

1 April 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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- Vietnam's battle with tuberculosis

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- Brazil: Dengue outpaces Zika in Brazil

## U.S. MILITARY

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### The Army Public Health Center App is here!

The new application currently features information on the Zika virus. It's available for download to your tablet or smartphone.

[iTunes](#)

[Google Play](#)



## Care commission shocker: The push to privatize VA health care

31 March - Seven of 15 outside health advisers appointed to recommend ways to improve veterans' health services over the next two decades have proposed shutting down all Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and outpatient services, and having its nine million enrollees get their medical care in the private sector. The ... congressionally created Commission on Care calls for an immediate halt to construction of new VA hospitals and clinics, and launch of a "BRAC-like process" to begin closing existing facilities. Shuttering the largest medical system in the country would leave the VA to be "primarily a payor" for the care veterans would receive from civilian community doctors and health facilities.

[Stars and Stripes](#)

## Correlation between antimicrobial resistance in *Escherichia coli* infections in hospitalized patients and rates of inpatient prescriptions for selected antimicrobial agents, Department of Defense hospitals, 2010-2014

March 2016 - ... This analysis aimed to identify inpatient *E. coli* infection trends and correlations between prescriptions and antimicrobial resistance observed among hospitalized Department of Defense beneficiaries during 2010–2014. A descending trend was observed for *E. coli* infection incidence during 2010–2013, with an upward trend noted during the last year of the study. Despite quarterly fluctuations, descending trends were noted among prescription rates and stable trends were observed for resistance rates throughout the study period. A statistically significant moderate and positive correlation ( $r=0.53$ ;  $p=0.01$ ) was noted between levels of ciprofloxacin prescriptions and ciprofloxacin resistance for *E. coli* isolates. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

## Fertility benefit coming to active-duty personnel Oct. 1

30 March - Active-duty military personnel will be able to freeze their eggs or sperm under a fertility pilot program beginning Oct. 1, a senior defense official said earlier this month. ... Tricare will cover the services as part of under the Pentagon's Force of the Future initiative. Gamete freezing is one of several family-planning benefits included in the initiative, an effort to realign military benefits to attract and retain troops.

[Military Times](#)

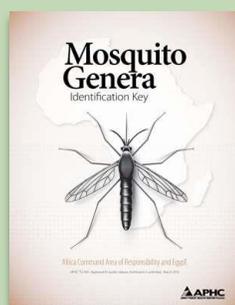
## Time has come for enterprise medicine, top DoD health official says

30 March - The Defense Department's health care system is in need of an overhaul, and that

## New Technical Guides on Mosquito Identification

[APHC: Technical Guide 370 - Mosquito Genera Identification Key, Southern Command Area of Responsibility](#)

[APHC: Technical Guide 369 - Mosquito Genera Identification Key, Africa Command Area of Responsibility and Egypt](#)



must be a top national security requirement, the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs said last week. ... Military health care is still operating in a Cold War posture, [Dr. Jonathan Woodson] said. ... Large, fixed hospitals were the norm. Now, interoperable small teams deliver care to troops in far-flung corners of the globe. "We have to adjust our medical posture to provide care wherever men and women are being asked to go in harm's way," he emphasized. ... A strategic line of effort Woodson said he's taken for the past several years since assuming his post is pursuing enterprise management for the military health care system -- "and that doesn't necessarily mean joint," he said. What it does mean, he explained, is "creating economies of scale, decreasing variability, knowing where the dollars are going, providing common medical platforms [and] common business tools that allow us to do our jobs more effectively. We've got to do that." [U.S. Department of Defense](#)

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## GLOBAL

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### Battling superbugs: Cave bacteria could hold the answer

29 March - Sometimes you find what you are looking for in the unlikeliest of places. Canadian microbiologist Naowarat (Ann) Cheeptham certainly does. She is a leading researcher into how to best battle a growing number of antibiotic resistant superbugs, and she is looking for answers everywhere - from deep subterranean caves to the local sewage treatment plant in her hometown of Kamloops, British Columbia. Cheeptham's most recent breakthrough came after she met one of Canada's top cave explorers: Nick Vieira. ... The soil and dirt he finds in those subterranean nooks are fueling Cheeptham's search for treatments to kill superbugs. "We find microbes in that soil," she says. "Pristine organisms that haven't contacted surface life in any way. When we put them in contact with drug resistance bacteria, we get fascinating results." [Al Jazeera](#)

### Case isolation, safe burial key to curbing Ebola in Sierra Leone

30 March - A nationwide campaign to isolate 100% of Ebola cases and conduct all burial safely, alongside a global response plan, was a key intervention that helped curb transmission in Sierra Leone, according to a study of illness patterns in chiefdoms and households. ... [The] analysis was based on a database ... of suspected and confirmed cases reported from May 2015 through September 2015. Tracking case timing and location, they found that at the chiefdom level, cases dropped by 43% after October 2014, when the United Nations Mission for Emergency Ebola Response launched its strategy. Cases dropped by 65% after December 2014, when Sierra Leone achieved its 100% case isolation and safe burial goal. Factors associated with Ebola transmission included population density, proximity to Ebola treatment centers, crop coverage, and outdoor temperature, the team found. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

**Updated:  
Detecting and  
Reporting DoD  
Cases of Acute Zika  
Virus Disease  
Guidance from  
AFHSB**

Updated information includes:

Case definitions for suspect, probable, and confirmed cases.

Additional links to CDC for updated health care provider guidance on sexual transmission, blood transfusion, and pregnancy.

Emergency Use Authorizations from FDA for the IgM and PCR diagnostic tests.

Change in request for reporting to DRSI from all confirmed to reporting all confirmed and probable cases of Zika.



## Diagnosing ear infection using smartphone



31 March - Researchers at Umeå University in Sweden have developed a method that simplifies the diagnosis of ear infections (otitis media), something which annually affects half a billion children worldwide. The software-based method automatically analyses images from a digital otoscope and enables highly accurate diagnoses. The method is described in the journal *EBioMedicine*. "Because of lack of health personnel in many developing countries, ear infections are often misdiagnosed or not diagnosed at all. This may lead to hearing impairments, and even to life-threatening complications," says Claude Laurent, researcher at the Department of Clinical Sciences at Umeå University and co-author of the article. "Using this method, health personnel can diagnose middle ear infections with the same accuracy as general practitioners and pediatricians. Since the system is cloud-based, meaning that the images can be uploaded and automatically analysed, it provides rapid access to accurate and low-cost diagnoses in developing countries." [Outbreak News Today](#)

## Expert panel urges no letup on Ebola vaccine progress

31 March - Although the World Health Organization (WHO) this week ended the global health emergency over Ebola, the world cannot ease up on efforts to maximize development of Ebola vaccines and prepare for the next outbreak, according to an expert panel. ... Wellcome Trust Director Jeremy Farrar, MD, PhD, said, "Although a global collaborative effort has moved us from having no drugs or vaccines in the early days of the Ebola epidemic to now having a safe, effective vaccine and other promising candidates, it has taken too long, and the job is still not done." "As Ebola infection rates come under control it's a huge concern that complacency sets in, attention moves to more immediate threats, and Ebola vaccine development is left half-finished," he added. [CIDRAP](#)

## Fecal transplants reduce antibiotic resistance in *C diff* patients

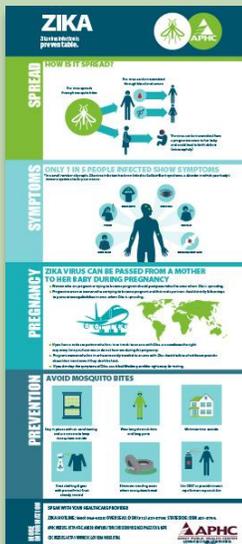
30 March - Fecal microbial transplantation (FMT) reduced the number and diversity of antibiotic-resistance (ABR) genes in patients with recurrent *Clostridium difficile* (*C diff*) infections, according to a study yesterday in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. Also, another study published yesterday showed that FMT may transfer relatively harmless bacterial viruses (bacteriophages) to human cells. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

## Here come the drones

11 March - Already, drones have been used in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti in 2015. And ... drones are expected to be deployed this year in the landlocked, hilly East African nation of Rwanda—a country lacking a sophisticated transportation structure—

## Zika Virus Infographic available in print

The Zika Virus infographic addresses general information on the virus and is now available in print at no charge from the [Health Information Products eCatalog](#).



where the delivery of necessary medical supplies to remote areas has been a tortuous, if not impossible task. And in September, the first FAA approved drone delivery of medical supplies in the United States occurred in rural Virginia. Unmanned aerial vehicles (or drones as they're commonly called) are expected to proliferate significantly in the next few years, experts predict. Drones will be deployed as "ambulances" to deliver invaluable medical equipment, such as automated external defibrillators, that could potentially save those injured in a rock slide, for example. The logistics are straightforward: Using drones can decrease response time and increase survival rates. Drones have the ability to deliver supplies from landing bases, which can be deployed almost anywhere. [Telemedicine](#)

## New source of transplant organs for patients with HIV: others with HIV

31 March - When a Connecticut woman who was HIV-positive died earlier this month, her family decided to donate her organs to others who needed them. Doctors in Maryland announced Wednesday that they performed two landmark, successful surgeries with her kidney and liver — transplanting the organs to HIV-positive patients. This is a big deal, because there continues to be an overall shortage of organs available for transplant, and people living with HIV have an increased risk of kidney and liver failure. Though HIV-positive organs will only go to recipients who have HIV, the ability to use these organs should help reduce the waiting time for all transplant candidates, HIV-positive or not, physicians say. [NPR](#)

## Study focuses on repeated hits, not concussions

31 March - Some scientists studying the relationship between contact sports and the risk of memory or mood problems later in life argue that cumulative exposure to hits that snap the head — not the number of concussions — is the most important factor. That possibility is particularly worrisome in football, where frequent "subconcussive" blows are unavoidable. On Thursday, the most prominent group making this case, based at Boston University, reported the most rigorous evidence to date that overall exposure in former high school and college football players could predict their likelihood of experiencing problems like depression, apathy, or memory loss years later. The finding, appearing in the *Journal of Neurotrauma*, is not conclusive, the authors wrote. Such mental issues stem from a variety of factors in any long life. [The New York Times](#)

## WHO downgrades Ebola health risk

29 March - Ebola is no longer an "extraordinary health event" and the risk of the virus spreading is low, the World Health Organization says. It means the disease is not thought to be a significant public health threat to countries outside of those affected in West Africa. A small cluster of cases are still occurring in Guinea, but Sierra Leone and Liberia have not had any in months. But experts say countries must remain vigilant for new flare ups of Ebola. There have been 12 of these to date - the most recent on 17 March in Guinea. The WHO says countries have been able to react to these clusters quickly to contain them. ..[Ebola has]

**April is  
Sexual Assault  
Awareness and  
Prevention Month**

National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM) is an observance held each April to raise awareness and educate communities on the prevention of sexual assault. During SAAPM the U.S. Army reaffirms its commitment to eliminate sexual assault within the Army, support victims, and inspire bystander intervention. The Army's 2016 SAAPM theme is Sexual Assault. Sexual Harassment. *Not in Our Army.*

**STAND-TO!**  
THE OFFICIAL FOCUS OF THE U.S. ARMY

been detected in the semen of male survivors, and the WHO says national and international efforts must be intensified to ensure such men can have their semen checked to know if they might still be able to spread the infection. [BBC News](#)

## World's obese population hits 641 million, global study finds

31 March - More than 640 million people globally now weigh in as obese and the world has more overweight than underweight people, according to an analysis of global trends in body mass index (BMI). A startling increase in rates of obesity in the past 40 years means the number of people with a BMI of more than 30 has risen from 105 million in 1975 to 641 million in 2014, the study found. More than one in 10 men and one in seven women are obese. ... Yet excessively low body weight remains a serious public health issue in the world's poorest regions, the study's authors said, and rising global trends in obesity should not overshadow the problem of many people not getting enough to eat. In South Asia, for example, almost a quarter of the population is underweight. In Central and East Africa, about 12 percent of women and 15 percent of men are underweight. [Reuters](#)

## ZIKA VIRUS

### F.D.A. clears use of experimental test for screening blood for Zika

30 March - The Food and Drug Administration announced Wednesday that it would allow the use of an experimental test to screen blood donations for contamination with the Zika virus. The move means that Puerto Rico, which had halted local blood donations and had imported nearly 6,000 units of red blood from the continental United States, will soon be able to resume collecting donations from residents. And it should help blood banks elsewhere in the country avoid similar ordeals. [The New York Times](#)

### Update: Interim guidance for health care providers caring for women of reproductive age with possible Zika virus exposure — United States, 2016

25 March - CDC has updated its interim guidance for U.S. health care providers caring for women of reproductive age with possible Zika virus exposure to include recommendations on counseling women and men with possible Zika virus exposure who are interested in conceiving. This guidance is based on limited available data on persistence of Zika virus RNA in blood and semen. Women who have Zika virus disease should wait at least 8 weeks after symptom onset to attempt conception, and men with Zika virus disease should wait at least 6 months after symptom onset to attempt conception. Women and men with possible

## Eye Care and TBI

The Vision Center of Excellence (VCE) recently released a new clinical recommendation and support tools to help eye care providers identify and treat Service members and Veterans who have sustained eye- or vision-related problems following a blast exposure or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

This suite of tools includes:

### Clinical

**Recommendation:** This detailed "Algorithm of Care" provides a recommended, step-by-step approach to help eye care providers evaluate, manage and refer affected Service members and Veterans.

**Clinical Support Tool:** This "Algorithm Card" reference tool helps conveniently guide the eye care provider through the recommended course of care.

### Educational Brochure:

This patient-focused informational tool informs patients of the vision changes associated with TBI, symptoms and when to see a doctor.



exposure to Zika virus but without clinical illness consistent with Zika virus disease should wait at least 8 weeks after exposure to attempt conception. ... Pregnant women who had possible exposure to Zika virus who do not reside in an area with active transmission should be evaluated for Zika virus infection and tested in accordance with CDC Updated Interim Guidance (Figure 1). Similarly, pregnant women who reside in an area with active Zika virus transmission should be evaluated and tested in accordance with CDC interim guidance; a decision to implement testing of asymptomatic pregnant women should be made by local health officials. [CDC](#)

## Many U.S. families considering pregnancy don't know Zika facts

29 March - Many people in U.S. households where someone is pregnant or considering getting pregnant in the next 12 months are not aware of key facts about Zika virus, according to a new poll by Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health researchers. The nationally representative poll of 1,275 adults, including 105 who live in households where someone is pregnant or considering getting pregnant in the next 12 months, was conducted March 2-8, 2016. ... Among people in households where someone is pregnant or considering getting pregnant, the researchers found:

- Approximately one in four (23%) are not aware of the association between Zika virus and the birth defect microcephaly.
- One in five (20%) believe, incorrectly, that there is a vaccine to protect against Zika virus.
- Approximately four in 10 (42%) do not realize Zika virus can be sexually transmitted.
- A quarter (25%) think individuals infected with Zika virus are "very likely" to show symptoms.

Such results suggest this key segment of the population does not have the latest Zika virus information presented by public health officials.

[Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health News](#)

## Pregnant women may be able to get answers about Zika earlier

30 March - ... [A] case — published Wednesday in The New England Journal of Medicine — offers insights into how Zika infects a fetus and suggests ways women may be able to find out earlier whether babies will have birth defects. First, the virus lingered in the patient's blood for months after she got sick. Usually a person's immune system clears out Zika in a week or so. But in this case, Driggers thinks the virus was hiding out inside the fetus — and repeatedly infecting the mother. ... Second, looking only for microcephaly isn't enough. Right now the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends doctors measure the size of the fetus's head with an ultrasound near the 20th week of the pregnancy to check for Zika-related problems. But with this new case, doctors could see brain abnormalities by MRI before there were signs of microcephaly. [NPR](#)

## 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.

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## Spread of Zika virus appears to be slowing in parts of Latin America

31 March - In several Latin American nations hit hard by the Zika epidemic, the transmission of the virus appears to have peaked, with the number of infections declining in recent weeks, according to governments in the region and the latest World Health Organization data. The slowdown has prompted some countries, including Colombia, to significantly scale back their projections of the impact of the virus. Epidemiologists tracking Zika warn that the downward trend appears to be limited to certain countries and should not be interpreted as a sign the epidemic has started to ebb everywhere in the Americas. It still appears to be expanding in Brazil, the epicenter of the virus, they caution.

[The Washington Post](#)

## Team of rival scientists comes together to fight Zika

30 March - ... [Some] of the nation's leading mosquito researchers are striving to assemble a state-of-the-art DNA map that they say will help them fight the disease with the mosquito's own genetic code. The quest involves scientists from assorted disciplines who rarely collaborate, often compete for funding and have different ideas about how to genetically manipulate the mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*. Some want to hunt for genes that, if altered in mosquitoes released into the wild, could drive the species to extinction. Others are trying to identify genes that control how mosquitoes sense human prey so as to devise better repellents. Still others favor the idea of selectively breeding populations of mosquitoes, like corn or cattle, for desirable — or, at least, less undesirable — traits, such as a preference for biting animals other than humans. [The New York Times](#)

## U.S. study may point the way on how to beat the Zika virus

31 March - A molecular map of Zika has revealed important structural differences on a key protein of the virus that may explain why the pathogen attacks nerve cells while other viruses in the same family do not, U.S. researchers said on Thursday. Variations in proteins on the outer shell, or "envelope," of the virus may explain how Zika enters human cells and suggests new ways to fight the virus with drugs or a vaccine, said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. ... Fauci said the important structural difference from similar viruses may explain the link between the mosquito-borne Zika virus and two disorders, the birth defect microcephaly and the paralyzing autoimmune ailment Guillain-Barre Syndrome. [Reuters](#)

## WHO sees scientific consensus on Zika as cause for disorders

31 March - Researchers around the world are now convinced the Zika virus can cause the birth defect microcephaly as well as Guillain-Barre syndrome ... the World Health

Organization said on Thursday. The statement represented the U.N. health agency's strongest language to date on the connection between the mosquito-borne virus and the two maladies. The WHO also reported the first sign of a possible rise in microcephaly cases outside Brazil, the hardest-hit country so far in an outbreak spreading rapidly in Latin America and the Caribbean. Neighboring Colombia is investigating 32 cases of babies born with microcephaly since January, and eight of them so far have tested positive for the Zika virus, the WHO said. [Reuters](#)

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## **INFLUENZA**

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### **AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary**

For Week 11:

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity continued to range from minimal to moderate for the majority of states.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity was minimal across EUCOM with the exception of Germany which had low activity.
- PACOM: Influenza activity remained low across PACOM with the exception of Guam which had minimal activity.
- CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Influenza activity remained minimal across CENTCOM and AFRICOM.
- 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 19 March 2016 (Week 8):

Overall, ILI and influenza A activity, as well as the number of specimens tested, decreased among Army populations.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 11 decreased from week 10. ILI visits were 3% higher than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: Three hospitalized influenza cases were reported to APHC (Prov) through DRSi in week 11; 1 AD service member and 2 non-AD beneficiaries. Two of the cases were not vaccinated and had underlying conditions.
- Viral specimens: During week 11, 533 of 1755 (30%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-A reported 149 influenza A-positive specimens, RHC-C reported 98, RHC-P reported 45, RHC-E reported 28, and CENTCOM reported 5.  
[APHC](#)

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

During week 11 (March 13-19, 2016), influenza activity decreased slightly, but remained elevated in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories during week 11 was influenza A, with influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 viruses predominating. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories decreased.
- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the system-specific epidemic threshold in the NCHS Mortality Surveillance System and above the system-specific epidemic threshold in the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System. [CDC](#)

## ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 11/2016 (14 – 20 March 2016)

Influenza was still widespread in countries in the western part of the Region, but the majority of countries (82%) reported decreasing or stable trends.

- While the proportion of sentinel specimens testing positive for influenza virus remained high, at 49% in week 11/2016, the total number of sentinel influenza virus detections has been decreasing since week 8/2016.
- There is a shift towards influenza virus type B circulation; this is most prominent in sentinel sources, where 66% of detections were influenza virus type B. The proportion of influenza virus type B detections in hospitalized cases ranged between 20% and 45%, indicating that influenza virus type A was most often detected in severe cases.
- The number of cases of severe disease was lower than in previous weeks, but varied between countries. Most severe cases were associated with A(H1N1)pdm09 infection and were in people aged 15–64 years.

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

## New vaccine may prevent multiple strains of the flu

29 March - Each year, researchers identify influenza strains expected to circulate during flu season and manufacture a vaccine aimed at them. Many years, strains not expected to pose a threat emerge, sickening people who have been vaccinated. Scientists at the University of Georgia and Sanofi Pasteur developed a vaccine for H1N1 influenza that protects against pandemic and seasonal strains of the virus, they report in a study published in the *Journal of Virology*. The study's results raise potential for a flu vaccine that covers more than a few strains at a time, and is not affected by the careful guesswork currently used to determine the strains each year's vaccine contains. The vaccine was created using Computationally Optimized Broadly Reactive Antigen, or COBRA, to create synthetic compound vaccines

based on genetic sequences from strains of influenza. While the newly developed vaccine has only been tested with mice, success in the lab raises the possibility for a universal vaccine at some point in the future. [UPI](#)

## NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 2 January 2016:

- Influenza: Nine cases of influenza among US military basic trainees were confirmed by the NHRC laboratory: five influenza (A/H3) and four influenza B.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at MCRD San Diego, Fort Leonard Wood, and Fort Benning.

[Naval Health Research Center](#)

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

During 13 – 26 March 2016 (Surveillance Weeks 11 & 12), a total of 434 specimens were collected and received from 45 locations. Results were finalized for 339 specimens from 43 locations. During Week 11, 87 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, four A(H3N2), and 30 influenza B viruses were identified. Forty-one influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, three A(H3N2), and 21 influenza B viruses were identified during Week 12.

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

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### **VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

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## Hamilton, Canada: 17 animal rabies cases reported in March to date

29 March - Hamilton health officials have reported 17 animal rabies cases in Mar. 2016 to date, bringing the total to 65 in the city since Dec. 2015. Prior to this, the province of Ontario hasn't seen a scourge of rabies since 2007. The rural township of Glanbrook has seen the most animal cases at 20. While bats have accounted for nearly all rabies cases in recent years, Hamilton has seen 46 raccoon cases and 19 in skunks. To put it in perspective, according to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, in 2014, 18 rabies cases were reported in Ontario, all were bats and in 2013, 28 cases which included one dog and 27 bats.

[Outbreak News Today](#)

## India: Anthrax outbreak reported in Jharkhand, second in a week

30 March - An anthrax outbreak, probably linked to the consumption of infected cattle, has

been reported in Bardega village, Simdega district in Jharkhand state in eastern India. According to Hindustan Times report, 13 villagers have been hospitalized in the suspected anthrax outbreak. ... The investigation into the source of the outbreak and laboratory testing for anthrax is currently underway. A team has also been dispatched to look at the situation concerning animal vaccination for the deadly bacterial disease. [Outbreak News Today](#)

## Retail deli slicer cleaning frequency — six selected sites, United States, 2012

1 April - ... Deli meats are a major source of listeriosis illnesses and meats sliced and packaged at retail delis are the major source of listeriosis illnesses attributed to deli meat. Mechanical slicers pose cross-contamination risks in delis and are an important source of *Listeria* cross-contamination. ... Good slicer cleaning practices can reduce this foodborne illness risk. CDC's Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net) studied how often retail deli slicers were fully cleaned (disassembled, cleaned, and sanitized) at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code–specified minimum frequency of every 4 hours and examined deli and staff characteristics related to slicer cleaning frequency. Interviews with staff members in 298 randomly-selected delis in six EHS-Net sites showed that approximately half of delis fully cleaned their slicers less often than FDA's specified minimum frequency. Chain-owned delis and delis with more customers, more slicers, required manager food safety training, food safety–knowledgeable workers, written slicer-cleaning policies, and food safety–certified managers fully cleaned their slicers more frequently than did other types of delis, according to deli managers or workers. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## Tapeworms and other parasites can make good guests

31 March - The kakapo — a large flightless parrot that can live 95 years and perhaps longer — is dangerously close to extinction. Once found throughout New Zealand, the population has dwindled to fewer than 150. Conservation biologists are doing everything they can to keep the kakapo from vanishing. And so, when they discovered a few years ago that a pair of captive kakapos were infected with tapeworms, they did the obvious thing. They dewormed the birds. Hamish G. Spencer, a geneticist at the University of Otago in New Zealand, thinks that was unwise. If endangered species are going to escape extinction, he argues, they may need parasites to survive. ... Aggressive medicine may endanger captive animals by removing parasites that help their immune systems develop normally. And ... these animals may end up unprepared for the diseases they may encounter should they be returned to the wild. [The New York Times](#)

## UK: Cumin and coriander powder recalled due to *Salmonella*

30 March - TRS Wholesale Company Ltd is recalling its Jeera (Cumin) Powder and Dhania (Coriander) Powder because salmonella has been detected in the products. The following products are affected by the recall:

- TRS Jeera Powder  
Pack size: 100g  
Batch no: P353340  
'Best before' date: 31 December 2017
- TRS Dhania Powder  
Pack size: 100g  
Batch no: A481514  
'Best before' end: End December 2017

The company will be displaying point-of-sale notices in all stores. These notices will tell consumers why the products are being recalled and will tell them what to do if they have bought the products. [Outbreak News Today](#)

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## WELLNESS

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### A crisis with scant data: states move to count drug-dependent babies

28 March - Many states — including some that have been hardest hit by the opioid crisis — don't know how many of their youngest residents each year are born physically dependent on those drugs. They rely on estimates. ... Between 2013 and 2014 in Pennsylvania, Dallas says, about 3,700 of the babies on Medicaid, the government's health insurance for the poor and disabled, were born with neonatal abstinence syndrome. Statistics show that 31 died before their first birthday — and neonatal abstinence syndrome likely played a role in some of those deaths. ... With more complete information, Dallas says, the state would be able to better deploy resources as it tries to solve a health problem that's getting worse.

[NPR](#)

### Campbell Soup to switch to BPA-free cans by 2017

28 March - Campbell Soup Co, the world's largest soup maker, said it would completely switch to cans that do not use the chemical bisphenol A (BPA) for their linings in North America by the middle of 2017. Bisphenol A is used to stiffen plastics that some studies suggest pose health risks. It is a component in metal can coating and protects food from directly contacting metal surfaces. The company said it began using cans with linings made from acrylic or polyester materials in March and will continue to introduce the new linings across the United States and Canada through 2017. [Reuters](#)

### CDC: 104,000 quit smoking due to 'Tips from Former Smokers' campaign

25 March - More than 1.8 million smokers attempted to quit and an estimated 104,000 quit

smoking for good as a result of a 2014 federal anti-smoking campaign, according to a new survey by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And the ads are still having a "significant impact," Atlanta-based CDC says. The ads feature people and their struggles with smoking-related health issues. ... About 80 percent of U.S. adult cigarette smokers who were surveyed reported seeing at least one television ad from Phase 2 of the 2014 campaign, the CDC said. [Atlanta Business Chronicle](#)

## New recommendations link better sleep to improved concussion outcomes

31 March - A national group of sleep and brain injury specialists recommends specific steps to test and develop sleep-related treatments to improve the outcome of mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI). ... Clinical practice guidelines in mTBI or concussion are woefully lacking, despite spending tens of millions of dollars over the past decade," says the group's chair, Emerson M. Wickwire, PhD. ... Wickwire says sleep and brain injury appear to share several overlapping brain circuits. "Structures damaged in brain injury may cause alterations in sleep/wake cycles. At the same time, sleep disturbances, which are reported by roughly half of people with brain injury, worsen quality of life, make treatment more difficult, and may well change the way the brain heals itself," he says. Given the shared neurophysiologic underpinnings of sleep and mTBI, Wickwire says disturbed sleep and clinical sleep disorders represent treatment targets that can be modified to improve outcomes and quality of life in mTBI. [Medical Xpress](#)

## The quiet research that led to a resounding success in diabetes prevention

31 March - ... The Diabetes Prevention Program grew out of extensive research on weight management and behavioral learning. More than 3,200 patients ages 25 to 75 with pre-diabetes were randomized to one of three groups. The first group was given an intensive lifestyle intervention. By focusing on a low-fat, low-calorie diet with the addition of exercise through brisk walking or a similar intensity activity, it encouraged people to lose at least 7 percent of their body weight and maintain that over the course of the trial. The backbone of the intervention involved 16 one-hour face-to-face meetings that helped each individual participant set and achieve goals to improve health habits. The second group was treated with metformin, a medication that can lower blood glucose, and the third was the control group, provided with a placebo medication. The trial was ended early because the results were so compelling. Those in the medication arm had a 31 percent reduction in the risk of developing diabetes. More important, those in the lifestyle intervention saw a 58 percent reduction in their risk. [The New York Times](#)

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## Giant rats to sniff out tuberculosis in Tanzania, Mozambique prisons

29 March - Scientists in East Africa plan to exploit trained rats' highly developed sense of smell to carry out mass screening for tuberculosis among inmates of crowded prisons in Tanzania and Mozambique. African Giant Pouched Rats trained by the Belgian non-governmental organization APOPO are widely known for their work sniffing out landmines, and are now developing a reputation in East Africa for their skill and speed at detecting TB too. ... APOPO, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID,) plans to recruit and train more rats to carry out prison screening that it expects to be faster and more reliable than existing methods. [Reuters](#)

## Kenya: Hepatitis A outbreak strikes Mombasa

30 March – A hepatitis A outbreak has hospitalized 21 people in Mombasa, Kenya in recent days, according to local media. The viral disease has been on the rise since January among schoolchildren. Mombasa Health executive Mohammed Abdi said, "We have got an outbreak of hepatitis A which we discovered in January in the schools around Mvita where we had a few cases which we made a follow up on and treated. "Right now we have had a recurrence of the same over the Easter break."

[Outbreak News Today](#)

## South Sudan: Hospitals targeted across South Sudan

27 March - ... According to a report by Human Rights Watch, medical facilities in South Sudan are at long-term risk of destruction, but in recent months they have come under increased attack. Less than a week after the destruction of the health facilities in Malakal, a clinic run by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Pibor, about 250 miles from Malakal - the only healthcare provider in the region, according to the organisation - was looted. "Currently, it's as pervasive as it's ever been in terms of the lack of respect for medical functions [worldwide]," said Leonard Rubinstein, the director of the programme on Human Rights, Health and Conflict at Johns Hopkins University in the US. "The reasons vary from country to country, but it's a disturbing trend." And South Sudan has become one of the most dangerous places for medical facilities. [Al Jazeera](#)

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## Saudi Arabia reports 1 new MERS case and 1 death

31 March - Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health (MOH) today reported one new MERS-CoV case and the death of a previously reported patient, both in the north-central city of Buraydah. The MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) case involves a 56-year-old Saudi man who is hospitalized in critical condition. He is not a healthcare worker, and the MOH has listed his infection as associated with exposure to camels. The fatality was in a 70-year-old Saudi man in Buraydah, the site of numerous recent healthcare-associated MERS cases. The man was not a healthcare worker and had an underlying medical condition. Also included in the MOH report was the recovery from MERS of a 57-year-old foreign man in Buraydah. He is not a healthcare worker and had no preexisting disease. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

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## France: Gas explosion rocks central Paris building, at least 5 injured

1 April - A massive gas explosion devastated the top three floors and roof of a building in central Paris on Friday, police said, adding that five people suffered minor injuries. The blast near the Jardin du Luxembourg was accidental and was traced to a fire that caused a gas stove to blow up, police said. ... The force of the blast blew out some of the prestigious school's windows, a witness said. [Gulf News](#)

## Russia's demography is looking different from the Brezhnev-era stagnation

29 March - ... [Health] data (so far!) suggest that rather than a return to "stagnation" the health status of most Russians continues to, very slowly and very modestly, improve. Rosstat just released data for January and February 2016 and, through the first two months of the year, the crude death rate was down by about 3%. In a society like Russia that is gradually growing older (meaning that the crude death rate should be slowly rising since older people die more frequently than younger people) that is only possible if there that there has been some rather noticeable improvements in life expectancy. And the data show exactly that! Another recent data release showed that, in 2015, average life expectancy set a new all-time record of 71.39. Rather than stagnating or declining, Russian life expectancy has continued to improve. It is true that there are some worrisome indicators scattered throughout the

data releases, particularly the inclusion of a new, and very suspicious looking, alcohol-related indicator. ... There's no indication that the infant mortality rate is increasing, there's no evidence that life expectancy is going down, and there's no evidence (at least yet!) of a renewed surge in alcohol-related deaths. [Forbes](#)

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## **USNORTHCOM**

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### **U.S.: Autism rate unchanged in new CDC report**

31 March - ... [A] new U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that finds the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) largely unchanged from two years ago, at one in 68 children (or 1.46 percent). Boys were 4.5 times more likely to be identified with ASD than girls, an established trend. The rate is one in 42 among boys and one in 189 among girls. ... Rates have been rising since the 1960s, but researchers do not know how much of this rise is due to more children being diagnosed with ASD or if actual cases are increasing or a combination of both. The CDC's first prevalence report, which was released in 2007 and was based on 2000 and 2002 data, found that one in 150 children had ASD.

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

### **U.S.: Elevated levels of suspected carcinogen found in states' drinking water**

31 March - ... Communities in three states in the Northeast have found elevated levels of a suspected carcinogen — perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA. Used to make Teflon, the chemical has contaminated water supplies in New York, New Hampshire and Vermont. After a four-month ban in the village of Hoosick Falls, N.Y., the New York State Department of Health declared the water safe to drink and cook with again on Wednesday. A temporary filtering system has brought PFOA levels down to non-detectable levels for weeks. ...

Philippe [Grandjean's] research on PFOA has found it can interfere with children's immune systems and make them less responsive to vaccines. Other studies have shown a "probable link" between the chemical and some types of cancer. [NPR](#)

### **U.S.: Fewer ear infections for U.S. babies**

29 March - Increases in breastfeeding, decreases in parental smoking, and vaccination against pneumonia and influenza were linked to the reduced incidence of ear infections among U.S. babies in their first year of life, researchers said. Rates of acute otitis media (AOM) have dropped significantly since the 1980s and 1990s, reported Tasnee Chonmaitree, MD, of the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, and colleagues. Nearly half (46%) of the 367 babies followed between 2008 and 2014 had an ear infection in their first year of life, compared with around three out of five babies in studies conducted 2 and 3 decades ago, they wrote in *Pediatrics*. [MedPage Today](#)

## U.S.: Gonorrhea on the rise in Utah, health experts say

28 March - Gonorrhea is spreading like wildfire in Utah and it's concerning state health officials like HIV/STD Epidemiologist Matthew Mietchen. "We're talking over a 700 percent increase in just a few years," Mietchen said. According to the Utah State Health Department, the cases have jumped from 310 in 2010 to a preliminary figure of 1,564 in 2015. ... "Some of the largest increases is - we're talking anywhere from seeing one to two cases a year to seeing 20-30 cases in a year are among age groups like 30- 35-year-olds up to 40- 45-year-olds," Mietchen said. ... Utah still has better numbers compared to the rest of the country. Utah's gonorrhea rate is about one-fifth of the national average. [Fox13](#)

## U.S.: New F.D.A. guidelines ease access to abortion pill

30 March - The Food and Drug Administration has relaxed the guidelines for taking a pill that induces abortion. ... The change allows women to use the drug further into pregnancy and with fewer visits to the doctor. ... The F.D.A. said its actions were based strictly on medical science. ... The change brings the directions for taking the drug, mifepristone, in line with what has become standard medical practice in most states: reducing the dosage to 200 milligrams from 600 milligrams, decreasing the number of visits a woman must make to a doctor to two from three, and extending the period when she can take the pill to 10 weeks of pregnancy from seven weeks. [The New York Times](#)

## U.S.: Obama announces new moves to fight opioid and heroin abuse epidemic

29 March - The Obama administration is making it easier for doctors to use anti-addiction drugs in the fight against an exploding epidemic of prescription drug and heroin abuse. It's part of a package of new initiatives announced Tuesday that includes other efforts to expand addiction treatment and increase coverage for mental health and substance abuse services. ... Medication-assisted treatment with drugs like methadone and buprenorphine is a key component of the administration's attack on the opioid epidemic. These drugs are used in conjunction with behavioral treatment to help manage an addict's recovery and ease withdrawal from opioid drugs. [NPR](#)

## U.S.: Preterm births tied to air pollution cost \$4 billion a year

29 March - U.S. premature births linked to air pollution cost more than \$4 billion a year in medical care and lost economic opportunity, a new analysis estimates. Almost 16,000 babies arrive early each year due at least in part to air pollution, according to researchers who analyzed air quality data and birth records. Annual costs associated with these preemies include nearly \$3.6 billion (about 3.2 billion euros) in lost wages and productivity due to physical and mental deficits tied to the early arrivals as well as \$760 million (about 678 million euros) for extended hospitalizations and long-term use of medications, researchers calculated. [Reuters](#)

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## **China: After China vaccine scare, Hong Kong to limit inoculations for non-resident children**

30 March - Hong Kong is to limit the number of non-resident children getting vaccinations at government clinics, after an illegal vaccine scandal in mainland China raised fears some families would come to the city for inoculations and put pressure on supplies. From April 1, Hong Kong's Maternal and Child Health Centres will only accept 120 new non-resident children a month. Non-resident children will only be able to book an appointment when there is spare capacity and will have to pay a higher fee. ... Mainland Chinese authorities said this month a mother and daughter had illegally traded nearly \$90 million worth of vaccines and sold them on to hundreds of re-sellers around the country, prompting an outcry from parents and political leaders. [Reuters](#)

## **India: Overpass collapse kills 21, leaves others trapped in India**

31 March - A long section of an overpass under construction collapsed Thursday in a crowded Kolkata neighborhood and sent tons of concrete and steel slamming onto midday traffic, killing at least 21 people and leaving scores of others injured, police said. More people were feared trapped in the debris, and rescuers used saws, small cranes and their bare hands to search for survivors. Smashed yellow taxis, destroyed rickshaws and the bloody legs of trapped people jutted from the fallen girders and concrete. ... About 100 meters (300 feet) of the overpass fell, while other sections remained standing. ... K.P Rao, a top official of IVRCL Infrastructure company, which was building the overpass [said, ]"We have to go into the details to find out whether the collapse was due to any technical or quality issue." [The Washington Post](#)

## **Indonesia pushes to unshackle victims of mental illness**

30 March - ...[Nearly] 20,000 Indonesian victims of mental illness [are] kept in shackles by families and government institutions, an illegal practice President Joko Widodo's administration aims to stamp out by the end of 2017. ... In a program launched this year, Indonesia sends teams of workers into often-remote hamlets to help free patients kept in chains and ensure they get the medical treatment they need. "The social ministry and agencies across Indonesia recognize that there are still a lot of such cases, so we are determined to end the shackling practice by December 2017," said Social Affairs Minister Khofifah Indar Parawansa. The world's fourth most populous nation has outlawed such shackling for decades but the practice continues, particularly in poor areas. [Reuters](#)

## Thailand: Only one country offers universal health care to undocumented migrants

31 March - While many countries struggle with whether — and how — to provide health care for their migrant populations, one country seems to stand out in its policy to provide equitable coverage for migrants and refugees, regardless of their legal status: Thailand. In Thailand, migrants — who account for more than 6 percent of the country's 67.1 million population — are able to immediately buy and access the country's universal health care. It's the only country in the world where undocumented migrants have the same health care rights as nationals. ... A combination of factors led the Thai government to contemplate a system that gave migrants equal health care. By 2005, migrant workers from Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia accounted for 5 percent of all labor forces within Thailand. ... The government recognized the migrants' contribution to the economy, considered access to health care a human right and was concerned that the lack of proper care for this vulnerable population would allow for communicable diseases that had already been controlled in Thailand to spread once again. [NPR](#)

## Vietnam's battle with tuberculosis

28 March - ... Twenty-five years ago ... Vietnam had nearly 600 cases of tuberculosis for every 100,000 residents. Today, it has less than 200. The country boasts a 90 percent cure rate for uncomplicated tuberculosis and cures 75 percent of its drug-resistant cases, easily beating the global average, 50 percent. ... There is no better example of how fragile this success may be than Vietnam. Hospital wards here are packed dangerously full, raising the risk that drug-resistant strains will spread. The easy-to-reach patients have been treated, and many of the rest are the hardest to help: heroin-addicted couriers and laborers from the poppy fields of the nearby Golden Triangle, and mountain villagers who do not speak Vietnamese and are barely connected to the health care system. [The New York Times](#)

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**USSOUTHCOM**

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## Brazil: Dengue outpaces Zika in Brazil

31 March - While global health agencies struggle to tame the rapidly spreading Zika virus, an older and deadlier pathogen is straining medical providers and setting record infection levels in Brazil: dengue. Brazil registered a record 1.6 million cases of the mosquito-borne dengue virus last year, roughly triple the number in 2014. The number of dengue cases nationwide this year through February 20, the most recent data available, rose to 300,980, nearly 50% higher than for same period last year. In many parts of the country, clinics and emergency rooms are struggling to cope with overflows of patients complaining of rashes,

fever, headaches and joint and muscle pain. Many patients face the added anxiety of not knowing whether they have contracted dengue, Zika or a third, similar mosquito-transmitted virus, chikungunya. All are currently at record levels in Brazil. [The Wall Street Journal](#)

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