

12 September 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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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Army Suicide Awareness Month

The U.S. Army amplifies its promotion the importance of resilience building and suicide awareness within the Army profession during the entire month of September. This year's theme is Enhancing Resiliency -- Strengthening Our Professionals.

See [USAPHC's Health Information Products eCatalog](#) for suicide prevention products.

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

- Liberia's grim Ebola situation prompts call for 'nonconventional' help
- More funds pledged, more volunteers sought for Ebola fight
- Senegal tracks route of Guinea student in race to stop Ebola
- Sierra Leone lockdown will not help halt Ebola: MSF
- Stabbing with syringe in Nigeria raises concerns of ebola as weapon
- WHO on Ebola: Blood may offer help now, vaccines this fall

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- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview
- Is U.S. ready for a pandemic? Investigation says we're 'ill-prepared'
- Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update
- One dose of flu drug shortens fever
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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- European hepatitis A berry outbreak report reveals no single source
- Trapped & poisoned: Is Kabul's ruthless war on dogs un-Islamic?

WELLNESS

- Do workplace wellness programs work? Usually not
- Eating habits, body fat related to differences in brain chemistry
- Increases in liver injury related to herbal and dietary supplements
- Is CrossFit Dangerous?
- Long-awaited diet pill gets U.S. approval
- Sleeping seven to eight hours a night linked to taking fewer sick days
- The war on sitting
- WHO report gives misleading view on e-cigarettes, experts argue

USAFRICOM

- Senegal: Activists push for looser abortion laws
- South Sudan: Food crisis - surviving on water lilies

USCENTCOM

- Afghanistan: Children bear brunt of Afghan conflict
- Afghanistan: Over 9,000 suicide attempt cases recorded
- Raging floods kill over 440 in Pakistan, India
- Saudi Arabia reports MERS in another health worker

USEUCOM

- Israel: Lessons from a public health emergency — importation of wild poliovirus to Israel
- United Kingdom: Impact of measles infections in England revealed
- United Kingdom: Invictus Games - Prince Harry throws party for competitors

Army Vector-borne Disease Report

- West Nile Virus: 399 cases and 16 deaths have been reported this WNV season; no acute Army WNV cases have been reported in 2014.
- Chikungunya Virus: As of 2 September, 4 travel-related cases of Chikungunya in Army beneficiaries have been reported to date in 2014.
- Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF): 12 cases of RMSF have been reported in Army beneficiaries; 1 AD case reported duty-related exposure.



USNORTHCOM

- U.S.: Hundreds of children in U.S. states stricken with respiratory illness
- U.S.: Kids' salt intake worries CDC officials
- U.S.: New safety rules weighed for magnets
- U.S.: Study suggests redundant antibiotic use is widespread in US hospitals
- U.S.: What is a public health "emergency"?
- U.S. widens program to dispose of prescription drugs
- U.S.: Severe respiratory illness associated with Enterovirus D68 — Missouri and Illinois, 2014

USPACOM

- Australia: HPV vaccine program shows success
- India: Pre-natal sex determination tests a cause for concern
- Japan: Dengue fever hits Japan
- Samoa: Chikungunya-related cases reach over 700 in American Samoa
- Solomon Islands: Measles outbreak at 800 cases, 'the real number could be in the thousands'
- South Korea seeks near-doubling of cigarette price
- Vietnam: Dengue fever cases reported increasing in southern Vietnam

USSOUTHCOM

- Colombia: Chikungunya infections spread to Colombia
- PAHO warns of heightened chikungunya, dengue threats
- U.S. SOUTHCOM expo displays technology that can save lives during natural disasters

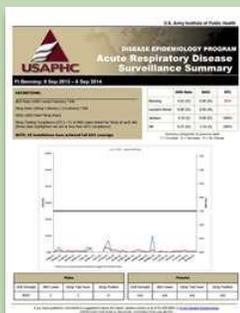
U.S. MILITARY

Could Navy submarine smoking ban lead military to quit?

8 September - A US Navy ban on smoking aboard submarines may offer lessons for enacting similar prohibitions in other parts of the military as well as in civilian life, a new paper suggests. On the last day of 2010, after decades of hurdles, Navy officials ordered all its underwater ships to become smoke free, and it's been smooth sailing for the submarine smoking ban since then... The Navy spent more than a year preparing for the submarine smoking ban and pitched it as essential to the health of involuntarily exposed nonsmokers. Commanders made the case that the likelihood of dying from secondhand smoke was comparable to dying in a motor vehicle accident and greater than dying from a combination of fire, falling and drowning, the report says... Smokers were offered counseling and nicotine-replacement patches and gum and were given time to complete cessation programs before the ban. Nearly 25 percent of military personnel smoked in 2011, down from 51 percent in 1980, the study says. [Reuters](#)

Acute Respiratory Disease Surveillance Summary

This week's summary reports on ARD Rates, Strep Rates, SASI, and Strep Testing Compliance for Army installations.



Department of Defense releases first quarter suicide information

5 September - The Department of Defense released the quarterly suicide report (QSR), today, for the first quarter of calendar year 2014. The report summarizes suicide counts for all services and components. During the months of January through March of this year, there were 74 suicides among service members in the active component, 24 suicides among service members in the reserves, and 22 suicides among service members in the National Guard. The report also shows 2013 annual counts and annual rates as published last month in the 2013 4th Quarter DoD QSR, as well as 2012 annual counts and annual rates as published in the DoD Suicide Event Report (DoDSER) Calendar Year 2012 Annual Report. Defense.gov

Fewest recruits ever test positive for HIV virus

8 September - Fewer Americans seeking to join the military tested positive for the virus that causes AIDS in 2013 than in any year since the Pentagon began screening in 1985. The Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center's medical surveillance report shows a continued drop in newly infected active-duty troops from 2012. And during the last 18 months, no women on active duty were infected. Still, the report showed a rise in human immunodeficiency virus infections among soldiers in the Army National Guard. There, more soldiers have tested positive for HIV in almost every year since 2010. The study said the number of HIV-infected guardsmen this year, 57, was slightly higher than in all 2009.

Military.com

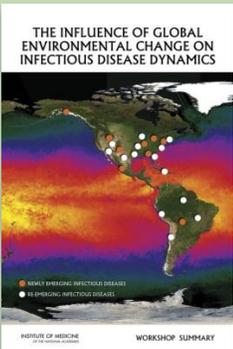
Gynecologic disorders diagnosed during deployment to Southwest/Central Asia, active component females, U.S. Armed Forces, 2008–2013

August 2014 - ...This report documented that approximately one in 10 military women who served in Southwest/Central Asia were diagnosed with a gynecologic disorder at least once during deployment. In addition, gynecologic disorders accounted for approximately one of every 20 medical evacuations of female service members from the war zone. A majority of clinically significant gynecologic disorder cases were attributable to irregular menstruation/bleeding or unspecified inflammation or pain of the female genital organs. Incidence rates of gynecologic disorder diagnoses were higher among black, non-Hispanic service women; younger women; and those in the Army and in motor transport and communications/intelligence occupations... Despite pre-deployment care, this report shows that service women need continuous access to gynecologic care during deployment.

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

**The Influence of
Global
Environmental
Change on
Infectious Disease
Dynamics**

The twentieth century witnessed an era of unprecedented, large-scale, anthropogenic changes to the natural environment. Understanding how environmental factors directly and indirectly affect the emergence and spread of infectious disease has assumed global importance for life on this planet. While the causal links between environmental change and disease emergence are complex, progress in understanding these links, as well as how their impacts may vary across space and time, will require transdisciplinary, transnational, collaborative research.



Toxic chemicals found in homes near old base in Ga.

5 September - Toxic vapor is accumulating in some homes near Fort Gillem, suggesting carcinogens dumped at the U.S. Army base decades ago may have migrated from the groundwater into the air residents breathe, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution has learned. Tests conducted this summer found hazardous chemicals in levels high enough to pose a danger to human health in the air of 26 of 29 homes sampled. More than 200 buildings are still to be tested, including a day care center close to the former military depot, just south of Atlanta. Army officials will begin informing residents of the results in the coming days and offering to install ventilation systems for affected homeowners. [Stars and Stripes](#)

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GLOBAL

C. diff. differs by season and region

10 September – March is the month when hospitals see more *Clostridium difficile* infections, and the Northeast is the region that leads the nation in the difficult to treat infection, researchers reported here. Overall, the in-hospital incidence for *C. difficile* was 8.0 cases of the infection for every 1000 discharges in the Northeast region, followed by the Midwest with 6.4 cases per 1000 discharges; the South with 5.0 cases of *C. difficile* per 1000 discharges and the West which recorded 4.8 *C. difficile* discharges per 1000, said Kelly Reveles, PhD, PharmD, assistant professor of pharmacy at the University of Texas, Austin. All the differences were statistically significant ($P < 0.0001$), she reported. The incidence of *C. difficile* in hospital nearly doubled from 4.5 cases of *C. difficile* per 1000 hospital discharges in 2001 to 8.2 cases per 1000 discharges in 2010. [MedPage Today](#)

Coalition urges nations to decriminalize drugs and drug use

8 September -A coalition of political figures from around the world, including Kofi Annan, the former United Nations secretary general, and several former European and Latin American presidents, is urging governments to decriminalize a variety of illegal drugs and set up regulated drug markets within their own countries... The former Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a member of the commission, said the group was calling for the legal regulation of "as many of the drugs that are currently illegal as possible, with the understanding that some drugs may remain too dangerous to decriminalize." [New York Times](#)

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site:

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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

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Emergent BioSolutions aims to develop heat-tolerant anthrax vaccine

9 September - The US government has awarded Emergent BioSolutions a contract worth up to \$29 million to develop a dry formulation of its adjuvanted anthrax vaccine, with the aim of eliminating the need for refrigeration during shipping and storage, the company announced yesterday... The contract provides funding for manufacturing and nonclinical activities through the preparation of an investigational new drug application to the US Food and Drug Administration... "The dry formulation of NuThrax is intended to increase stability of the vaccine candidate at ambient and higher temperatures, with the objective of eliminating the need for cold chain during shipping and storage," the company said.

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

Kidney stones may raise heart, stroke risk

5 September - Development of kidney stones was associated with an increased risk for coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke, and the risk appeared to be greater for women than men in a meta-analysis of six cohort studies. The studies included close to 50,000 patients with kidney stones and 3.56 million controls. Pooled results found kidney stone history to be associated with a 19% greater risk for CHD... and a 40% greater risk for stroke... In pooled results, women showed a statistically significant increased risk for myocardial infarction... while men did not. [MedPage Today](#)

MDR infection risk rises with each hospital day

9 September - Extended stays in hospital appeared to increase the risk of infection with a multidrug-resistant Gram-negative pathogen, researchers said. In a single-center study, the risk of such infection rose by 1% for every day in hospital, according to Tonya Smith, PharmD, of the University of Utah. But the risk varied markedly with the species of organism... Clinicians often treat patients on the assumption that "the longer you are in the hospital, the more likely you are to get one of these hard-to-treat organisms," Smith said during a media event at the conference. But in this study, she and colleagues "were actually able to quantify that," Smith said. [MedPage Today](#)

Scientists 'reset' stem cells to study start of human development

11 September - British and Japanese scientists have managed to "reset" human stem cells to their earliest state, opening up a new realm of research into the start of human development and potentially life-saving regenerative medicines. In work described by one independent expert as "a major step forward", the scientists said they had successfully rebooted pluripotent stem cells so they were equivalent to those of a 7 to 10-day old embryo, before it implants in the womb... Human pluripotent stem cells, which have the potential to become any of the cells and tissues in the body, can already be made in a lab either from cells extracted from early-stage embryos or from adult cells that have been

induced, or reprogrammed, into an earlier state. But, the researchers said in a statement, until now it has proved difficult to generate human pluripotent stem cells that are at an early enough, pristine stage, before they have started changing. [Reuters](#)

Study tracks who dengue-carrying mosquitoes bite

10 September - Most people bitten by dengue fever-transmitting mosquitoes in four northwestern Thai villages weren't residents but visitors, a finding that provides new clues about the spread of the dengue virus. According to a new study, larger people and adults are bitten significantly more often than smaller people and children. The study matched human DNA in mosquito blood meals collected from the villages to DNA of 676 village residents, whose cheeks were swabbed for their genetic profiles. Of 3,677 blood-fed *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes collected and 1,186 complete DNA profiles, only 420 meals matched people from the study area; mosquitoes mostly fed on people who were passing through, reports the study published Aug. 7 in the journal *Public Library of Science Neglected Tropical Diseases*. [Science Blog](#)

Vaginal microbe yields novel antibiotic

11 September - Bacteria living on human bodies contain genes that are likely to code for a vast number of drug-like molecules — including a new antibiotic made by bacteria that live in the vagina, researchers report in this week's issue of *Cell*. The drug, lactocillin, hints at the untapped medical potential of this microbial landscape. "They have shown that there is a huge diverse potential of the microbiome for producing antimicrobial molecules," says Marc Ouellette, a microbiologist at the University of Laval's Hospital Centre (CHUL) in Quebec, Canada, who was not involved in the research. [NPR](#)

Viruses can spread through buildings in just hours, study finds

8 September - ...For the experiment, the researchers dabbed the bacteriophage [MS-2] on one or two commonly touched surfaces, such as a doorknob or tabletop, in office conference rooms as well as in a health care facility. After a few hours, they then sampled 60 to 100 surfaces that were capable of carrying infectious organisms, such as light switches, countertops, push buttons, coffee pot handles, faucet handles, phones and computer equipment. Within two to four hours, between 40 to 60 per cent of the surfaces they sampled were contaminated with the phage. The researchers then looked at what could stop the spread of the phage. Cleaning personnel were provided with disinfectant wipes containing QUATS (quaternary ammonium compounds)... After disinfection, the number of surfaces on which virus was detected was reduced by 80 per cent or more. The concentration of the virus was also reduced by 99 per cent or more. [CTV News](#)

Web cam used to detect abnormal heart rhythm

9 September - With a regular laptop camera and sophisticated software, researchers may be able to detect atrial fibrillation about as accurately as with a standard electrocardiogram

(ECG), according to a new pilot study. The technology records and analyzes video footage of a person's face and detects subtle shifts in skin color that indicate changes in blood flow. "Existing ECG-based technologies are used only for patients who had symptoms," said the Jean-Phillipe Couderc of the University of Rochester Medical Center in New York, who led the study. But there are "approximately 3.2 million people with AF in the U.S., and an estimated 30 million people in the world," he told Reuters Health, and currently there's no way to diagnose the condition without consulting a doctor. [Reuters](#)

Women who eat fish twice weekly cut their risk of hearing loss

10 September - Women who eat fish regularly have a lower risk of developing hearing loss compared to women who rarely or never eat fish, according to a study published Wednesday in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. Women who ate two or more servings of fish per week had a 20 percent lower risk of hearing loss, according to Dr. Sharon Curhan, a researcher at Brigham and Women's Hospital and co-author of the study. And though she and her colleagues had a hunch that certain types of fish may be more protective than others, it didn't turn out that way. "Eating any type of fish — whether it's tuna, dark fish [like salmon] or light fish was associated with a lower risk," Curhan told Shots. [NPR](#)

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

Can the U.S. military turn the tide in the Ebola outbreak?

11 September - The U.S. Military is uniquely poised to help with this disease," says Timothy Flanigan, an infectious disease researcher at Brown University who's volunteering in Liberia, the country hardest hit by Ebola. "We've trained for it, we've got the logistics, we've got the support and we have the matériel." The Department of Defense runs a sophisticated health service for its own troops. Its staff includes infectious disease experts, doctors and nurses. It can set up massive field hospitals almost anywhere. On top of that, the military can do logistics like no other: It can move fuel, food and supplies en masse... But the Pentagon's commitment seems modest in the wake of Obama's comments. It plans to supply Liberia with a 25-bed field hospital — but no medical staff. The World Health Organization says hundreds of beds are urgently needed. [NPR](#)

CDC offers Ebola guidance for obstetricians and gynecologists

11 September - The CDC is telling U.S. obstetricians and gynecologists that although it is "very unlikely" that they will encounter a patient with Ebola, those who care for foreign-born women or women with a history of recent travel should be aware of the virus's signs,

symptoms, and methods of transmission. Some evidence indicates that pregnant women may be at greater risk for severe Ebola-related illness and mortality than the general population, but there is no evidence that they are at higher risk for being infected. To date, no infants born to Ebola-infected mothers have survived. Ebola virus has been detected in breast milk, and it seems likely that Ebola could be transmitted through breast-feeding, but this has not been confirmed. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

Dying of Ebola at the hospital door

11 September - Monrovia, the Liberian capital, is facing a widespread Ebola epidemic, and as the number of infected grows faster than hospital capacity, some patients wait outside near death. (Video) [New York Times](#)

Ebola: British military sent to tackle West Africa

8 September - British military engineers and medics are being sent to Sierra Leone to help fight the world's largest-ever outbreak of Ebola. They will set up and run a treatment centre near the capital Freetown... The UK has announced it will build a centre with 50 beds for people in Sierra Leone and 12 beds for healthcare workers who become ill. The proposed site will be surveyed this week, with the healthcare worker section of the facility scheduled to be running within eight weeks. Yesterday, President Obama said the US military would set up isolation units and provide security for public health workers. [BBC News](#)

Ebola outbreak 'threatens Liberia's national existence'

10 September - Liberia is facing a "serious threat" to its national existence as the deadly Ebola virus "spreads like wildfire" there, its defence minister says. Brownie Samukai told the UN Security Council that the international response to the crisis was "less than robust"... Mr Samukai warned on Tuesday that the disease was "devouring everything in its path" in Liberia. The country's weak health system was already overwhelmed by the number of cases, he said. Mr Samukai told UN Security Council members that Liberia lacked "infrastructure, logistical capacity, professional expertise and financial resources to effectively address this disease". "Liberia is facing a serious threat to its national existence. The deadly Ebola virus has caused a disruption of the normal functioning of our state," he said. [BBC News](#)

Ebola response: Slowed by a 'perfect storm' of setbacks

8 September - The world was taken by surprise by the West Africa Ebola outbreak and has been scrambling ever since to catch up, with many setbacks and only a few bright spots in the picture, international experts said at the Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy (ICAAC). The CDC's initial response was based on years of experience with Ebola... In March, the agency dispatched 20 staff to do what the CDC has often done before -- help control an Ebola outbreak with such things as data management, contact tracing, and epidemiology, she told reporters. It seemed to work, and in May the agency pulled its staff back, satisfied -- as was the World Health Organization (WHO) -- that

the worst would soon be over. But in the following months it became clear that a "perfect storm" of factors was at work, combining to push what had been a localized outbreak into a widespread and deadly epidemic, she said. Those factors included a very mobile community that was sometimes angrily opposed to the outbreak control measures -- adequate infection control and safe burial practices, for instance -- that had always worked in the past. The result was an outbreak that has grown so swiftly that "those measures still need to be put fully into effect," she said. [MedPage Today](#)

Ebola spread exponential in Liberia, thousands of cases expected in September: WHO

8 September - The Ebola virus is spreading exponentially in Liberia, where many thousands of new cases expected over the coming three weeks, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday. In a statement, the WHO said that motorbike-taxis and regular taxis are "a hot source of potential virus transmission" in Liberia where conventional Ebola control interventions "are not having an adequate impact". The United Nations agency said that aid partners need to scale-up current efforts against Ebola by three-to-four fold in Liberia and elsewhere in West Africa. [Reuters](#)

Ebola virus disease – Democratic Republic of Congo

10 September - Between 2 and 9 September 2014, there have been 31 more cases of Ebola virus disease (EVD) reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), increasing the cumulative number of cases to 62 (14 confirmed, 26 probable, and 22 probable). In total, 35 deaths have been reported (9 confirmed and 26 probable). No deaths have been reported among suspected cases. Nine health-care workers have been diagnosed with EVD, including 7 deaths... A total of 386 contacts have been listed and 239 contacts have been followed-up. All cases and contacts are linked to the initial index case reported to the World Health Organization on 26 August 2014. [WHO](#)

Liberia's grim Ebola situation prompts call for 'nonconventional' help

8 September - In an unusually grim statement today, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Ebola virus disease (EVD) illnesses are increasing exponentially in Liberia, where taxicabs are literal vehicles of disease transmission as they ferry sick people between treatment centers that are too full to admit them. [CIDRAP](#)

More funds pledged, more volunteers sought for Ebola fight

10 September - The international response to West Africa's Ebola virus disease (EVD) epidemic continued to gain steam today, with the introduction of a government funding bill in the US House of Representatives that earmarks \$88 million more to battle the disease and the announcement of a \$50 million donation from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help groups that are working on control efforts. Last week, Doctors without Borders

(MSF), which has been at the forefront of battling the outbreak since it began in March, called on states with biological disaster-response capacity to send civilian and military assets and personnel to West Africa. The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Sep 8 that the outbreak was increasing exponentially and that "nonconventional" interventions are needed... MSF has said the greatest needs are treatment centers and health workers to staff them, and earlier this week the WHO said there were no more treatment center beds for EVD patients in Liberia and that 1,000 beds were urgently needed, against the backdrop of a rapidly escalating outbreak. It added that the lack of beds was sending sick patients back into the community, increasing the risk of spread the virus to family and neighbors.

[CIDRAP](#)

Senegal tracks route of Guinea student in race to stop Ebola

9 September - In a sandy street of the Senegalese capital Dakar, a hand emerges from behind the door of a run-down house to grab a bundle of baguettes from an aid worker as police officers watch. Behind the wooden door, 33 people are being kept in quarantine after a 21-year-old student from neighboring Guinea came to stay there at his uncle's house a fortnight ago. With him, he brought the deadly Ebola virus. The student is now in isolation in a Dakar hospital, his condition improving, according to the health ministry. So far, no other Ebola cases have been confirmed, but the World Health Organization said on Tuesday that two new suspected cases had been detected in Senegal. It provided no further details. Dakar, a city of 3 million people, is anxiously waiting to see if the young man's arrival has kindled an epidemic in a fifth West African country. [Reuters](#)

Sierra Leone lockdown will not help halt Ebola: MSF

6 September - Sierra Leone's proposed countrywide "lockdown" will not help control an Ebola outbreak and could lead to the disease spreading further as cases are concealed, medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said on Saturday. The government plans to order citizens not to leave the areas around their homes for three days from Sept. 19 in a bid to halt new infections and help health workers track down people suffering from the disease, the information ministry said on Saturday. "It has been our experience that lockdowns and quarantines do not help control Ebola as they end up driving people underground and jeopardizing the trust between people and health providers," said the group. [Reuters](#)

Stabbing with syringe in Nigeria raises concerns of ebola as weapon

10 September - A federal air marshal was stabbed with a syringe at the airport in Lagos, Nigeria, on Sunday, an incident that is raising concerns about whether the deadly Ebola virus could be harvested from the widespread outbreak in West Africa and used as a bioweapon. Initial tests on the substance in the syringe, conducted at a special biodefense forensics laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md., did not detect the virus or any other threatening

agent, a spokesman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Christos Sinos, said Wednesday. The marshal, who arrived in Houston on Monday, was examined there and has been released from the hospital with no sign of illness, according to a spokesman for the Transportation Security Administration. Experts say it would be extremely hard for a group to grow large amounts of the virus and turn it into a weapon that could be dispersed over a wide area, infecting and killing many people... But it is harder to totally discount the possibility of a smaller attack, perhaps like the one at the airport in Lagos. Another possibility would be suicide infectors, people who deliberately infected themselves and carried the virus out of the epidemic zone to sicken others. [New York Times](#)

WHO on Ebola: Blood may offer help now, vaccines this fall

5 September – Experts convened by the World Health Organization (WHO) believe that blood products from Ebola survivors may offer early help in West Africa's Ebola epidemic, and limited doses of two candidate vaccines may be ready to use as early as November, depending on the outcome of safety studies, the WHO announced today. "We agreed that whole blood and convalescent serum may be used to treat Ebola virus disease and that all efforts must be directed to help affected countries use them safely," Marie-Paule Kieny, PhD, the WHO's assistant director-general, told reporters in a press teleconference from Geneva. She said safety studies of the two most advanced vaccine candidates are getting started in the United States now and will begin in Africa and Europe in mid-September. If the vaccines are found to be safe, some doses could be available for use in healthcare workers (HCWs) in November. [CIDRAP](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 5.3 % 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 6.0% for week 35. [FluView](#)

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

For weeks 21-35/2014:

- Low intensity was reported by all countries submitting reports (15 to 19 depending on the week). Local or sporadic activity was reported by eight countries.
- Of 330 sentinel specimens tested across 14 countries, 10 were positive for influenza

virus. Eight were influenza A viruses and two were type B.

- Nine hospitalised, laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported by two countries; six of these cases were admitted to intensive care units.

Overall, influenza activity and circulation of influenza viruses in reporting countries was low.

[Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Is U.S. ready for a pandemic? Investigation says we're 'ill-prepared'

9 September - ...A federal investigation has found that the DHS is totally "ill-prepared" for something like the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic -- or something worse, such as a global Ebola outbreak or the 1918 flu pandemic that killed an estimated 21.5 million people, according to a report released by the Office of the Inspector General on Monday. In 2006, Congress gave DHS \$47 million to prepare for such a national medical crisis. And the department did go shopping; it spent millions on this equipment that might now be completely worthless, missing or unnecessary. For example, the audit found more than 4,000 bottles of expired hand sanitizer in storage with the DHS. Many of those bottles have been expired for up to four years. Some 81% of the antiviral drugs the DHS has will expire by the end of next year. And 100% of the Tamiflu is set to expire in 2015. Some 46% of the Relenza DHS has will expire then as well. It was unclear to investigators whether the antiviral medication had been stored at a proper temperature. The department's entire respirator stockpile has reached, or will soon reach, the manufacturer's date of usability. [CNN](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 6 September 2014:

- 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 at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

One dose of flu drug shortens fever

6 September - A single dose of an investigational influenza drug was able to reduce the duration of fever and viral shedding, researchers said here. In a combined analysis of two randomized placebo-controlled trials, the neuraminidase inhibitor peramivir (Rapivab), given by injection within 48 hours of symptom onset, also lowered the amount of virus in the blood, according to Rich Whitley, MD, of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. But while the drug reduced the time to resolution of symptoms -- the primary endpoint of the trials -- the difference from placebo was not statistically significant, Whitley said during a media event at the Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy here. [MedPage Today](#)

WHO Influenza Update

8 September - Globally the influenza season is ongoing in the southern hemisphere. Elsewhere influenza activity remained low.

- In Europe and North America, overall influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.
- In Africa (except the southern cone) and western Asia, influenza activity was low.
- In eastern Asia, influenza activity remained low in most countries with influenza A(H3N2) the main detected virus subtype. Influenza A(H3N2) and some influenza B activity continued in south China.
- In the southern hemisphere, the influenza season was ongoing. In the temperate zone of South America, influenza activity mainly associated with A(H3N2) virus decreased. In Australia and New Zealand, the influenza season was ongoing. Australia reported a sharp increase in activity associated with A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) viruses in recent weeks with the highest number of influenza-like illness (ILI) rates and weekly notifications of influenza confirmed cases in the last 5 years. In South Africa the influenza season continued with A(H3N2) most frequently detected. [WHO](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

European hepatitis A berry outbreak report reveals no single source

9 September - No single source has been identified in the 2013 hepatitis A virus (HAV) outbreak linked to mixed frozen berries that sickened nearly 1,500 Europeans, according to the final report issued by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and published yesterday in the EFSA Journal. The outbreak began in May of 2013 when HAV genotype IA developed in seven Germans who had traveled to ski resorts in northern Italy. Italy then began reporting cases, and about 90% of the total 1,444 cases over the course of the outbreak occurred in Italy. Other countries with cases (331 total) included Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

Trapped & poisoned: Is Kabul's ruthless war on dogs un-Islamic?

4 September - ...About 17,600 dogs were poisoned last year by municipal workers in the Afghan capital in an effort to protect residents from disease and to control the rocketing population of canines that roam the city's streets and open ground. The method of killing is brutally effective... [Nasser Ahmad Ghori, director of the Kabul city sanitation department] said plans to neuter dogs to stop breeding or to launch a rabies vaccination programme were being considered in consultation with veterinary and health officials, but no other practical solution was currently available. [Aquila Style](#)

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WELLNESS

Do workplace wellness programs work? Usually not

11 September - ...Medium-to-large employers spent an average of \$521 per employee on wellness programs last year, double the amount they spent five years ago, according to a February report by Fidelity Investments and the National Business Group on Health. The programs are generally offered not directly by insurance companies, but by specialist firms that tell employers they will reduce spending on employees' care by encouraging the employees to take better care of their health. Wellness programs have grown into a \$6 billion industry because employers believe this... More rigorous studies tend to find that wellness programs don't save money and, with few exceptions, do not appreciably improve health. This is often because additional health screenings built into the programs encourage overuse of unnecessary care, pushing spending higher without improving health... Wellness programs can achieve cost savings — for employers — by shifting higher costs of care onto workers. [New York Times](#)

Eating habits, body fat related to differences in brain chemistry

9 September - People who are obese may be more susceptible to environmental food cues than their lean counterparts due to differences in brain chemistry that make eating more habitual and less rewarding, according to a National Institutes of Health study published in *Molecular Psychiatry*. Researchers at the NIH Clinical Center found that, when examining 43 men and women with varying amounts of body fat, obese participants tended to have greater dopamine activity in the habit-forming region of the brain than lean counterparts, and less activity in the region controlling reward. Those differences could potentially make the obese people more drawn to overeat in response to food triggers and simultaneously making food less rewarding to them. A chemical messenger in the brain, dopamine influences reward, motivation and habit formation. [NIH](#)

Increases in liver injury related to herbal and dietary supplements

5 September - Liver injury related to herbal and dietary supplements has more than doubled in the past 10 years, according to an analysis of data from a U.S. liver injury network published in *Hepatology*. The authors caution, however, that this is not a population-based study and the results may not be broadly applicable across the U.S. Researchers analyzed registry data from some 800 patients with liver injury either from medications (excluding acetaminophen) or herbal and dietary supplements. In the first 2 years of the registry, 7% of cases were due to herbal and dietary supplements, a proportion that increased to 20% a decade later. Hepatotoxicity from non-bodybuilding-related supplements required liver transplantation more often than injury from conventional drugs (13% vs. 3%); there were no cases of liver transplantation associated with bodybuilding supplements. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

Is CrossFit Dangerous?

4 September - ...[An academic] article..., "CrossFit-Based High-Intensity Power Training Improves Maximal Aerobic Fitness and Body Composition," shed scientific light on why CrossFit has grown from 250 affiliate gyms in 2007 to more than 10,000 today. At all levels of fitness, the Ohio volunteers lost body fat and increased oxygen capacity. "It was pretty impressive," says Mitch Potterf, the gym's owner... But because of a single sentence the paper turned out to be a millstone rather than an advertisement. It states that 9 of the 11 volunteers who failed to show up for the second test cited "overuse or injury." Potterf is now suing two of the study's authors—Michael Smith and Steven Devor, both of Ohio State—and the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), which published the article. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#)

Long-awaited diet pill gets U.S. approval

11 September - A new diet pill Contrave got approval to be sold in the United States on Wednesday, only the third obesity treatment in more than a decade to win approval from the Food and Drug Administration. Made by Orexigen Therapeutics Inc, Contrave is a combination of the antidepressant bupropion and Orexigen's formulation of naltrexone, designed to prevent drug dependence. The company did not say when the pill would become available or how much it would cost. [Reuters](#)

Sleeping seven to eight hours a night linked to taking fewer sick days

11 September - Adults who say they sleep between seven and eight hours per night miss fewer work days due to sickness than others, according to a Finnish study. The researchers calculate that if insomnia, apnea and other kinds of sleep disturbances were eliminated, the total cost of worker sick days could be cut by 28 percent. [Reuters](#)

The war on sitting



2 September - ...New research shows there's a big difference between exercising too little and sitting too much. That's because a standing body uses energy altogether differently from a sedentary body—and also from an exercising one. We burn calories at a different rate, store them in different ways, and our brains

function differently, too. While data is still emerging, one experiment with high school kids found that standing in class instead of sitting improved their test scores by 20%. All of which has doctors and health experts calling for a paradigm shift. "In the same way that standing up is an oddity now, sitting down should be," says Dr. James Levine, director of the Mayo Clinic-Arizona State University Obesity Solutions Initiative and probably best known as the inventor of the first treadmill desk. [Time](#)

WHO report gives misleading view on e-cigarettes, experts argue

4 September - A World Health Organisation-commissioned review of e-cigarettes contains errors, misinterpretations and misrepresentations, meaning policymakers may miss their potential health benefits, a group of tobacco addiction experts said... The WHO's report last month called for stiff regulation of e-cigarettes as well as bans on indoor use, advertising and sales to minors... [The critique] published in the journal *Addiction*, focused on several key statements in the WHO-commissioned review which they said were misleading:

- The review implied e-cigarette use in youth is a major problem and could be acting as a gateway to smoking, they said, when in fact current use by non-smokers is extremely rare and youth smoking rates are declining.
- The review fails to acknowledge that e-cigarettes are not just less harmful than tobacco cigarettes but that the concentrations of toxins are mostly a tiny fraction of what is found in cigarette smoke.
- The review infers that bystanders can inhale significant levels of toxins from the vapour, when the concentrations are too low to present a significant health risk.
- And the review gives the impression that evidence suggests e-cigarettes make it more difficult for people to stop smoking, when the opposite is true, the experts said. [Reuters](#)

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USAFRICOM

Senegal: Activists push for looser abortion laws

11 September - Senegalese health workers and activists are demanding women be allowed access to medically safe abortions in certain cases, such as rape or under-age pregnancies. "Secret" abortions are now one of the leading causes of maternal death in Senegal and forced pregnancies have led to an increase in infanticide. The World Health Organization says an estimated one in 10 pregnant women who die in Senegal are believed to perish due to complications from illegal or unsafe abortions. Sixty percent of illegal abortions in Senegal are done on women between 19 and 25 years old. Experts here say many women and girls, who may be unmarried or have been raped, feel they have no other solution. [VOA](#)

South Sudan: Food crisis - surviving on water lilies



8 September - ...The people in Reke are now surviving on water lilies from a nearby river. They collect the seeds, grind them and mix them with water, and then cook them for a meal. The UN says at least four million people are facing starvation after farmers missed the planting season. Experts have warned that South Sudan will most probably face a severe famine by the end of the year or early next year. [BBC News](#)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: Children bear brunt of Afghan conflict

4 September - ...Children in Afghanistan are being used by the Taliban as suicide bombers and combatants, say aid workers concerned about the lack of policy towards those they see as the hidden victims of the country's conflict. Parents may also be manipulating identity documents to raise the age of their sons to enrol them in pro-government forces in order to secure an income, aid workers say. Organisations that work with children say the impact of the conflict on them goes far beyond their recruitment as fighters, and the resulting damage to the children's mental health has not even received minimal attention. Abdul Aziz Froutan, a spokesman for UNICEF in Afghanistan, told Al Jazeera that the UN has documented 97 cases in which combatants recruited children, some as young as eight-years old. [Al Jazeera](#)

Afghanistan: Over 9,000 suicide attempt cases recorded

10 September - Afghanistan's public health ministry officials said Wednesday that over 9,000 suicide attempt cases were recorded in the country during the current year. Deputy public health service chief Najia Tariq said 4,466 cases of poisoning and 707 cases of burns were recorded in the capital, while 4,136 cases of burns were recorded in the provinces since the beginning of the year. She was speaking during a ceremony to mark the suicide prevention day where she said at least 166 victims have died due to severe burns... According to Najia, majority of the attempted suicide cases remains hidden since the act of attempting suicide is considered shameful in the society. [Khaama Press](#)

Raging floods kill over 440 in Pakistan, India



9 September - Raging monsoon floods sweeping across India and Pakistan have killed more than 440 people, authorities said Tuesday, warning hundreds of thousands more to be prepared to flee their homes as helicopters and boats raced to save marooned victims. Authorities in Pakistan say the floods, which began

Sept. 3, are the worst since massive flooding killed 1,700 people in 2010. Pakistan's minister for water and power, Khwaja Mohammad Asif, warned parliament that some 700,000 people have been told to leave their homes, which could be inundated in the next four days. Pakistani and Indian troops have been using boats and helicopters to drop food supplies for stranded families and evacuate victims. However, the challenge of the situation grows as more than 1.5 million people are now affected as the rushing waters have destroyed the homes of thousands of families. [ABC News](#)

Saudi Arabia reports MERS in another health worker

8 September - Saudi Arabia today confirmed one new MERS-CoV case, in a 60-year-old foreign health worker whose illness was detected in the city of Jubail, in the northeastern part of the country, according to a statement from the Ministry of Health (MOH). The man is hospitalized in an intensive care unit, according to the report. He had no pre-existing disease, the MOH said. The case is the first to be reported in 9 days. The last case, reported Aug 29, was also in a non-Saudi health worker in Jubail. The latest case raises Saudi Arabia's number of MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) infections to 727, of which 302 have been fatal. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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Israel: Lessons from a public health emergency — importation of wild poliovirus to Israel

11 September - Last year, Israel's polio-free status was seriously challenged. On May 28, 2013, a sample obtained during routine supplementary environmental surveillance at a sewage-treatment plant in the South district tested positive for wild poliovirus type 1... Since Israel's enhanced national environmental surveillance was functioning properly in real time, we had a substantial early-warning period that allowed decision makers to implement tailor-made, evidence-based public health interventions... We would therefore support a recommendation that environmental parameters be added to the clinical definition of a polio-infected country, as long as such a measure would be comparable in sensitivity to the long-standing gold-standard criteria used for polio eradication worldwide, which involves the detection of clinical poliomyelitis cases. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

United Kingdom: Impact of measles infections in England revealed

9 September - Measles causes significant absence from school or work and has a much larger impact on people's daily lives than illnesses like flu or chicken pox, according to a new study by researchers from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and Public Health England. The study, published in *PLOS ONE*, is the first of its kind to look at the short-term impact of measles on individuals' health-related quality of life. The study found that, on average, measles illness lasted for almost 14 days. 63% of people reported spending time off work or school due to measles infection, and among them the average number of days missed was nearly 10 (9.6), equivalent to two working weeks. 37% of people reported that a caregiver had also stayed home from work to look after them – the average number of days away from work for the caregiver was just over seven. [Medical Xpress](#)

United Kingdom: Invictus Games - Prince Harry throws party for competitors



10 September - Prince Harry has hosted a party to welcome wounded servicemen and women to the UK ahead of the opening ceremony of the inaugural Invictus Games. He thanked competitors for embracing the games "so enthusiastically", while US president Barack Obama also wished teams well in a video message. More than 400 competitors from 13 countries will take part in the first Invictus Games over four days... The competition is the brainchild of Prince Harry with competitors - many with missing limbs or other serious injuries - due to compete for medals in nine different adaptive sports. The sports include athletics, wheelchair basketball and rugby,

sitting volleyball, archery, powerlifting, swimming, indoor rowing and road cycling. [BBC News](#)

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USNORTHCOM

U.S.: Hundreds of children in U.S. states stricken with respiratory illness

8 September - Hundreds of children across the U.S. Midwest have been stricken by a potentially serious respiratory illness, and many states are asking for federal help testing and tracking cases, according to federal and state health officials. Hospitals are reporting unusually high numbers of children with symptoms similar to that of a common cold that turns into respiratory distress. Symptoms can include coughing, difficulty breathing, and possibly a rash and fever. Missouri has been hit particularly hard by the viral illness. More than 300 cases of the respiratory illness have been reported at just one pediatric hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, and 15 percent of those children have needed treatment in intensive care, according to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services... A specialized CDC laboratory is handling testing of specimens taken from the children, and many are positive for the Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68), Missouri officials said. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Kids' salt intake worries CDC officials

9 September - Just like adults, children and teens in the U.S. consume a great deal of sodium -- about 1,000 mg above the recommended maximum daily intake on average, according to a new [CDC "Vital Signs"](#) report. Results from the 2009-2010 edition of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, which included 2,266 children 6- to 18-years-old, indicated a mean daily intake of 3,279 mg of sodium, whereas the recommended maximum in the Healthy People 2020 initiative is 2,300 mg/day, according to the report. Sodium consumption was especially high in teens -- participants of high school age had a mean intake of 3,672 mg/day. [MedPage Today](#)

U.S.: New safety rules weighed for magnets

10 September - ...The Consumer Product Safety Commission cited the Chaffin case on Wednesday during a hearing to discuss potential new rules governing high-powered magnets, which the agency believes pose a special risk to children. From 2009 to 2013, roughly 2,900 children and teenagers went to the emergency room because they had ingested at least one high-powered magnet, according to the commission... The United States regulates the magnets used in children's toys, but it does not regulate magnets marketed for adults. The commission may change that by imposing new standards that would require magnets to be either too large for a child's throat, or only about one-fiftieth

as powerful as a Buckyball and other similar products. The agency's commissioners are expected to vote on the proposed rules in the next few weeks. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Study suggests redundant antibiotic use is widespread in US hospitals

10 September - An analysis of 4 years of records from 505 US hospitals suggests that duplicative use of antibiotics is pervasive, leading to needless costs and potentially increasing resistance to the drugs... The report, by a team from the Premier Safety Institute, Premier Healthcare Alliance, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, says that some clinicians use antibiotics with overlapping sets of target pathogens to reduce the chance that the infecting pathogen will resist the regimen. The authors assert that aside from this use, there are very few clinical indications for using antimicrobials with overlapping functions. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

U.S.: What is a public health “emergency”?

11 September - ...State laws providing public health emergency powers permit designated officials — typically governors and their top health officers — to take extraordinary legal actions. The laws provide flexibility in responding to emergency situations, when adherence to ordinary legal standards and processes could cost lives. State laws vary in their definitions of “emergency” or “disaster.” Many refer to an occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from a natural phenomenon or human act... Once a public health emergency is declared, designated officials can harness powers that are typically unavailable without legislative approval, by issuing emergency orders. These expansive powers may include deploying military personnel, commandeering property, restricting freedom of movement, halting business operations, and suspending civil rights and liberties. Emergency orders can also tap resources reserved for the proverbial rainy day. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

U.S. widens program to dispose of prescription drugs

8 September - Americans will be able to dispose of unused prescription drugs at more sites under a Drug Enforcement Administration rule announced on Monday aimed at curbing rising drug addiction and abuse. Attorney General Eric Holder said in a statement that the new DEA policy would let prescription drugs be dropped off at hospitals, pharmacies, clinics and other authorized drop-off sites. Long-term care facilities will be able to collect controlled substances turned in by residents. Prescription drug users also can mail unused medications to collectors using pre-paid packages, the statement said... In 2011, more than half of the 41,300 unintentional U.S. drug overdose deaths involved prescription drugs. Opioid pain relievers caused about 17,000 of those deaths, the statement said. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Severe respiratory illness associated with Enterovirus D68 — Missouri and Illinois, 2014

12 September - On August 19, 2014, CDC was notified by Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, of an increase (relative to the same period in previous years) in patients examined and hospitalized with severe respiratory illness, including some admitted to the pediatric intensive care unit. An increase also was noted in detections of rhinovirus/enterovirus by a multiplex polymerase chain reaction assay in nasopharyngeal specimens obtained during August 5–19. On August 23, CDC was notified by the University of Chicago Medicine Comer Children's Hospital in Illinois of an increase in patients similar to those seen in Kansas City. To further characterize these two geographically distinct observations, nasopharyngeal specimens from most of the patients with recent onset of severe symptoms from both facilities were sequenced by the CDC Picornavirus Laboratory. Enterovirus D68* (EV-D68) was identified in 19 of 22 specimens from Kansas City and in 11 of 14 specimens from Chicago. Since these initial reports, admissions for severe respiratory illness have continued at both facilities at rates higher than expected for this time of year. Investigations into suspected clusters in other jurisdictions are ongoing. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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USPACOM

Australia: HPV vaccine program shows success

10 September - In 2007, Australia began providing the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine free to girls 12 to 18 in a school-based program. Now researchers have calculated the effect on the incidence of genital warts in women 15 to 27. The study, published in the September issue of PLOS One, found that the rate of genital warts in young Australian women decreased by 61 percent, while rates in age and sex groups not covered by the program were unchanged. [New York Times](#)

India: Pre-natal sex determination tests a cause for concern

10 September - Suspected pre-natal sex determination tests and declining child sex ratio have set the Nellore district administration into 'mission mode'. It has initiated necessary steps, as the situation appears bleak and is conducting fortnightly reviews with the involvement of doctors and police officers. According to the 2011 Census, the number of girls stood at 939 per 1,000 boys in the district as compared to the ratio of 954 girls according to the 2001 Census. The major reason for the declining number of girls is female foeticide, which continues, thanks to sex determination tests being conducted at illegal

scanning centres. Determination and disclosure of the sex of the foetus is banned under the Pre-Natal Diagnostics Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994. [Hindu](#)

Japan: Dengue fever hits Japan

9 September - Japan had been free of dengue fever since 1945, but that streak is now over. More than 60 Japanese have come down with the disease since the end of August... The outbreak in Japan is yet another reminder of the dangerous consequences of global warming. At a recent conference in Geneva, the World Health Organization warned of increases in dengue fever and other climate-sensitive diseases in unexpected parts of the world. [New York Times](#)

Samoa: Chikungunya-related cases reach over 700 in American Samoa

8 September - The latest reports from American Samoa reveal Chikungunya-related cases have now reached over 700 and there is now one probable case in Ofu, Manua. The virus was discovered in the territory in July but there have been no reported cases in Manua until now...Since July there have been 11 hospitalisations with the virus but no deaths. [Radio New Zealand](#)

Solomon Islands: Measles outbreak at 800 cases, 'the real number could be in the thousands'

10 September - The measles outbreak in the Solomon Islands, which began in July, continues to grow and the real numbers may be much higher than reported. The Solomon Star News reports today that since the outbreak began in July, two children under 3 months old have died due to measles related complications. Almost 800 cases of measles have been reported to the Ministry of Health and Medical Services Surveillance Unit and with measles being a very infectious disease, and not all cases being reported, the Ministry reckons the real number could be in the thousands. [Outbreak News Today](#)

South Korea seeks near-doubling of cigarette price

11 September - South Korea's government has proposed nearly doubling the price of cigarettes to lower the country's smoking rate. Under its plan, the average price per pack would go up to 4,500 won (£2.70, \$4.35) by the start of next year. It is currently 2,500 won. But the proposal may undergo changes in parliament as it is facing significant opposition, reports Yonhap news agency. The government is hoping to cut the smoking rate among men, which is among the highest in the developed world. About 41% of South Korean men smoke, according to 2012 figures from the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development - higher than the 26% OECD average. South Korea's overall smoking rate, at 23%, is also higher than the OECD average of 21%. [BBC News](#)

Vietnam: Dengue fever cases reported increasing in southern Vietnam

11 September -- Hospitals in Vietnam's southern Ho Chi Minh (HCM) City over the last few weeks received about 150 people infected with dengue fever every day, a two-fold increase compared to the figure in July, reported the city's Preventive Medicine Center on Thursday. Specifically, Hoc Mon district was the hot-spot for the outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease in the city, with dozens of infected people being hospitalized every day. A total of 4,500 city residents have contracted dengue fever so far this year. [Xinhua](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Colombia: Chikungunya infections spread to Colombia

11 September - Colombia's health ministry has confirmed the first four cases of chikungunya virus in the country. All four are thought to have contracted the mosquito-borne virus locally... "Based on what has happened in other countries, chikungunya could infect about 670,000 people in Colombia in the next few months," said Deputy Health Minister Fernando Ruiz. Those most at risk were people living at altitudes of no more than 2,200m (7,200ft) above sea level, where the climate is warmer, Mr Ruiz said. [BBC News](#)

PAHO warns of heightened chikungunya, dengue threats

11 September - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) yesterday urged its member countries that have mosquitoes that transmit dengue and chikungunya viruses to step up their vector control programs in advance of a possible increase in infections. The recommendation from PAHO, the World Health Organization's office in the region, comes in advance of the peak transmission season for dengue and in the wake of local chikungunya transmission in a number of Latin American and Caribbean countries. Since the start of the year countries in the PAHO region have reported almost 850,000 dengue infections, including 470 deaths, PAHO said in a press release. As of Sep 5, the area has reported more than 650,000 chikungunya cases, 37 of them fatal. [CIDRAP](#)

U.S. SOUTHCOM expo displays technology that can save lives during natural disasters

10 September - Technological innovations that could help provide humanitarian relief throughout the Western Hemisphere in response to natural disasters and other emergencies took center stage at an expo recently hosted by the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM)... Some of the technologies included an Mk2 Unmanned Aerial

System, which is known as an Instant Eye; the All Partners Access Network (APAN); the Content-Oriented Mobile Edge Technology (COMET); a 2.4 meter Inflatable Satellite Terminal (GATR); a Deployable Water Purification System; and a Western Hemisphere Information Exchange Program. Many of the technologies on display at the expo could help authorities provide assistance to civilians who are at-risk from natural disasters, said U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Scott B. Jerabek, director of theater engagement (J7). [Dialogo](#)

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