

12 April 2013

Army Public Health Weekly Update

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 Department.

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National Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)

National Sexual Assault Awareness Month, known as SAAM, is an annual campaign to raise awareness and educate communities on the prevention of sexual violence.

The 2013 SAAM theme is: "We own it ... We'll solve it ... Together."

The theme strengthens our collective moral and ethical commitment, in keeping with Army Values and our Warrior Ethos, to show respect and dignity for every Soldier, DA Civilian, their family members, and the nation we serve.

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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U.S. MILITARY

DoD program works to help stressed military parents

10 April - With April designated as Child Abuse Prevention Month, the Defense Department is highlighting its commitment to preventing child abuse and neglect among military families, especially through the Family Advocacy Program, and providing those who need it with counseling. The FAP focuses on strengthening family resilience through visits and counseling with new military parents, as well as on educating young families about the stresses of parenting and what it takes to maintain healthy relationships especially when some members are deployed. The department has created the New Parent Support Program, a voluntary home-visiting program aimed at helping parents-to-be or those with young children adapt to parenthood through classes, community support groups and other forms of instruction. [MHS](#)

Heat injuries, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2012

March 2013 - In 2012, there were more active component service members treated for heat stroke (n=365) than in 2011 but fewer than in 2008 or 2009. Compared to their respective counterparts, incidence rates of heat stroke were higher among males, those younger than 20 years of age, Marine Corps and Army members, recruit trainees, and service members in combat-specific occupations. Fewer service members were treated for "other heat injuries" in 2012 (n=2,257) than in 2010 or 2011; also, there were fewer hospitalizations for "other heat injuries" in 2012 than in any of the prior four years. The incidence rate of "other heat injuries" was higher among females than males, more than 8 times higher among recruit trainees than other enlisted members, and 20 times higher among recruit trainees than officers. From 2008 to 2012, 1,060 heat injury events occurred in Iraq/Afghanistan; 6.5 percent (n=69) were due to heat stroke. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Pet dogs help Soldiers with PTSD

10 April - FORT BRAGG, N.C. (AP) — Former Army infantryman John Walis has a cabinet full of medicines to fight depression, sleeplessness and pain, resulting from PTSD and a disabling spinal-cord injury. Most of the time, he says, instead of taking the drugs, he takes Tommy for a walk. Tommy is a dog Walis got from Afghanistan at the end of his tour there in 2009. Walis says it's hard to describe how much Tommy has helped him; when he is depressed and needs a supportive companion, the dog is there, offering unconditional love. When Walis would rather stay in his New York home, away from the rest of the world, Tommy begs to go to a park or for a walk in the woods...[Tri-Valley Dispatch](#)

Posttraumatic stress significantly reduced by transcendental meditation

10 April - A significant percentage of veterans returning from wars exhibit symptoms of posttraumatic stress (PTS). This is now recognized as a serious health problem, but what

about the victims of such violence? Refugees live with the constant reminder of what war has done to their lives and those of their families. A randomized/matched study published in the April 2013 issue of *Journal of Traumatic Stress* (Volume 26, Issue 2, pp. 295-298.) measured the severity of posttraumatic stress symptoms in refugees in Africa before and after learning the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique. The reductions were dramatic... [Medical News Today](#)

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GLOBAL

Air pollution tied to birth defects

8 April - Exposure in the first two months of pregnancy to air pollution from traffic sharply increases the risk for birth defects, a new study has found. Researchers used data from two large studies carried out in eight counties in the San Joaquin Valley in California. One has tracked birth defects since 1997, and the other has recorded concentrations of nitrogen dioxide, nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide and particulate matter at 20 locations in the valley since the 1970s. The results are [posted online in The American Journal of Epidemiology](#).

Dengue fever cases have been seriously underestimated

8 April - A new paper in the journal *Nature* says scientists have been seriously underestimating the amount of dengue around the globe. The study says there could be as many as 400 million dengue infections worldwide each year making it more prevalent than malaria. This is four times higher than the current dengue prevalence estimate of the World Health Organization. One reason for the huge increase in estimated infections is that dengue has been spreading far and wide. It's usually described as an infectious tropical disease but lately it's been popping up even outside the tropics. There've been major outbreaks in Portugal and Russia, and small ones in the U.S. [NPR](#)

Does your birth month affect the risk of developing MS?

9 April - A new study out of England shows that the risk of developing multiple sclerosis may be influenced by your birth month. The study, released Monday, showed the risk of MS was highest in individuals born in May and lowest in those born in November. To conduct the study, researchers from Queen Mary, University of London and the University of Oxford looked at the immune system development of newborn babies and their vitamin D levels. [CTV News](#)

Experts triple estimate of world dengue fever infections



7 April - Around 390 million people are infected each year with dengue fever - the world's fastest-spreading tropical disease - more than triple the current estimate by the World Health Organization, experts said on Sunday. The new finding, based on several years of analysis, underscores the growing burden of the mosquito-borne viral disease, which is also called "breakbone fever" because of the severe pain it can cause. [Reuters](#)

In Blacks, Alzheimer's study finds same variant genes as in Whites

9 April - African-Americans have a slightly higher risk of [Alzheimer's disease](#) than people of largely European ancestry, but there is no major genetic difference that could account for the slight excess risk, new research shows. The results are from one of the only large studies ever done on Alzheimer's in African-Americans. [New York Times](#)

Male sex hormones 'drive breast cancer'

10 April - US scientists say they have found a new target to beat breast cancer - male sex hormones, or androgens. The University of Colorado team discovered that many breast cancers possess androgen receptors on their surface, and that male hormones like testosterone fuel the tumour's growth. Drugs to block these receptors could offer another way to fight the disease, a meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research heard. They plan clinical trials to test this... [BBC](#)

WHO: High blood pressure a silent killer



7 April - The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than one in three adults, or about one billion people, is affected by high blood pressure. To mark World Health Day (Sunday, April 7), WHO is promoting the many steps people can take to reduce the risk of dying prematurely from what it calls a silent killer. WHO Director-General Margaret Chan led a tribute today to celebrate the founding of the World Health Organization on April 7, 1948. Every year, World Health Day marks this event by highlighting a public health issue. This year's theme is hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, one of the most important contributors to heart disease and stroke. Chan says the effects of the condition create a global health crisis. [VOA](#)

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Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary

4 April 2013:

- ILI incidence rates continued to trend downward for all regions. Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) incidence rates continue to decrease in the US, but increased slightly this week for EUCOM and PACOM. This season, there have been 298 reportable medical event (RME) influenza cases among service members (82.2% were vaccinated); an additional 318 cases were reported among other beneficiaries.
- Across the overseas DoD laboratory surveillance network, influenza activity was at low levels.
- As of 26 March 2013, vaccine coverage in the active component of the U.S. Armed Forces is 97%. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 13 (March 24 – 30, 2013), influenza activity decreased in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 4,909 specimens tested and reported by collaborating laboratories, 555 (11.3%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths: One pediatric death was reported.
- Influenza-Associated Hospitalizations: A cumulative rate for the season of 42.3 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported. Of reported hospitalizations, 50% were among adults 65 years and older.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.8%. This is below the national baseline of 2.2%. Three of 10 regions reported ILI at or above region-specific baseline levels. Seven states and New York City experienced low activity; 43 states experienced minimal activity, and the District of Columbia had insufficient data.
- Geographic Spread of Influenza: Four states reported widespread influenza activity; 7 states reported regional influenza activity; the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 26 states reported local influenza activity; 12 states reported sporadic influenza activity; Guam and one state reported no influenza activity, and the U.S. Virgin Islands did not report. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Week 13, 53 specimens were tested from 27 locations. There was one influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus, nine influenza A(H3N2) and 12 influenza B viruses detected (see

Table 1).

- To date this influenza season, 3,425 specimens have been tested from 81 locations of which 1,059 were positive for influenza A (948 A(H3N2), 100 A(H1N1)pdm09, five co-infections, and six A/not subtyped).
- To date this influenza season, 323 specimens were positive for influenza B. Of these, there were 14 B/Yamagata, two B/Victoria, and two B & enterovirus co-infections. The lineage is pending or unknown for 305 specimens. The onset of influenza B cases compared to influenza A has been somewhat later in the season.
- There have been 218 other respiratory viruses isolated (49 adenovirus, 88 RSV, 72 parainfluenza, and nine enterovirus) cumulatively this season. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview

In week 13/2013, 26 countries reported clinical information:

- Nineteen of 26 reporting countries indicated low-intensity transmission.
- Decreasing or stable trends were reported by almost all reporting countries.
- The proportion of influenza-positive sentinel specimens remained high (40%) but has continued to decrease since the peak observed in week 5/2013 (61%) and with a considerably lower number of specimens tested.
- Since week 40/2012, 47% of sentinel surveillance specimens testing positive for influenza virus have been type A, and 53% type B. Of the influenza A viruses subtyped, the proportion of A(H1)pdm09 viruses has been 63%.
- Thirty-two hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported by six countries, including one fatality.

In all reporting countries, influenza activity continued to decline or had already returned to baseline levels. After more than three months of active transmission, a long period compared to other years, the 2012–13 influenza season is waning and slowly moving towards its close. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 30 March 2013: Influenza activity at basic training centers decreased in March

Adenovirus:

- Vaccination against types 4 and 7 adenovirus was instituted at all basic training centers by mid-November 2011 (week 45).
- FRI rates and the proportion of FRI cases positive for adenovirus have decreased markedly since vaccine was reintroduced.

- Sporadic adenovirus cases at basic training centers in early 2013. FRI rates remain low in general.

FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 30 March 2013 (Week 13):

Army influenza-like illness (ILI) activity continues decreasing. Influenza B continues to exceed influenza A among typed specimens in both the Army and civilian populations. The World Health Organization continues to monitor novel influenza virus A(H7N9) in China; risk among DoD populations is very low.

- **ILI Activity:** Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 13 were 8% lower than the same week last year.
- **Influenza cases:** One hospitalized influenza case was reported to USAPHC in week 13. 92 hospitalized cases have been reported during this influenza season, 80 in dependents and 12 in Active Duty.
- **Acute Respiratory Disease at BCT sites:** ARD rates remain low; rates did not increase significantly at any sites during week 13.
- **Viral specimens:** During week 13, 147 of 656 (22%) laboratory specimens tested were positive for respiratory pathogens. Influenza B accounted for 57% of positive specimens. Most of the influenza positive specimens were from ERM (38%); 17% were from PRM and SRM each. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

China: Human infection with influenza A(H7N9) virus – WHO update

11 April - As of 11 April 2013 (17:00 CET), the National Health and Family Planning Commission notified WHO of an additional 10 laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with influenza A(H7N9) virus...To date, a total of 38 patients have been laboratory confirmed with influenza A(H7N9) virus in China; including 10 deaths, 19 severe cases and nine mild cases. More than 760 close contacts of the confirmed cases are being closely monitored. [WHO](#)

China's actions in flu cases draw critics

10 April - HONG KONG — Of all the mysteries surrounding the emergence of a new and deadly strain of [avian influenza](#) around Shanghai, one of the biggest is why [China's](#) hundreds of medical and veterinary labs did not spot the problem sooner — or if they did, why it was not disclosed... [New York Times](#)

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Are food trucks safe?



8 April - With cheap, chic fare, like arugula pizza, squash empanadas and fish tacos, the country's 15,000-plus food trucks are rolling into virtually every big city and many small towns across the United States. The burning question: Is it safe to grab a bite to eat from a truck that

cooks for hundreds in a space that's a fraction of the size of your kitchen? For the most part, yes. "Many of the health inspectors in our office buy lunch from food trucks," says Christie Sweitz, interim supervisor for inspection in Portland, Oregon. "Trucks are required to follow strict guidelines and they are inspected as often as restaurants." Just as with the fare from their brick-and-mortar peers, though, some meals on wheels are better bets, food safety-wise, than others. [CNN](#)

Britain's Asda says finds horse drug in corned beef

9 April - British supermarket chain Asda said on Tuesday very low levels of the horse pain-killing drug phenylbutazone, also known as bute, had been found in horsemeat discovered in tins of corned beef in the first such case in Britain. Britain's Food Standards Agency (FSA) said the level of the drug, which is banned from entering the human food chain, posed a low risk to human health, as results showed it contained 4 parts per billion. [Reuters](#)

Europe: Rise in human infections from Campylobacter and E. coli, whilst Salmonella cases continue to fall



9 April - The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the European Food Safety Authority launched their [annual report on zoonoses and food-borne outbreaks](#). The report provides data on 10 zoonotic diseases and on food-borne outbreaks in the European Union for 2011... The report

highlights a reduction of reported human cases of salmonellosis, which dropped by 5% from 2010 and by almost 40% from 2007. Human cases of yersiniosis and brucellosis have also decreased. On the other hand, the number of cases of campylobacteriosis has increased by 10% over the last four years. Increasing human cases of Shiga toxin/verotoxin-producing *Escherichia coli* and of alvear echinococcosis have also been reported. [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#)

FDA requests budget increase to implement food safety law

10 April - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said on Wednesday it is requesting a budget of \$4.7 billion in fiscal 2014, including \$295.8 million to implement new food safety

regulations. The proposed budget represents an increase over the \$4.03 billion included in the 2013 budget after automatic spending cuts mandated by Congress, known as the sequester. [Reuters](#)

North America: White nose syndrome, bats

8 April - The Nature Conservancy Today [2 Apr 2013] announced that white nose syndrome (WNS), which has decimated bat populations in eastern North America, has been confirmed in a bat found last month [March 2013] at the Conservancy's Bat Cave Preserve in Rutherford County. White nose syndrome was 1st identified in the winter of 2006-2007 in upstate New York. It has spread to 19 US states and 4 Canadian provinces. It is estimated that bat populations have declined by 80 percent in the affected areas. Infected bats have also been identified in Avery, McDowell, Haywood, Yancey, and Transylvania counties. Investigators from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and The Nature Conservancy found the infected bat. The US Fish and Wildlife Service confirmed the disease. [ProMED-mail](#)

U.S.: Hepatitis A scare at NYC eatery prompts Health Department to urge vaccines

8 April - New York City health officials are urging some patrons of an upscale restaurant to get vaccinated for hepatitis A, because of potential contamination from an infected employee who prepared pastries. The New York City Department of Health said Friday that anyone who ate dessert at the Alta Restaurant in New York City's Greenwich Village between March 23 and April 2 may have been exposed to the infectious disease, and should get a vaccine as a "precautionary measure," CBS New York reported. "The best option for everybody is to see their primary care doctor," Dr. Jay Varma, Deputy Commissioner For Disease Control at the NYC Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene, told the 1010 WINS radio station Friday night, according to CBS New York. [CBS News](#)

U.S.: Kid's food lead content leads to warning label lawsuit – DOLE, KKR

9 April - Several food-makers have been violating a California State law that requires them to print lead level warnings on baby-food and fruit juice labels. Dole Food Company, Inc (NYSE:DOLE) (current: \$10.59, Up by 0.57%) and the Gerber unit owned by Nestle are amongst those facing trial for the offence. In its 2011 lawsuit, the Environmental Law Foundation said that Gerber, Dole and Del Monte Foods co. manufacture kid's food which contains lead. These companies have to either reduce the lead levels or put print warnings on the labels. California's Proposition 65 is a toxins-warning law that states that companies have to follow these labeling norms. [Indices News and Media](#)

U.S.: Worrisome levels of lead found in imported rice

11 April - An analysis of imported brands found surprising levels of the metal. Reporting at the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society, a group of researchers lead by Tsanangurayi Tongesayi, an associate professor of chemistry at Monmouth University in

[New Jersey](#) announced the results of their analysis of rice from Asia, [Europe](#) and [South America](#). The imports, which currently make up about 7% of rice consumed in America, contained higher than acceptable levels of lead. The levels ranged from six milligrams/kilogram to 12 milligrams/kilogram; factoring in average consumption, that added up to estimated lead exposure levels 30 to 60 times greater than the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) provisional total tolerable intake (PTTI) levels for children and 20-40 times greater than the standard exposure levels for adults. [TIME](#)

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WELLNESS

A new treatment option for alcohol dependence: Reduced consumption rather than abstinence

11 April - Philadelphia, PA, A potential new treatment for alcoholism called nalmefene is effective and safe for reducing alcohol consumption in alcohol dependent individuals, says a new study published this week in *Biological Psychiatry*. Traditionally, abstinence has been regarded as the primary treatment goal for alcohol dependence, and current pharmacological treatments for alcoholism are approved only for relapse prevention. However, relapse rates remain high and a goal of abstinence is unacceptable to many patients. To address these concerns and provide opportunities for improved patient outcomes, new evidence-based treatments are necessary...[EurekaAlert!](#)

April is STD Awareness Month - make a difference

April 2013 - April is STD Awareness Month, an opportunity for individuals, doctors, and community-based organizations to address ways to prevent some of the nearly 20 million new sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) that occur in the United States each year...[CDC](#)

Couch potatoes may be genetically predisposed to being lazy, rat study suggests



8 April - Studies show 97 percent of American adults get less than 30 minutes of exercise a day, which is the minimum recommended amount based on federal guidelines. New research from the University of Missouri suggests certain genetic traits may predispose people to being more or less motivated to exercise and remain active. Frank Booth, a professor in the MU College of Veterinary Medicine, along with his post-doctoral fellow Michael Roberts, were able to selectively breed rats that exhibited traits of either extreme activity or extreme laziness. They say these rats indicate that genetics could play a role in exercise motivation, even in humans. [Science Daily](#)

Fitness after 65 is no one-size-fits-all endeavor

8 April - America's ageing population is posing special challenges, fitness experts say, because it is difficult to design effective workout routines for people with such a wide range of abilities. For one 70-year-old, the goal may be to run a marathon, for another it's getting out of a chair. "If you are teaching 10-year-olds, it's perfectly reasonable to do an activity that everybody would participate in," said Dr. Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko, an expert on aging with the American College of Sports Medicine. But 20 80-year-olds could be as different as chalk and cheese." Some baby boomer could be athletic, he explained, while others would be unable to get out of bed. [Reuters](#)

Increase potassium and cut salt to reduce stroke risk



4 April - Increasing potassium in our diets as well as cutting down on salt will reduce blood pressure levels and the risk of stroke, research in the British Medical Journal suggests. One study review found that eating an extra two to three servings of fruit or vegetables per day - which are high in potassium - was beneficial. A lower salt intake would increase the benefits further, researchers said. A stroke charity said a healthy diet was key to keeping stroke risk down. While the increase of potassium in diets was found to have a positive effect on blood pressure, it was also discovered to have no adverse effects on kidney function or hormone levels, the research concluded. [BBC](#)

Month of birth impacts immune system development

8 April - Newborn babies' immune system development and levels of vitamin D have been found to vary according to their month of birth, according to new research. The research, from scientists at Queen Mary, University of London and the University of Oxford, provides a potential biological basis as to why an individual's risk of developing the neurological condition multiple sclerosis (MS) is influenced by their month of birth. It also supports the need for further research into the potential benefits of vitamin D supplementation during pregnancy. [Science Daily](#)

Red meat chemical 'damages heart', say US scientists

7 April - A chemical found in red meat helps explain why eating too much steak, mince and bacon is bad for the heart, say US scientists. A study in the journal Nature Medicine showed that carnitine in red meat was broken down by bacteria in the gut. This kicked off a chain of events that resulted in higher levels of cholesterol and an increased risk of heart disease. Dieticians warned there may be a risk to people taking carnitine supplements. There has been a wealth of studies suggesting that regularly eating red meat may be damaging to health. [BBC](#)

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Africa: Wild foods could improve nutrition and food security



10 April - NAIROBI, (IRIN) - Malnutrition could be greatly reduced and food security improved by ensuring improved access to nutrient-rich forest-derived foods like berries, bushmeat, roots, insects and nuts for the world's poorest populations, experts say. "I believe forest foods are particularly important for reducing malnutrition when it comes to micronutrients such as vitamin A and iron," Bronwen Powell, a nutritionist and researcher at the Centre for International Research on Forests (CIFOR), told IRIN. Making these foods accessible would mean bringing them to markets to benefit the urban poor, many of whom find imported fruits and processed foods unaffordable, and giving people legal access to forests to obtain bio-resources like game meat and honey in areas where it is illegal to do so...[IRIN](#)

Africa: World Health Day 2013 - combating malnutrition and infection with forests

8 April - World Health Day is a time when - as a nutritionist - I think about the links between nutrition and infection. Current estimates suggest that **30 percent of global child mortality** is directly or indirectly linked to malnutrition. This is because infection and malnutrition are linked in a cyclical manner: malnutrition decreases immune function and increases risk of infection (e.g. vitamin A deficiency increases risk of diarrhea and respiratory tract infections) - while infection increases nutritional requirements and the risk of becoming malnourished (e.g. the malaria parasite destroys red blood cells and can result in iron deficiencies). Forests contribute to both human nutrition and **human health**. They supply an estimated **75 percent of usable water globally** by providing natural filtration and storage ecosystem services. [All Africa](#)

Will Nigerian boom babies feed prosperity or entrench poverty?

9 April - In the time it takes to read this article, Nigeria will have added 50 people to its population, or about 11,000 a day. While some see these new consumers feeding an engine of prosperity, others fear they will create a crisis of poverty and unrest. By 2050, the global Population Reference Bureau (PRB) projects it will be the world's fourth most populous country, with 400 million people - just less than the projected figure for the United States, but with only a tenth of its territory. While Africa's most populous nation has long had **business** leaders salivating over its potentially huge market, especially retailers of fast-moving consumer goods, it is not clear whether it can turn a growing population - already at 170 million - into a richer society with widespread higher living standards. [Reuters](#)
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Egypt: Rural health services ill-equipped



8 April - Rural Egyptians seeking medical treatment often face an ordeal just getting to the nearest clinic or hospital. But when they finally get there, they are unlikely to find the equipment, medicines or even doctors they need. The Arab Spring may have brought radical changes to Egyptian politics, but medical practitioners say little has changed in the undersupplied health system used by the poor. "Our government needs to revolutionize health services, particularly in the countryside," Ahmed Lutfi, a senior member from Egypt's Medical Association, told IRIN. [IRIN](#)

Iran: Quake hits near Iran's nuclear city Bushehr, 37 dead

9 April - A powerful earthquake struck close to Iran's only [nuclear power](#) station on Tuesday, killing 37 people and injuring 850 as it destroyed homes and devastated two small villages, Iranian media reported. The 6.3 magnitude quake totally destroyed one village, a Red Crescent official told the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA), but the nearby Bushehr nuclear plant was undamaged, according to Iranian officials and the Russian company that built it. [Reuters](#)

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Dengue fever in 42 German and United Kingdom Madeira tourists during autumn 2012

4 April - In October and November 2012 residents and tourists in the Autonomous Region of Madeira, Portugal, were affected by dengue fever. The outbreak waned during the unusually dry winter. Using a Monte Carlo test we investigated the hypothesis that rainy weather conveyed increased risk of dengue virus infection among tourists. Results confirmed the hypothesis. As it is unclear whether the outbreak is over, upkeep and emphasis on mosquito avoidance on rainy days may help residents and tourists reduce infection risk. [Eurosurveillance](#)

Germany: Undiagnosed illness, respiratory

10 April - A 49 year old policeman is dead, 5 other persons are ill and doctors are puzzled by this mysterious disease just outside of Hamburg. Andreas Breitner, Minister of the

Interior, confirmed to the "Schleswig Holstein newspaper" the death of the 49-year-old policeman at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE) on Tuesday [9 Apr 2013], after multi-organ failure. Another policeman, aged 38 years is in critical condition. He is suffering from similar flu symptoms, including severe pneumonia...[ProMED-mail](#)

Poland: Hepatitis C, nosocomial outbreak

11 April – A local outbreak of hepatitis C virus infection has occurred in Gdansk, Poland. The outbreak has been linked to a private medical clinic performing radiological imaging. In the middle of January 2013, 3 patients were hospitalized in the Regional Hospital of Infectious Diseases with the diagnosis of acute hepatitis C. It was revealed that all 3 had undergone CT scans with contrast administration on 5 Nov 2012, all in the same private medical imaging facility. The case was referred to the State Sanitary Inspection for epidemiological investigation. Altogether, out of 25 patients who had undergone contrast CT scan on 15 Nov [2012] in the aforementioned center, 9 have been diagnosed with hepatitis C virus infection. The medical imaging center is suspected of re-using contrast injector syringes on multiple patients. The outbreak is currently being investigated by the local Prosecutor's Office. [ProMED-mail](#)

Sweden: Increased incidence of invasive group A streptococcal infections, January 2012–February 2013

4 April - The incidence of invasive group A streptococcal infections in Sweden was 6.1 per 100,000 population in 2012, the highest since the disease became notifiable in 2004. Furthermore, January and February 2013 marked a dramatic increase of cases notified, partly explainable by an increase of emm1/T1 isolates, a type previously shown to cause severe invasive disease more often than other types. Healthcare providers in Sweden and health authorities in neighbouring countries have been informed about this increase.

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USNORTHCOM

Study of babies did not disclose risks, U.S. finds

10 April - A federal agency has found that a number of prestigious universities failed to tell more than a thousand families in a government-financed study of oxygen levels for extremely premature babies that the risks could include increased chances of blindness or death. None of the families have yet been notified of the findings from the Office for Human Research Protections, which safeguards people who participate in government-financed research. But the agency's conclusions were listed in great detail [in a letter last month](#) to the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the lead site in the study. In all, 23 academic institutions took part, including Stanford, Duke and Yale. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Boomers' latest high

9 April - Baby boomers have become addicted to drugs at an alarming rate. The most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health, released in 2012, found the rate of illicit drug use — cocaine, methamphetamines, marijuana, heroin — had tripled among those 55 to 59 and nearly doubled among those 50 to 54, from 2002 to 2011. About 6 percent of these groups had used illicit drugs, the survey found. The bigger issue of boomers' addictions, however, relates to alcohol and prescription drugs. [Miami Herald](#)

U.S.: Human contacts with oral rabies vaccine baits distributed for wildlife rabies management — Ohio, 2012

12 April - Baits laden with oral rabies vaccines are important for the management of wildlife rabies... During August 23–September 7, 2012, a total of 776,921 baits were distributed in Ohio over 4,379 square miles (11,341 square kilometers). During August 24–September 12, a total of 89 baits were reported found by the general public, with 55 human contacts with baits identified (some contacts involved more than one bait). In 27 of the 55 human contacts, the bait was not intact, and a barrier (e.g., gloves) had not been used to handle the bait, leaving persons at risk for vaccine exposure and vaccine virus infection. However, no adverse events were reported. Continued surveillance of human contacts with oral rabies vaccine baits and public warnings to avoid contact with baits are needed because of the potential for vaccine virus infection. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S.: Judge orders morning after pill be available without prescription, without restrictions

5 April - In the latest volley over the contraceptive Plan B, a federal judge reversed the Department of Health and Human Services decision to restrict over-the-counter availability of the morning after pill to those 17 years or older. Judge Edward Korman of the District Court of Eastern New York overturned Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius' decision to add an age limit to obtaining [Plan B](#) without a prescription; citing concerns over the safety of the emergency contraceptive, which is effective about 50% of the time in preventing pregnancy before the fertilized egg implants in the uterus, being taken by girls as young as 11 years old, Sebelius required anyone under 17 to provide a prescription in order to purchase Plan B, while allowing those 17 and older to buy the contraceptive over-the-counter. [TIME](#)

U.S.: Varicella death of an unvaccinated, previously healthy adolescent, Ohio, 2009

12 April - Varicella usually is a self-limited disease but sometimes can result in severe complications and death. Although infants, adults, and immunocompromised persons are at increased risk for severe disease, before varicella vaccine was introduced in 1995, the majority of hospitalizations and deaths from varicella occurred among healthy persons aged <20 years (1). Introduction of varicella vaccine has substantially decreased varicella incidence, hospitalizations, and deaths in the United States (2). This report describes a

varicella death in an unvaccinated, previously healthy adolescent aged 15 years. In April 2012, as part of the routine review of vital statistics records, the Ohio Department of Health identified a 2009 death with the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision code for varicella as the underlying cause. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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USPACOM

India: Japanese encephalitis and other

11 April - Encephalitis normally makes its presence felt during monsoons. However, this time, acute encephalitis has claimed 38 lives and affected 118 persons even before the onset of the disease season. This despite chief secretary Jawed Usmani issuing repeated directives to the state health department and officials posted in the districts to initiate preventive measures...Statistics gathered from the health department show that of the total cases, 103 patients belonged to UP of whom 34 died. Bihar accounted for the remaining 14 cases and 4 deaths. A patient from Nepal is also undergoing treatment at the Baba Raghav Das Medical College of Gorakhpur [Uttar Pradesh]. Kushinagar turned out to be the worst affected district so far, but Gorakhpur has seen the maximum deaths. [ProMED-mail](#)

Nepal turns to renewable energy



5 April - Nepal's recently adopted policy of subsidizing renewable energy is the latest of many attempts to electrify long-deprived areas, but much more is needed, say experts. More than half of the country's households - almost all in urban and semi-urban areas - are connected to the national electricity grid. But 80 percent of the population is rural, and in these areas, less than one-third have electricity. With grid extension to the country's hilly and mountainous areas prohibitively expensive, officials are looking to off-grid renewable alternatives. "Renewable, off-grid energy solutions [are] the only realistic way to provide energy in parts of the country," according to the government's National Rural and Renewable Energy Programme ([NRREP](#)), a five-year framework launched in 2012. [IRIN](#)

Philippines' natural disaster risks shift, along with experts

10 April - As the storm season approaches, officials in the Philippines are turning to seasoned storm emergency responders to help prepare communities that have historically been spared devastation but that now find themselves in harm's way. When Typhoon Bopha struck the southern Philippine island of Mindanao last December, it unleashed an unprecedented scale of devastation on the island's northern and eastern coasts, particularly in farming regions once thought to be safe from such deadly weather events. Whipping up

winds of up to 250km an hour, the typhoon - known locally as Pablo - was the strongest to have hit the southern region in nearly a century, and it was the deadliest storm in the world that year. One of the first responders was a disaster relief team deployed from the eastern Albay Province, a region once among the country's most disaster-prone. [IRIN](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Drugs in Brazil - Cracking up

6 April - ...São Paulo's Cracolândia [Crackland] was Brazil's first and is still its biggest. It is home to 2,000 addicts. But most Brazilian cities now have similar districts. Recent studies put the country's crack-using population at 1m-1.2m, the world's largest. In the past 20 years, as American consumers shifted to synthetic drugs, traffickers in the coca-growing countries—Bolivia, Colombia and Peru—sought new markets. Brazil shares long, porous borders with all three. Its growing prosperity ensured customers. The gangs born in its hellish prisons handled distribution. [Economist](#)

Peru: Leptospirosis

8 April - Health Minister Midori de Habich announced that MINSA [Ministry of Health of Peru] will declare a red alert for next week for the city of Juanjui, capital of the Mariscal Caceres Province, in the San Martin Region, where an outbreak of leptospirosis has been detected. She said that a team from MINSA was in [Juanjui] 2 weeks ago, monitoring the situation and coordinating with the regional and local authorities the measures to be taken in the face of this disease. She also indicated that at this moment it is not necessary to declare a state of emergency in the zone, as had been requested by the provincial mayor, Renan Saavedra Sandoval. "We are monitoring the situation and we have sufficient medication for the rapid treatment of patients affected by this bacterial disease", she declared to the press. [ProMED-mail](#)

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