

15 January 2016

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

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 Command.

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NOTICE:

Circumstances have led us to consider discontinuing the Army Public Health Weekly Update.

Five short questions will help us determine its usefulness to you. Thank you.

[TAKE THE QUICK SURVEY](#)

Contents

U.S. MILITARY

- Army colonel under fire for faith-based fitness message
- Army scores NFL funding for brain injury mitigation tech
- Diagnoses of low back pain, Active Component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2010–2014
- Despite concerns, military continues use of burn pits in Iraq
- Making the most of military medics' field experience
- Sexual assault reports rise at military academies
- Transcendental meditation may help relieve PTSD

GLOBAL

- Morphine for back pain tied to rapid changes in brain
- New MCR-1 reports warn of untreatable infection threat
- New report: Future pandemics pose massive risks to human lives, global economic security
- New tool estimates looming risk of kidney failure in people with kidney disease
- Repeated blasts linked to brain changes in combat vets
- Study estimates 89,000 global melioidosis deaths a year
- This germ can live decades in distilled water, kill humans in 48 hours
- Vitamin deficiencies increase risk, small study of Bangladeshi women suggests
- Zika virus in the Americas — yet another arbovirus threat

INFLUENZA

- AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary
- APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report
- CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report
- ECDC: Flu News Europe
- H5N6 kills another in China; H7N9 sickens 9
- NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update
- Studies note nasal spray vaccine failure against H1N1 flu
- Ukrainian health official says 25 people killed by swine flu
- USAFSAM: DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program
- WHO: Influenza Update

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- Campbell Soup becomes first major company to start GMO labeling

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YouTube

- Elephants infected seven Oregon zoo workers with tuberculosis: CDC
- EU food safety watchdog hits back at scientists in glyphosate row
- Gross anatomy: A bear's parasitic payback

WELLNESS

- Acetaminophen tops list of accidental infant poisonings
- Antidepressant use tied to better diabetes control
- Did painkiller crackdown cause heroin epidemic?
- Dietary supplement sellers could face fresh challenges in 2016
- Exercise Rx plus education alleviates lower-back pain
- Having friends is good for you, starting in your teens
- Model 'No Buy' criteria could dramatically reduce youth exposure to TV alcohol ads
- Motion control running shoes prevent injuries in some
- Popular acid reflux drugs are linked to kidney disease risk
- Study finds poverty a stronger harbinger of childhood obesity than race
- The more women earn, the less healthy they feel
- Why employers' incentives for weight loss fall flat with workers

USAFRICOM

- Liberia declared Ebola-free, signaling end to West African epidemic
- Nigeria: Lassa fever outbreak spreads to 10 states
- Sierra Leone investigating suspected Ebola death: health ministry

USCENTCOM

- Afghanistan: From under Kabul's bridges, addicts get help at old U.S. base
- Syria: Survival in Madaya: 'We are living on water and salt'
- Yemen: Injured Yemenis - unable to leave, unable to stay
- Yemen: MSF-backed hospital hit by missile

USEUCOM

- Europe: Migrants struggle in sub-zero temperatures
- United Kingdom: English doctors strike for first time in 40 years

USNORTHCOM

- U.S.: Acute gastroenteritis on cruise ships — United States, 2008–2014
- U.S.: Average age of first-time moms keeps climbing in the U.S.
- U.S.: C.D.C. may warn pregnant women against travel to countries with Zika virus
- U.S.: Legionnaires' spike in Michigan county dealing with water crisis
- U.S.: Pertussis outbreak hits Florida preschoolers
- U.S.: Secondhand smoke common for U.S. teens
- U.S.: Sudden deaths among oil and gas extraction workers resulting from oxygen deficiency and inhalation of hydrocarbon gases and vapors
- U.S.: Wintertime floods among costliest ever
- U.S.: Zika virus case confirmed in Texas; person traveled to Latin America

USPACOM

- Thailand: Spike in dengue cases expected in Thailand in 2016, expert says

USSOUTHCOM

- Brazil microcephaly cases top 3,500, Investigation into possible Zika link continues
- Cuba: Program luring Cuban doctors to U.S. may end
- PAHO reports almost 42,000 new chikungunya cases

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site:

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

Links

[A-Z Index](#)

[About APHC](#)

[Army Public Health Weekly Update Archives](#)

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

[Medical Threat Briefings \(AKO\)](#)

[Request APHC Services](#)

[APHC Resource Materials](#)

[APHC Homepage](#)

[APHC Training](#)

[Contact APHC](#)

U.S. MILITARY

Army colonel under fire for faith-based fitness message

12 January - An Army colonel's to-do list for better fitness in 2016, presented as one of his weekly "motivational messages" on a Defense Department-run health website, has outraged an advocate for religious freedom in the military. "Improve your spiritual fitness through increased prayer," Col. Thomas Hundley wrote in a Jan. 4 posting at Health.mil, the online home of the Military Health System. That message, and others in a piece that asks readers to "give God a little something to work with," drew an official complaint from the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, a group that claims more than 40,000 service-connected clients. [Army Times](#)

Army scores NFL funding for brain injury mitigation tech

12 January - Against a backdrop of weekly concussive injuries to football players, a group of researchers from the Army Research Lab have received funding for final-phase research in the Head Health Challenge II, sponsored by the NFL, Under Armour and GE. Originally announced in September of 2013, Head Health Challenge II seeks novel technologies, designs or materials that could result in "behavior modifications, innovative protective materials and devices and validated return-to-play protocols." ... ARL's solution uses a rate-activated strapping material that prevents violent head motions while permitting voluntary head motion. The material stretches with low, elastic force at slow to moderate speeds, though it resists with higher force when pulled quickly.

[GCN](#)

Diagnoses of low back pain, Active Component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2010–2014

December 2015 - ... During the 5-year surveillance period of this analysis, the [low back pain (LBP)] diagnoses of interest were associated with more than 6 million outpatient healthcare encounters and more than 25,000 hospitalizations among active component service members. Annual numbers of outpatient encounters for LBP diagnoses increased 34% during 2010–2014. Annual numbers of inpatient encounters decreased during the period. Incidence rates were lowest among the youngest service members and increased with advancing age. Of all service members ever given a LBP diagnosis during the surveillance period, 91% were diagnosed at least once with a condition in the broad category "nonspecific back pain." The most common specific diagnosis during the surveillance period was lumbago. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Despite concerns, military continues use of burn pits in Iraq

4 January - The U.S. military still relies on burn pits to dispose of waste in Iraq despite

concerns that toxic smoke and fumes released by fires can cause serious illnesses to troops. ... When U.S. forces returned to Iraq in late 2014 and summer 2015 to assist the Iraqis in rebuilding their army and security forces, burn pits were put back in use, said Army Capt. Traun Moore, spokesman for Operation Inherent Resolve. "Coalition forces at Al Asad Air Base and al-Taqaddum Air Base disposed of garbage by using burn pits, in accordance with Central Command environmental guidelines. The burn pit at Al Asad has been replaced by an incinerator and is no longer in use," Moore said. "Regular garbage at (al-Taqadum) is disposed of by a local contractor. However, a registered medical waste burn pit is still in use. An incinerator has been shipped to (al-Taqadum) and is in the process of being put into operation." [Stars and Stripes](#)

Making the most of military medics' field experience

13 January - Veteran Dave Manning served two combat deployments in Iraq and was the sole medical provider for more than 100 people on a Navy ship. But as he contemplated his post-military job prospects, he struggled. ... Manning is in the inaugural class of a physician assistant training program launched this month by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and geared at recruiting nontraditional students -- specifically, veterans, as the country seeks to improve healthcare by expanding the number of primary care providers. UNC staff worked with Army officials at Fort Bragg to figure out how to translate troops' medical experience into jobs. [MedPage Today](#)

Sexual assault reports rise at military academies

8 January - Reports of sexual assaults in military service academies increased by more than 50 percent in the 2014 to 2015 school year compared with the previous year, according to a Pentagon report released Friday. The report indicates the increase might be because of growing confidence among students that the assault allegations will be taken seriously. "Given the department's goal to increase reporting of sexual assault, DoD is encouraged by the increased number of reports received by the MSAs," the report says, using an abbreviation for military service academy. "However, the academies must continue their efforts to prevent sexual assault." In the 2014-15 school year, there were 91 reports of sexual assault. That's compared to 59 the previous year. Eight of the 91 assaults took place before the person entered military service, according to the report. [The Hill](#)

Transcendental meditation may help relieve PTSD

12 January - Transcendental meditation may help ease post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in some soldiers and seems to reduce their need for medication, a new study finds. ... The study included 74 active-duty U.S. military personnel with PTSD or other type of anxiety disorder. Half of them did regular transcendental meditation in addition to regular psychotherapy, and half did not. After one month, nearly 84 percent of those in the meditation group had stopped, reduced or stabilized their use of drugs to treat their mental health conditions, while nearly 11 percent increased their use of the drugs. In the non-meditation group, the percentages were about 59 percent and 41 percent, respectively. ... By the sixth month, those who did not meditate had a 20 percent greater increase in

symptoms than those in the meditation group, according to the study published in the January issue of the journal *Military Medicine*. [MedlinePlus](#)

[top of page...](#)

GLOBAL

Morphine for back pain tied to rapid changes in brain

13 January - Patients who take morphine pills for lower back pain may experience changes in the volume of the brain's gray matter in as little as a month, a small study suggests. In the 30-day experiment, researchers gave 11 patients daily morphine pills and 10 people placebos and then took magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans to see if treatment impacted the brain. The morphine group had gray matter volume declines of about 3 percent in regions of the brain thought to regulate emotions, cravings and responses to pain and volume increases in areas believed to be responsible for learning, memory and executive function. No changes occurred with the placebo. [Reuters](#)

New MCR-1 reports warn of untreatable infection threat

8 January - The newly identified MCR-1 resistance gene has been detected in six more countries, along with worrisome signs that it can appear alongside other resistance genes, which would make some infections untreatable, according to reports yesterday from several research groups. At least 17 countries have now reported the MCR-1 gene, which disables the last-line antibiotic colistin, an older drug that isn't often used in humans but is commonly used for raising food animals. The newest reports—based on studies of existing bacteria collections—place the gene in Germany, Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan, Switzerland, and Belgium. The MCR-1 gene was first reported by Chinese researchers in the middle of November. ... Most of today's reports detail findings in livestock or their environments, but three detections involve humans: a German patient, a Cambodian child who was hospitalized in 2012, and an elderly Swiss man who had no history of travel abroad. [CIDRAP](#)

New report: Future pandemics pose massive risks to human lives, global economic security

13 January - Infectious disease outbreaks that turn into epidemics or pandemics can kill millions of people and cause trillions of dollars of damage to economic activity, says a new report from the international, independent Commission on a Global Health Risk Framework for the Future. ... The Commission estimated the global expected economic loss from potential pandemics could average more than \$60 billion per year. ... The Commission recommended an investment of approximately \$4.5 billion per year - which equates to 65 cents per person - to enhance prevention, detection, and preparedness. The biggest component of this investment is to upgrade public health infrastructure and capabilities for low- and middle-income-countries. [Medical Xpress](#)

New tool estimates looming risk of kidney failure in people with kidney disease

12 January - An online tool combining results of common medical tests can accurately estimate the risk of whether someone with chronic kidney disease will develop kidney failure in the next two to five years, an international team of researchers led by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health has found. ... [The] researchers say the new calculator will not only help patients at high risk for kidney failure prepare for dialysis or transplant, but could provide peace of mind to millions more who have chronic kidney disease but are not at serious risk of kidney failure.

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

Repeated blasts linked to brain changes in combat vets

13 January - Researchers say they've gained new insight into how repeated exposure to explosions affects the brains of combat veterans. Many U.S. veterans exposed to blasts have suffered mild traumatic brain injury, but the exact impact on the brain has not been clear. In a new study, researchers found that the more explosions veterans were exposed to, the greater the odds for chronic changes in activity in the cerebellum. The team also found that mice exposed to mild blasts lose neurons in the cerebellum. This pattern of loss is similar to that seen in retired boxers. [MedlinePlus](#)

Study estimates 89,000 global melioidosis deaths a year

11 January - According to the first-ever global burden estimates for melioidosis, the disease is sharply underreported in 45 endemic countries, it's probably endemic in 34 more, and conditions are suitable for the disease in parts of the United States and Japan. ... The findings are based on reports of human and animal cases, reports of *Burkholderia pseudomallei*—the bacterium that causes the disease—in the environment, and modeling that takes into account factors such as environmental suitability. Researchers estimate that there are about 165,000 cases each year worldwide, 89,000 of them fatal, a level that calls for new policy and public health steps to battle the disease, they write. The report includes a map of highest-risk zones, which include Southeast and South Asia, tropical Australia, west sub-Saharan Africa, and South America. The researchers also said the United States and Japan are among 44 countries where the disease is absent but soil and other conditions are suitable for the disease. The US risk area is in the southern parts of Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. For Japan, risk areas are Okinawa and Kagoshima prefectures. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

This germ can live decades in distilled water, kill humans in 48 hours

11 January - Melioidosis is a disease that strikes fear in those who've heard of it. Doctors in Southeast Asia and Northern Australia know it as a stubborn, potentially deadly infection that causes pneumonia, abscesses and, in the most severe cases, organ failure. Without

treatment, it can kill within 48 hours. Military officials worry it could be converted into an agent of terror. ... A new study ... says the bacterium causing melioidosis, *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, is living in the soil and water of 45 countries and is likely spread throughout another 34 countries, all wrapped around the tropics. ... The study estimates there are about 90,000 deaths each year from melioidosis, roughly the same as measles and several times that of dengue. ... And *B. pseudomallei* is a tough thing. In 1993, Thai scientists mixed *B. pseudomallei* with pure, distilled water. Each year, for at least 16 years ... they tested the water and found the bacteria had survived without anything to sustain them. [NPR](#)

Vitamin deficiencies increase risk, small study of Bangladeshi women suggests

12 January - Researchers from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health have found a link between pre-existing nutritional deficits and immune dysfunction and the risk of hepatitis E infection during pregnancy. Hepatitis E, a virus that is largely transmitted through contaminated drinking water, can be particularly deadly in pregnant women. ... Hepatitis E is likely responsible for as many as 10 percent of maternal deaths in Southeast Asia. ... Researchers found that anemia occurred in nearly three times the number of women who became infected compared to those who didn't (27.5 percent versus 10 percent). Forty-five percent of infected women had a body mass index that categorized them as underweight compared to a quarter of the control group. Researchers also found that women who were vitamin-D deficient and who had lower levels of zinc were more likely to be infected than the control group of pregnant women at a similar risk level who did not become infected with the virus.

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

Zika virus in the Americas — yet another arbovirus threat

13 January - The explosive pandemic of Zika virus infection occurring throughout South America, Central America, and the Caribbean and potentially threatening the United States is the most recent of four unexpected arrivals of important arthropod-borne viral diseases in the Western Hemisphere over the past 20 years. It follows dengue, which entered this hemisphere stealthily over decades and then more aggressively in the 1990s; West Nile virus, which emerged in 1999; and chikungunya, which emerged in 2013. Are the successive migrations of these viruses unrelated, or do they reflect important new patterns of disease emergence? Furthermore, are there secondary health consequences of this arbovirus pandemic that set it apart from others?

[New England Journal of Medicine](#)

[top of page...](#)

INFLUENZA

AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 52:

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity was moderate to high in some states.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity increased to low in many countries and moderate in Italy.
- PACOM: Moderate influenza activity was seen for Japan and Hawaii during the last two weeks.
- CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Influenza activity remained minimal in CENTCOM and AFRICOM, with the exception of Afghanistan which had low activity.
- SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity in Honduras was minimal based on DMSS data.

[DHA -Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch](#)

APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 2 January 2016 (Week 52):

Influenza activity has remained relatively low for the current season, with a decrease in influenza activity in Army MTFs over the past week. In the US civilian population, influenza-like illness (ILI) activity increased slightly.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 52 were 33% lower than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: No hospitalized influenza cases were reported to APHC(P) through DRSi in week 52. Three hospitalized cases have been reported to date this season.
- Viral specimens: During week 52, 107 of 605 (18%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-A, RHC-P, and RHC-E each reported 1 influenza A-positive specimen. RHC-C and CENTCOM did not report any influenza A-positive specimens. [APHC](#)

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

During week 52 (December 26, 2015-January 2, 2016), influenza activity increased slightly in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories during week 52 was influenza A, with influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 viruses predominating. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories was low.
- Novel Influenza A Virus: One human infection with a novel influenza A virus was reported.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below their system-specific epidemic threshold in both the NCHS Mortality Surveillance System and the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System. [CDC](#)

ECDC: Flu News Europe

[Week 53/2015 \(28 December 2015 – 3 January 2016\)](#)

- Influenza activity remained low in most countries in the WHO European Region.
- The proportion of influenza-virus-positive specimens from sentinel surveillance continued to increase: from 18% for week 52/2015 to 30% for week 53/2015. Most of these specimens came from two countries, however.
- Detections of A(H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2) and type B influenza viruses among sentinel surveillance specimens were reported by 17 countries.

Season

The proportion of influenza-virus-positive sentinel-surveillance specimens has been over 10% for three consecutive weeks, indicating the start of the influenza season in week 51/2015 in the northern and southern parts of the European Region.

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

H5N6 kills another in China; H7N9 sickens 9

11 January - China has reported another H5N6 avian flu infection, its fourth in 2 weeks, as well as 9 more H7N9 illnesses, boosting the number of cases in the fourth wave of illnesses to 20 and the overall total past 700. The rise in human avian flu cases comes in the weeks leading up to Lunar New Year celebrations, a time when poultry sales pick up and illnesses have historically climbed. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today posted a travel notice urging people to take a host of health precautions, including to protect against avian flu, for people who will visit Asia to celebrate the Lunar New Year, which falls on Feb 8. [CIDRAP](#)

NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 9 January 2016:

- Influenza: Two cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees: one influenza A(H3) virus and one influenza B virus.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

Studies note nasal spray vaccine failure against H1N1 flu

11 January - Two studies published last week by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other researchers noted that the live attenuated influenza vaccine—a nasal spray option—failed to adequately protect kids from the 2009 H1N1 strain in 2013-14, when it was the predominant circulating strain. ... Of the total, 637 received LAIV and 2,066 received IIV during the four seasons. Over all four seasons, they found no statistical difference in rates of influenza among those vaccinated with LAIV versus IIV for two of the three strains: H3N2 and influenza B. The odds of contracting the 2009 H1N1 strain of flu, however, were three times higher in the LAIV recipients over all seasons, a statistically significant difference. And in 2013-14, a year in which 2009 H1N1 predominated, overall protection against all

three strains was more than five times lower in children 2 to 8 years old—compared with three times lower in all children. [CIDRAP](#)

Ukrainian health official says 25 people killed by swine flu

14 January - Twenty-five people have died from swine flu in Ukraine since the start of the flu season, Tetyana Dykhanovska, the director of the state flu center, told Reuters by phone on Thursday. She did not say when exactly the season started. On Wednesday, Health Minister Alexander Kvitashvili said the flu outbreak was not yet widespread enough to be considered an epidemic. Armenia also reported a swine flu outbreak this week. [Reuters](#)

USAFSAM: DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program

During 27 December 2015 - 9 January 2016 (Surveillance Weeks 52 & 1), a total of 116 specimens were collected and received from 41 locations. Results were finalized for 83 specimens from 32 locations. During Week 52, two influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses were identified. No influenza viruses were identified during Week 1.

[US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

WHO: Influenza Update

4 January - High levels of influenza activity was reported from some countries in Western Asia. Globally influenza activity was picking up in some temperate countries of the Northern Hemisphere, but in general remained low.

- In Eastern Asia, influenza activity continued at low levels, except Mongolia where increased influenza activity was reported.
- In Central Asia, influenza activity increased in a few countries, but in general remained low.
- In Western Asia, influenza activity remained at high levels. Israel, Jordan and Oman reported increased influenza activity associated with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and influenza B viruses, and the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan reported elevated influenza activity, predominantly due to influenza A(H1N1)pdm09. Bahrain and Qatar reported a decline in influenza activity.
- In Europe influenza activity continued at low levels, except in some countries in Northern and Eastern Europe where an increase in influenza activity was observed.
- In Northern Africa, influenza activity increased in a few countries, but in general remained low.
- In tropical Africa, few influenza virus detections were reported.
- In tropics of the Americas, respiratory virus activity was at low levels.
- In tropical Asia, countries in Southern and South East Asia reported low influenza activity overall with the exception of Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand where influenza B viruses continue to be detected.

- In the temperate countries of the Southern Hemisphere, respiratory virus activity was generally low in recent weeks. [WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Campbell Soup becomes first major company to start GMO labeling



11 January - Campbell Soup Co is to start disclosing the presence of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in all its U.S. products, becoming the first major food company to respond to growing calls for more transparency about ingredients in food. The world's largest soup maker broke ranks with peers and said late on Thursday it supported the establishment of federal legislation for a single mandatory labeling standard for GMO-derived foods and a national standard for non-GMO claims made on food packaging.

[Reuters](#)

Elephants infected seven Oregon zoo workers with tuberculosis: CDC

9 January - Seven employees of an Oregon zoo contracted tuberculosis from three elephants in their care in 2013, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Friday. The staff members at the Oregon Zoo in Portland were infected with a latent form of the respiratory illness and therefore displayed no symptoms and were not contagious, a report published by the CDC said. ... PETA sued the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, parent of the CDC, last year. It sought release of data because of what it said was a serious risk that elephants could spread the potentially deadly disease to other elephants or to humans. [Reuters](#)

EU food safety watchdog hits back at scientists in glyphosate row

13 January - The head of Europe's food safety watchdog has written to a group of nearly 100 senior scientists strongly rejecting their criticisms in a row about the safety of weed-killer ingredient glyphosate. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which advises European Union policymakers, issued an opinion in November that glyphosate is unlikely to cause cancer. That was at odds with a view from the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), sparked outrage among environmental

campaigners and divided the scientific community. ... EFSA's opinion could lead the 28-member European Union to renew approval for glyphosate, which was brought into use by Monsanto in the 1970s and is used in its top-selling product Roundup and many other herbicides around the world. [Reuters](#)

Gross anatomy: A bear's parasitic payback

13 January – A man, 47, presented with a myriad of symptoms that didn't add up as he rapidly progressed to respiratory failure and a "profound" white cell count, reported Jason Lee, MD, of the UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, Calif., and colleagues. ... After conducting a full patient history, Lee's group learned of the man's game hunting hobby, and that he'd killed and eaten a wild bear in recent weeks. Investigations into potential parasitic culprits led to *Trichinella* antibodies, and he was diagnosed with trichinellosis. ... According to the authors, recovery from this type of infection is slow and can take several months to years to regain full muscular function. ... Sometimes you eat the bear; sometimes the bear gets posthumous revenge. [MedPage Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

WELLNESS

Acetaminophen tops list of accidental infant poisonings

13 January - Infants are just as susceptible to accidental poisonings as older children are, especially when it comes to medication errors, new research reports. A decade of poison control center calls in the United States showed that acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) was the most common medication mistake for infants. This was followed by H2-blockers (for acid reflux), gastrointestinal medications, combination cough/cold products, antibiotics and ibuprofen (such as Motrin or Advil). The most common non-medication exposures were diaper care and rash products, plants and creams, lotions and make-up, the investigators found. [MedlinePlus](#)

Antidepressant use tied to better diabetes control

13 January - People who have both diabetes and depression may have an easier time keeping their blood sugar levels under control if they also take medication to address their mental health symptoms, a U.S. study suggests. Diabetics can be more prone to depression and stress than other individuals, and these mental health problems are linked to increased risks of dangerously high blood sugar levels and other serious complications, previous research has found. When diabetics do get depressed, however, taking antidepressants is linked to 95% higher odds that their blood sugar will be well controlled, the current study found. [MedPage Today](#)

Did painkiller crackdown cause heroin epidemic?

13 January - Top U.S. drug researchers are challenging a leading theory about the nation's heroin epidemic, saying it's not a direct result of the crackdown on prescription painkillers such as OxyContin and Vicodin. The commentary, published in the Jan. 14 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, is unlikely to resolve the debate, as other researchers disagree with the authors' conclusion. ... the commentary authors said that the rise in heroin use began before states launched restrictions on narcotic painkillers to prevent abuse. [MedPage Today](#)

Dietary supplement sellers could face fresh challenges in 2016

14 January - GNC Holdings, Vitamin Shoppe and other dietary supplement sellers could take a hit to their financial health in 2016 if safety concerns attract new action from U.S. federal and state officials. Shares of GNC and Vitamin Shoppe fell more than 30 percent last year after allegations of impure and dangerous ingredients in dietary supplements hurt already sluggish demand for their products. They and other companies are still under scrutiny, with pressure building to tighten regulation on dietary supplements, which are not covered by U.S. rules governing pharmaceuticals. [Reuters](#)

Exercise Rx plus education alleviates lower-back pain

11 January - Exercise, especially when combined with education, was shown to help reduce lower-back pain, but shoe insoles, back belts, ergonomic interventions, or education alone had little effect, researchers reported. Exercise reduced the risk of lower-back pain episodes by 35% and the risk of sick leave over lower-back pain by 78%, and when combined with education, the risk reduction for the prevention of episodes for up to 1 year was as high as 45%. [MedPage Today](#)

Having friends is good for you, starting in your teens

8 January - Having friends is good for your physical health, and the benefits appear to start early in life, according to a new study. ... After controlling for education, smoking, depression, alcohol consumption, diabetes and other characteristics, they found a lower score on the social integration index was associated with higher levels of C-reactive protein, a measure of general inflammation, and with higher blood pressure, higher body mass index and larger waist circumference. The associations were stronger at some ages than others. For example, social isolation in adolescence raised the risk of inflammation to about the same degree as physical inactivity. Being isolated in old age raised the risk of hypertension as much as having diabetes did. [The New York Times](#)

Model 'No Buy' criteria could dramatically reduce youth exposure to TV alcohol ads

13 January - A set of "no buy" list criteria ... could greatly reduce underage viewers' exposure to alcohol advertising on cable TV, a new study finds. "No-buy" lists refer to lists of television programming that advertisers avoid in order to comply with self-regulatory marketing guidelines. The new report ... found that from 2005 through 2012 youth were exposed more than 15 billion times to alcohol ads on television, most of them on cable, that were not in compliance with the alcohol industry's self-regulatory advertising placement guidelines. ... The new set of "no buy" list criteria recommends avoiding ad placements on programs that were previously non-compliant and during times of day when television audiences skew young (like late night). The criteria also recommend being more selective about ad placements on low-rated cable shows.

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

Motion control running shoes prevent injuries in some

12 January - Runners with flat feet or whose feet roll inward may want to invest in running shoes with motion control to help prevent injuries, according to a study from Luxembourg. Running shoes with motion control features reduced injuries by about half, but that benefit was limited to runners whose feet rolled inward, which is typical for people with flat feet.

[Reuters](#)

Popular acid reflux drugs are linked to kidney disease risk

11 January - People who take certain popular medicines for heartburn, indigestion and acid reflux may want to proceed more cautiously, researchers reported Monday. The drugs, known as proton-pump inhibitors (PPIs), appear to significantly elevate the chances of developing chronic kidney disease, according to a study involving more than 250,000 people. ... Among the 322 people using PPIs in the [first] study, the 10-year estimated absolute risk for chronic kidney disease was 11.8 percent, the researchers reported. The expected risk would have been 8.5 percent. The 10-year absolute risk among the 16,900 patients using PPIs in the [second study] was 15.6 percent, whereas 13.9 percent would have been expected to develop chronic kidney disease. [NPR](#)

Study finds poverty a stronger harbinger of childhood obesity than race

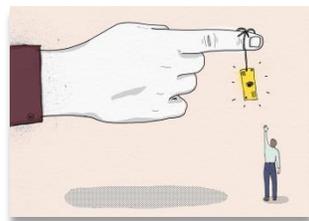
12 January - Poverty is a better predictor of childhood obesity than race, new research suggests. A statistical model, based on information from more than 110,000 Massachusetts students, found that as children's family income dropped, rates of childhood obesity went up. The researchers suspect that fewer parks, recreational programs and full service grocery stores among the poor may lead kids to eat more fast food and get little or no exercise. ...

"It illustrates that race and ethnicity in communities may not have a significant connection to obesity status once the community's income is considered," Eagle said. [MedlinePlus](#)

The more women earn, the less healthy they feel

13 January - ... [For] executive women, as incomes and education levels increase, several health indicators also increase. ... [Wealthier,] more educated women were less likely to be overweight, more likely to get at least six hours of sleep a night, less likely to drink to excess, and less stressed. ... Even though wealthier women were less likely to be overweight and more likely to get at least some exercise, 41% of all the women in my sample reported being overweight, and 25% said they wanted to lose more than 25 pounds. Executive women also report high levels of stress: 30% said their change in weight was due to stress, and 26% said they had used medicine for anxiety or sleep problems in past year. In contrast, the National Institute of Medicine reports that only 18% of the general population is affected by anxiety disorders. ... More-educated women were more likely to drink regularly than less-educated women, but less likely to drink to excess. ... The higher-income women, however, were much more likely to worry about their drinking. [Harvard Business Review](#)

Why employers' incentives for weight loss fall flat with workers



8 January - Promising workers lower health insurance premiums for losing weight did nothing to help them take off the pounds, a recent study found. At the end of a year, obese workers had lost less than 1.5 pounds on average, statistically no different than the minute average gain of a tenth of a pound for workers who weren't offered a financial incentive to lose weight. ... The incentives may have failed for a number of reasons, he said. The \$550 premium discount may not have been large enough. Bundling the financial reward into the insurance premium on a paycheck rather than making a separate payment to the worker may have affected how it was perceived. Other details — such as the fact that participants weighed themselves at work rather than at home — may have been off-putting to some participants. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

Liberia declared Ebola-free, signaling end to West African epidemic



14 January - Liberia was declared free of the Ebola virus by global health experts on Thursday, a milestone that signaled an end to an epidemic in West Africa that has killed more than 11,300 people. But the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned there could still be flare-ups of the disease in the region, which has suffered the world's deadliest outbreak

over the past two years, as survivors can carry the virus for many months and could pass it on. ... Liberia was the last affected country to get the all-clear, with no cases of Ebola for 42 days, twice the length of the virus's "incubation period" [Reuters](#)

Nigeria: Lassa fever outbreak spreads to 10 states

11 January - Nigeria's health ministry said a Lassa fever outbreak over the past 6 weeks has so far totaled 86 cases, 40 of them fatal, [NAIJ.com](#), an Internet news portal based in Lagos, reported on Jan 9. At a media briefing, health minister Isaac Adewole, MD, said the Lassa infections have been reported in 10 of the country's 36 states. ... He said most of the cases didn't involve person-to-person contact and that the number of deaths—with the case-fatality rate at 43.2%—was unusual, according to the report.

[CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

Sierra Leone investigating suspected Ebola death: health ministry

14 January - Sierra Leone's Health Ministry said on Thursday it was investigating a suspected Ebola death in Tonkolili district, hours after the World Health Organization said transmission of the virus in West Africa had ended. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

Afghanistan: From under Kabul's bridges, addicts get help at old U.S. base

10 January - The bridges that span the Kabul River in the heart of this capital city have long harbored their own special hell. For several years, hundreds of heroin addicts lived beneath the bridges. ... When reports surfaced in late 2014 that the drug camps had become a

macabre public eyesore ... President Ashraf Ghani's government said the authorities would relocate the bridge denizens to a sprawling former military base that was built by the United States in 2003 but was handed over to the government when American troops pulled out in 2014. It took more than a year to happen, but over the past two weeks, the government has been making good on its promise, clearing out the riverbanks under the bridges and moving addicts, many of them homeless, into compulsory rehabilitation in the base, Camp Phoenix, on the eastern outskirts of the city. [The New York Times](#)

Syria: Survival in Madaya: 'We are living on water and salt'

8 January - Life has become a grim exercise in survival for thousands of families in the Syrian town of Madaya, where the consequences of a six-month siege have been exacerbated by the onset of winter. ... Around two dozen people have already starved to death and scores more are suffering from malnutrition. "A lot of people are surviving on water and salt only," said a humanitarian activist in Madaya ... "They dissolve salt into the water just to kill the hunger pangs they are dying from." ... Activists have begun documenting deaths related to the siege of Madaya, which is surrounded by landmines planted by the Syrian regime. In December, at least 22 people died from starvation, including six babies, according to the Syrian American Medical society. ... At least four others died in landmine explosions in December, activists say, while several more residents were killed by sniper fire. [Al Jazeera](#)

Yemen: Injured Yemenis - unable to leave, unable to stay

8 January - ... The Yemeni city of Taiz has been under siege by the Houthi rebel group since last April, preventing injured civilians from obtaining the medical care they need. ... Houthi fighters are preventing the hospitals still in operation in Taiz from importing medical supplies, according to Haitham Abdul Malik, a doctor at the state-run al-Thawra hospital - and those who try to leave the city in search of treatment are often restricted from leaving by the Houthis, who accuse them of being resistance fighters. ... Thawra closed its doors to new patients late last month, citing a lack of supplies. [Al Jazeera](#)

Yemen: MSF-backed hospital hit by missile

10 January - At least four people were killed when a missile hit a hospital supported by Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in northern Yemen, the aid agency says. MSF said the strike in Saada province, a Houthi rebel movement stronghold, had injured a further 10 people. The Houthis are fighting the government and its allies, including Saudi Arabia. MSF said it was unclear whether the hospital was hit in an air strike by warplanes of a Saudi-led coalition, or by a rocket fired from the ground. ... The agency said three of those injured in the strike were its staff, two of whom were in a critical condition.

[BBC News](#)

[top of page...](#)

USEUCOM

Europe: Migrants struggle in sub-zero temperatures

8 January - Medics working at refugee aid camps in the Balkans say they are seeing a spike in the number of migrants falling ill as freezing temperatures arrive. It has fallen to as low as -11C in the region. The medical charities International Medical Corps and Medecins Sans Frontieres say most patients are suffering with respiratory problems such as bronchitis and flu. There are also concerns about people refusing or not seeking treatment. Migrants are offered medical assistance, warm clothes and food at the main refugee points at the Serbian border with Macedonia to the south, and Croatia to the north. ... "Even if they are referred to hospital, most don't go. They just want to keep moving... in case borders suddenly close and they are left stranded." [BBC News](#)

United Kingdom: English doctors strike for first time in 40 years

12 January - English doctors staged their first strike in 40 years on Tuesday over government plans to reform pay and conditions for working anti-social hours, in a move health chiefs have warned could put patients' lives at risk. Junior doctors, or doctors in training, who represent just over half of all doctors in the state-funded National Health Service (NHS), said they would only deliver emergency care during the 24-hour walkout. The government expects some 4,000 non-emergency operations to be canceled during the stoppage, the first industrial action by doctors since 1975. ... Recent struggles during winter have also led to concerns as to whether the NHS has been adequately funded to maintain high standards. Ninety-eight percent of more than 37,000 junior doctors in England voted for strikes in protest against a new employment contract Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has proposed. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Acute gastroenteritis on cruise ships — United States, 2008–2014

15 January - ... During the study period, the rates of acute gastroenteritis per 100,000 travel days decreased among passengers from 27.2 cases in 2008 to 22.3 in 2014. Rates for crew members remained essentially unchanged (21.3 cases in 2008 and 21.6 in 2014). However, the rate of acute gastroenteritis was significantly higher in 2012 than in 2011 or 2013 for both passengers and crew members, likely related to the emergence of a novel strain of

norovirus, GII.4 Sydney. During 2008–2014, a total of 133 cruise ship acute gastroenteritis outbreaks were reported, 95 (71%) of which had specimens available for testing. Among these, 92 (97%) were caused by norovirus, and among 80 norovirus specimens for which a genotype was identified, 59 (73.8%) were GII.4 strains. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Average age of first-time moms keeps climbing in the U.S.

14 January - Many moms in the U.S. are waiting longer than ever to have their first child. Fifteen years ago, the mean age of a woman when she first gave birth was 24.9 years old. In 2014, that age had risen to 26.3. "It doesn't sound like a big change," says T.J. Mathews, a demographer at the National Center for Health Statistics and an author of the report published online Thursday. But, he says, the small shift underscores some important trends. First, the researchers found that an increase happened across all states and across all racial and ethnic categories, to one degree or another. ... The main force pulling the average age to the older end of the spectrum is a decrease in the number of teen moms, the researchers say. Over the past 15 years, the proportion of first-time mothers younger than 20 years old dropped from 23 percent to 13 percent. [NPR](#)

U.S.: C.D.C. may warn pregnant women against travel to countries with Zika virus

13 January - Federal health officials are debating whether to warn pregnant women against travel to Brazil and other Latin American and Caribbean countries where mosquitoes are spreading the Zika virus, which has been linked to brain damage in newborn babies. Officials say it could be the first time the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises pregnant women to avoid a specific region during an outbreak. Some infectious disease specialists say such a warning is warranted, although it could have a devastating effect on travel and tourism. A spokesman for the C.D.C. said the agency hoped to make a final announcement Thursday or Friday. [The New York Times](#)

U.S.: Legionnaires' spike in Michigan county dealing with water crisis



13 January - The Michigan county already reeling from lead-contaminated drinking water in the city of Flint has seen a spike of Legionnaires' disease resulting in 10 deaths that may or may not be related to the water crisis, officials said on Wednesday. Genesee County, which includes Flint, had 87 cases of Legionnaires' from June 2014 to November 2015.

State officials told a news conference they could not conclude that the increase was due to a switch in the source of Flint's water. ... About half the cases were connected to Flint water and half were not, according to Nick Lyon, director of the Michigan Department of Health

and Human Services. ... Snyder called in Michigan National Guard troops, who arrived on Wednesday to help distribute bottled water, water filters, testing kits and other supplies to Flint residents. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Pertussis outbreak hits Florida preschoolers

13 January - Twenty-six preschoolers in Leon County, Fla., became ill with pertussis or pertussis-like symptoms -- even though many were current on their vaccinations -- after a classmate developed the illness, according to a study published by the CDC. Officials attributed this outbreak to a combination of the children's incomplete vaccination status, waning immunity due to vaccine type, possible provider error, and perhaps the emergence of vaccine-resistant bacteria. [MedPage Today](#)

U.S.: Secondhand smoke common for U.S. teens

12 January - Close to half of U.S. middle and high school students who never used tobacco themselves were exposed to secondhand smoke in 2013, often at home or in cars, according to a new study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. ... [More] than 18,000 U.S. students in grades six through 12 answered questions about where they had inhaled tobacco smoke from someone who was smoking nearby over the last seven days. ... Most kids said smoking was prohibited at school, at home and in cars, but secondhand smoke exposure was reported by about 48 percent of those who had never used tobacco, 65 percent of former users, and almost 80 percent of current tobacco users. Among never-users, 35 percent said they had inhaled smoke indoors or in outdoor public places, 27 percent at work, 17 percent at school and 15 percent in a vehicle. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Sudden deaths among oil and gas extraction workers resulting from oxygen deficiency and inhalation of hydrocarbon gases and vapors

15 January - ... Cases were defined as nontraumatic oil and gas extraction worker deaths occurring during January 2010–March 2015, in which the workers were 1) performing tank gauging, sampling, or fluid transfer activities at oil and gas well sites; 2) working in proximity to a known and concentrated source of [hydrocarbon gases and vapors (HGVs)] (e.g., an open hatch); 3) not working in a confined space; and 4) not exposed to [hydrogen sulfide (H₂S)], fires, or explosions. ... Nine deaths, occurring from January 2010 to March 2015, were identified; six of the deaths occurred during 2014. ... The median age of workers was 51 years (range = 20–63 years), and all were male. All of the victims were working alone at the time of the incidents and were found collapsed on a tank or catwalk, or at the base of the catwalk stairs. In at least five cases, the hatch was open when the worker was found. Five of the fatalities occurred during the collection of a fluid sample, and four occurred during tank gauging. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Wintertime floods among costliest ever

8 January - As floodwaters continue to rise along the lower Mississippi River, it's clear the slow-motion disaster will be among the costliest wintertime flood events in U.S. history. ... The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said Thursday that damage from the floods will top \$1 billion. That number is likely to climb as the unpredictable and overflowing Mississippi continues its march south. Over the weekend and into next week, floodwaters will continue to rise along the Mississippi River in Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana, including the cities of Greenville and Natchez, Miss., and Baton Rouge, according to AccuWeather. Minor-to-moderate flooding is possible south of Baton Rouge to New Orleans this month. In recent weeks, the floods severely damaged homes, businesses and farms that line the Mississippi and its tributaries in Missouri and Illinois, where at least 25 deaths were blamed on the weather. [USA Today](#)

U.S.: Zika virus case confirmed in Texas; person traveled to Latin America

12 January - A traveler who recently returned to the Houston area from El Salvador has a confirmed case of Zika, a virus borne by mosquitoes, health officials in Harris County, Texas, said on Tuesday. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control said it has confirmed 22 cases of the disease among returning U.S. travelers since it was first reported in 2007, and is still receiving specimens for testing from travelers who recently became ill. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

USPACOM

Thailand: Spike in dengue cases expected in Thailand in 2016, expert says

14 January - The number of dengue cases in Thailand is expected to spike this year, a researcher said, as experts from across Asia met to discuss introduction of the first ever dengue vaccine to control and prevent the disease. ... In Thailand, the 2016 caseload may be on par with the last big outbreak in 1987, when there were about 170,000 cases, said Dr. Usa Thisyakorn, professor of pediatrics at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok and chairwoman of Asian Dengue Vaccination Advocacy (ADVA). "We have had a lot of patients in this season. It's a big predictor that we'll have a big problem with dengue this year. ... It is quite, quite bad. Last year, in 2015, we had 140,000 cases." [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

Brazil microcephaly cases top 3,500, Investigation into possible Zika link continues

14 January - The increase in microcephaly cases continue, albeit at a lesser amount than recent weeks, according to new data from Brazilian health authorities Tuesday (computer translated). 3,530 cases are under investigation from 724 municipalities in 21 Brazilian states. In addition, 46 babies with microcephaly deaths possibly related to the Zika virus are under investigation, all in the Northeast. ... Four cases from Rio Grande do Norte that were Zika positive are being investigated by the US CDC. Two of these cases are miscarriages and two newborns at term (37-42 weeks gestation) who died in the first 24 hours of life. The samples were positive in the PCR test laboratory Zika virus. ... These results add to the other evidence obtained in 2015 and reinforce the hypothesis relationship between the Zika virus infection and the occurrence of microcephaly and other congenital malformations.

[Outbreak News Today](#)

Cuba: Program luring Cuban doctors to U.S. may end

11 January - The U.S. government is considering putting an end to a program that encourages Cuban doctors and nurses on overseas assignments to defect, a senior aide to President Barack Obama said, in a gesture emblematic of improving U.S.-Cuban relations. The Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program, which started under President George W. Bush in 2006, targets one of Cuba's proudest achievements: sending doctors, nurses and other medical professionals abroad, either on missions of mercy or to raise cash for the Communist government. The program grants U.S. officials discretionary authority to allow Cuban medical professionals into the U.S., providing assistance at U.S. embassies in the countries where the doctors are posted. It is open to more than 50,000 Cuban medical professionals in more than 60 countries. [MedPage Today](#)

PAHO reports almost 42,000 new chikungunya cases

11 January - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported 41,815 new chikungunya cases in the Americas and Caribbean late last week in an update that covered 3 weeks' worth of data. The new infections, which average about 14,000 per week, bring the outbreak total to 1,832,496, PAHO said in the Jan 8 update. ... The new illnesses bring the total for 2015 and 2016 to 685,727 suspected and confirmed cases. PAHO also reported 5 new deaths, bringing that total to 82. ... The vast majority of countries in the region, however, have not provided updates to PAHO for many weeks. [CIDRAP News](#) (second item)

[top of page...](#)

[U.S. Military](#) | [Global](#) | [Influenza](#) | [Veterinary/Food Safety](#) | [Wellness](#) | [Contact Us](#)

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