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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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The Army Medicine 2020 Research to Practice Education Series

The Army Medicine 2020 Research to Practice Education Series is sponsored by the AM2020 Physical Performance Service Line and the AM2020 Injury and Violence Free Living Program. It is a continuing education opportunity for military medical providers and staff.

The Series is held quarterly on Defense Collaboration Services (DCS) with two or more presentations from experts in the fields of injury prevention, health promotion, and physical performance science.

The next seminar will be held on 7 December 2015 from 1300-1400 EDT. CME credits are available

U.S. MILITARY

For some service members, insomnia may not be part of PTSD

2 December - Lack of sleep is reported by more than half of the 2 million men and women who have served since Sept. 11. Sleeplessness has historically been considered a secondary symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder, but recent research shows that insomnia may be a disorder unto itself. In 2014, an Army research team, led by Col. Vincent Mysliwicz, suggested the name "trauma-associated sleep disorder," leading the service to propose it as a separate diagnosis from post-traumatic stress disorder. He and the Army hope the name will add legitimacy to the diagnosis and lead to better treatment of insomnia among service members and veterans. [Task & Purpose](#)

New DHA director seeks to optimize resources and serve a greater purpose

30 November - Navy Vice Adm. Raquel Bono, the new director of the Defense Health Agency (DHA), hopes to build on the successes the agency achieved in its first two years. She also has her own vision of what she wants to accomplish as director, and how to get it done. Bono, who became the DHA director on Nov. 2, 2015, said her top priority is to optimize available resources. This means leveraging the talent and abilities already within the DHA so it can better support the Navy, Army, and Air Force medical services. "It's my desire to position ourselves to be much more effective as a supporting element to the combatant commanders as a combat support agency," said Bono. [Health.mil](#)

Rates of acute respiratory illnesses of infectious and allergic etiologies after permanent changes of duty assignments

November 2015 - ... When military members are reassigned, they often develop [acute respiratory illnesses (ARIs)] within the first weeks of their arrivals at their new assignments. ... [This] analysis compared the experiences of service members within their first full calendar months at new assignments and during the same months at the same locations 1 year later. The results do not support the hypothesis that ARIs of infectious etiologies consistently occur more frequently soon after arriving at new assignments compared to 1 year later at the same locations. In contrast, during two-thirds of the 117 months considered here, rates of ARIs of presumed allergic etiologies (e.g., allergic rhinitis, asthma) were higher during the first months of new assignments compared to 1 year later. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Soldiers can mix camo patterns for cold-weather gear

Many Soldiers now wear their Army Combat Uniform, or ACU, in the new Operational Camouflage Pattern. But their organizational clothing and individual equipment, or OCIE, such as their wet-weather gear and their Extended Cold Weather Clothing System sport the Universal Camouflage Pattern, or UCP.

The Army wants Soldiers to know that it's okay to wear the foliage green fleece cold-weather jacket and other UCP cold-weather gear on top of their new Operational Camouflage Pattern uniform.

No matter what ACU Soldiers are wearing - the one in UCP pattern or the one in Operational Camouflage Pattern - they are allowed to wear the winter-weather gear that is issued by the Clothing Issue Facility.



Why evacuating wounded troops by air might do more harm than good

30 November - Over the last 15 years, the United States has flown its wounded troops out of combat zones to hospitals around the globe. The logic: get those hurt in places where medical supplies are limited to places where they are not. The fastest way to do this? By air. Yet according to a new, first-of-its-kind study conducted by the University of Maryland School of Medicine, rapid air evacuation has the potential to cause more damage to those patients suffering from an extremely prevalent battlefield affliction—traumatic brain injury. ... The study used rats that had been given traumatic brain injuries and then subsequently placed them in chambers that would simulate air pressure in a military transport aircraft. ... “What we found is that they were materially worse at the end,” Faden said. “They were worse in behavioral terms, and when we actually looked at the brains they lost cells in the critical hippocampal regions, the place where one makes memories.” The tests also found that the inflammation of the brain that typically occurs after a head injury was “substantially enhanced” after the rats were subjected to the pressure changes. [The Washington Post](#)

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GLOBAL

17 countries in Americas may have eliminated mother-to-child HIV transmission: U.N.

1 December - Data from 17 countries and territories across the Americas, including the United States, Canada and Chile, show they may have eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis, the U.N. World Health Organization said on Monday. The countries were able to cut mother-to-child transmission of HIV by improving pregnant women's access to prenatal care, HIV testing and antiretroviral treatment, said the WHO and its regional arm in the Americas, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The 17 countries and territories, including several Caribbean islands, report "data consistent with dual elimination" of HIV and syphilis, with births in those places accounting for about a third of all births in the region, PAHO/WHO said. [Reuters](#)

Brain changes persist long after concussion symptoms disappear

30 November - Although young athletes who've had a concussion may seem to make a quick clinical recovery, physiologic changes in the brain may persist long after symptoms have resolved, researchers reported here. In a case-control study, high school and college athletes who'd had a concussion had a significant drop in cerebral blood flow more than a week after their injury, while those who didn't sustain a concussion had no changes on MRI,

**NIH to convene
workshop on Total
Worker Health —
What's Work Got to
Do With It?**

The National Institutes of Health will convene a Pathways to Prevention workshop to assess the available scientific evidence on the benefits of implementing a Total Worker Health (TWH) approach. TWH promotes bringing together the diversity of relevant programs, including occupational safety and health, worksite health, disability management, workers' compensation, and human resource benefits. An impartial, independent panel will identify research gaps and future research priorities.

Wednesday, Dec. 9 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. EST, and Thursday, Dec. 10 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. EST



Michael McCrea, PhD, of the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, and colleagues reported. [MedPage Today](#)

Chikungunya encephalitis complications in infants, elderly

30 November - Infants and elderly people who experience neurologic symptoms with chikungunya virus infection may be at increased risk of encephalitis and death, according to findings published online Nov 25 in *Neurology*. An international team of researchers conducted a cohort study of people affected by the 2005-06 chikungunya virus (CHIKV) outbreak on Reunion Island, which lies off the coast of Madagascar. ... Of the 57 people with CNS symptoms, 24 people (Incidence Rate [IR]: 8.6 per 100,000) had encephalitis associated with CHIKV infection. Infants younger than 1 year had a drastically higher incidence rate of encephalitis (187 per 100,000), as did people over the age of 65 (37 per 100,000). During the outbreak, 16.6% of people with CHIKV-associated encephalitis died, while 30% to 45% of people with encephalitis experienced long-term disabilities, such as behavioral change and memory problems in infants and dementia in previously healthy older people. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Cooking with chloraminated water and salt could create toxic molecules

24 November - Several new molecules have been discovered by researchers, who suggest ways to avoid their formation. They have found that cooking with chloraminated water could put potentially harmful toxins in your food. The study reveals several molecules that are almost completely new to researchers, created by cooking with chloraminated tap water and iodized table salt. [ScienceDaily](#)

Diagnosing malaria with a cell phone

1 December - New technology that transforms a cell phone into a mobile polarized microscope can diagnose malaria in a Rwandan village with the same level of accuracy as a hi-tech lab in a major Western city, according to Texas A&M University biomedical engineers developing the device. ... The add-on device, known as a mobile-optical-polarization imaging device (MOPID), makes use of a smart phone's camera features to produce high-resolution images of objects 10 times smaller than the thickness of a human hair. The device images a blood sample using polarized light that can detect a malaria parasite byproduct called Hemozoin crystals which appear as very bright dots in the image and are an accurate indicator of infection. According to the scientists, once the device is attached to the phone, the diagnosis takes just minutes using a phone app. [Reuters](#)

Ebola study ties viral blood levels to death rate

2 December - Ebola levels in the blood appear to be a strong predictor of death, according to a study of nearly 700 patients in Guinea's capital city who were treated for the disease

19th-century epidemic of opiate addiction and its lessons for the current crisis

Interview with Dr. David Courtwright on a 19th-century epidemic of opiate addiction and its lessons for the current crisis.

during the height of West Africa's outbreak, researchers reported yesterday. And a survey of US hospitals designated as Ebola treatment centers (ETCs) during the outbreak found that establishing the facilities was costly, averaging about \$1.2 million to get each one up and running, according to a report published yesterday. [CIDRAP](#)

Psychological first aid: Migrant trauma demands alternative therapies

3 December – Europe's migrant crisis is forcing the advancement of new psychological therapies that go beyond existing treatments to help victims not of one traumatic event, but of multiple traumas such as rape, war and torture. Among the hundreds of thousands of people fleeing Syria, Afghanistan and other war-torn areas, significant numbers are likely to have severe psychiatric illnesses, including complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), according to studies in peer-reviewed scientific journals. ... So therapists in Europe are honing their skills in relatively new, refugee-focused psychological techniques such as Narrative Exposure Therapy and Intercultural Psychotherapy. ... In Sicily's Ragusa province, MSF says screening showed almost 40 percent of those suffering mental health effects had PTSD. [Reuters](#)

Human brains aren't distinctly male or female, study says

30 November - There's no such thing as a distinctly male or female brain, new research suggests. An analysis of more than 1,400 MRI scans suggests that biologically unmistakable sex differences don't extend to the brain. Instead, the brain is home to a mix of masculine and feminine characteristics, the researchers found. "This is the first study to look at the brain as a whole and ask whether brains are of two types. The answer is no," said study lead author Daphna Joel, a psychologist and professor at Tel-Aviv University in Israel. "Each person possesses a unique mosaic of characteristics: some more common in females compared to males, some more common in males compared to females, and some common in both," Joel said. ... Joel and colleagues analyzed MRI brain scans of 1,400 people. They found that the brains of males and females tended not to stand apart in terms of gray matter, white matter and connections inside the brain. [MedlinePlus](#)

Mutant mosquitoes 'resist malaria'

24 November - US scientists say they have bred a genetically modified (GM) mosquito that can resist malaria infection. If the lab technique works in the field, it could offer a new way of stopping the biting insects from spreading malaria to humans, they say. The scientists put a new "resistance" gene into the mosquito's own DNA, using a gene editing method called Crispr. And when the GM mosquitoes mated - their offspring inherited the same resistance, PNAS journal reports. In theory, if these mosquitoes bite people, they should not be able to pass on the parasite that causes malaria. [BBC News](#)

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.

Researchers link longer MERS incubation to lower risk of death

2 December - Having a longer incubation period—the time from virus exposure to disease—was tied to a lower risk of death in MERS-CoV patients in South Korea, according to a study yesterday in Emerging Infectious Diseases. French and Hong Kong researchers analyzed data on 170 cases of MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) infection, of which exposure data were available for 109. They found that the incubation period was 6.4 days for patients who died compared with 7.1 days for those who survived. They calculated that the risk of death dropped 17% for every additional day of incubation period. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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INFLUENZA

AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 46:

NORTHCOM: Influenza activity overall was minimal, but some states have low to moderate activity.

EUCOM: There was minimal influenza activity.

PACOM: Influenza activity remained minimal.

CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Both show minimal influenza activity.

SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity remained minimal

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

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

During week 46 (November 15-21, 2015), influenza activity increased slightly in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories during week 46 was influenza A viruses, with influenza A (H3) 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](#)

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ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 47/2015 (16 November–22 November)

- Influenza activity across the WHO European Region was at low levels in most of the 44 countries that reported data for week 47/2015.
- Sporadic and local influenza activity was reported in Northern and central European countries.
- Representatives of all seasonal influenza viruses (A(H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2), B Victoria and Yamagata lineage) were detected.

Season

- As usual for this time of year, influenza activity in the European Region remains low, with few influenza viruses detected.
- Although low numbers of viruses have been subtyped (type A) or ascribed to lineage (type B), A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses have been detected more often than A(H3N2) and B/Victoria lineage, more often than B/Yamagata in both sentinel and non-sentinel specimens than in the same period during the 2014–2015 season.

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

Flu vaccine with booster gains F.D.A. approval

25 November - Federal health officials have approved a first-of-a-kind flu vaccine that contains a booster to help protect seniors vulnerable to the virus. The Food and Drug Administration says Fluad is the first seasonal vaccine that contains an adjuvant, a substance that strengthens the body's immune response. Several vaccines already include boosters, including aluminum, which has been shown to help build immunity. Fluad contains a mixture that includes squalene. [The New York Times](#)

NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2015 Weeks 46 and 47 ending 28 November 2015:

- Influenza: Three cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) among US military basic trainees at CGTC Cape May during week 46. No new cases during week 47.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at Fort Benning during week 46 and were at or below expected values for Week 47. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

Person-to-person bird flu transmission likely happened at Chinese hospital

18 November - The transmission of H7N9 bird flu between two unrelated people probably happened in a hospital in China, a new case study says. Previous reports of person-to-person transmission of the virus have all occurred among family members. The two patients in the study were on the same ward in a district hospital in Zhejiang Province, China in

February 2015. One patient was admitted to the hospital on Feb. 18 with fever, cough and sore throat. His symptoms developed after he bought two chickens from a live poultry market, the researchers noted. The second patient was a 57-year-old man with a history of chronic pulmonary lung disease who developed flu-like symptoms after spending five days on the same ward as the first patient. ... The second patient had no exposure to poultry for 15 days prior to his illness. But, the H7N9 virus that infected him was nearly genetically identical to that from the first patient, and similar to the virus found in the poultry market visited by the first patient. [NWI Times](#)

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

From 15 - 28 November 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 46 &47), a total of 112 specimens were collected and received from 38 locations. Results were finalized for 79 specimens from 29 locations. Two influenza A(H3N2) viruses and one influenza B virus were identified during Week 46. [US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

WHO: Influenza Update

30 November – Globally, influenza activity generally remained low in both hemispheres.

- In Central and Eastern Asia, Europe, North Africa and North America, influenza activity continued at low, inter-seasonal levels with sporadic detections.
- In western Asia, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar reported increased influenza activity, predominantly due to influenza A(H1N1)pdm09.
- Few influenza virus detections were reported by countries in Africa.
- In tropical countries of the Americas, Central America and the Caribbean, influenza activity remained at low levels, with the exception of Cuba.
- In tropical Asia, countries in Southern and South East Asia reported low influenza activity overall except India, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Thailand where activity mainly due to A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses continued to be reported.
- In temperate South America, respiratory virus activity was generally low in recent weeks, with mostly influenza B viruses circulating. A few countries reported fluctuations in respiratory illness indicators.
- In Australia and South Africa, only sporadic influenza detections were reported. [WHO](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

America’s war on the kissing bug

20 November - [Thomas Cropper, a public-health veterinarian at Lackland Air Force Base] ... specializes mainly in zoonoses—diseases transmissible from animals to humans—and in

keeping service members away from them. Not long after he arrived at Lackland, in 2008, he learned that a military working dog had developed heart problems while deployed in Kuwait. The dog was returned to Lackland, the home of the Department of Defense's canine school, and confirmed positive for Chagas. A study of all the working dogs on base, in fact, found that about eight per cent had antibodies against *T. cruzi*. ... [Nearly] nearly thirty per cent [of the kissing bugs] tested positive for human blood. "They were indeed feeding on people," [Candelaria Daniels] said. Cropper had vegetation cut back, insecticide sprayed, and treated bed nets installed where trainees slept, and similar measures were taken around the kennels. [The New Yorker](#)

Celery-onion blend causes Costco E. coli outbreak

27 November - A celery-onion blend included in a rotisserie chicken salad from Costco stores is the probable culprit behind an ongoing E.coli outbreak and has been recalled, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday. According to a CDC news release, the Montana Public Health Laboratory tested the diced celery-onion blend and found results that "indicated the presence of E. coli O157:H7." As a result, "Taylor Farms Pacific, Inc., voluntarily recalled multiple products containing celery," the agency said. The E. coli outbreak that has so far sickened 19 people in seven states has been linked to rotisserie chicken salad made and sold at Costco stores. Most of the illnesses have occurred in the western United States. Affected states are California, Colorado, Missouri, Montana, Utah, Washington and Virginia. [WebMD](#)

New legislation facilitates military dogs' return to U.S., adoption by battlefield handlers



30 November - ... America's fighting canines, who undoubtedly saved many lives in battle by detecting hidden bombs, do not always make it home during the long war on terrorism for a variety of reasons. Some were retired overseas, making them "civilians" ineligible for military-funded transportation back to the States. ... Now Congress has stepped in. Tucked inside the 2016 Defense Department budget bill signed by President Obama is a new law that directs the military to bring home all working dogs stateside if they are being retired. [Washington Times](#)

Nine-state Salmonella outbreak prompts nut butter recall

3 December - An Oregon company recalled its nationally marketed nut butter spreads yesterday after they were linked to 11 *Salmonella* infections in nine states. JEM Raw Chocolate, based in Bend, Ore., said investigations by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Oregon health officials have linked illnesses to consuming its nut spreads, which are sold in glass jars under the JEM Raw Organics label. [CIDRAP](#)

WHO calls for fighting food borne diseases that can be deadly

3 December - At least 600 million people, or 1 in 10 worldwide, fall ill from contaminated food each year and 420,000 die, many of them young children, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Thursday. Giving its first global estimates of preventable food borne diseases, a WHO report called on governments and industry to improve inspections and control of the food chain. ... "Our results show that the biggest burden is in Africa and in southeast Asia, and there the death rates are highest, including those of children under five years of age," said Havelaar, who chaired the WHO group of 150 scientists that carried out the research for the report. Children under age five account for 40 percent of the 600 million cases of food borne disease worldwide a year and 125,000 of the 420,000 deaths, or 30 percent, the WHO said. [Reuters](#)

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WELLNESS

Applying public health principles to the HIV epidemic — how are we doing?

1 December - ... Scientific and policy advances over the past decade have provided more effective tools for preventing HIV infection and improving outcomes among infected people. The challenge now is to increase integration of health care and public health efforts in order to use these new tools to greatly reduce new infections. ... Increasingly, public health principles are being implemented to stop the HIV epidemic, and the rate of new infections appears to be declining despite the facts that more people are living with HIV infection and that rates of high-risk behaviors are stable or increasing. Yet much more needs to be done, such as increased use of testing, including of the partners of infected people and others in their social networks to rapidly identify recent infections; targeted preexposure prophylaxis for key high-risk groups; and, most important, treatment initiation, continuation, or resumption in many more infected people.

[New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Fauci: HIV science 'has spoken'

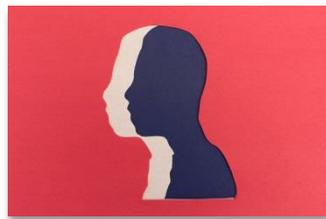
1 December - Evidence supports using antiretroviral drugs both to treat and prevent HIV and what's needed now is the political will get medications to people who need them, according to top U.S. officials. In recent years, high-quality clinical trials have laid to rest many of the bugbears that had hampered wider access to antiretroviral drugs, according to Anthony Fauci, MD, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and Hilary Marston, MD, the agency's policy advisor for global health. "The science has

spoken. There can now be no excuse for inaction," they argued in a Perspective article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, published online Tuesday to coincide with the 28th World AIDS Day. [MedPage Today](#)

High-salt warnings on New York menus to start Tuesday

1 December - Starting Tuesday, diners at many chain restaurants in New York City will see warnings on menus next to items that are high in sodium, under a rule believed to be the first of its kind in the country. The symbol of a saltshaker in a black triangle will warn customers about items that contain more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium, the recommended daily maximum. The city estimated that 10 percent of menu items will need the warning. Chain restaurants will be required to use the symbol next to menu items that are high in sodium. The rule is part of a measure, approved in September, that also requires the restaurants to post a clearly visible statement warning customers that high sodium intake can increase blood pressure and risk of heart disease and stroke. [The New York Times](#)

Loneliness may warp our genes, and our immune systems



30 November - ... For decades, researchers have been seeing signs that the immune systems of lonely people are working differently. Lonely people's white blood cells seem to be more active in a way that increases inflammation, a natural immune response to wounding and bacterial infection. On top of that, they seem to have lower levels of antiviral compounds known as interferons. That seemed to provide a link to a lot of the poor health outcomes associated with loneliness, since chronic inflammation has been linked to everything from cancer to depression. The human body isn't built to hold a high level of inflammation for years. "That explains very clearly why lonely people fall at increased risk for cancer, neurodegenerative disease and viral infections as well," says Steve Cole, a genomics researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles, and lead author on the study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* on Monday. [NPR](#)

Minorities get less pain treatment in E.R.

30 November - White patients receive more pain treatment in emergency rooms than African-Americans and other minorities, a new study reports. Researchers studied four years of data collected nationwide by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They used a sample of 6,710 visits to 350 emergency rooms by patients 18 and older with acute abdominal pain. White and black patients reported severe pain with the same frequency — about 59 percent. But after controlling for age, insurance status, income, degree of pain and other variables, the researchers found that compared with non-Hispanic white people, non-Hispanic blacks and other minorities were 22 percent to 30 percent less likely to receive

pain medication. Patients were also less likely to receive pain medicine if they were over 75 or male, lacked private insurance or were treated at a hospital with numerous minority patients. [The New York Times](#)

MRI shows joints recover even under extreme duress

1 December - A study of ultramarathoners who ran the whole of Europe demonstrated that critical leg joints seemed to self-heal even as the runners covered about 70 km (42 miles) a day, researchers said here. With the exception of the patellar joint, nearly all cartilage segments of knee, ankle, and hindfoot joints showed a significant degradation within the first 1,500 to 2,500 km of the race. But with continued running, the deficits resolved, according to Uwe Schütz, MD, of University Hospital of Ulm in Germany, and colleagues. "Interestingly, further testing indicated that ankle and foot cartilage have the ability to regenerate under ongoing endurance running," Schütz told MedPage Today. ... "The ability of cartilage to recover in the presence of loading impact has not been previously shown in humans. In general, we found no distance limit in running for the human joint cartilage in the lower extremities." [MedPage Today](#)

New diabetes cases, at long last, begin to fall in the United States

1 December - After decades of relentless rise, the number of new cases of diabetes in the United States has finally started to decline. The rate of new cases fell by about a fifth from 2008 to 2014, according to researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the first sustained decline since the disease started to explode in this country about 25 years ago. The drop has been gradual and for a number of years was not big enough to be statistically meaningful. But new data for 2014 released on Tuesday serves as a robust confirmation that the decline is real, officials said. There were 1.4 million new cases of diabetes in 2014, down from 1.7 million in 2008. [The New York Times](#)

Snack bar maker Kind wants U.S. government to change labeling standard

1 December - Kind LLC wants a U.S. federal agency to change its standards for what can be labeled as healthy, months after the snack bar maker received a warning letter for using the term on packaging for bars that were deemed too fatty. Kind argues that fat from items like fruits, vegetables, nuts and whole grains should not be counted in the tally, in a citizen petition the company said it plans to file with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday. ... The dispute represents a new front in an emerging battle over what is officially considered healthy in the United States, in the light of dietary research over the past two decades pointing to processed sugar in foods, rather than fat, as a greater threat to health. ... Created in 1993, when dietary recommendations focused on limiting fat intake rather than sugar, the rules prohibit foods that are nutrient-dense from being marketed as healthy, Lubetzky said. Products such as sugary cereal and low-fat pudding meet the definition while foods like avocados and salmon are too high in fat. [Reuters](#)

World overtaking U.S. in sugar consumption

1 December - The U.S. is no longer the world's leading consumer of sugar-sweetened foods and drinks on a per-capita basis, a new analysis has found, thanks to developing nations' rapidly growing access to packaged foods. Moreover, while consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages in the U.S. has been declining, it's on the increase in most of the rest of the world, according to the study of global trends in sweetened-beverage and food sales, as well as policy initiatives designed to reduce such consumption, published in the journal *Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology*. Chile has overtaken the U.S. as the country with the highest per capita sales of sugar-sweetened beverages on earth, followed by Mexico and the U.S., Argentina, Saudi Arabia, and Germany. [MedPage Today](#)

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USAFRICOM

Guinea: Guinea's last Ebola case, a baby girl, leaves hospital

29 November - A one-month-old baby girl who was Guinea's last reported Ebola case left hospital on Saturday, delighting medical staff and putting the country on course to be declared free of the deadly virus. Guinea will become officially Ebola-free after 42 days if no new cases are reported following the recovery of baby Nubia -- thought to be the first baby to survive after being born to an infected mother. ... Nubia, who was born Ebola-positive and named after an MSF nurse, was able to survive due to experimental drugs as well as round-the-clock care given by a 20-strong team. [Reuters](#)

Liberia: Ebola crisis - Liberia boy dies after fresh cases

24 November - A 15-year-old boy has died of Ebola in Liberia less than three months after the country was declared free of the virus, officials have told the BBC. He tested positive last week and died late on Monday at a treatment centre near the capital, Monrovia, Francis Kateh, the chief medical officer, said. His father and brother are being treated for Ebola at the centre. ... The World Health Organization (WHO) has twice declared Liberia to be Ebola-free, once in May and again in September. [BBC News](#)

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New Saudi MERS case, blood study in Kazakh camels

30 November - ... The Saudi Ministry of Health (MOH) reported yesterday that a 35-year-old Saudi woman from the north-central city of Buraidah is in critical condition with a MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) infection. She is not a healthcare worker and was not exposed to other MERS patients, the ministry said. No other risk factors were noted. The woman's illness was Saudi Arabia's first case to be reported in 17 days. ... Writing in *Emerging Infectious Diseases* on Nov 25, an international team of researchers found a lack of evidence for MERS-CoV infection in dromedary and Bactrian camel herds living in Kazakhstan. ... The researchers said that their results imply that dromedary camels may only maintain the virus, while another animal or environment likely serves as the ultimate natural reservoir for MERS-CoV.

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

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Poland: Poland's new government to end state-financed IVF program

2 December - Poland's new, socially conservative government plans to end state funding for in-vitro fertilization (IVF) just two years after the scheme was introduced, saying it is too expensive. Most countries in the European Union have some sort of state program to fund IVF for infertile couples. Poland, an overwhelmingly Catholic country of 38 million people, has passed legislation regulating the procedure only this year, the last EU state to do so. The procedure had been available for years but state funding only since 2013. Teachings of the Catholic church, which wields considerable influence in Poland and has close links with the ruling Law and Justice party (PiS), say IVF is sinful and prohibit it. [Reuters](#)

Spain: Aging Spain passes population milestone as deaths surpass births

2 December - Spain, long concerned about its aging population and emptying countryside, passed a milestone in population decline on Wednesday when it recorded more deaths than births in the first half of this year. Deaths exceeded births by more than 19,000 in the first half of 2015, a turnaround from a year earlier when there were nearly 4,000 more births than deaths, the National Statistics Institute (INE) said. ... Europe is the continent most affected by an aging population. The U.N. said 34 percent of its population would be over 60 years old by 2050. [Reuters](#)

Ukraine: UN says Ukraine polio outbreak should be a “state of emergency”

2 December - The World Health Organization is urging the health authorities in Ukraine to declare a state of emergency because of a continuing polio outbreak. This move is meant to put more pressure on the Ukrainian government in Kiev to act on the problem. There were two cases of polio in children in Ukraine in September. These are the first polio cases in Europe since 2010. [Youth Health](#)

United Kingdom: Organ donation law 'revolution' starts in Wales

1 December - Wales has become the first nation in the UK to introduce a "revolutionary" new system to increase the number of organ donors. From Tuesday, adults will be regarded as having consented to organ donation unless they have opted out. More than one million people - 34% of the population - have registered to opt in already and 86,000 have opted out. Health Minister Mark Drakeford called it a "ground-breaking step which will save lives". He paid tribute to the cross-party support for the change in the law, which aims to increase the number of donors by 25%. [BBC News](#)

United Kingdom: Tax on sugary drinks backed by MPs

30 November - A tax on sugary drinks should be introduced as part of a "bold and urgent" set of measures to tackle child obesity in England, MPs say. The Commons' Health Committee said there was now "compelling evidence" a tax would reduce consumption. Its report, which puts pressure on ministers who have so far been resisting a tax, also proposes a crackdown on marketing and advertising. Food industry representatives say a new tax would be unfair on consumers. The government will be setting out its plans early next year when it publishes a child obesity strategy, but has said a tax is not something it favours. [BBC News](#)

United Kingdom: Trafficking victims forced to grow high-priced UK cannabis: police

2 December - Organized criminal gangs are exploiting vulnerable people, including children, forcing them to cultivate cannabis in Britain where street prices are among the highest in Europe, the National Police Chiefs' Council said. ... Large-scale cannabis farming is linked to money laundering, distributing class A drugs, human trafficking and illegal immigration, and most offenders are white British men aged between 25 and 34, the NPCC said in a report late on Tuesday. It also found evidence that Vietnamese people were being forced to grow cannabis - in line with reports from lawyers and campaigners that young men and boys were being trafficked from Vietnam to grow cannabis in Britain. [Reuters](#)

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U.S.: CDC notes 43 cases of highly resistant CRE 'superbug'

3 December - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today noted that it has received reports of 43 cases of an especially resistant form of carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) in recent years, often among patients who traveled internationally, according to a report in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*. The specific CRE strain produces what scientists call OXA-48-like carbapenemases, which inactivate carbapenem antibiotics, some of the last lines of defense against bacteria. OXA-48-like carbapenemases were first identified in the United States in 2013.

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

U.S.: Community mental health cuts tied to spike in ER visits

1 December – There was an increase in the number and length of mental health evaluations at a California emergency room after a nearby treatment center cut back on services, according to a new study. “Unfortunately, resources to help these vulnerable patients are frequently the target of funding cuts,” said lead author Dr. Arica Nesper. ... Overall, psychiatric evaluations increased from about one per day before the treatment center cut its services to about four per day afterward. The average length of stay for patients undergoing psychiatric evaluations also increased from about 14 hours to around 22 hours. ... Fewer people were referred to a psychiatric hospital and more were sent home after the treatment center cut its services. ... “Our study suggests that when these resources became unavailable, these patients came to our emergency department, as they had nowhere else to go,” she said. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Ebola crisis passes, but questions on quarantines persist

3 December - ... The Ebola epidemic has subsided, but in the United States the fallout over how health care workers and their families were treated during the crisis continues. Throughout the months of fear and uncertainty, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended monitoring people entering the United States from Ebola-affected countries, not confining them, because research showed that people with Ebola are not contagious before they show symptoms. But states, which have the legal authority to impose quarantines, often exceeded those guidelines. ... The United States military also imposed quarantines on 2,815 service members returning from assisting in the Ebola response, according to figures provided by the Army. ... In interviews, officials who authorized the quarantines defended their actions as reasonable.

[The New York Times](#)

U.S.: Hawaii dengue fever cluster tops 100 cases

1 December - The Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) said yesterday that the number of locally acquired dengue fever cases has risen by 20 within the last week, for a total of 112 cases. Of the confirmed cases of dengue fever, 98 are in Hawaii residents, and 14 are in visitors. Most of the total cases (77%, or 86) have occurred in adults, while 26 cases (23%) involve children. Illness onset occurred between Sep 11 and Nov 20. ... High- and moderate-risk areas for dengue fever currently lie along the western and eastern coasts of the Big Island. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

U.S.: HHS - Dramatic downturn in hospital-acquired conditions

1 December - The rate of HACs dropped from 145 per 1,000 discharges in 2010 to 121 per 1,000 discharges in 2014, according to the report, which was issued by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). Over a 4-year period starting in 2011, "a cumulative total of 2.1 million fewer HACs were experienced by hospital patients ... relative to the number of HACs that would have occurred if rates had remained steady at the 2010 level," the report noted. ... Some of the biggest reductions were in three of most four frequent types of HACs, noted AHRQ director Richard Kronick, PhD, who was also on the conference call: adverse drug events (accounting for 40% of the total reductions in HACs), pressure ulcers (28%), and catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs, 16%). [MedPage Today](#)

U.S.: More research needed on women's health, U.S. Preventative Services Task Force tells Congress

1 December - An independent national board dedicated to improving better health outcomes through evidence based research has called for a focus on women's health beyond gynecological and reproductive issues in its annual report to the U.S. Congress. ... In its report issued this month, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force has identified five areas for "high priority" in terms of filling a gap for needed evidence-based research to improve its recommendations for meeting the medical and behavioral health needs of women. These include addressing what is effective in screening women for issues of domestic violence, drug abuse, depression and suicide; thyroid dysfunction, something eight times more common in women; vitamin D deficiency that can play a role in bone health particularly as the body ages; for cancers of the ovary, cervix and in dense breasts; and how any recommendations can be best implemented in primary care practices. [Mass Live](#)

U.S.: Prevalence of cholesterol treatment eligibility and medication use among adults — United States, 2005–2012

4 December - ... Overall, 36.7% of U.S. adults or 78.1 million persons aged ≥ 21 years were on or eligible for cholesterol treatment. Within this group, 55.5% were currently taking cholesterol-lowering medication, and 46.6% reported making lifestyle modifications, such as exercising, dietary changes, or controlling their weight, to lower cholesterol; 37.1% reported making lifestyle modifications and taking medication, and 35.5% reported doing neither. Among adults on or eligible for cholesterol-lowering medication, the proportion taking cholesterol-lowering medication was higher for women than men and for non-Hispanic whites (whites) than Mexican-Americans and non-Hispanic blacks (blacks). Further efforts by clinicians and public health practitioners are needed to implement complementary and targeted patient education and disease management programs to reduce sex and racial/ethnic disparities among adults eligible for treatment of cholesterol. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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USPACOM

Asia: Dating apps fuel 'hidden epidemic' of new HIV infection

30 November - Social networking technologies and mobile apps that allow young people to meet to engage in risky sexual practices are being cited as a key reason for an increase in HIV infections in the Asia Pacific region, with Bangkok, Jakarta and Hanoi hubs of new infections. A United Nations study released on Monday found that mobile dating apps increasingly allow for spontaneous casual sex and that the age of those using the technology for this purpose is dropping. ... While AIDS-related adult deaths dropped by 28 percent from 2005 to 2014, AIDS-related deaths among 10 to 19 year olds in the Asia Pacific region rose by 110 percent during the same period. In the Philippines, new HIV infections among 15 to 19 year olds have risen by 50 percent between 2010 and 2015. [Al Jazeera](#)

Asia: Number of AIDS deaths among young Asians doubles over past decade: U.N.

30 November - The estimated number of adolescents dying of AIDS in the Asia Pacific region has more than doubled since 2005, experts said on Monday, warning of a "hidden epidemic". UNICEF urged Asian countries to improve teenagers' access to testing, saying many young people do not know their HIV status because of parental consent requirements

for tests. The Asia Pacific region has made enormous strides against HIV/AIDS in the adult population, with a 31 percent drop in new HIV infections between 2000 and 2014, and 28 percent decline in AIDS-related deaths between 2005 and 2014. However, one in seven new infections in the region last year was among 15 to 19-year-olds, and the estimated number of AIDS-related deaths for adolescents aged 10 to 19 has shot up 110 percent to 6,600 in 2014, from 3,100 in 2005, a U.N. report said on Monday. [Reuters](#)

India: Chennai floods - Over 200 health camps to check outbreak

4 December - Fearing an outbreak of diseases, the state health department is running about 200 medical camps in various parts of the city as well as in Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram — two other flood-hit districts in northern Tamil Nadu. The water is contaminated with sewage water at many places raising a major health threat. State Health Secretary J Radhakrishnan told *The Indian Express* that over 1,700 doctors were on duty. [The Indian Express](#)

Nepal unlocks quake funds: It only took 7 months!



26 November - Seven months after a massive earthquake devastated Nepal, the government has finally found its way through a political logjam that was holding up billions of dollars pledged for reconstruction. International donors pledged more than \$4 billion after the 25 April quake and another temblor on 12 May. The earthquakes killed close to 9,000 people and destroyed or damaged almost a million homes. The government formed a National Reconstruction Authority to devise quake-resistant building regulations and risk reduction strategies as well as to oversee the allocation and utilisation of funds. But political wrangling prevented the body from being authorised to begin its work. [IRIN](#)

'North Korean' boats carrying dead bodies wash ashore in Japan



1 December - A dozen fishing boats carrying dead bodies have washed ashore in Japan in recent weeks, amid speculation they are North Korean vessels that have strayed dangerously far from port because of a push to increase the country's catch. The Japanese coast guard and police reported 12 incidents of wrecked wooden boats since October, containing 22 dead bodies. North Korea has not mentioned any missing boats, but its leader, Kim Jong-un, has put a high priority on fishing as a way of earning foreign currency and providing a sustainable food source that is not reliant on harvests. ... Defectors and experts say fishing boats under the command of the Korean People's Army may have succumbed under pressure from Kim to catch more fish, ill-

equipped for rough seas. [The Guardian](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Brazil links fever to birth defects



29 November - The Brazilian health ministry has confirmed a link between a mosquito-borne virus from Africa, Zika Fever, and a high incidence of birth defects. The fever, it said, is behind a spike in cases of micro-encephalitis - an inflammation of the brain contracted in the first months of pregnancy. It has recorded two

adult deaths and 739 cases of the disease, which can stunt the growth of the foetus's head. ... The ministry said doctors had found Zika virus in the blood and tissue of a baby with micro-encephalitis in the north-eastern state of Ceara. It said it was also the first time in the world that adult deaths from Zika virus had been registered. Most cases have been in the north-east of Brazil but cases also rapidly appeared in the south-east, in Rio and Sao Paulo.

[BBC News](#)

Zika virus spreads to more countries

30 November - In quickly evolving developments, more countries in the Americas reported Zika virus cases, as Brazil—one of the hardest hit countries—reported more microcephaly cases, which health officials suspect might be related to infections in pregnant women. In a pair of updates, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) weighed in on the spread of mosquito-borne Zika virus to more countries and the possible connection to complications, which may also include Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS) and congenital neurological malformations. Also, the World Health Organization (WHO) said it has been notified of Zika virus infections in Guatemala and El Salvador, with infectious disease news sources flagging foreign language media reports suggesting that illnesses have been detected in Paraguay and Venezuela. [CIDRAP](#)

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