

12 August 2016

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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## Stinging Nettle Fact Sheet

Stinging nettle is a weedy perennial plant found in parts of the United States and Canada, and in the temperate parts of Europe, Asia, and northern Africa. Contact with the hairs on the stems and leaves will release toxins that can cause severe skin irritation.

Know what stinging nettle looks like and avoid contact with bare skin. Wear gloves, a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and closed-toe shoes when working or recreating in areas where stinging nettles grow.



## U.S. MILITARY

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### Increasing severity of traumatic brain injury is associated with an increased risk of subsequent headache or migraine

July 2016 - ... Sequelae of TBI, such as headache or migraine, can lead to military duty limitations or separation from service. To determine whether the severity of TBI is associated with the risk of these sequelae, this 2006–2015 retrospective cohort study compared the incidence of diagnosed headache or migraine among all service members with a first-time mild or moderate/severe TBI (N=111,018) against a matched sample without any history of TBI. Risk increased according to the severity of TBI. Compared to service members without TBI, those who sustained a mild TBI were 3.99 times more likely to have a headache or migraine, and those with a moderate/severe TBI were 8.89 times more likely. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

### Suicide among veterans and other Americans: 2001–2014

3 August – ... Key findings from this year's report include:

- In 2014, an average of 20 Veterans died by suicide each day. Six of the 20 were users of VHA services.
- In 2014, Veterans accounted for 18 percent of all deaths by suicide among U.S. adults and constituted 8.5 percent of the U.S. adult population (ages 18+). In 2010, Veterans accounted for 20.2 percent of all deaths by suicide and represented 9.7 percent of the U.S. adult population.
- The burden of suicide resulting from firearm injuries remains high. In 2014, about 67 percent of all Veteran deaths by suicide were the result of firearm injuries.
- There is continued evidence of a high burden of suicide among middle-aged and older Veterans. In 2014, about 65 percent of all Veterans who died by suicide were age 50 or older. [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

### Women in combat, like men, at risk for PTSD

10 August - Women in the military who experience combat have a much greater risk than those who don't of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues, a U.S. study suggests. Compared to their peers without any combat exposure, enlisted women who had just one combat experience were over four times more likely to screen positive for PTSD in post-deployment exams, the study found. With three or more combat experiences, the PTSD risk was more than 20 times greater. [Reuters](#)

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## Vector-borne Disease Report

**Zika Virus:** 1,657 travel-associated cases have been reported to the CDC in the United States; 33 confirmed and probable cases have been reported in Army beneficiaries.

**Army-wide:** 3,168 mosquitoes were tested for Zika; none tested positive.



## GLOBAL

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### Compound found to treat three parasitic tropical diseases

8 August- Scientists have found a single class of drugs that can kill the parasites responsible for three tropical diseases that affect millions in Africa, Asia and Latin America - Chagas disease, leishmaniasis and sleeping sickness. In a study published in the journal *Nature*, scientists at the Genomics Institute of the Novartis Research Foundation found the compound can cure all three diseases in mice, and does not harm normal human cells in laboratory tests. This provides a strong starting point for developing new drugs to replace existing treatments that are expensive, sometimes not very effective, and can also have side effects. [Reuters](#)

### Is 5G technology hazardous?

8 August - As wireless companies prepare to launch the next generation of service, there are new questions about the possible health risks from radiation emitted by cellphones and the transmitters that carry the signals. ... [The] launch of super-fast 5G technology over the next several years will dramatically increase the number of transmitters sending signals to cellphones and a host of new Internet-enabled devices. ... National Toxicology Program researchers released preliminary data in May that showed small increases in tumors in male rats exposed to cellphone radiation. The rats were exposed to nine hours of radiation daily, in 10-minutes-on, 10-minutes-off intervals, over their whole bodies for two years. The researchers found increased incidences of rare brain and heart tumors starting at about the federally allowable level of cellphone radiation for brain exposure, with greater incidences at about two and four times those levels. [Los Angeles Times](#)

### French study says resistance of *M. genitalium* to two antibiotic classes growing

8 August - Resistance of the sexually transmitted bacterium *Mycoplasma genitalium* to both fluoroquinolones and macrolides is increasing, raising the specter of the infection becoming untreatable. ... The researchers explored resistance to moxifloxacin, a second-line agent against *M genitalium*, and to azithromycin, typically the first-line treatment and one to which resistance is well established. ... ParC and GyrA mutations were found in 12 of 200 (6%) patients, none of whom had received fluoroquinolone treatment but about half of whom had received azithromycin. Mutations in macrolide resistance-associated 23S rRNA was identified in 38 of 221 patients (17.20%), which represents an increase over the 2012 rate of 14%. Two of 168 patients (1.2%) had both macrolide- and fluoroquinolone-associated mutations.

[CIDRAP Antimicrobial Resistance Scan](#) (second item)

## DOD Human Tick Test Kit Program

The Department of Defense (DOD) **Human Tick Test Kit Program** helps combat the threat of tick-borne diseases to DOD personnel. The **Army Public Health Center (Provisional)** (APHC (P)) provides a tick identification and testing service for military health clinics and health care providers. This is a free service and it serves as a 'first alert' for tick-bite patients and their health care providers.

The APHC (P) provides clinics/health care providers with 'tick test kits' upon request. Each kit consists of instructions, a vial for the tick specimen, a submission form, and a preaddressed envelope for mailing the specimen back to the APHC Tick-Borne Disease Laboratory.



## Paraplegics regain some feeling, movement after using brain-machine interfaces

11 August - Eight people who have spent years paralyzed from spinal cord injuries have regained partial sensation and muscle control in their lower limbs after training with brain-controlled robotics, according to a new study. The patients used brain-machine interfaces, including a virtual reality system that used their own brain activity to simulate full control of their legs. The research -- led by Duke University neuroscientist Miguel Nicolelis, M.D., Ph.D., as part of the Walk Again Project in São Paulo, Brazil -- offers promise for people with spinal cord injury, stroke and other conditions to regain strength, mobility and independence. ... Several patients saw changes after seven months of training. After a year, four patients' sensation and muscle control changed significantly enough that doctors upgraded their diagnoses from complete to partial paralysis. [Science Daily](#)

## Study links global warming to rise in waterborne illnesses

8 August - Rising global temperatures are clearly linked to increasing waterborne food poisoning, particularly from eating raw oysters, along with other nasty infections, a new study shows. About a dozen species of *Vibrio* bacteria make people sick from eating raw or undercooked seafood or drinking or swimming in tainted water. ... Lab-confirmed *Vibrio* infections in the United States have increased from an average of about 390 a year from the late 1990s to an average of 1,030 in recent years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But most cases aren't confirmed by tests and reported. ... The CDC blames about 100 deaths a year on *Vibrio* on average. Even Alaska, where such outbreaks used to be unheard of because the bacteria needs warm water, is getting cases from people eating *Vibrio*-infected oysters. [Associated Press](#)

## The poisoning of children around the world

5 August - ... Severe, persistent lead poisoning is occurring throughout low- and middle-income countries on a massive scale. Our researchers estimate that approximately 26 million people are at risk for exposure to lead globally. Some of the adverse health impacts from lead include neurological damage, a decrease in IQ, anemia, increased blood pressure, chronic headaches and infertility. According to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, a leading compiler of global health data, there are over 850,000 deaths associated with lead exposure each year. This figure doesn't even include acute poisoning events. By 2015, Pure Earth, a global non-profit, identified nearly 800 sites around the world where exposure to high levels of lead is resulting in acute poisoning, and that is just a fraction of affected areas. The most common cause of this severe poisoning is backyard recycling of used car batteries to smelt the 20 pounds of lead within for resale. [The New York Times](#)

## Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

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## ZIKA VIRUS

### FDA approves GMO mosquito test to fight Zika

5 August - Genetically modified mosquitoes that could help to fight the spread of the Zika virus may soon be released in a Florida community following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's final assessment showing that a field test of the insects would have "no significant impact" on the environment. The FDA decision released today means that Oxitec, the British biotechnology company that produces the GMO mosquitoes, is one step closer to releasing them for a field test in the small community of Key Haven, Florida. The company has created genetically modified *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, the same insects that transmit Zika virus. The GMO variety passes on genetic traits to their offspring that cause them to die in the wild. [ABC News](#)

### Puerto Rican OB-GYNs offer free birth control to fight Zika

6 August - In Puerto Rico the local association of obstetricians and gynecologists has launched a new attack on Zika. ... [The] doctors are trying to reduce the number of pregnant women by offering free contraception across the island to any woman who wants it. ... Working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Puerto Rico Department of Health, [Dr. Nabal] Bracero's group is distributing modern contraceptives to doctors' offices across the island. If the patient decides that she wants to practice contraception, the device or the method is going to be in the office of the physician on a same-day availability," Dr. Bracero says. ... The CDC predicts that between 20 to 25 percent of the island's estimated 3.5 million population will be infected with Zika before the end of the year.... The program is offering women more expensive and long-lasting implants and intrauterine devices in addition to pills or condoms. [NPR](#)

### Study details possible link between Zika and severe joint condition

9 August - Scientists in Brazil studying a possible link between Zika virus infection in the womb and severe joint abnormalities in babies say they should be added to the growing list of conditions to watch for. In an analysis of seven cases of children with joint deformities, the researchers said the abnormalities - a condition known as arthrogryposis - could be a result of Zika's effect on the developing baby's motor neurons, cells that control the contraction or relaxation of muscles. In all the cases, the mother also had either documented Zika infection, a Zika-like rash during pregnancy or had given birth to a baby with an abnormally small head. ... "It is becoming increasingly clear that this virus can cause a wide range of other abnormalities including visual and hearing defects and brain damage in babies with normal sized heads," he said. [Reuters](#)

## The U.S. military has declared war on the Zika virus

9 August - ... As of now, 41 military members have contracted the virus including a pregnant female – a 273 percent increase in less than three months. In May the DOD provided \$1.76 million in additional financing to military laboratories to enhance Zika virus surveillance worldwide and examine "the virus's impact on deployed service members' health and readiness." ... The Army recently partnered with French pharmaceutical firm Sanofi to co-develop a vaccine for the Zika virus. Walter Reed, a military biomedical research institute at DOD, will provide Sanofi with its purified inactivated virus vaccine technology. In return, the Paris-based drug maker will be responsible for managing human trials. ... The DOD has been taking the following actions to protect both military and civilian personnel, as well as their dependents from the virus: increased emphasis on education on personal protective measures; increased attention on mosquito surveillance and control; expanded diagnostic laboratory testing; and increased attention and preparedness in medical treatment facilities to screen, diagnose, and care for infected individuals. [The Fiscal Times](#)

## Two years ago, Ebola became a public health emergency. Here are 5 lessons for fighting Zika

8 August - Two years ago, on Aug. 8, 2014, the World Health Organization declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) for Ebola. Public health experts have written about the WHO's slow reaction to Ebola and the weakness of health systems in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, the centers of the outbreaks. But there's a story that hasn't yet reached the public: How communities mobilized to fight the outbreak. My fieldwork in Liberia this year yields five insights.

1. Communities have vital information in health emergencies. ...
2. Traditional practices can be adapted to save lives. ...
3. Religious organizations can be crucial players in health crises, as research on the AIDS response has already shown. ...
4. Communities took responsibility for themselves – and took action to slow and stop Ebola. ...
5. If communities don't trust the government, the government can't act effectively.

[The Washington Post](#)

## U.S. government shifts \$81 million to Zika vaccine research

11 August - The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has shifted \$81 million in funds from other projects to continue work on developing vaccines to fight Zika in the absence of any funding from U.S. lawmakers. In a letter addressed to Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat and minority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, HHS Secretary Sylvia Burwell said she was allocating \$34 million in funding to the National Institutes of Health and \$47 million to the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) to work on Zika vaccines. Burwell said the funding was intended to keep Zika vaccine

research going despite the lack of funding from U.S. lawmakers, who left for summer recess before allocating any funding to Zika research and preparedness. [Reuters](#)

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## INFLUENZA

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### Army prepares to administer 1.6 million flu shots

11 August - he Army estimates it will use approximately 1.6 million doses of the injectable influenza vaccine (i.e., flu shot) – more than half of the total number of doses ordered by the Department of Defense annually – to keep both active duty and reserve Soldiers, civilian staff, and family members healthy during the upcoming flu season. For the 2016-2017 flu season, only injectable flu shots will be provided to Soldiers, federal civilians, and beneficiaries. No live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), known as FluMist, will be offered based on effectiveness recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The Army's flu shot supplies will start arriving at military medical treatment facilities as early as September. ... The goal is to immunize with flu shots at least 90 percent of service members and health care professionals by Dec. 15, 2016. [Health.mil](#)

### CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report

Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) Mortality Surveillance for 2015-2016 Influenza Season Week 30 ending July 30, 2016:

- NCHS Mortality Surveillance Data: Based on NCHS mortality surveillance data available on August 4, 2016, 5.3% of the deaths occurring during the week ending July 16, 2016 (week 28) were due to P&I. This percentage is below the epidemic threshold of 6.2% for week 28.
- 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System: During week 30, 4.9% of all deaths reported through the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to P&I. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 5.8% for week 30. [CDC](#)

### ECDC: Flu News Europe

Weeks 26-30/2016 (27 June-31 July 2016)

- Influenza activity in the WHO European Region has remained at low levels, all countries reporting low-intensity influenza activity.
- Few influenza viruses were detected among both sentinel and non-sentinel specimens.
- Data from the 16 countries or regions reporting to the European monitoring of excess

mortality for public health action (EuroMOMO) project indicate that all-cause mortality was within the normal range in reporting countries during this period.

[European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

## NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2016 Week 31 (through 6 August 2016):

- Influenza: Forty-four cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (2 untyped A and 42 A/H3) among US military basic trainees at CGTC Cape May. The new cases presented 24 July to 6 August and had not been vaccinated.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at CGTC Cape May, MCRD San Diego, and Ft. Benning.

[Naval Health Research Center](#)

## WHO: Influenza Update

8 August - Influenza activity varied in countries of temperate South America and increased steadily in the last few weeks in South Africa, but remained low overall in most of Oceania. Influenza activity in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere was at inter-seasonal levels. [WHO](#)

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### **VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

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## Cardinals may protect people from West Nile virus

9 August - A recent study ... suggests that cardinals may be protecting people in the US Southeast from infection with West Nile virus (WNV) by being "super suppressors" of the pathogen. WNV infection occurs when the virus spills over to humans, via mosquito bites, from mosquito and bird populations. Though one-third of birds in Atlanta carry WNV, human transmission rates are very low (about 3.3 per 100,000 people per year). Chicago has a similar percentage of birds carrying WNV, but more than five times the incidence of WNV in humans (about 16.2 per 100,000 people). The geographical differences may be explained by a complex interplay between bugs, birds, and old-growth forests.

[The New York Times](#)

## Find the bomb! Good boy! Man's best friend may be our best bet for staying safe.

4 August - Roaming through cruise ports, train stations, courthouses and college campuses. Appearing at Super Bowls, marathons and holiday parades. Inspecting vehicles in airport parking lots and planes on tarmac. Sniffing luggage and legs in security lines. In public

settings around the country, dogs are becoming as ubiquitous as security cameras and as visible as X-ray machines. The dog — all wet nose and whiskers — is the new face of security. "There is no better overall detector of explosives than a dog's nose," TSA Administrator Peter Neffenger said. "Dogs work an environment like no technology can. They are versatile, mobile and very accurate."

[The Washington Post](#)

## For vets, caring for sick pets and grieving owners takes a toll

6 August - ... Little data exists, but research suggests veterinarian suicide rates are some of the highest in the medical field, and a 2014 study of about 10,000 veterinarians found twice as much "severe psychological distress" in them than in the general public. One 1 in 6 veterinary school graduates say they have considered suicide. ... Among the biggest strains for animal shelter employees is euthanasia, according to a 2009 study published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. ... The euthanasia is quick; the employees are tender. But the grief of a life extinguished and the suffering that preceded it can linger. ... Private animal hospitals practice euthanasia, too, but there the patient is often a beloved pet. And veterinarians and staff have to manage both the end of the animal's life and the humans' grief. ... Veterinary social workers provide support for animal-related professionals who need an extra hand resolving stress or stubborn conflict. They can also gently guide grieving pet owners through heartbreak, or help figure out what to do when an animal is a victim of family violence. [NPR](#)

## United Kingdom/Mexico: Cyclospora outbreak linked to Mexico

10 August - Public Health England (PHE) is advising people planning on travelling to the Riviera Maya coast in Mexico to be aware of the risk of infection from a food and water bug, *Cyclospora*. PHE is aware of an increase in *Cyclospora* cases linked with travel to Mexico. There have been 204 cases reported in the UK since 1 June 2016, with 148 cases from holidaymakers who stayed in a number of different hotels and resorts on the Riviera Maya coast. Investigations into the source of infection are ongoing. [gov.UK](#)

## Why the world isn't close to eradicating Guinea worm



8 August - ... In the early '80s, there were 3.2 million cases of Guinea worm — a two-foot long worm that emerges slowly — and excruciatingly — from a blister on the skin. A massive campaign, led by President Jimmy Carter, has eradicated the worm from all but four countries. And this year, there have been only seven cases, the Carter Center reports. ... But a surprising wrinkle has cropped up: The worm has found a new way to hide and thrive. Back in 2013, something strange started happening in

Chad: Dogs were showing up with Guinea worm emerging from their legs. Many dogs. With many, many Guinea worms. [NPR](#)

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## WELLNESS

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### Diet designed to lower blood pressure also reduces risk of kidney disease

9 August - People who ate a diet high in nuts and legumes, low-fat dairy, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables and low in red and processed meat, sugar-sweetened beverages and sodium were at a significantly lower risk of developing chronic kidney disease over the course of more than two decades, new ... research suggests. The diet, known as DASH for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, was designed to help reduce blood pressure, but research has shown it to be effective in preventing a series of other chronic illnesses including cardiovascular disease.

[Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

### Miscarriage following dengue virus 3 infection in the first six weeks of pregnancy

4 August - ... DENV infection during the first trimester of pregnancy does not reveal a significant risk of vertical transmission of the virus. However, since women in early pregnancy may not be hospitalised, the frequency of vertical transmission remains difficult to estimate. The case described in our report chronologically links an acute DENV infection in the first weeks of pregnancy to an unfavourable outcome. It should be borne in mind, however, that one in five of all recognised pregnancies end in miscarriage and maternal hyperthermia is recognised as an independent risk factor for miscarriage. Although DENV RNA was detected in the fetal material tested after the miscarriage, in utero fetal infection cannot be demonstrated due to possible contamination with maternal blood. ... In the global alertness for ZIKV-induced microcephaly, DENV infection might represent an additional and underestimated risk factor for pregnancy. [Eurosurveillance](#)

### ‘This is your brain on drugs,’ tweaked for today’s parents

7 August - For a generation of commercial-watching adolescents, it was an indelible image: an egg, sizzling in a frying pan, representing “your brain on drugs.” It was a straightforward message, and the ad’s final line — “Any questions?” — asked as the egg white clouded and cooked, was strictly rhetorical. Three decades later, the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids (the group formerly known as the Partnership for a Drug-Free America) is bringing the frying pan out of retirement and firing up the stove again. But this time questions are the point.

The group hopes it can tap into the nostalgia parents may have for the old frying egg ad while also letting them know their children do indeed want answers about drugs. [The New York Times](#)

## When pregnant women need medicine, they encounter a void



8 August - ... The CDC estimates that 70 percent of pregnant women in the U.S. take at least one prescription drug — whether it's for something like colitis or diabetes, or just allergies. ... [There] are only about a dozen medications in the U.S. that are approved as safe during pregnancy. For people who

want to know more about the safety of the medication they're taking, the CDC suggests two resources — MotherToBaby, which is run by the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists, and LactMed, which is run out of the National Institutes of Health. But the CDC acknowledges that as pregnant women aren't usually included in drug safety studies, we know very little about the effects of most medication on pregnancy. Little says this means a lot of drugs go to market without any information on how they act in pregnant women. ... That's why she's working with a group of researchers to figure out how to get more information in a responsible way. "We are looking at finding ethical pathways to doing the needed research with pregnant women," says Little. [NPR](#)

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### USAFRICOM

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## Angola and Democratic Republic of the Congo: 17 million to be vaccinated against yellow fever in August and September

8 August - The World Health Organization (WHO) said 17 million more people in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) will be vaccinated against yellow fever in August and September. The vaccine campaigns will begin before the rainy season, and with it mosquitoes, descends on the area in September. According to the WHO, the outbreak has slowed significantly in the last 6 weeks, no new confirmed cases. Nineteen million doses of the vaccine have already been given, but dense urban centers, like Kinshasa are still at risk for outbreaks. The WHO said that dose sparing, administering the vaccine at one-fifth standard dose, will be used in Kinshasa to ensure that 8.5 million people in that city are vaccinated. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

## Central African Republic: Cholera outbreak

11 August - Fears of a cholera outbreak have been confirmed in the Central African Republic. This follows the announcement made by the country's Health Minister who said the disease has already claimed the lives of at least 10 people. In his statement, he said that the government has put all the necessary measures and urged the population to practice proper hygiene in a bid to contain the epidemic. Since the beginning of this month, a total of 19 cases of the disease had already been reported. The affected areas include the Djoukou region on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ombella M'Poko and the capital Bangui where a case was detected on Tuesday. [Africanews](#)

## Kenya: Chikungunya

9 August - On 28 May 2016, the Ministry of Health of Kenya notified WHO of an outbreak of Chikungunya in Mandera East sub-county. The first reports of an increase in cases with febrile illness and joint pains occurred in May 2016. Samples were collected and shipped to the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) Arboviral Laboratory in Nairobi. On 16 May, KEMRI laboratory confirmed 7 of the 10 samples tested positive for Chikungunya virus. All samples tested negative for other arboviruses including: dengue, yellow fever and West Nile viruses. Moreover, from partial sequencing of the envelope gene it was observed that the CHIK isolates from Mandera are grouped with isolates from the post-2005 Indian Ocean islands, Asia and Europe. [WHO](#)

## Nigeria reports first polio cases in two years – WHO

11 August - Nigeria has reported that two children in Borno state have been paralyzed by polio, the first cases of the disease in the country in two years, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Thursday. Nigeria and the U.N. agency are conducting immunization campaigns and strengthening surveillance systems that help catch the virus early, the WHO said in a statement on the latest setback to its global program to eradicate polio. "The overriding priority now is to rapidly immunise all children around the affected area" ... said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa. Pakistan and Afghanistan have also reported polio this year, with 21 cases to date, WHO said. [Reuters](#)

## Sierra Leone: Is Sierra Leone ready for the next epidemic?

8 August - ...There will be another outbreak of some deadly disease in Sierra Leone at some point. ... Ebola was able to spiral out of control in such spectacular fashion here because Sierra Leone's health system was extremely weak. When the virus came knocking, there was not a single laboratory in the country which could diagnose it. There also were not enough doctors and nurses, not enough hospitals and not enough trust in the health system for people to turn up at clinics when they got sick. But exactly two years since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Ebola outbreak a global health emergency, parts of the health system are probably in the best shape they have ever been in. ... "We are definitely

more prepared [for a new outbreak] than we were when the Ebola outbreak started here in May 2014," said Dr Brima Kargbo, Sierra Leone's chief medical officer. "We have rapid response teams ready, and can isolate people quickly if we need to." ... The head of the WHO in Sierra Leone, Dr Anders Nordstrom, said that despite improvements in some areas, there was still much to do. ... "We have a big lack of trained healthcare workers. The quality of service is not good enough. Sierra Leone has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world. [BBC News](#)

## Uganda: Ministry of Health announces measles outbreak

9 August - The ministry of health has announced an outbreak of measles in the districts of Kamwenge in western Uganda and the eastern district of Kamuli. In a statement dated August 9 and signed by the acting director general health services, Prof Anthony Mbonye a surveillance confirmed the outbreak in the two districts. ... The statement further states that the most affected are children above between five and 14 years. ... Another disease, Rubella has also been reported in Alebtong district. [allAfrica](#)

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### USCENTCOM

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## Afghanistan and Pakistan: Final push begins to end polio

8 August - On Aug 5, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the Islamic Advisory Group for Polio Eradication (IAG) approved a new work plan during their third annual meeting that would eradicate the disease from the two Muslim countries where polio is still active: Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the WHO, previous eradication campaigns have failed in those countries because of a distrust of the polio vaccine. The misperceptions about vaccine safety often come from fatwas prohibit vaccinating children. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (seventh item)

## Iraq: Hospital fire kills 12 premature babies in Iraq

10 August - At least 12 premature babies have been killed in a fire at a hospital in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, officials say. It took three hours to put out the blaze, which broke out overnight inside the maternity unit at the Yarmouk Hospital, in the city's west. Eight other children and 29 women had to be moved from the unit and transferred to nearby hospitals. The health ministry said the fire was probably caused by an electrical fault. Electrical fires are common in Iraq because of shoddy maintenance and poor wiring, and a lack of fire escapes often adds to the danger. [BBC News](#)

## Pakistan: Suicide bomber kills dozens at Pakistani hospital in Quetta

8 August - A suicide bomber struck a hospital in the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta on Monday, officials said, killing at least 74 people in another devastating attack on civilians in a city that has become a byword for massacre and struggle over the past decade. Before the bomber attacked, dozens of lawyers had gathered at the hospital to condemn the shooting death hours earlier of a prominent colleague, officials said. They feared that the death toll from the bombing would rise, given the vast crowd of people seriously wounded in the attack. Late on Monday evening, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a splinter group of the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the shooting and the bombing.

[The New York Times](#)

## Saudi Arabia: New case of MERS

8 August - The Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health (MOH) reported a new case of MERS-CoV over the weekend. A 36-year old Saudi man from Huraymila is in stable condition after presenting with symptoms of MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus). The MOH said he had primary exposure to the virus, meaning not from another patient. He is not a healthcare worker, and has no known contact with camels. The case brings the total in the country since the outbreak began in 2012 to 1,445, including 608 fatalities. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

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### USEUCOM

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## Macedonia declares state of emergency after 21 die in flash floods



8 August - Macedonia declared a state of emergency in its capital Skopje and neighboring districts on Sunday, a day after at least 21 people were killed in flash floods caused by a storm. Torrential rains flooded homes, swept away a section of the ring road around Skopje and wrecked cars late on Saturday evening. Northern suburbs of the capital were particularly hard hit, though the city center also suffered flash floods. Children were among those killed, a police spokesman said, adding that searches were continuing for six people who have been reported missing. ... Special police forces and trucks loaded with drinking water were sent to the worst affected areas, where there also have been some electricity outages and where scattered debris of furniture swept away from houses could be seen on the streets. [Reuters](#)

## Portugal: Madeira wildfires - three dead as flames reach Funchal

10 August - Three people have died as wildfires raged in the city of Funchal, on the Portuguese island of Madeira. All three are said to have been elderly people whose homes caught fire. A thousand people have evacuated from homes and hotels. Fires have also been blazing on the mainland and there are reports of a fourth death in central Portugal. The government has triggered the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, which enables other European states to help. ... Several arrests have been made of people suspected of illegally starting fires. Forest fires first took hold in the Portuguese mainland on Friday and on the island of Madeira, off the north-west African coast, on Monday, following weeks of dry weather and temperatures above 35C. [BBC News](#)

## United Kingdom: Measles spreading at music festivals

8 August - Music festivals including Glastonbury have become a hotbed of measles this summer, Public Health England has warned. It said a "significant number" of cases had been linked to the events, with 36 cases reported in June and July alone. More infected people are expected to be discovered as the outbreaks are investigated. People planning to attend other festivals are advised to ensure they are vaccinated against the disease. [BBC News](#)

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### USNORTHCOM

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## U.S.: Cardiovascular health status by occupational group — 21 states, 2013

12 August - Work conditions and organization have a direct impact on health. Findings from studies indicate the existence of an association between cardiovascular disease and certain job factors and between specific cardiovascular disease health behaviors (e.g., smoking status, etc.) and occupational group. Using population-based data, occupational group was found to be significantly associated with both the individual cardiovascular health metrics (CHMs) and the CHM summary score. In 2013, prevalence of meeting two or fewer CHMs ranged from 5.0% among farming, fishing, and forestry employees to 14.6% among community and social services employees.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Update](#)

## U.S.: Finding the root of Hawaii's hepatitis A outbreak

11 August - From Papa John's Pizza in Waipahu, to New Lin Fong Bakery in Chinatown, state health officials confirm more cases of food handlers infected with Hepatitis A. ... "The fact

that we're seeing so many cases from all walks of life, all ages, all around Oahu, there's no specific relationship identified among the cases," said Dr. Sarah Park, a Hawaii State Epidemiologist. Dr. Park says with at least 168 confirmed cases of Hepatitis A in Hawaii, the state health department is trying to find the root of the problem. "This has to be a product that is widely distributed, commonly consumed, primarily on this island," said Dr. Park. Dr. Park also predicts the product may also have a long shelf life. Although most cases are concentrated on Oahu, there are also eight cases on the neighbor islands, including Maui, Kauai, and Hawaii Island. [KITV](#)

## **U.S.: Gaps in active life expectancy remain between black, white Americans**

9 August - Black Americans still live more of their older years with disability than white Americans, according to a new study. Older white Americans - those over 65 - can expect to spend about three quarters of their remaining years without needing much help. Older blacks, however, are likely to be disability-free for only about two-thirds of their remaining years. ... [Researchers] found that between 1982 and 2011, life expectancy beyond age 65 years improved for white and black Americans. They also found that the prevalence of disabilities declined for both white and black Americans after 1982 but then began to rise again. However, they report in Health Affairs, compared to whites, blacks had smaller postponements in disability as they aged, "and the percentage of remaining life spent active remained stable and well below that of whites." [Reuters](#)

## **U.S.: Minnesota takes a 'One Health' approach to antibiotic stewardship**

8 August - Minnesota has launched a comprehensive and multi-faceted plan to tackle the rise in drug-resistant bacteria and promote antibiotic stewardship. State officials are hoping the effort can break down some of the tension between human and animal health experts regarding antibiotic use and become a model for addressing the emerging public health crisis. The 5-year plan, released in early July, calls for Minnesota's departments of health and agriculture, along with the Board of Animal Health and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), to work together to promote the judicious use of antibiotics in humans and animals and get a better sense of how antibiotic use is affecting environmental health. The idea of having all four agencies work on the issue is based on the One Health concept, which views the health of humans, animals, and the environment as being inter-connected. [CIDRAP](#)

## **U.S.: Mortality rate declines, and researchers breathe a sigh of relief**

9 August - The death rate in the United States declined in the first quarter of this year, preliminary data show, a return to normal for a crucial health measure that showed a rare increase in 2015. The data from the National Center for Health Statistics were estimates

based on all death records received by the center as of June 19, and could still change. Even so, they came as a relief to researchers, who had been taken aback by a rise in the nation's death rate in 2015, an event that has happened only a few times in the past 25 years. ... Last year was the first time since 1993 that the death rate from heart disease did not decline. But in the first quarter of 2016, the death rate from heart disease resumed its decline, dropping to 177.8 per 100,000 from 188.5 in the first quarter of 2015.

[The New York Times](#)

## **U.S.: Outbreak warning declared after increase of Cryptosporidiosis in central Ohio**

11 August - Columbus Public Health along with other central Ohio agencies have declared a community outbreak of Cryptosporidiosis after more than 100 cases have been reported in the area. There has been a recent rise over the normal threshold of cases across several jurisdictions in central Ohio. ... The three jurisdictions have reported more than 107 cases so far this year, which is more than the last three years combined. This outbreak is not tied to any one location. ... A large portion of the cases include people with multiple exposures at various recreational water facilities throughout the three jurisdictions. [NBC4i](#)

## **U.S.: Unsafe levels of toxic chemicals found in drinking water of 33 states**

9 August - Levels of a widely used class of industrial chemicals linked with cancer and other health problems — polyfluoroalkyl and perfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs) — exceed federally recommended safety levels in public drinking-water supplies for 6 million people in the United States, according to a new study. ... "For many years, chemicals with unknown toxicities, such as PFASs, were allowed to be used and released to the environment, and we now have to face the severe consequences," said lead author Xindi Hu, a doctoral student in the Department of Environmental Health at Harvard Chan School, Environmental Science and Engineering at SEAS, and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. "In addition, the actual number of people exposed may be even higher than our study found, because government data for levels of these compounds in drinking water is lacking for almost a third of the U.S. population — about 100 million people."

[Harvard Gazette](#)

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## Myanmar: Myanmar measles outbreak kills 40 in remote villages

6 August - At least 40 people, nearly all of them children, have died from an outbreak of measles in a remote, impoverished region of Myanmar where there is little available health care, officials said on Saturday. More than 200 people have come down with measles since mid-July, when an epidemic swept through five villages in the mountainous Naga Self-Administered Zone of northwestern Myanmar. Thirty-five of the dead were children under the age of 15, said U Kay Sai, the chairman of the Naga Self-Administered Zone. Myanmar is emerging from five decades of military rule that left it one of the poorest countries in Asia. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy took power in April, but her government has been slow to improve services or adopt an economic recovery program. [The New York Times](#)

## Philippines dengue fever cases continue to rise, death toll tops 300

10 August - Despite recording more than 200,000 dengue fever cases in 2015, Philippines health officials are recording even more cases in 2016 to date, based on the latest data from the Philippines Department of Health (DOH) released Wednesday. Through July 23, health officials report 70,697 suspected dengue cases. This is an increase of more than 19 percent compared to the same period last year (59,342). Regions reporting the most dengue this year include Calabarzon, Central Visayas, Soccsksargen, Northern Mindanao and Central Luzon. ... Of the 70,000 cases reported to date, less than one half of one percent were fatal (308). Nearly 600 dengue-related fatalities were reported in all of 2015. [Outbreak News Today](#)

## Thailand: Melioidosis - Thailand's unknown deadly disease

8 August - ... [Melioidosis is] the little-known disease that is Thailand's third most deadly infectious disease, after AIDS and tuberculosis. ... Endemic to Thailand's northeast, melioidosis is caused by a soil and water-dwelling bacteria, *B pseudomallei*. ... Every year, in the agriculturally intensive regions of Thailand, there are thousands of cases of melioidosis. Of those infected, approximately 40 percent die from the disease, even if they begin treatment. If the patient is not diagnosed and provided with effective antibiotics on time, the mortality rate is at a much higher 90 percent. Quick diagnosis increases the chances of survival, but it is the difficulty in diagnosing it that causes so many problems, as symptoms vary largely from patient to patient. [Al Jazeera](#)

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## Chikungunya infects 617 more in the Americas

9 August - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) recently reported 617 more suspected or confirmed chikungunya cases, lifting the total in the Americas since the first of the year to 215,164. The weekly increase was smaller than previous weeks, and several countries didn't report new cases. ... The largest portion of the newly reported cases was from El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, which reported in for the first time this year with 112 cases. Other countries reporting additional cases were Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Mexico. One more death from the virus was reported, putting that number at 29 so far for the year. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fifth item)

## Peru: Peru's oil spills deserve the world's attention

9 August - In Peru's third major oil spill this year, an estimated 600 barrels of crude oil gushed out near the Marañon River, in Datem del Marañón on June 24. The spills proved devastating to local Indigenous communities, but the health response fell far short—with little international attention to the long-term health and social consequences. The June disaster in the Loreto region of the Amazon came on the heels of 2 spills this past January and February on the same pipeline, owned by state oil company Petroperu. The winter spills sent approximately 3,000 barrels of crude oil into the Chiriaco River and 1,000 into the Morona River in Amazonas Peru, affecting at least 30 Indigenous communities living near the ... rivers that depend on fish from the rivers and crops grown on the riverbanks. ... In May, 4 months after the January spill in Chiriaco, community members from Temashnum, an Indigenous Awajún community on the Marañon River affected by the spill, were still suffering from strong headaches, nausea and undiagnosed illness they attributed to working in oil cleanup and eating crops covered in oil. [Global Health Now](#)

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