

22 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.

U.S. Military | Global | Influenza | Veterinary/Food Safety | Wellness | Contact Us

USAFRICOM | USCENTCOM | USEUCOM | USNORTHCOM | USPACOM | USSOUTHCOM

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Contents

U.S. MILITARY

- Incidence of diagnoses using ICD-9 Codes specifying chronic pain (not neoplasm related) in the primary diagnostic position
- Investigation faults U.S. Army lab's leaders over mistaken anthrax shipments
- Sexual trauma raises suicide risk among veterans
- Small study sees differences in brains of soldiers with PTSD

GLOBAL

- Americans' views on the U.S. role in global health
- Children on Syrian refugee route could freeze to death: U.N.
- Ebola: \$5m vaccine deal announced
- HPV raises head cancer risk sevenfold, study finds
- ZIKA VIRUS
- Birth defects linked to Zika virus still rising in Brazil
- CDC: Interim guidelines for pregnant women during a Zika virus outbreak - United States, 2016
- CDC releases Zika guidance on pregnant patients
- El Salvador urges against pregnancies until 2018 as Zika virus spreads
- Guillain-Barré syndrome – El Salvador
- Recognizing, managing, and reporting Zika virus infections in travelers returning from Central America, South America, the Caribbean, and Mexico
- Transgenic mosquito ready to join Brazil's war on Zika virus
- Zika and microcephaly: report from Brazil

INFLUENZA

- AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary
- APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report
- CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report
- CDC says closely monitoring outbreak of new bird flu strain
- China confirms H5N6, H7N9 avian flu cases
- ECDC: Flu News Europe
- Estrogen protective against flu virus in women but not men, study suggests
- H1N1 swine flu kills 18 in Armenia, three in Georgia: officials
- NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

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.

If you haven't already done so, please -

TAKE THE QUICK SURVEY

And thanks to all of you who have already participated!

Subscription or Comments

If you wish to be added to the APH Weekly Update mailing list, removed from the mailing list, or if you have comments or questions about the update, please [contact us](#). We welcome your comments. Please feel free to share this update with others who may be interested.



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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- Discovery of disease-carrying rodents prompts county health advisory
- Salmonella risk prompts recall of Trader Joe's Raw Cashew Pieces

WELLNESS

- Are beards good for your health?
- Five questions to ask when considering health supplements
- HIV drugs give couples 'ray of hope'
- Limiting infants to almond milk can result in scurvy
- Most U.S. restaurant meals exceed recommended calories: study
- Opioid abuse takes a toll on workers and their employers
- Rate of birth defect of abdominal wall increasing, C.D.C. says
- Scripps Wired for Health study results show no clinical or economic benefit from digital health monitoring
- 'Supplements and safety' explores what's in your supplements

USAFRICOM

- Sierra Leone confirms new Ebola case, second in less than a week
- Southern Africa's drought leaves millions hungry

USCENTCOM

- Iraq: Nearly 19,000 civilians killed in Iraq in 22 months, U.N. report says
- Syria: Beyond Madaya, 1 in 3 Syrians doesn't have adequate access to food

USEUCOM

- France: Drug trial participant dies, 5 others hospitalized in France
- Turkey: ISIS and bioterrorism - Tularemia planned use in Turkey's water

USNORTHCOM

- U.S.: Another tuberculosis case confirmed in Alabama
- U.S.: Drug shortages in U.S. emergency rooms on the rise
- U.S.: FDA proposes cybersecurity guidance for medical devices
- U.S.: Federal workplace law fails to protect employees left out of workers' comp
- U.S.: Inadequate diagnosis and treatment of malaria among travelers returning from Africa during the Ebola epidemic
- U.S.: Sexually active U.S. teens, young adults not getting HIV tests
- U.S.: Ticks carrying Lyme disease in almost half of U.S. counties

USPACOM

- Thailand dengue fever cases quadruple in one week
- Tonga: How mutton flaps are killing Tonga

USSOUTHCOM

- Latin America's biggest medical cannabis farm sprouts in Chile
- PAHO reports 7,500 new chikungunya cases in the Americas
- Venezuela needs urgent foreign medical aid, pharma group says

U.S. MILITARY

Deer Hunter Fact Sheet: Protection from Ticks

A [new APHC fact sheet](#) on tick bite prevention for hunters is now available.

Ticks found on deer may spread diseases to people, pets and other animals. Germs that may be present in their saliva are transmitted as they feed on a person or animal.

These germs include bacteria and viruses that cause such serious diseases as Lyme disease, Babesiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Human ehrlichiosis.

Even though the ticks are attached to the deer while it is alive, as the body temperature of the deer drops, ticks will release from your deer and seek another warm bodied host. The next warm bodied host could be you, another family member or your family pet.



Incidence of diagnoses using ICD-9 Codes specifying chronic pain (not neoplasm related) in the primary diagnostic position

December 2015 - ... This report documents a striking increase in the numbers and rates of incident medical encounters with a primary diagnosis related to chronic pain during the 8-year surveillance period. This finding is not entirely unexpected given that new codes allowing for greater specificity of pain diagnoses were introduced just prior to the start of the surveillance period; examinations of the utilization of other newly introduced ICD-9 codes have demonstrated a similar upward trend in use. It is also likely that the results of this analysis represent an overarching increase in the numbers of service members presenting for health care for chronic pain conditions. ... [The] prevalence of chronic pain is high in military populations. ... However, whether, and to what extent, an increasing proportion of service members are suffering from chronic pain cannot be answered by this very limited analysis. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Investigation faults U.S. Army lab's leaders over mistaken anthrax shipments

15 January - Officials at a U.S. Army biodefense lab in Utah had multiple warning signs of safety issues but failed to take steps that could have averted the mistaken shipment of live anthrax to other labs, according to a military investigation report released on Friday. While no single event or individual directly caused the shipment, a number of people, including leaders at Dugway Proving Ground, should be held accountable, the report said. "A combination of events including gaps in science, institutional issues, and personal accountability, when taken together each contributed to this event," Major General Paul Ostrowski told reporters. [Reuters](#)

Sexual trauma raises suicide risk among veterans

20 January - Men and women veterans who experienced sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment while serving in the military are at heightened risk of suicide, according to a recent U.S. study. Researchers with the department of Veterans Affairs found that men with a history of what the VA calls military sexual trauma (MST) are 70 percent more likely than fellow vets without such experience to commit suicide, and women veterans with MST are more than twice as likely as other female vets to do so. [Reuters](#)

Small study sees differences in brains of soldiers with PTSD

20 January - New findings about how the brains of soldiers with post-traumatic stress

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](#)

disorder (PTSD) respond to angry faces might help improve diagnosis of the condition, researchers report. PTSD can be difficult to diagnose because its symptoms vary considerably, the researchers explained. And many of those symptoms -- such as memory loss and attention problems -- are similar to those of a concussion. In the small study, the Canadian researchers said they found that over-connected brain circuits in soldiers with PTSD made them more attuned to angry faces than happy faces.

[U.S. News and World Report](#)

[top of page...](#)

GLOBAL

Americans' views on the U.S. role in global health

20 January - ... [When] it comes to global health efforts specifically, about half (53 percent) say the U.S. government is already doing enough to improve health for people in developing countries, and nearly half (46 percent) feel that the U.S. is doing more than its fair share compared to other wealthy countries. In addition, most Americans prefer a collaborative international approach in global health efforts over the U.S. acting alone, and this sentiment has increased over the past several years. The survey also finds a general skepticism on the part of the American people when it comes to the effectiveness of global health spending, with seven in ten saying the "bang for the buck" of U.S. spending in this area is only fair or poor, and more than half believing that spending more on global health efforts won't lead to meaningful progress (a share that has grown since 2012). [Kaiser Family Foundation](#)

Children on Syrian refugee route could freeze to death: U.N.

19 January - Thousands of refugee children traveling along the migration route through Turkey and southeastern Europe are at risk from a sustained spell of freezing weather in the next two weeks, the United Nations and aid agencies said on Tuesday. The U.N. weather agency said it forecast below-normal temperatures and heavy snowfall in the next two weeks in the eastern Balkan peninsula, Turkey, the eastern Mediterranean and Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan. ... Children were coming ashore on the Greek island of Lesbos wearing only T-shirts and soaking wet after traveling on unseaworthy rubber dinghies, the charity Save the Children said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

Ebola: \$5m vaccine deal announced



20 January - The Vaccine Alliance, Gavi, has signed a \$5m (£3.5m) deal for an Ebola vaccine, to protect against future outbreaks of the deadly disease. The deal commits pharmaceutical company Merck to keeping 300,000 vaccines ready for emergency use or further clinical trials. It will also submit an application to license

the vaccine by the end of 2017, which would be the next step towards enabling Gavi to prepare a global stockpile. ... Merck has led trials of the VSV-EBOV vaccine - which combines a fragment of the Ebola virus with another safer virus in order to train the immune system to beat Ebola. Early evidence from studies in West Africa suggests it may give 100% protection, although more data is still being collected.

[BBC News](#)

HPV raises head cancer risk sevenfold, study finds

21 January - The human papillomavirus (HPV) raises the chances someone will get head and neck cancer by at least sevenfold and maybe much more, researchers reported Thursday. [A] mouthwash test can tell a doctor who's most at risk. [Researchers] looked at the records of more than 96,000 people taking part in a big medical study. They all took a mouthwash test for oral HPV infection as part of the study. Four years later, 132 of them had developed some form of head and neck cancer. ... People infected with a strain called HPV-16 were between two and 22 times as likely to be in the cancer group, the team reported. [NBC News](#)

ZIKA VIRUS

Birth defects linked to Zika virus still rising in Brazil

20 January - The cases of babies born with unusually small heads continue to rise in Brazil where researchers said on Wednesday they had found new evidence linking the increase to the Zika virus spreading through the Americas. The Ministry of Health said the number suspected cases of microcephaly, a neurological disorder in which infants are born with smaller craniums and brains, increased to 3,893 by January 16 from 3,530 cases 10 days earlier. The number of reported deaths of deformed babies rose to 49, ministry officials said at a news conference. So far, health authorities have only confirmed six cases of microcephaly where the infant was infected with the mosquito-born Zika virus. [Reuters](#)

CDC: Interim guidelines for pregnant women during a Zika virus outbreak - United States, 2016

22 January - CDC has developed interim guidelines for health care providers in the United States caring for pregnant women during a Zika virus outbreak. These guidelines include recommendations for pregnant women considering travel to an area with Zika virus

transmission and recommendations for screening, testing, and management of pregnant returning travelers. Health care providers should ask all pregnant women about recent travel. Pregnant women with a history of travel to an area with Zika virus transmission and who report two or more symptoms consistent with Zika virus disease (acute onset of fever, maculopapular rash, arthralgia, or conjunctivitis) during or within 2 weeks of travel, or who have ultrasound findings of fetal microcephaly or intracranial calcifications, should be tested for Zika virus infection in consultation with their state or local health department. [CDC](#)

CDC releases Zika guidance on pregnant patients

19 January - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today released **interim guidance on Zika virus for clinicians** with pregnant patients returning from or considering visiting countries where it is circulating, a move that comes on the heels of its Jan 15 **travel advice for pregnant women** and those trying to conceive. The CDC's warning a few days ago—urging pregnant women and those planning pregnancies to temporarily shelve their travel plans—was underscored by an announcement only hours later of a **microcephaly case in a baby born in Hawaii**. Today's guidance for clinicians and the stepped-up travel advisory from a few days ago come during the winter vacation travel season to tropical climates and ahead of Brazil's pre-Lenten Carnival celebrations next month and the Summer Olympics that get under way in August. Meanwhile, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said the mosquito-borne virus has expanded its reach, which came with a request for countries to look for unusual rises in cases of **Guillain-Barre syndrome** (GBS), and officials in Brazil announced funding to **fast-forward vaccine development**. [CIDRAP](#)

El Salvador urges against pregnancies until 2018 as Zika virus spreads

21 January - El Salvador on Thursday urged women in the Central American nation to avoid getting pregnant until 2018 to avoid their children developing birth defects from the mosquito-borne Zika virus which has rampaged through the Americas. He said the government decided to make the announcement because 5,397 cases of the Zika virus had been detected in El Salvador in 2015 and the first few days of this year. Official figures show 96 pregnant women are suspected of having contracted the virus, but so far none have had babies born with microcephaly. In Colombia, which has the second-highest Zika infection rate after Brazil, the government is also advising women to delay becoming pregnant, but only for six to eight months. [Reuters](#)

Guillain-Barré syndrome – El Salvador

21 January - The National IHR Focal Point of El Salvador has notified PAHO/WHO of an unusual increase of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) in the country. In El Salvador, the annual average number of GBS is 169; however, from 1 December 2015 to 6 January 2016, 46 GBS were recorded, including 2 deaths. ... Investigations are ongoing to determine the cause of infection and acquire further details about the laboratory diagnosis. Possible associations

between GBS and Zika virus infection are also being investigated. Since the confirmation of the first case of Zika virus infection in November 2015 until 31 December 2015, Salvadoran health authorities reported 3,836 suspected cases of Zika virus infection. [WHO](#)

Recognizing, managing, and reporting Zika virus infections in travelers returning from Central America, South America, the Caribbean, and Mexico

15 January - ... This CDC Health Advisory includes information and recommendations about Zika virus clinical disease, diagnosis, and prevention, and provides travel guidance for pregnant women and women who are trying to become pregnant. Until more is known and out of an abundance of caution, pregnant women should consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. Pregnant women who do travel to these areas should talk to their doctors or other healthcare providers first and strictly follow steps to avoid mosquito bites during the trip. Women trying to become pregnant should consult with their healthcare providers before traveling to these areas and strictly follow steps to avoid mosquito bites during the trip. [CDC](#)

Transgenic mosquito ready to join Brazil's war on Zika virus

19 January - A genetically modified mosquito has helped reduce the proliferation of mosquitoes spreading Zika and other dangerous viruses in Brazil, its developers said on Tuesday. The self-limiting strain of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito was developed by Oxitec, the UK-subsiary of U.S. synthetic biology company Intrexon. The male mosquitoes are modified so their offspring will die before reaching adulthood and being able to reproduce. [Reuters](#)

Zika and microcephaly: report from Brazil

17 January - On Jan. 14, the Brazilian Health Ministry released the latest numbers of microcephaly cases possibly linked to Zika virus infection. A total of 3,530 microcephaly cases suspected to be related to Zika virus are now under investigation, affecting 23 of Brazil's 26 states. ... Despite the temporal and geographic correlation between the Zika infections and the staggering number of microcephalic babies, little is known about how that interaction occurs. An ob-gyn doctor from the state of Paraíba collected amniotic fluid from pregnant mothers who had Zika symptoms and whose babies were born with microcephaly and sent it to virology labs in Rio de Janeiro. Fragments of Zika virus were found in the fluid. Also, CT scans of the babies with microcephaly showed calcification areas along with the abnormal size of the brains. Teams are now looking into how the virus affects the central nervous system in its formation and whether there is a most dangerous time during the pregnancy for the infection to cause damage. [MedPage Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

INFLUENZA

AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 2 (10 Jan 2016—16 Jan 2016):

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity was low to moderate for most states.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity was minimal to low this week.
- PACOM: Low influenza activity was seen for Japan and the Republic of Korea. Hawaii had moderate activity and a large number of flu A un-subtyped positive lab tests over the past 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 9 January 2016 (Week 1)

Influenza activity has increased significantly in Army MTFs. Non-AD populations were mainly affected. In the U.S., overall civilian influenza-like illness activity decreased.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 1 were 17% lower than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: No hospitalized influenza cases were reported to APHC(P) through DRSi in week 1. Three hospitalized cases have been reported to date this season.
- Viral specimens: During week 1, 129 of 763 (17%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-C reported 6 influenza A-positive specimens, RHC-P reported 4, and RHCA reported 2. RHC-E and CENTCOM did not report any influenza A-positive specimens. [APHC](#)

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

During week 1 (January 3-9, 2016), laboratory data indicated that influenza activity increased slightly in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories during week 1 was influenza A, with influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 viruses predominating. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories was low.
- 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](#)

CDC says closely monitoring outbreak of new bird flu strain

15 January - The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is closely monitoring individuals who may have been exposed to the new strain of bird flu that has been found in a flock of turkeys in Indiana, a CDC health official said on Friday. Dr. Michael Jung, a medical officer at the CDC, said there is no evidence of human infection related to the new bird flu strain known as H7N8, but the agency and local health officials are not taking any chances. "There's always the possibility of implications to human health when you see a new flu virus in animals, like we're seeing now in turkeys," Jung told Reuters in an interview.

[Reuters](#)

China confirms H5N6, H7N9 avian flu cases

19 January - Guangdong province in China has confirmed its fifth H5N6 avian flu outbreak in 3 weeks, the world's ninth such case, and Fujian province reported its first H7N9 avian flu case of the winter, Xinhua reported today. In related news, the World Health Organization (WHO) provided details on 10 recent H7N9 cases, a businessman from Taiwan who contracted H7N9 on the mainland has died from his infection, and scientists have detected H5N6 in farm birds in Hunan province. ... The 10 H7N9 cases detailed by the WHO today include 6 in Zhejiang province, 2 in Jiangsu, and 1 each in Guangdong and Jiangxi. National health officials reported the cases to the WHO on Jan 11. Three of the cases proved fatal. Patients range in age from 29 to 77 years old, with a median age of 52.5. Half are women, and one is a healthcare worker. All reported exposure to live poultry. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 01/2016 (4-10 January 2016)

- Of the 43 reporting countries, 35 reported low influenza activity and eight medium activity.
- The proportion of influenza virus-positive sentinel specimens continued to increase: from 30% in week 53/2015 to 37% in week 01/2016. Most specimens came from only two countries.
- Detection of A(H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2) and type B influenza viruses was reported in sentinel surveillance specimens by an increasing number of countries: 22, as compared with 17 in the previous week.

Season

- The proportion of influenza virus-positive sentinel surveillance specimens has been over 10% since week 51/2015, indicating that the influenza season in the European

Region started in week 51/2015.

- Three quarters (74%) of the viruses detected were type A, and 26% were type B. The vast majority of the subtyped A viruses and B viruses ascribed to a lineage were A(H1N1)pdm09 and B/Victoria, respectively. The dominance of the A(H1N1)pdm09 virus coincides with reports of severe disease and deaths associated with infection with this virus in Armenia, Israel, Turkey and Ukraine. [European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

Estrogen protective against flu virus in women but not men, study suggests

19 January - Estrogen dramatically reduced the amount of flu virus that replicated in infected cells from women but not from men, a new study [shows]. ... [Researchers] exposed batches of [cells from the nasal passage] to different types of estrogens, including normal levels of naturally occurring estrogen, different types of selective estrogen receptor modulators (SERMs, synthetic estrogen-like chemicals...) or bisphenol A, an estrogen-like chemical found in many plastics. They then exposed cells to the influenza A virus. ... Tests showed that female cells that received estrogens, including some types of SERMs and bisphenol A, had marked reductions of viral replications — nearly 1,000-fold less compared to those that hadn't been exposed to these hormones. ... Klein explains that even though men produce estrogen, their cells have far fewer receptors for the hormone. That might be why estrogen didn't have the same protective effects against flu virus replication in cells from men.

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

H1N1 swine flu kills 18 in Armenia, three in Georgia: officials

21 January - Eighteen people have died from H1N1 swine flu in Armenia in the last two months, the country's health ministry said on Thursday, but it said there was no risk of a mass outbreak. It said on Jan. 13 that 10 people had died of swine flu in the same period, but on Thursday said the toll had now risen to 18. The ministry said the deaths did not amount to an epidemic. Separately, neighboring Georgia said on Thursday that swine flu had killed three people so far this year. [Reuters](#)

NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2016 Week 2 (through 16 January 2016)

- Influenza: Six cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated elevated FRI rates at CGTC Cape May. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

[top of page...](#)

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Discovery of disease-carrying rodents prompts county health advisory

21 January - Confirmation that mice collected west of Beaumont tested positive for the potentially deadly hantavirus prompted Riverside County health officials today to remind residents to take precautions in places inhabited by rodents. According to the Department of Environmental Health, eight deer mice snared last month in the Norton Younglove Preserve, between San Timoteo Canyon Road and state Route 60, were confirmed to be carriers of hantavirus. [KESQ](#)

Salmonella risk prompts recall of Trader Joe's Raw Cashew Pieces

17 January - Heritage International (USA) Inc. of Compton, CA is voluntarily recalling one lot of Trader Joe's Raw Cashew Pieces with the following code "BEST BEFORE 07.17.2016TF4" because of potential contamination with Salmonella. ... The recall only affects one specific lot of Trader Joe's Raw Cashew Pieces. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

WELLNESS

Are beards good for your health?

20 January - ... In this study, published in the *Journal of Hospital Infection*, they swabbed the faces of 408 hospital staff with and without facial hair. ... The beardless group were more than three times as likely to be harbouring a species known as methicillin-resistant staph aureus on their freshly shaven cheeks. ... The researchers suggested that shaving might cause micro-abrasions in the skin "which may support bacterial colonisation and proliferation". ... But there was another more plausible explanation staring them in the face. That beards fight infection. ... [The microbes found in beards were] part of a species called *Staphylococcus epidermidis*. When he tested them against a particularly drug-resistant form of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), the sort that cause urinary tract infections, they killed with abandon. [BBC News](#)

Five questions to ask when considering health supplements

19 January - Compared to most drugs sold at pharmacies, health supplements are loosely regulated by government agencies. [Unlike] prescription drugs, which pass through a

strict premarket approval process, the Food and Drug Administration does not evaluate a supplement's contents or effectiveness before it hits the shelves. ... The result is a more than \$30 billion industry that is largely regulated by the honor system. Given this framework, there is little to guarantee that any vitamin, mineral, probiotic, sports supplement, herbal treatment, or other dietary supplement is safe, effective, or even contains what's on its label. ... While there are no guarantees, there are steps consumers can take to improve the chances that their supplements contain what they claim to, in the labeled quantities, and that they may indeed have a health benefit. [Frontline](#)

HIV drugs give couples 'ray of hope'

17 January - There are 260,000 couples in Kenya where one partner is positive and the other negative. Known as serodiscordant couples, they account for 44% of new HIV infections in the country. The drive to have children is still very strong. ... Now a new way of using anti-HIV drugs called PrEP - normally given to people who are HIV positive - could potentially mean couples could try and conceive risk-free. Dr Nelly Mugo from the Kenya Medical Research Institute in Nairobi and a team from Washington University have been running a trial. "The Partners PrEP study took over 4,700 couples, one of whom had HIV, and one who didn't. The person who wasn't infected took PrEP over the course of 36 months. "We found that having the drug in your system reduced the rate of transmission by over 90%. "If the positive partner was also taking antiretroviral drugs, the risk of transmission would reduce to zero or close to zero" [BBC News](#)

Limiting infants to almond milk can result in scurvy

18 January - Plant-based beverages like almond milk can't be used to replace breast milk or infant formula, a new report warns. The authors of the report describe an infant in Spain who was fed only almond beverages or almond flour-based formulations from age two months to 11 months and developed fractures and failure to thrive due to scurvy. [Reuters](#)

Most U.S. restaurant meals exceed recommended calories: study

20 January - Calorie-counters beware: A new study reports that more than nine in 10 U.S. restaurants are serving meals that exceed the recommended calorie limit for a single meal. And that's just the entree. Drinks, appetizers and desserts weren't included. ... The study was based on an analysis of 364 American, Chinese, Greek, Indian, Italian, Japanese, Mexican, Thai and Vietnamese meals offered at restaurants in Boston, San Francisco and Little Rock, Ark., between 2011 and 2014. Sampled establishments were both local and from large chains. But that made little difference. In fact, non-chain meals were found to be just as heavy on the belly as chain restaurant offerings. Which is to say, they averaged in the neighborhood of 1,200 calories a meal. That's more than double the 570 calories experts recommend that the average adult woman consume at lunch or dinner, the researchers said. [Medline Plus](#)

Opioid abuse takes a toll on workers and their employers

20 January - ... According to one study, prescription opioid abuse alone cost employers more than \$25 billion in 2007. Other studies show people with addictions are far more likely to be sick, absent or to use workers' compensation benefits. ... According to Quest Diagnostics, a testing firm, only 13 percent of the roughly 6.5 million workplace drug tests screen for prescription painkillers. Even federal government workers in public safety positions who are required to undergo periodic drug testing aren't currently tested for prescription opioids. ... [Ron Flegel, director of workplace programs for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration] says in coming months, new rules will include prescription painkillers in federal drug testing. [NPR](#)

Rate of birth defect of abdominal wall increasing, C.D.C. says

21 January - A serious birth defect is appearing in maternity wards with increasing frequency, and experts do not know why, federal researchers reported on Thursday. Infants with the defect, called gastroschisis, are born with intestines poking out of a hole in the abdominal wall. Other organs, like the stomach and liver, may also be found outside the body at birth. The prevalence of gastroschisis has increased by about 30 percent, to 4.9 births out of 10,000 during the period from 2006 to 2012, from 3.6 per 10,000 live births from 1995 to 2005, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [The New York Times](#)

Scripps Wired for Health study results show no clinical or economic benefit from digital health monitoring

19 January - The results are in for the Scripps Translational Science Institute's Wired For Health study, and ... they're disappointing for those working in digital health. The six-month randomized control trial found no short-term benefit in health costs or outcomes for patients monitoring their health with connected devices. ... There are a few possible explanations for the failure. ... One is that the trial only tested for short-term outcomes and healthcare costs after six months. It's possible that this technology can have an effect over the longer term. Another is that this study more or less tested the effect of monitoring itself, although there were nurses and coaches made available to participants. [Also] the technology has advanced since this study. Better data visualizations and monitoring that is passive, rather than requiring manual logging action on the part of the patient, could go a long way. [MobiHealthNews](#)

'Supplements and safety' explores what's in your supplements

19 January - ... A new documentary, "Supplements and Safety," pulls back the curtain on some of America's most popular supplements, and it suggests that many people who buy

them may not be getting what they are paying for. ... The program examines the widespread use of potent vitamins, herbs, fish oil and fat-burning supplements. Millions of Americans use these products safely every year. But researchers have found that in many cases they can cause unexpected side effects. And because dietary supplements are largely unregulated by the federal government, adulteration and contamination are common, experts say. The Frontline documentary investigates large outbreaks of disease tied to tainted vitamins and fat-burning supplements, including one case in which a workout supplement was linked to more than 70 cases of liver damage. The company whose products were at the center of that outbreak, USPlabs, is among 117 companies and individuals that the Justice Department filed criminal and civil enforcement actions against last year. [The New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

USAFRICOM

Sierra Leone confirms new Ebola case, second in less than a week

20 January - Sierra Leone confirmed a new case of Ebola on Wednesday, its second in less than a week, marking a further setback in efforts to end a two-year West African epidemic that has killed more than 11,300 people. Health ministry spokesman Sidi Yahyah Tunis described the new patient as a 38-year-old woman, a relative who had helped care for the earlier victim Mariatu Jalloh. [Reuters](#)

Southern Africa's drought leaves millions hungry

18 January - About 14 million people in Southern Africa are facing hunger because of last year's poor harvest, caused by the El Nino weather pattern, the World Food Programme says. In a statement released on Monday, the WFP, which is the UN's food-assistance branch, gave warning that the number of people without enough food is likely to rise further in 2016, as the drought worsens throughout the region. "Worst affected in the region by last year's poor rains are Malawi (2.8 million people facing hunger), Madagascar (nearly 1.9 million people) and Zimbabwe (1.5 million) where last year's harvest was reduced by half compared with the previous year because of massive crop failure," the WFP statement said. [Al Jazeera](#)

[top of page...](#)

USCENTCOM

Iraq: Nearly 19,000 civilians killed in Iraq in 22 months, U.N. report says

19 January - A new U.N. report says that nearly 20,000 civilians were killed during Iraq's bloody conflict between January 2014 and October 2015. And that number might be significantly higher. "Despite their steady losses to pro-government forces, the scourge of [ISIS] continues to kill, maim and displace Iraqi civilians in the thousands and to cause untold suffering," U.N. special representative Ján Kubiš says in a statement. ... Baghdad governorate had the highest number, at 1,875. [NPR](#)

Syria: Beyond Madaya, 1 in 3 Syrians doesn't have adequate access to food

20 January - The village of Madaya, where civilians died of starvation during months of siege by government forces, isn't the only place in Syria where people can't get enough food. Before aid convoys arrived in Madaya on Jan. 11, at least 23 people in clinics died of starvation, Doctors Without Borders reported. ... Another siege, this time by ISIS militants, is raising concerns about starvation. Some 200,000 people — 70 percent of them women and children — are trapped in the western side of Deir ez-Zor, close to the Iraqi border, according to a U.N. report. The U.N. says it received unverified reports that 15-20 people in Deir ez-Zor died from starvation in 2015. ... One in three Syrians "do not have adequate access to food," the World Food Programme said in a 2015 report. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

USEUCOM

France: Drug trial participant dies, 5 others hospitalized in France

18 January - A man has died in France after participating in a clinical drug trial, the University Hospital of Rennes said in a statement Sunday. The conditions of five other volunteers have been improved to stable. The French Health Ministry is investigating what it calls a "serious accident." Four of the patients may be permanently disabled with neurological damage, doctors in the northwestern city of Rennes said. One other person doesn't have symptoms but remains under medical surveillance. ... The testing has been stopped ... and health authorities have been reaching out to the rest of the volunteers to let them know about these adverse effects. The drug being tested is a painkiller meant to treat anxiety and motor disorders. ... A total of 128 volunteers took part in the drug test. The

subjects were between the ages of 18 to 55 and were considered healthy. Ninety people were given different level dosages of the drug and the rest got the placebo. [CNN](#)

Turkey: ISIS and bioterrorism - Tularemia planned use in Turkey's water

21 January – The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), as early as five months ago, was implicated at least in planning to use bioweapons to strike terror. ... Turkish officials via an intelligence report revealed plans by the Islamic terror group to attack Turkey water source with biological agents, according to Turkish media. According to the report, the main biological threat is the bacterium, *Francisella tularensis*, which causes tularemia or rabbit fever. Today's Zaman reports: The report states that it is very hard to diagnose the disease because its symptoms resemble those of many other diseases, and in the event of an ISIL attack on Turkey with this poison, many lives in Turkey might be lost because of late diagnosis. The report also states that ISIL plans to poison potable water supplies, water in reservoirs and other water sources. [Outbreak News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Another tuberculosis case confirmed in Alabama

21 January - Public health officials say another case of tuberculosis has been confirmed amid an outbreak in rural Alabama that has killed three people since 2011. Alabama Department of Public Health officials said in a statement Thursday that another person has tested positive for the airborne bacterial infection in Marion, a city of roughly 3,600. Division of Tuberculosis Control Director Pam Barrett says 27 people with some connection to the city have tested positive for the disease since 2014 and 21 are Perry County residents. Officials say 1,058 county residents have been tested, and 49 have latent infections and will receive preventative treatment. ... Officials are paying residents to be tested, get results and follow up with recommended treatment. [AL.com](#)

U.S.: Drug shortages in U.S. emergency rooms on the rise

15 January - U.S. emergency rooms are increasingly running short on medications, including many that are needed for life-threatening conditions, a recent study documents. Since 2008, the number of shortages has risen by more than 400 percent, researchers found. ... Half of the individual shortage incidents had no explanation, the authors found. ... Hawley noted that a particularly problematic shortage was for naloxone, the only injectable treatment for opiate overdose. In nearly half of shortage incidents, the manufacturer did not give a reason for the shortage when contacted. For shortages with a known reason, about a quarter were due to manufacturing problems or delays, around 15 percent were caused by market supply

and demand issues and about 4 percent were from problems with raw materials. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: FDA proposes cybersecurity guidance for medical devices

15 January - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Friday issued draft guidelines to medical device makers on how to protect patients from cybersecurity vulnerabilities in their devices. ... The draft guidance, which is not legally binding, recommends companies take a number of actions, including monitoring and assessing risk, coordinating efforts by companies, government and other groups do disclose vulnerabilities, and taking measures to address cybersecurity risk early. Most cybersecurity vulnerabilities are considered routine and can be remedied by updates or patches which would not need to be reported under the proposed guidance, the agency said. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Federal workplace law fails to protect employees left out of workers' comp

21 January - ... [There are] 1.5 million workers in Texas and Oklahoma who don't have state-regulated workers' compensation to turn to when they're injured on the job. Millions more may join them as more states consider giving employers the right to opt out of state workers' comp systems. ... [Many] employers prefer this opt-out alternative to workers' comp, because the state systems, employers claim, result in expensive and long-lasting benefits, costly litigation and delays in treatment of injured workers. When employers opt out, they avoid state regulation and write their own workplace injury plans, which make it easier to deny and cut benefits, control medical care and limit appeals of their decisions. But don't worry, employers contend, injured workers are still protected by a federal law — the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, or ERISA. ... But federal judges, under ERISA, must first determine whether employer decisions are "arbitrary and capricious" and can only reject benefits decisions if employers were unreasonable or did not adhere to their plans.

[NPR](#)

U.S.: Inadequate diagnosis and treatment of malaria among travelers returning from Africa during the Ebola epidemic

22 January - Malaria cases are rarely diagnosed in the United States; however, malaria is potentially fatal if the diagnosis or treatment, or both, are delayed. Febrile travelers who recently visited a malaria-endemic area should be tested for malaria without delay by blood smear microscopy, with results available within hours. Empiric treatment of malaria is not recommended. During the Ebola epidemic, there were deficiencies in malaria diagnosis, treatment, and laboratory practices in the United States related to concerns about exposure of laboratory and clinical staff members to Ebola. Malaria evaluation should be prioritized in febrile persons who travelled to malaria-endemic areas regardless of travel to an Ebola-affected country. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Sexually active U.S. teens, young adults not getting HIV tests

19 January - Most U.S. high school students and young adults who have sex don't get HIV tests, according to a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. On average, just 22 percent of high school students and 33 percent of young adults aged 18 to 24 who report ever having sexual intercourse also report being tested at least once for HIV, researchers report in the journal *Pediatrics*. ... [Young] people often lack access to confidential healthcare services, and their poor knowledge of sexual health may lead them to underestimate their risk for HIV infection. Also, healthcare providers might not realize that in 2006, the CDC recommended that all people aged 13 to 64 be tested for HIV.

[Reuters](#)

U.S.: Ticks carrying Lyme disease in almost half of U.S. counties

18 January - Ticks that can spread Lyme disease now live in almost half of U.S. counties, according to a new study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Varieties of the blacklegged tick that may carry bacteria responsible for Lyme disease are present in 45 percent of counties nationwide, compared with just 30 percent in 1998, researchers found.

[Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

USPACOM

Thailand dengue fever cases quadruple in one week

20 January - Experts in Thailand are predicting a heavy dengue fever year in 2016, and according to the latest numbers from the Bureau of Epidemiology, the predictions may be coming true. During the past week, the number of cases of the mosquito borne viral disease have risen from 583 in 53 provinces one week ago to 2,380 in 67 provinces today. No deaths have been reported. Health officials say Bangkok is reporting the most cases with 17.34 cases per 100,000 population. On Tuesday, The Public Health Ministry has predicted dengue fever cases will jump more than 16% this year, according to a Bangkok Post report. The department estimated the number of cases of dengue infections to rise from 142,925 last year, 141 of which were fatal, to 166,000 this year. [Outbreak News Today](#)

Tonga: How mutton flaps are killing Tonga



18 January - The Pacific island of Tonga is the most obese country in the world. Up to 40% of the population is thought to have type 2 diabetes and life expectancy is falling. One of the main causes is a cheap, fatty kind of meat - mutton flaps - imported from New Zealand. ... The traditional Tongan diet is fish, root vegetables and coconuts, as you might expect for a palm-fringed island in the middle of the Pacific. But at some point in the middle of the 20th Century, offcuts of meat began arriving in the Pacific islands - including turkey tails from the US and mutton flaps from New Zealand. They were cheap and became hugely popular. ... In 1973, 7% of the population were suffering from non-communicable disease - a phrase that has come to be used as synonymous with diabetes in Tonga. By 2004 the figure was 18%. It is now 34% according to the Tongan Health Ministry, though some think the figure could be as high as 40%. ... The country of 100,000 struggles to cope with the consequences of this diet. Life expectancy, which was once in the mid-70s, has fallen to 64. [BBC News](#)

[top of page...](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Latin America's biggest medical cannabis farm sprouts in Chile

19 January - Latin America's largest medicinal marijuana farm was formally inaugurated on Tuesday, marking another step in the region's growing acceptance of therapeutic uses for the formerly illegal plant. ... The head of the foundation behind the project, Ana Maria Gazmuri, said opinions about the use of cannabis were shifting in traditionally conservative Chile. ... In 2013, Uruguay moved to fully legalize marijuana, a pioneering step that has been watched closely across the globe. A Mexican court ruling in November opened the door to limited amounts of legal cannabis cultivation. Colombia's President Juan Manuel Santos in December signed a decree that legalized medical marijuana, which he said does not weaken the government's fight against illicit crops and drug trafficking. [Reuters](#)

PAHO reports 7,500 new chikungunya cases in the Americas

19 January - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported 7,599 new chikungunya cases in the Americas and Caribbean on Jan 15, bringing the outbreak total to 1,840,095 cases. The agency's previous update included 3 weeks' worth of data and

included 41,815 new cases, or about 14,000 per week. The new illnesses bring the total for 2015 and 2016 to 693,326 suspected and confirmed cases. ... Honduras had the most new cases—3,366—bringing it to 85,374 for 2015-16. Brazil was second, with 2,593 new cases and 18,243 total. Colombia had the third highest increase, with 914 new cases and 359,281 total. Mexico reported 109 new cases, for a total of 11,597 in 2015 and 2016. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Venezuela needs urgent foreign medical aid, pharma group says

20 January - With scores of medicines in short supply due to a severe financial squeeze, Venezuela is suffering a "humanitarian crisis" and requires rapid international assistance, according to a major pharmaceutical association. The Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation listed 150 medicines, from those for hypertension to cancer, as well as basics such as prophylactics and antibiotics, which are scarce in the OPEC nation of 29 million people. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

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

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