

4 September 2015

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center



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U.S. MILITARY

307,000 veterans may have died awaiting Veterans Affairs health care, report says

3 September - Hundreds of thousands of veterans listed in the Department of Veterans Affairs enrollment system died before their applications for care were processed, according to a report issued Wednesday. The VA's inspector general found that out of about 800,000 records stalled in the agency's system for managing health care enrollment, there were more than 307,000 records that belonged to veterans who had died months or years in the past. The inspector general said due to limitations in the system's data, the number of records did not necessarily represent veterans actively seeking enrollment in VA health care. ... [The] inspector general also found VA staffers incorrectly marked unprocessed applications and may have deleted 10,000 or more records in the last five years. ... The report released Wednesday reveals a web of complications with the VA's management of health care enrollment data, including a lack of procedures to oversee records, software glitches within the records system and inconsistency in identifying veterans who have died.

[CNN](#)

Durations of military service after diagnoses of HIV-1 infections among active component members of the U.S. Armed Forces, 1990-2013

August 2015 - This report describes the trends in length of military service for active component members of the U.S. Armed Forces who were diagnosed with human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) infections during 1990–2013. Durations of service after service members' initial diagnoses of HIV-1 infection were compared for five different cohorts that corresponded to when diagnoses were made during the 5-year intervals beginning in 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005, and the 4-year interval of 2010–2013. By several measures, the durations of service after initial diagnoses of HIV-1 infection increased from the earliest to the later cohorts. The findings are discussed in the context of changes in several factors during the surveillance period: the growing availability and effectiveness of treatments for HIV-1 disease; the stigmas associated with the diagnosis of HIV-1 infection and its link to homosexuality; and the changes in U.S. military policy about the inclusion of homosexuals in its ranks. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Pentagon launches lab review, widens moratorium after anthrax find

3 September - The Pentagon has launched a safety review at nine U.S. military labs and expanded a moratorium on the production and shipment of deadly toxins after anthrax contamination was discovered in a Utah facility. The contamination at the Dugway Proving Ground Life Sciences Test Facility in Utah was in "secure areas located outside the primary

National Preparedness Month

National Preparedness Month (NPM) is commemorated each September to emphasize preparedness' importance and to encourage Americans to take simple actions to prepare for emergencies such as tornadoes, hurricanes, active shooters, or terrorist attacks. During this twelfth annual NPM campaign, the Army's focus remains steadfast to educate, empower, and involve the Army community in preparedness activities that enhance the Army's resiliency and increase the Nation's readiness for all-hazards events. To help prepare the Army Community, Ready Army encourages everyone to **Be Informed, Make a Plan, Build a Kit, and Get Involved.**

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containment area," the Pentagon said in a statement on Thursday. The lab conducted a full decontamination and did not detect anthrax during re-testing. Specifically, the deadly anthrax bacteria was found on the floors of two laboratories, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a statement. ... Secretary of the Army John McHugh on Wednesday directed all nine Department of Defense labs and facilities involved "in the production, shipment, and handling of live and inactivated select agents and toxins" to conduct safety reviews immediately, according to the Pentagon. The Army had already suspended production, handling, testing and shipment of anthrax at all four Defense laboratories that work with the bacteria. Now, that moratorium extends to critical reagents and other agents and toxins, the statement said. [Reuters](#)

The number of child abuse cases in the military hits a decade high

2 September - Confirmed cases of abuse and neglect of military children increased markedly in 2014, Defense Department data showed on Wednesday, prompting concerns among Pentagon about efforts to safeguard the nation's over 1 million military children. In fiscal year 2014, officials tracking family violence within the military confirmed 7,676 cases of child abuse or neglect, an increase of 10 percent from the previous year, according to annual statistics on child abuse and domestic violence. Confirmed cases of neglect – which excludes physical and sexual abuse – rose by 14 percent, military officials said. [Washington Post](#)

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GLOBAL

Case of 28-year poliovirus shedding reported in UK

28 August - A man living in the United Kingdom (UK) has been shedding highly evolved, vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV) serotype 2 for 28 years, according to a case report yesterday in *PLoS Pathogens*. Researchers at the UK National Institute for Biological Standards and Control analyzed more than 180 stool samples from the man from 1995 to this year. The man received a full course of childhood polio immunizations, including oral polio vaccine (OPV) administered in 1986. ... The initial samples gathered in 1995 showed iVDPV strains had undergone antigenic drift of 9.9% to 11.3% from the Sabin serotype 2 poliovirus included in the live-attenuated OPV. By March 2015, strains drifted 17.7% from the Sabin 2 poliovirus. ... The man represents the longest period of VDPV shedding currently known, and the only person identified as a chronic shedder of highly evolved VDPV, the authors said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Cause of multiple system atrophy identified, making MSA newest prion disease in 50 years

2 September - Prion diseases are rare conditions similar to those caused by viruses that are caused by misfolded proteins known as prions. The most well-known of these is the neurodegenerative Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, which is commonly known for the way it appears in cows as Mad Cow disease. But according to a recent study, multiple system atrophy (MSA), another neurological disorder, can also be classified as a prion disease. ... First identified in 1960, MSA is an extremely rare condition that impairs the body's involuntary functions. Its symptoms are similar to those that characterize Parkinson's disease, including slowed movement and trouble with balance. These symptoms eventually lead to the patient's death. ... The findings mark the first time in 50 years that a human disease has been found to be caused by a new prion. [Medical Daily](#)

Distinctive risk factors tied to sexual assaults at large events

3 September - Women who are sexually assaulted at large events like festivals and holiday gatherings are often young, intoxicated and unfamiliar with their attacker, according to a small Canadian study. More than a quarter of sexual assaults happen at mass events like festivals, student orientations and holiday celebrations, the study authors say, and prevention efforts should focus on the distinctive risk factors in these cases. ... [The] researchers analyzed data from 2013 on sexual assault cases involving women over age 16 who came to the SAPACP within 30 days of the attack. Among the 204 cases of sexual assault identified, 53 of them, or 26 percent, happened at large gatherings. ... Most mass-event-related assaults happened either at a friend's home (25 percent) or outdoors (23 percent), whereas one third of assaults in the comparison group took place at the victim's home and only 14 percent outdoors. [Reuters](#)

Guidance on personal protective equipment (PPE) to be used by healthcare workers during management of patients with confirmed Ebola or persons under investigation (PUIs) for Ebola

27 August - Key points

- Healthcare workers caring for patients with Ebola must have received comprehensive training and demonstrated competency in performing Ebola-related infection control practices and procedures.
- PPE that covers the clothing and skin and completely protects mucous membranes is required when caring for patients with Ebola.
- Personnel providing care to patients with Ebola must be supervised by an onsite manager at all times, and a trained observer must supervise each step of every PPE donning/doffing procedure to ensure established PPE protocols are completed

correctly.

- Individuals unable or unwilling to adhere to infection control and PPE use procedures should not provide care for patients with Ebola. [CDC](#)

Insecticide coating effective against mosquitoes

1 September - A new method of applying insecticide to netting has proved 100% effective against some strains of mosquito, an international study reports. The electrostatic coating allows the netting to carry much higher doses of insecticide. In experiments, the coating killed off many more mosquitoes than usual. ... It is thought that water-based spray insecticides and bed nets, which often contain low levels of insecticide, don't always kill the mosquitoes, allowing them to develop resistance. In this study, researchers from the Netherlands used a charged surface, originally developed for trapping airborne pollen, and applied insecticide to it. The long-lasting electrostatic charge allowed high levels of insecticide to stick fast to the netting, giving the mosquitoes a lethal overdose when they came into contact with the surface - even for just a few seconds. [BBC News](#)

Study says men have stronger immune response to smallpox vaccine

31 August - Men's immune response to smallpox vaccine—used in those susceptible to a bioterror attack—is about 27% stronger than women's, according to a new study in *Vaccine*. US researchers measured the immune response to Imvamune smallpox vaccine in 136 men and 139 women from three randomized trials conducted at 13 US medical centers. The volunteers received the standard dose of the liquid formulation of the vaccine and had not been vaccinated for smallpox before. The data showed that the men had a higher peak geometric mean titer—a measure of immune response of about 27% higher than the women did. ... The authors say the results indicate that sex should be considered in the development and deployment of this and similar smallpox vaccines. [CIDRAP Biosecurity Scan](#) (second item)

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INFLUENZA

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

During Week 33 ending August 22, 2015:

- During week 33, 5.4% of all deaths reported through the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia and influenza. This percentage was below the epidemic

threshold of 5.8% for week 33.

- Nationwide during week 33, 0.8% of patient visits reported through the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) were due to influenza-like illness (ILI). This percentage is below the national baseline of 2.0%. [CDC](#)

French study finds influenza A, B clinical illnesses similar

1 September - Illness from influenza A is quite similar to illness from influenza B, according to a large study today in *PLoS One*. French researchers analyzed data on 14,423 influenza cases from 2003 to 2013, 24% of which involved influenza B. Influenza A dominated in eight of the seasons studied, and influenza B dominated in the other two. The team found only minor differences in the distribution of signs and symptoms across influenza virus and subtypes. They found that children aged 5 to 14 years were most likely to contract influenza B illness, while males and those diagnosed early in the season were less likely to be infected with "B" strains. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 12 January 2015:

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at Fort Benning and Fort Leonard Wood. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

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

For 2-29 August 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 31-34):

- During 2-29 August 2015, a total of 49 specimens were collected and received from 17 locations. Results were finalized for 30 specimens from 15 locations. One influenza A(H3N2) was identified during Week 32. No other influenza viruses were identified.
- One human infection with a novel influenza A virus was reported by the state of Iowa. The person was infected with an influenza A(H1N1) variant (H1N1v) virus and was hospitalized as a result of their illness. No human-to-human transmission has been identified, and the case reported close contact with swine in the week prior to illness onset. [US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Salmonella outbreak tied to pork grows to 152 cases as recall expands

28 August - A salmonellosis outbreak tied to pork products grew by 18 cases, to 152, as a slaughterhouse in Washington state expanded a prior recall to more than 500,000 pounds of pork products and whole hogs after environmental sampling revealed insufficient sanitary conditions. The new case numbers were posted in an update today from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The agency said that 24 people have been hospitalized because of their illness, an increase of 8 cases since the CDC's previous update on Aug 14. Illness-onset dates range from Apr 25 to Aug 12. Meanwhile, Kapowsin Meats in Graham, Wash., recalled 523,380 pounds of pork products that may be contaminated with the outbreak strain, *Salmonella* I 4,[5],12:i:-, according to an update yesterday from the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Why freezing didn't keep sushi tuna safe from *Salmonella*

2 September - A recent outbreak of *Salmonella* in frozen tuna might have sushi lovers wondering if it's safe to eat that raw fish. The outbreak in question began in California in March. All told, it sickened 65 people in 11 states. There were 35 cases in California, with another 18 in Arizona and New Mexico. The rest of the cases were scattered across the country, including four in Minnesota. Most of the victims interviewed by public health investigators said they'd eaten sushi made with raw tuna in the week before they became ill. ... [Freezing] is usually considered a way to make sushi safer, because it kills any parasitic worms living in the raw fish flesh. ... But as this case highlights, freezing doesn't guarantee your sushi is pathogen-free. While freezing will slow down the growth of *Salmonella*, cooking or pasteurizing are the only ways to kill the bacteria. [NPR](#)

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WELLNESS

Bicycle-related injuries on the rise in U.S.

1 September - Between 1998 and 2013, adult bicycling injuries rose sharply in the U.S., largely among riders over age 45, a new study shows. "Once we looked at the demographics of who were admitted from the hospital we saw the trend in riders older than 45 getting hurt," said Dr. Benjamin N. Breyer, ... who worked on the study. More people over

45 ride bikes now than ever before, he said. ... In 1998-1999, there were 96 injuries per 100,000 people, which rose to 123 injuries in 2012-2013, the researchers reported in JAMA. Hospital admissions over the same period rose from about 5 per 100,000 people to about 11 per 100,000. Head and torso injuries became more common over time, while extremity injuries became less common. In 1998, only 23 percent of injuries were in cyclists over age 45, which rose to 42 percent by 2013. [Reuters](#)

Citing consumer risk, FDA sends warning letters to 5 distributors of pure powdered caffeine

1 September - The Food and Drug Administration has issued warning letters to five distributors of pure powdered caffeine, saying the products put consumers at risk. The letters, which are dated Aug. 27, follow the overdose deaths last year of two young men from Ohio and Georgia. Caffeine powder is usually marketed as a dietary supplement and is unregulated, unlike caffeine added to soda. Since the FDA doesn't have the legal authority to pull such a substance off the shelves, the agency has been building a case against those who are marketing it in bulk in an attempt to persuade them to stop. Last summer, the FDA warned consumers to avoid pure powdered caffeine. The agency said in a statement Tuesday that it sent the warning letters to the distributors "because these products are dangerous and present a significant or unreasonable risk of illness or injury to consumers." [U.S. News and World Report](#)

Health buzz: CVS cigarette ban burns tobacco sales

3 September - It's been one year since CVS/pharmacy stores halted tobacco sales. As a result, 95 million fewer packs were sold, according to data released today. The CVS Health Research Institute conducted the study that evaluated cigarette purchases at big-box and convenience stores in the eight months following the ban. Since the smoke-free decision took effect, there's been an additional 1 percent reduction in cigarette pack sales across all retailers in states where CVS/pharmacy had a 15 percent or greater share of the retail pharmacy market, compared with states without the store. The company has continued to sell their smoking-cessation nicotine patches which, since the ban, have increased in sales by 4 percent – or five packages per 1,000 smokers – in the month immediately following the ban, according to the study. [U.S. News and World Report](#)

Hoarding is making firefighting harder

28 August - ... Hoarding is a psychological ailment that was once considered to be similar to obsessive-compulsive disorder, but is now a distinct diagnosis. Among the condition's many devastating mental and physical consequences is that it can make the sufferer more likely to die in a fire. Clutter can block exits and trip residents when they try to escape. Boxes and papers act like kindling, making a fire rage more intensely. Studies suggest about 2 to 5 percent of people hoard, but the firefighters I spoke with said they see "hoarding conditions" in about 25 percent of homes they enter. It's not clear whether hoarding is becoming more widespread, but some cities say they are seeing an uptick. If firefighters and

city officials are sensing a rise, it might be because hoarding is more common among the elderly, and the U.S. population is rapidly aging. [The Atlantic](#)

Insurer says clients on daily pill have stayed H.I.V.-free

2 September - Demonstrating that taking a daily pill to prevent H.I.V. infection can work in the real world, San Francisco's largest private health insurer announced Wednesday that not one of its 657 clients receiving the drug had become infected over a period of more than two years. That outcome contradicted some critics' predictions that so-called pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, would lead to less condom use and more H.I.V. infections. [New York Times](#)

Short sleepers may catch more colds

2 September - ... [Researchers] say they found that adults who sleep less than five or six hours a night are four times more likely to catch a cold than those who get at least seven or more hours of sleep. ... The new study was the first to measure actual sleep. To do so, the researchers used a technique called wrist actigraphy, which uses a watchlike device with an accelerometer that measures movement and inactivity and which, when combined with sleep diaries, provides a more accurate accounting of sleep. [New York Times](#)

Suicide-risk behaviour patterns identified – study

30 August - Depressed people who display "risky behaviour", agitation and impulsivity are at least 50% more likely to attempt suicide, a study has found. Research by the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP) concluded that the behaviour patterns "precede many suicide attempts". ... The ECNP study evaluated 2,811 patients suffering from depression, of whom 628 had previously attempted suicide. Researchers "looked especially at the characteristics and behaviours of those who had attempted suicide", and found that "certain patterns recur" before attempts.

They said the risk of an attempt was "at least 50% higher" if a depressed patient displayed:

- "risky behaviour" such as reckless driving or promiscuous behaviour
- "psychomotor agitation" such as pacing around rooms or wringing their hands
- impulsivity - defined by the researchers as acting with "little or no forethought, reflection, or consideration of the consequences"

Dr Dina Popovic, one of the report's authors, added: "We found that 'depressive mixed states' often preceded suicide attempts. "A depressive mixed state is where a patient is depressed, but also has symptoms of 'excitation', or mania." [BBC News](#)

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Africa: Diabetes a growing health menace in Africa

3 September - In sub-Saharan Africa, problems with communicable diseases, like HIV, malaria and ebola are common. But adult-onset diabetes is being seen more often in the region, in many of the world's poorest countries, where doctors and medical facilities are not prepared to deal with the serious health problem. ... Diabetes now affects 21 million African men and women, a number that ... is expected to climb to 35 million in the next 20 years. [Researchers] estimate the prevalence of undiagnosed diabetes is 62 percent in middle-aged adults, with those younger than age 60 making up three-quarters of deaths related to the condition. The problem ... is not so much tied to economic improvements, as in other westernizing countries, but to the social and lifestyle transitions now taking place in Africa, "such as no exercise, changing jobs, and migration into urban areas without adequate green space and options for exercise - are all [meeting] to trigger this change."

[VOA](#)

Africa: WHO calls for regulation of traditional medicine

2 September - World Health Organization officials on Monday called to regulate traditional medicine in Africa to protect the public against potentially harmful practices. The announcement ... could have broad implications for the estimated 80 percent of Africans who rely on traditional practitioners for their primary mode of care. Calling upon researchers to work with traditional practitioners to produce scientific evidence on the safety, effectiveness and quality of their products, Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO's regional director for Africa, issued a letter urging governments to strengthen regulatory bodies for traditional health practitioners. [VOA](#)

Liberia declared Ebola-free for second time

3 September - Liberia was declared free of the Ebola virus for a second time on Thursday and entered a 90-day period of heightened surveillance aimed at preventing the disease from re-emerging, the World Health Organization (WHO) said. ... "WHO declares Liberia free of Ebola virus transmission in the human population," the U.N. health agency said in a statement. It said that 42 days - twice the maximum incubation period of the virus - had passed since the last confirmed case was cured, testing negative for the disease on July 22. ... Liberia was declared Ebola-free in May but more cases appeared in late June and six additional cases were identified. [Reuters](#)

Sierra Leone: New Ebola death confirmed

1 September - A woman who recently died in northern Sierra Leone has tested positive for Ebola. It comes as a setback to the country's effort to eradicate the deadly disease. Sierra Leone was celebrating last week when it discharged its last known Ebola patient from hospital. News of the new case means the country is no longer Ebola-free. High-risk

contacts of the woman have been identified, isolated and will now be watched for symptoms. The National Ebola Response Centre is assessing whether to isolate the whole village of Sella in the Kambia district where the woman, who was in her mid-60s, died. [BBC News](#)

West Africa's weekly Ebola total stays at 3 cases

2 September - For the fifth week in a row, three Ebola cases were confirmed in West Africa's outbreak region, limited to two in Guinea and an earlier announced case in Sierra Leone that set back the clock on its progress toward Ebola-free status. In its weekly epidemiologic update today, the World Health Organization (WHO) said that a rapid response team has been deployed to Kambia district where Sierra Leone's recent case was detected, and teams are on alert to tamp down the threat of recent high-risk cases in Guinea. In other developments, global health experts in London today grappled with how to better manage global health risks, in the wake of missteps that occurred during the response to the Ebola crisis. ... Both of Guinea's cases were detected in Conakry, though one had links to Dubreka, located on the outskirts of the country's capital, the WHO said. ... The WHO said the number of contacts being monitored in Guinea continues to drop and is now at about 450, compared with 600 the week before. [CIDRAP](#)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: Environmental factors related to fungal wound contamination after combat trauma in Afghanistan, 2009–2011

October 2015 - During the recent war in Afghanistan (2001–2014), invasive fungal wound infections (IFIs) among US combat casualties were associated with risk factors related to the mechanism and pattern of injury. Although previous studies recognized that IFI patients primarily sustained injuries in southern Afghanistan, environmental data were not examined. We compared environmental conditions of this region with those of an area in eastern Afghanistan that was not associated with observed IFIs after injury. A larger proportion of personnel injured in the south (61%) grew mold from wound cultures than those injured in the east (20%). In a multivariable analysis, the southern location, characterized by lower elevation, warmer temperatures, and greater isothermality, was independently associated with mold contamination of wounds. These environmental characteristics, along with known risk factors related to injury characteristics, may be useful in modeling the risk for IFIs after traumatic injury in other regions. [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#)

Egypt/Saudi Arabia: Egypt sets up 35 clinics in KSA ahead of Hajj

2 September - The Egyptian Health Ministry has established 35 makeshift medical clinics to provide healthcare services for Egyptian pilgrims during the Hajj season expected to start September 21, Youm7 newspaper reported. "The medical clinics, located in both Mecca and Medina, comprise 350 doctors and nurses tasked with making good preparations for the reception-arrangements of the Egyptian pilgrims and providing excellent services to enable them to perform the Hajj rituals in ease and comfort," head of Egypt's Health Ministry Hajj mission Dr. Hisham Atta was quoted by Youm7 Wednesday. The step is considered to be a practical medical aid to [Kingdom of Saudi Arabia] from one of the largest Muslim countries which owns sizable numbers of skilled medical doctors and health practitioners. [OnIslam](#)

Jordan: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

1 September - Between 26 and 28 August 2015, the National IHR Focal Point of Jordan notified WHO of 4 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, including 1 death. All these cases are associated with a MERS-CoV outbreak currently occurring in a hospital in Amman city. ... Globally, the WHO has been notified of 1,478 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 516 related deaths. [WHO](#)

Saudi Arabia: Riyadh MERS outbreak shows no signs of slowing

2 September - Saudi Arabia today reported seven more MERS-CoV cases, five of them from the Riyadh hot spot, and the World Health Organization (WHO) filled in more details about 15 recent cases in the country, including 11 that are part of a growing hospital outbreak. ... [The] five new cases in Riyadh are likely linked to a hospital outbreak that has been under way at King Abdulaziz Medical City since at least the middle of July. Four had contact with a confirmed or suspected case, and the exposure is still under review for one of the patients. ... Sixty people are still being treated for their infections, and another 12 are in home isolation. The new cases lift Saudi Arabia's total from the disease to 1,195, with the death total remaining at 510. [CIDRAP](#)

Yemen hospitals facing closures as fighting rages

31 August - Major hospitals in Yemen are struggling to function due to supply shortages caused by increased fighting between Houthi rebels and forces loyal to the exiled President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, two Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have said. The main hospital in the rebel-held capital, Sanaa, is on the verge of shutting down due to limited access to basic medicines and equipment caused by a blockade imposed by pro-Hadi fighters, while hospitals in Taiz are under siege by Houthi rebels, according to Save the

Children said. The UK-based charity said Al-Sabeen Hospital - which caters to children and pregnant women in Sanaa - could shut its doors on Tuesday over critical fuel shortages and a lack of medical supplies. ... Across Yemen, 15.2 million people are lacking access to basic healthcare, an increase of 40 percent since March, Save the Children warned. [Al Jazeera](#)

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USEUCOM

Germany, United Kingdom: Today's seniors are smarter but in poorer health, study finds

2 September - Today's older generation appears to be smarter than people of their age were in the past. Researchers suggest two reasons for this: higher education rates and increased use of technology. However, the same cannot be said for older people's physical and mental health, which appears to be declining. The findings come from two studies: one that measured cognitive function, physical fitness and mental health in people over the age of 50 in Germany, and another that measured cognitive function in the over-50s in England and Germany. ... The results [of the first study] show that men and women of all ages from 50-90 performed better on cognitive tests in 2012 than in 2006, but physical functioning and mental health declined - especially in men aged 50-64 with low education. ... The second study shows that a similar improvement in cognitive function can be seen in older people in England. [Medical News Today](#)

Migration crisis: Germany presses Europe into sharing refugees

3 September - The German chancellor, Angela Merkel, looks set for victory in her campaign to press Europe into a new system of sharing refugees after France caved in to a proposed new quotas system and Brussels unveiled plans to quadruple the number of people spread across most of the EU. In a major policy speech on Europe's worst migration emergency, Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European commission, is to table proposals next Wednesday for the mandatory sharing of 160,000 refugees between 26 of the EU's 28 countries. Britain, Ireland and Denmark are exempted from having to take part, but Dublin has already agreed to participate and David Cameron is under increasing pressure for Britain to pull its weight as the migration crisis escalates with scenes of chaos and misery on Europe's borders. ... But the speed of developments on the ground is dictating political responses. Donald Tusk, who chairs EU summits as president of the European council, said the EU should agree to share at least 100,000 refugees. In June, he opposed the quotas system. The proposed figures - 100,000 to 160,000 - refer merely to a mandatory quotas system, beyond the much higher numbers of asylum claims that the countries will have to

process in any case. Germany alone expects 800,000 this year. [The Guardian](#)

Ukraine: Circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus

1 September - In Ukraine, 2 cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 1 (cVDPV1) have been confirmed, with dates of onset of paralysis on 30 June and 7 July 2015. Both are from the Zakarpatskaya oblast, in south-western Ukraine, bordering Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland. One child was 4 years old and the other 10 months old at the time of onset of paralysis. Ukraine had been at particular risk of emergence of a cVDPV, due to inadequate vaccination coverage. In 2014, only 50% of children were fully immunized against polio and other vaccine-preventable diseases. ... Circulating VDPVs are rare but well-documented strains of poliovirus that can emerge in some populations which are inadequately immunized. A robust outbreak response can rapidly stop such events. Given substantial vaccination coverage gaps across the country and subnational surveillance deficits, the risk of further spread of this strain within the country is deemed to be high.

[WHO](#)

United Kingdom: Alcohol price plans face further delay after European ruling

3 September - Plans to introduce minimum unit pricing for alcohol in Scotland face further delay, following an initial ruling by Europe's highest court. MSPs passed legislation in 2012 which set a minimum unit price of 50p. But European Court of Justice advocate general Yves Bot said the move risked infringing EU rules on free trade. In an official opinion, he said it would only be legal if it could be shown no other mechanism could deliver the desired public health benefits. Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon welcomed the opinion, saying it confirmed that minimum unit pricing was not precluded by EU law. The Scottish government, which has argued that minimum pricing is vital to address Scotland's "unhealthy relationship with drink", has been unable to implement the policy while the legal process is ongoing. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

Canada: Coerced sterilization of Canadian indigenous women in 70s widespread: researcher

1 September The coercive sterilization of indigenous women in Canadian health centers during the 1970s was more widespread than previously believed, with impoverished communities in the north disproportionately targeted, a researcher has found. ... Historical documents do not say how many of the nearly 1,200 sterilization cases - including more

than 550 at federally operated "Indian" hospitals between 1971 and 1974 - were undertaken by force or fraud, but evidence suggests coercion was widespread, Stote said. "Consent forms (for sterilizations) were not translated into indigenous languages, people weren't necessarily understanding what was happening in the doctor's office," Stote told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. ... Officials in the province of Alberta have apologized and paid compensation for past sterilization campaigns on people considered mentally challenged and other disadvantaged groups, including indigenous people. ... Forced or coercive sterilization has been deemed a form of discrimination, violence against women, and a violation of basic human rights by the United Nations. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: 9/11 recovery workers: Congress must renew health programs for those exposed to toxic dust

3 September - Dozens of 9/11 recovery workers are demanding that Congress renew programs offering money and health care to people exposed to toxic dust after the terror attacks. ... Congress authorized billions of dollars in payments and health services for people with illnesses potentially linked to dust released when the twin towers collapsed after they were struck by hijacked planes in 2001. But those programs are set to expire next year. Advocates for the sick say the health programs are essential for people with complicated, often incurable illnesses. Congress initially limited the programs because of cost concerns. [Fox News](#)

U.S.: Colorado's long-lasting birth control program for teens may not last long

3 September - ... Colorado launched an experiment aimed at [reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies]. The results have been dramatic — but efforts to expand the program using taxpayer money have hit a political roadblock. Six years ago, Children's Hospital outside Denver and dozens of clinics around the state began focusing on long-acting forms of contraception, such as IUDs and hormonal implants. ... Despite their effectiveness, less than 5 percent of teenagers on birth control nationwide use the long-acting forms. ... By 2013, teen births in Colorado had dropped 40 percent — compared to a 30-percent decline nationwide. The steep drop continued last year. Abortions among teenagers in Colorado were also down. Democratic Gov. John Hickenlooper said the savings in Medicaid and government assistance far outweigh the up-front costs. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Fewer people neglecting health care over cost – CDC

1 September - The rate of people who didn't get needed medical care as a result of its cost reached a 16-year-low in the three months that ended in March, as the Affordable Care Act continued to drive down the number of people without health insurance, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report released Tuesday. The percentage of people who didn't get needed health care as a result of its cost fell to 4.4 percent. ... The

CDC report also found that the rate of people without health insurance dropped below 10 percent in the first quarter, breaking a double-digit plateau that had persisted since the 1990s. [CNBC](#)

U.S.: Labs cited for 'serious' security failures in research with bioterror germs

28 August - ... Federal regulators have secretly threatened to revoke permits to study bioterror pathogens from at least six labs ... because they failed to take required actions to assess the behavior and trustworthiness of their workers, plus other kinds of safety violations, records obtained by USA TODAY show. ... How significant the security violations are is unclear because so much of the oversight of labs working with “select agents” ... is cloaked in secrecy. Lab regulators at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention refused to answer questions. [A] U.S. Army biodefense lab had been mistakenly shipping hundreds of live anthrax specimens — that it told recipients had been killed — for more than a decade, despite inspections by federal regulators. The problems continued undetected despite regulators previously citing the lab in 2007 for failing to properly kill anthrax. ... Lab regulators at the CDC are in the midst of a 90-day review of how the agency regulates safety and security at hundreds of public, private and government labs working with select agent pathogens. [USA Today](#)

U.S.: Prison officials join movement to curb solitary confinement

2 September - In a sign of how far the nation has moved from supporting solitary confinement for inmates, the leading organization for the nation’s prison and jail administrators on Wednesday called for sharply limiting or even ending its use for extended periods. The statement from the Association of State Correctional Administrators, whose members are largely responsible for the growth in solitary confinement in recent decades, is its most forceful to date on the practice. ... To reduce the number of people in solitary confinement, prison administrators are focusing on inmates who have been in isolation for 30 days or longer, usually for disciplinary reasons, said George Camp, the group’s co-executive director. ... Any efforts to end or significantly restrict the use of solitary are likely to face opposition from prison guards, who view the practice as vital for maintaining prison safety and whose unions often have substantial clout. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Seven dead in Illinois veterans home *Legionella* outbreak

2 September - An outbreak of Legionnaires' disease at a veterans home in Illinois has sickened 39 and killed 7 of them, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) said yesterday in a news release. The outbreak involves residents at the Illinois Veterans' Home-Quincy in Adams County. The seven residents who died all had underlying medical conditions, the IDPH said. Their average age was 86, the Associated Press (AP) reported

today. ... The IDPH requested aid from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Aug 30, and the next day four CDC specialists arrived at the home to work with state investigators. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

U.S.: Suicide-by-firearm rates shift in two states after changes in state gun laws

1 September - A new study examining changes in gun policy in two states finds that handgun purchaser licensing requirements influence suicide rates. Researchers estimate that Connecticut's 1995 law requiring individuals to obtain a permit or license to purchase a handgun after passing a background check was associated with a 15.4 percent reduction in firearm suicide rates, while Missouri's repeal of its handgun purchaser licensing law in 2007 was associated with a 16.1 percent increase in firearm suicide rates. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

U.S.: Survey - Mental health stigmas are shifting

2 September - Mental health has a long-standing public perception problem, but the stigma appears to be shifting, at least in the United States, a new survey reveals. Results from a national online survey on mental health, anxiety and suicide indicate that 90% of Americans value mental and physical health equally. ... Despite recognizing a link between mental health and overall well-being, the majority of survey participants view access to mental health care inaccessible and costly. Although most people surveyed identified life circumstances, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar disorder as risk factors for suicide, more than half -- 53% -- did not know that people with anxiety disorders are also at risk for suicide, the survey found. ... The survey also revealed that people ages 18 to 24 are becoming more comfortable with seeking medical help and are more likely to consider it a sign of strength to see a medical health professional, compared with older people. [CNN](#)

U.S.: West Nile virus and other nationally notifiable arboviral diseases — United States, 2014

4 September - ... In 2014, CDC received reports of 2,327 cases of nationally notifiable arboviral disease, among which 1,453 (62%) were classified as neuroinvasive disease. Cases were caused by WNV (2,205 cases, 95%), La Crosse virus (80), Jamestown Canyon virus (11), St. Louis encephalitis virus (10), Powassan virus (8), Eastern equine encephalitis virus (8), and unspecified California serogroup virus (5). Cases were reported from 568 (18%) of the 3,141 U.S. counties; no cases were reported from Alaska, Delaware, Rhode Island, or Vermont. ... WNV disease cases peaked in late August; 90% of cases had illness onset during July–September. The median age of patients was 57 years (interquartile range [IQR] = 44–67 years); 1,403 (64%) were male. Overall, 1,589 (72%) patients were hospitalized, and 97 (4%) died. The median age of patients who died was 75 years (IQR = 65–83 years). Of the 1,347 WNV neuroinvasive disease cases, 620 (46%) were reported as encephalitis, 565 (42%) as meningitis, 132 (10%) as acute flaccid paralysis, and 30 (2%) as other neurologic

presentation. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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USPACOM

India: Paid to poo - Combating open defecation in India

30 August - Using a toilet is something most people take for granted - but about 1.1 billion people around the world defecate in the open because they do not have access to proper sanitation. Now a scheme in India is aiming to instill better toilet habits in children by "paying them to poo". ... In India, nearly half of the population - more than 590m people - relieve themselves in the open. ... Now a state council in the Gujarati city of Ahmedabad has come up with a scheme where children are being paid to use public toilets. Campaigners hope it will improve the situation in a country where diseases such as diarrhoea kill about 200,000 children every year. [BBC News](#)

India: Sixty-one infants die at India hospital in two weeks

3 September - Sixty-one infants have died at an Indian children's hospital in the past two weeks, but a senior official at the hospital in eastern Odisha state insists that the deaths were not due to the negligence of the medics. The recent spike in deaths at the hospital in Cuttack city has sparked protests, forcing the state government to launch an investigation. About 6,000 children have died at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Post Graduate Institute of Paediatrics, popularly known as Shishu Bhavan, in the past five years, and records show that the death toll has been rising steadily over the years. Niranjana Mohanty, a senior professor-cum-superintendent at the hospital, told Al Jazeera on Thursday that the hospital was overburdened, adding that about 60 doctors handled 45-50 critically ill children and 450-500 outpatients daily. He said that most of the infants who died were born prematurely and had low birth weight. Septicaemia or pneumonia were the main causes of the deaths while many children died because of encephalitis, he added. [Al Jazeera](#)

Japan: Fukushima-related child cancers unlikely to rise – IAEA

31 August - An increase in thyroid cancer among children is unlikely after the meltdown at Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant four years ago, but it remains unclear exactly how much radiation children in the vicinity of the plant were exposed to, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog said in a report released on Monday. Increased thyroid cancer is generally the leading health concern after exposure to nuclear radiation, but that may not be the case after the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Co's Fukushima Daiichi plant in March 2011, the

Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency said. "Because the reported thyroid doses attributable to the accident were generally low, an increase in childhood thyroid cancer attributable to the accident is unlikely," the report said. "However, uncertainties remained concerning the thyroid equivalent doses incurred by children immediately after the accident," it added. [Reuters](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Americas chikungunya cases rise by nearly 28,000

31 August - In its latest update on chikungunya in the Caribbean and the Americas, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on Aug 28 reported 27,867 new cases, bringing the outbreak total to 1,707,090. ... Colombia, which now has 320,891 cases in 2015, has reported the region's most cases by far this year. PAHO's latest update reflects 2,280 new suspected cases for that nation. Honduras, however, reported the biggest jump, with 22,673 new cases in the most recent 7 weeks, bringing its total for the year to 71,840. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

Dominica: Erika death toll rises in Caribbean as Hurricane Fred forms off African coast

31 August - Rescue crews are continuing to search for more than 50 people still missing in Dominica after Tropical Storm Erika caused flooding and mudslides on the Caribbean island. The death toll in Dominica has risen to 20. Officials are working to evacuate roughly 1,000 people from the town of Petite-Savanne because of fears of new landslides, said Don Corritte, director of the office of disaster management. Evacuations were carried out by boat because of damage to roads and bridges. [ABC News](#)

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The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* is published by the Public Health Information Directorate, Army Public Health Center.

