, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has treated 3,991 patients in its health facilities in the camps and has recorded 88 deaths, including 15 pregnant women. Hepatitis

E is a virus that causes liver disease. It can lead to acute liver failure and death, and is particularly dangerous for pregnant women. Its symptoms are treatable, but there is no cure. [Medecin Sans Frontieres](#)

## Uganda: Ugandan authorities concerned as HIV self-test kits hit the market

6 February – The sale of HIV test kits to the public by private chemists in Uganda is causing concern among health officials, who feel that HIV testing should remain in the hands of professionals and be accompanied by counselling. A number of pharmacies in the capital, Kampala, are stocking HIV test kits imported from China, India and several European countries; they retail for as little as 3,000 Uganda shillings (US\$1.12). ...However, while the Ugandan government is keen to have more people to know their HIV status – just 45 percent of men and 66 percent of women have ever been tested and received results, according to the latest AIDS Indicator Survey – senior health officials say they have not approved the private sale of self-test kits and would prefer the public to continue to use the health provider- or client-initiated HIV counselling and testing model recommended by the country's national HIV strategy. [IRIN PlusNews](#)

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### USCENTCOM

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## Iraq looks to rebuild health care

1 February - After years of economic sanctions and wars, the Iraqi healthcare infrastructure is tottering, but that also makes the sector ripe for investment. In the first three days of the 38th Arab Health exhibition in Dubai, a delegation from the Iraqi ministry of health met more than 100 companies, including ones based in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, China and India, who have shown interest in doing business in Iraq, said the ministry spokesman Nazar Al Helaly... The US Agency for International Development is building 360 primary healthcare centres in 18 provinces as part of a \$74m project. [National](#)

## Pakistan: Another six children fall to measles, toll rises to 502

6 February – The deadly measles outbreak has left at least six more children dead, mounting the death toll to 502 across the country with 463 casualties in Sindh only. According to reports from Sindh, two children died in Sukkur and three more in Kandhkot, while another died in an adjoining area. In Punjab, 19 children have died of measles since the outbreak gripped the province. Fifteen children died in Balochistan, and five died in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). [Pakistan Today](#)

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## Measles transmission in Europe remains low, rubella is on the rise

4 February - The latest ECDC report on measles and rubella shows that 8 326 cases of measles were reported by 29 EU and EEA countries from January to November 2012. France, Italy, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom accounted for 87% of all reported cases and there were measles-related deaths during this timeframe. However, seven cases were complicated by acute measles encephalitis. Although the number of reported cases was substantially lower in 2012 compared with the same period in 2011, measles transmission has continued at European level.

28 536 cases of rubella were reported during the period December 2011 to November 2012 by the 26 EU and EEA reporting countries. Poland and Romania accounted for 99% of all reported rubella cases in the 12-month period. Reported cases in 2012 are higher than for the same period in 2011 and the highest notification rate was among adolescents between 15 and 19 year of age. [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#)

## United Kingdom: Health service, pride of Britain, ravaged by hospital scandal

6 February - The deaths of hundreds of hospital patients, left without food or water in filthy conditions, exposed an urgent need to change the culture of Britain's National Health Service (NHS), a report said on Wednesday. Between 400 and 1,200 patients are estimated to have died needlessly at Stafford Hospital in central England between January 2005 and March 2009 in one of the worst scandals to hit the NHS since it was founded in 1948. "There were patients so desperate for water that they were drinking from dirty flower vases," Prime Minister David Cameron told parliament in a statement on the report. Describing events at Stafford Hospital as "a despicable catalogue of clinical and managerial failures", Cameron apologized to all the families affected on behalf of the government and the country. [Reuters](#)

## Russia eyes crackdown on duty-free booze after brawls on flights

4 February - Russia may soon crack down to stop boozy flights after a spate of brawls involving drunken passengers. State television on Monday broadcast amateur footage of several drink-soaked punch-ups after a plane made a forced landing in Uzbekistan on the way to Thailand on Sunday because a Russian had attacked other passengers. The footage included shots of a man butting a steward during one flight and a fight among passengers queuing for the toilet during another. In a third incident, a man was tied to his seat and his mouth taped shut after passengers got fed up with him. A senior member of the State Duma, the lower house of parliament, said the assembly could soon draw up legislation to ban duty-free liquor and cigarettes being brought on board planes, even in sealed bags.

[Reuters](#)

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## Canada: In Ontario, abuse of 'hillbilly heroin' being replaced by real thing

6 February - It was last March when the [Ontario] provincial government removed OxyContin, a prescription drug that had been the subject of reports of widespread abuse, from its drug benefit program... As hoped, delisting successfully limited access to the drug, often referred to as "Oxy" or "hillbilly heroin." Oxy prices shot up to as much as \$20 a pill as supplies in the province dwindled. But police and social workers have expected something would come and fill the void among the province's drug users. And now it looks like the substitute for "hillbilly heroin" is the real thing...[Dr. Clement Sun] says that on average, in the last six months, his clinics are seeing one new case a week. Before that he might see a new patient seeking treatment for heroin once every 3 years. [Christian Science Monitor](#)

## U.S.: African-Americans still more likely to die from cancer

5 February - Drops in smoking may have helped drive cancer death rates down among black men during the last decade, but they are still more likely to die of cancer than whites, according to a new analysis. "I think we see some really good news, but then we also see some trends that are going in the wrong direction," said Carol DeSantis, the study's lead author from the American Cancer Society (ACS) in Atlanta... The biennial analysis found that improvements in cancer treatments and care have avoided nearly 200,000 cancer deaths in blacks since 1990. But cancer death rates for blacks are still higher than whites, according to DeSantis and her colleagues, who published their findings in *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians* on Tuesday. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Climate change threatens public health, safety, economy along U.S. coasts

5 February – A new technical study from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) reports that the effects of climate change will continue to threaten the health and vitality of U.S. coastal communities' social, economic, and natural systems. All U.S. coasts are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change such as sea-level rise, erosion, storms, and flooding, especially in the more populated low-lying parts of the U.S. coast along the Gulf of Mexico, Mid-Atlantic, northern Alaska, Hawaii, and island territories. ...The authors also emphasized that storm surge flooding and sea-level rise pose significant threats to public and private infrastructure that provides energy, sewage treatment, clean water, and transportation of people and goods. These factors increase threats to public health, safety, and employment in the coastal zone. [Homeland Security Newswire](#)

## U.S.: Experts debate CDC guidance in fungal meningitis outbreak

6 February - A debate emerged yesterday in Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy (AAC) about US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for treating people exposed to contaminated injections in recent months. David A Stevens, MD, a fungal disease expert from Stanford University Medical School, said the CDC should have recommended prophylactic treatment with oral antifungals for all exposed patients, according to a press release from the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), which publishes AAC. He also aired concerns about the CDC's focus on only two drugs for treatment. Stevens wrote that, for patients who have been injected intrathecally or close to the intrathecal sac, fungal infection should be prevented with oral drugs that have known, uncommon, and usually inconsequential side effects. In the counterargument, four authors, including Tom Chiller, MD, deputy chief of the CDC's mycotic diseases branch, defended the CDC's recommendation against prophylactic antifungal drugs and described the decision model that an expert panel used in the deliberations. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

## U.S., Pennsylvania: Fracking wastewater can be highly radioactive

3 February – ...Studies from the U.S. Geological Survey, Penn State University and environmental groups all found that waste from fracking can be radioactive — and in some cases, highly radioactive. A geological survey report found that millions of barrels of wastewater from unconventional wells in Pennsylvania and conventional wells in New York were 3,609 times more radioactive than the federal limit for drinking water and 300 times more radioactive than a Nuclear Regulatory Commission limit for nuclear plant discharges. ...A recent study by an undergraduate student and two professors in Penn State's Department of Geosciences also found that fracking wastewater contains high levels of radium — and barium. [Herald-Standard](#)

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### USPACOM

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## India enacts tough new rape laws

4 February - In India, the government has passed tough new laws to tackle sexual violence against women. Demand for new legislation was sparked by a brutal gang rape of a 23-year-old woman in India's capital in December. Women's rights activists say the laws do not go far enough in addressing the pressing issue. A harsher punishment for rape will for the first time include the death penalty in cases where the victim dies or is left in a vegetative state. The minimum sentence for gang rape, rape of a minor or rape by a person in authority has been doubled from 10 to 20 years. Trafficking of women and children will also be punished by longer jail terms. Voyeurism and stalking have been defined as new offenses. [VOA](#)

## India, Jodhpur: Highly vulnerable to swine flu

3 February - With the death of 22 persons in January, the city has become highly vulnerable to the H1N1 virus. According to the data available with the S N Medical College, as many as 17 persons died of swine flu from September till December. And in January, the flu cases increased significantly. S N Medical college principal Dr Arvind Mathur said majority of patients had died within two to 48 hours after being brought to hospitals and even before their swab testing report being issued... Mostly, pregnant women are getting infected with the virus. Out of the 45 deaths reported in the recent past, 20 were pregnant women. [Times of India](#)

## Japan Rubella outbreak spreading quickly

8 February - The fresh rubella outbreak spreading quickly nationwide poses the greatest threat to fetuses, according to the National Institute of Infectious Diseases. If a woman catches rubella in the early stages of pregnancy, her child can suffer hearing, heart and eye defects. Five such cases were reported during last year's epidemic and one has already been reported this year, the institute said. On Jan. 29, the health ministry issued a nationwide alert about the potential for another epidemic and recommended that prefectures and other local governments start promoting vaccinations. The case count in January has already surpassed the yearly average... The 254 cases in January are more than 13 times higher than a year ago and higher than the annual average of 224 logged from 2008 to 2011, the institute said. [Japan Times](#)

## Solomon Islands earthquake triggers tsunami

6 February - A powerful earthquake off the Solomon Islands generated a tsunami up to 1.5 metres (5ft) high that damaged dozens of homes and left several people missing, presumed dead. Authorities cancelled tsunami warnings on more distant coasts in the Pacific. Officials on the chain of islands reported two 1.5-metre waves hitting the western side of Santa Cruz island on Wednesday, damaging 70 to 80 properties, said George Herming, a spokesman for the prime minister of the Solomon Islands. Many villagers had headed to higher ground as a precaution. The islands' police commissioner, John Lansley, said there were unverified reports from local patrols that several people were presumed dead. "At the moment we potentially know of four, but there may of course be more." [Guardian](#)

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## USSOUTHCOM

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## Cuba - Investing in biotechnology to battle cancer

4 February - The Cuban government has made a substantial investment in biotechnology in a drive to battle cancer, the country's second leading cause of death, after cardiovascular disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 31,000 new cancer diagnoses are made in Cuba each year, and that 21,000 patients die of the disease annually. Dr José

Luis Di Fabio, the head of the WHO Country Office in Cuba, said: "Cancer is one of the major killers in Cuba. This is partly because people live longer but also because many have adopted unhealthy lifestyles. Too many people use alcohol harmfully, eat unhealthily and use tobacco. Among men, prostate and lung cancers are the most common types of cancer, and among women breast and cervical cancer are at the top of the list." WHO says that Cuba followed up its recommendations by setting up a "comprehensive national cancer plan" to make sure all Cubans have access to all levels of health service - from prevention, diagnosis, to palliative care. According to Cuban health authorities, their anti-cancer plan is based on a strong primary health care system that allows patients to see their GP (general practitioner, primary care physician) regularly, so that health problems, including cancer are spotted early on during the disease. [Medical News Today](#)

## Guatemala: Traditional herb water linked to smaller babies

4 February -Infants given a traditional Guatemalan drink in the first month of life are almost twice as likely to have stunted growth than other children, according to a new study. "We believe that aguitas may be part of the explanation for the high child stunting prevalence in Guatemala," lead author Colleen Doak told Reuters Health by email. The herbal infusions known as aguitas come in many forms, including cinnamon, chamomile and mint. Indigenous Guatemalans believe the drinks help ease colic and diarrhea and improve general health. Doak, of VU University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, and her colleagues surveyed about 450 mothers with children under two years old. Nearly 80 percent of their babies had been given aguitas, and a quarter of those were first given the drink before the age of three weeks. Half of the babies who had been given aguitas within the first three weeks of life had stunted growth, compared to 35 percent of all other children, according to results in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. [Reuters](#)

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