

18 July 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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DCoE Webinar: Hearing and Vision Impairment from Combat Trauma

Serious combat eye trauma accounts for approximately 15 percent of all battlefield injuries and up to 75 percent of those affected experience short or long-term visual dysfunction. Hearing loss and tinnitus prevalence for service members and veterans is increasing 13-18 percent annually and account for the top two most common service-connected disabilities among veterans.

The majority of neurosensory disorders resulting from combat trauma are caused by mild traumatic brain injury. Understanding the mechanics of the injury and the associated research guides patient care and treatment recommendations.

This webinar will examine current research and evidence-based practices to reduce injury risk and enable prevention and treatment in both clinical and non-clinical settings.

July 24th at 1-2:30 pm ET
Registration



WELLNESS

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- NIH system to monitor emerging drug trends
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- U.S.: 300 vials labeled influenza, dengue found at lab
- U.S.: C.D.C. closes anthrax and flu labs after accidents
- U.S.: Experts puzzled by increase in shingles cases
- U.S., Mexico: Pneumonia, swine flu outbreaks in immigrant children trouble border
- U.S.: Reporting rape, and wishing she hadn't
- U.S.: Stroke incidence and mortality on the decline
- U.S.: Threat rises in U.S. from mosquito-borne chikungunya virus
- U.S.: West Nile virus activity by state

USPACOM

- Australia: Measles cases hit 15-year high in Victoria, prompting alert to doctors and hospitals
- China: Chinese town trades lead poison test results for milk
- India: Poor sanitation may afflict well-fed children with malnutrition
- Philippines: Typhoon kills 10 in Philippines but eases before heading for China

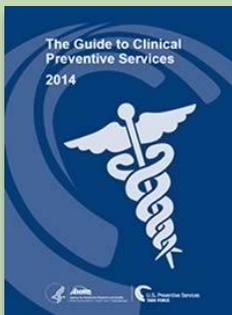
USSOUTHCOM

- Caribbean: Chikungunya outbreak exceeds 355,000 cases
- El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras: Children at the border

Guide to Clinical Preventive Services, 2014

The *Guide to Clinical Preventive Services* includes U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendations on screening, counseling, and preventive medication topics and includes clinical recommendations for each topic.

This new pocket guide provides family physicians, internists, pediatricians, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and other clinicians with an authoritative source for making decisions about preventive services.



U.S. MILITARY

Gallbladder disease and cholecystectomies, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2004–2013

June 2014 - Gallbladder disease is a common healthcare problem in the U.S. that often results in gallbladder removal (cholecystectomy). During the 10-year surveillance period, 20,001 active component service members were identified as incident cases of gallbladder disease. The overall incidence rate of gallbladder disease was 1.4 per 1,000 person-years (p-yrs); the incidence rate increased 32% during the period. During the same period, 15,487 cholecystectomies were performed. A majority were removed laparoscopically (94.4%) and in the outpatient setting (60.3%)... Gallbladder disease and cholecystectomies were more common among females, service members older than 40 years, Hispanics, members of the Air Force, and those in healthcare occupations. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Lt. Gen. Patricia Horoho hosts the first Army Medicine Virtual Town Hall

18 July - Lt. Gen. Patricia Horoho, Army surgeon general and commanding general of the U.S. Army Medical Command, hosted the first Army Medicine Virtual Town Hall on Facebook, July 9, 2014. Horoho... used the opening post to share her priorities for Army Medicine:

- Combat casualty care
- Readiness and health of the force
- A ready and deployable medical force
- Health of families and retirees

Horoho's opening post also announced the release of the Performance Triad app, version 1.0. This app provides easy access on iPhones, iPads, Android devices, and Windows phones to the triad which emphasizes sleep, activity, and nutrition as the foundation to health and personal readiness. In the one hour that the town hall was "live," a total of 133 comments were posted, asking questions ranging from medical innovation to budget-cut impacts, and various inquiries in between. [Federal Health Care News](#) (second item)

Poor sleep may signal dementia in older vets

15 July - Disturbed sleep was a significant and independent risk factor for subsequent development of dementia among U.S. military veterans, according to a large registry study reported here. With adjustments for education, history of traumatic brain injury, cardiovascular diseases, and other potential confounders, veterans 55 and older with any type of sleep disturbance were 30% more likely to be diagnosed with new-onset dementia during the following 8 years... relative to those without sleep problems. [Medpage Today](#)

CDC: Tick-borne Disease Prevention Resources

CDC's Division of Parasitic Diseases and Malaria is promoting some new health communication materials for babesiosis and general tick-borne disease prevention.

A limited number of printed babesiosis gardening posters (laminated 11" x 17") and four different versions of tick-check reminder cards (i.e., bookmarks, 2" x 6" and double-sided) are available. Download them or tell CDC which of the materials you'd like, the quantity, and the shipping address.



Pot researcher says her firing may block PTSD breakthrough

16 July - The attorney for a pot-and-PTSD researcher fired by the University of Arizona appealed her termination Tuesday, asserting the college is blocking a possible breakthrough in treating veterans with debilitating post-combat anxiety. Dr. Sue Sisley, who earned federal approval in March to test marijuana on veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, has argued that her June 27 dismissal was spurred by Arizona lawmakers who did not support her planned cannabis study... "If there is a one percent chance that Dr. Sisley's research could heal the nightmarish, epidemic suffering of our veterans, then why would the University impede it in any way?" A spokesman for the school declined to comment. University administrators have 30 days to respond to the appeal, Flores-Williams said. [NBC News](#)

Soldiers: Let them have (alternative) tobacco products

10 July - The NEJM writers offer a reasonable health rationale for eliminating cigarettes from the U.S. Military. If Congress approves this move, then the service branches should permit the use of snus and electronic cigarettes by smoking recruits who want to serve their country... For 50 years, snus use by Swedish men has been associated with world-record low rates of smoking and smoking-attributable deaths, including lung, oral, and throat cancers as well as cardiovascular events. Another boon to the smoker who wants to quit or find an alternative nicotine device is electronic cigarettes... The risk, if any, of long-term inhalation of propylene glycol, the common substrate used for the nicotine solution, is not known -- the devices have simply not been around long enough. In limited exposure, however, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration generally regards propylene glycol as safe; it is used in toothpaste, asthma inhalers, and many other foods and cosmetics. [Medpage Today](#)

Telephone-based intervention improves pain symptoms

16 July - Telephone-based pain management can improve symptoms in patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain, according to a study conducted at Veterans Affairs primary care clinics and published in JAMA. Some 250 patients with musculoskeletal pain lasting at least 3 months were randomized to a telecare intervention or usual care. The intervention included frequent automated symptom monitoring (via voice-recorded phone calls or Internet), which triggered calls with nurse care managers for issues such as inadequate symptom improvement or medication nonadherence. The nurses worked in collaboration with primary care physicians and pain specialists. Usual-care patients received all care from their primary care physicians. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

The Army's bioprinted skin is almost ready to be used on Soldiers

12 July - The US Army is hoping to soon begin clinical trials with 3D-printed skin. The goal is helping soldiers better recover from injuries sustained in battle—and the Army also actively

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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developing artificial 3D printed hearts, blood vessels, and other organs. It's no secret that 3D-printed human tissue is in the works, but the Army's technology is so far along that it could soon be battle ready... "The scars that soldiers develop as a result of burns constrict movement and disfigure them permanently," Michael Romanko, a doctor with the Army's Tissue Injury and Regenerative Medicine Project told the magazine. The initiative to restore high-quality skin that is elastic and complete with sweat glands, appropriate pigmentation, and hair follicles is incredibly important. Everyone has a different type of energy, and not everyone's skin injury looks the same. Skin bioprinting would provide a scalable form of personalized medicine." [Motherboard](#)

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GLOBAL

Chikungunya at the door — déjà vu all over again?

16 July -...[The] course of the burgeoning [chikungunya] epidemic in populations not previously exposed to alphaviruses offers little room for optimism: the growing number of imported chikungunya cases in the Americas raises concerns about possible future local transmission... The potential for chikungunya to become established in the Western Hemisphere, either in an urban mosquito-human-mosquito transmission cycle or in an enzootic cycle involving other vertebrates, must be considered. Antiviral agents and monoclonal antibody treatments for chikungunya are in early stages of testing. Several chikungunya vaccines are in development ...however, licensure is not imminent for any vaccine. Even when there is a vaccine, public health officials will face a significant challenge in determining whom and when to vaccinate, since chikungunya appears unpredictably and proceeds so explosively that epidemic catch-up vaccination is impractical. Thus, the current chikungunya threat to the United States must be met primarily with standard public health approaches such as mosquito control and avoidance. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Cholesterol activates signaling pathway that promotes cancer

15 July – Everyone knows that cholesterol, at least the bad kind, can cause heart disease and hardening of the arteries... Cells employ thousands of signaling pathways to conduct their functions. Canonical Wnt signaling is a pathway that promotes cell growth and division and is most active in embryonic cells during development. Overactivity of this signaling pathway in mature cells is thought to be a major driver in the development of cancer. "Our research points to a new regulatory role for cholesterol, and also presents an exciting new therapeutic target for suppressing canonical Wnt signaling to treat or prevent cancer," said Wonhwa Cho, professor of chemistry at UIC and principal investigator of the research. [EurekAlert](#)

Dengue candidate vaccine shows promise in phase 3 trial

11 July - Phase 3 clinical trial results for the most advanced dengue vaccine in development, known as CYD-TDV and made by Sanofi Pasteur, showed it is more than 50% protective overall and nearly 90% effective against the most serious, hemorrhagic form of the disease, according to a new study published in *The Lancet*... The vaccine group comprised 6,851 children and the controls 3,424; the children were followed for 2 years. A total of 250 dengue cases were identified more than 28 days after the final injection, 117 in the vaccine recipients and 133 in the controls, for an overall efficacy rate of 56.5%. Efficacy against dengue hemorrhagic fever was 88.5%, and against dengue-related hospitalization it was 67%. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

How sloth fur is going to revolutionize medicine



11 July - ...Researchers who took a long hard look at what's populating sloths in Panama have discovered that, among the flora and fauna of sloth hair, there are fungi growing that are resistant to the parasites that cause malaria, human breast cancer cell lines, and a range of pathogenic bacteria. The [sloth] hairs were cut up and put into cultures, where the fungi could grow for a few weeks and then be closely examined. The results were 84 different fungal isolates, some of which, the researchers believe, had never been seen before. Using ethyl acetate to make extracts from the fungi, the researchers found two extracts that inhibited the growth of one of the parasites that causes malaria in humans, eight that inhibit the trypanosoma that causes Chagas disease, and 15 that were highly active against the MCF-7 breast cancer cell line. [Motherboard](#)

Microchip detects type 1 diabetes

16 July - A new microchip may one day be used to rapidly and inexpensively detect type 1 diabetes, researchers found. The device uses gold nanoparticles to intensify a fluorescent signal to identify antibodies characteristic of type 1 disease, [Brian Feldman, MD, PhD](#), of Stanford University, and colleagues [reported in Nature Medicine](#). The development could be an important one, they said, given that more adults are now being diagnosed with type 1 disease, while more children are found to have type 2 disease, given an epidemic of obesity. [Medpage Today](#)

Proof: Parkinson's enhances creativity

14 July - New TAU study confirms creative energy in Parkinson's sufferers is greater than in healthy individuals... [A new] study, now published in the *Annals of Neurology*, definitively demonstrates that Parkinson's patients are more creative than their healthy peers, and that those patients taking higher doses of medication are more artistic than their less-medicated counterparts. "It began with my observation that Parkinson's patients have a special interest in art and have creative hobbies incompatible with their physical limitations," said Prof.

Inzelberg. "In my last paper, I reviewed case studies from around the world and found them to be consistent. In my present research, we conducted the first comprehensive study to measure the creative thinking of Parkinson's patients." [EurekaAlert](#)

Researchers develop smartphone-based air quality tool for public health

15 July - Researchers at Germany's Karlsruhe Institute of Technology have developed a smartphone-connected tool that can sense dust levels, which can be an important metric for some public health issues. When tested, the technology showed a good initial performance, but a paper describing the research explains that future iterations of the tool will offer increased sensitivity so that the device can detect even lower concentrations of dust... While portable devices that monitor dust currently exist, researchers say they currently range from \$1,000 to several thousand dollars. [MobiHealthNews](#)

Scientists developed new technology for the diagnosis of cancer cells

14 July – The type of therapy a cancer patient receives largely depends on the trained eye of a pathologist. Investigating diseased organs and tissues under the microscope is one of their tasks. However, human judgment is, by its very nature, subject to a certain degree of variation... Together with the company Tissuegnostics, the pathologist Lukas Kenner and his colleagues have developed a software that is able to identify cancer cells in tissue sections and demonstrate the presence of specific biomarkers on cells. The overall information provides a precise picture of the disease and leads to the most suitable treatment.

[University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week Week 27, ending July 5, 2014, 5.7 % 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 6.3% for week 27. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During 1-28 June (Surveillance Weeks 23– 26), 51 specimens were collected and received, and results finalized from 20 locations. There were two specimens positive for influenza A (one A(H1N1)pdm09 and one A(H3N2)). [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program: Supplemental EUCOM Report – 29 September 2013 - 28 June 2014

In cooperation and agreement with U.S. Army Public Health Command Region-Europe (PHCR-E), the DoD Global, Laboratory-based, Influenza Surveillance Program has analyzed data from Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC), Germany.

- To date this influenza season, testing has been completed on 1,451 specimens from 25 locations. Of those specimens tested, 446 were positive for influenza (133 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 200 influenza A(H3N2), 31 A/not subtyped, four influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) co-infections, 19 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 co-infections, 32 influenza A(H3N2) co-infections, 13 influenza A/not subtyped co-infections, and 14 influenza B).
- There have been 491 other respiratory viruses isolated (25 adenovirus, 85 human metapneumovirus, 30 parainfluenza virus, 86 RSV, 193 rhinovirus/enterovirus, and 72 non-influenza co-infections) cumulatively this season. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 12 July 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](#)

WHO notes youth of 2013 H5N1 patients

11 July - The vast majority of H5N1 avian flu cases in 2013 were in children and younger adults, and the number of cases was up slightly from 2012, according to a report of influenza at the human-animal interface published today by the World Health Organization (WHO). The agency confirmed 39 H5N1 cases last year, up from 32 in 2012 but well down from the 62 cases in 2011. The vast majority of 2013 cases—26—were in Cambodia, with the rest in Bangladesh, Canada (in a traveler to China), China, Egypt, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Egypt had the second-most cases, at 4. Of the 39 cases, 22 (56%) were in children 10 years old or younger, and 36 (92%) were in people younger than 40. The median age was 6 years, compared with 18 in 2012, 13 in 2011, 25 in 2010, and 5 in 2009. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fifth item)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

CDC sees gains, losses in effort against foodborne infections

July 2014 - Nearly 70% of strains of Salmonella Typhi were resistant to quinolones in 2012, according to a new report on foodborne pathogens from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The report found that the prevalence of multidrug resistant (MDR) Salmonella fell between 2003 and 2012, and that germs that resist cephalosporins and fluoroquinolones remain uncommon. However, the incidence of quinolone-resistant S. Typhi—which causes typhoid fever—surged 68% over the study period, according to the CDC report... The report also found that ciprofloxacin-resistant Campylobacter held steady at 25% of isolates in 2012, unchanged from 2005 when the FDA barred the use of enrofloxacin (Baytril, Bayer) in poultry over fears that resistance to the animal antibiotic could lead to resistance to Cipro. [Infectious Disease Special Edition](#)

USDA proposes record-keeping rule for makers of ground beef

16 July - The US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued a proposed rule today that would require all retail outlets that grind their own beef to keep records of their meat sources to enable efficient tracing in case of a foodborne disease outbreak. "The improved traceback capabilities that would result from this proposal will prevent foodborne illness by allowing FSIS to conduct recalls of potentially contaminated raw ground products in a timelier manner," said USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety Brian Ronholm in an FSIS news release. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

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WELLNESS

Dementia: Shifting incidence rate?

16 July - The incidence rate for dementia may have flattened or even declined in the U.S. and other developed nations, studies presented here suggested. For example, 30 years of data from the Framingham Heart Study indicate that age- and sex-adjusted rates of new dementia cases were 44% lower in the most recent four 5-year epochs compared with the first, according to Claudia L. Satizábal, PhD, of Boston University. Also, a database study in Germany indicated that the incidence of dementia had decreased by 20% from 2004-2007 to 2007-2010, and by 19% in men over the same interval (both $P < 0.001$). Also, the overall prevalence of dementia in women fell by 3.5% from 2007-2009 ($P = 0.001$), with a similar but nonsignificant trend in men. [Medpage Today](#)

Dosing by the spoonful can lead to medicine errors, researchers warn

14 July – The song says a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down, but a study says that kind of imprecise measurement can lead to potentially dangerous dosing mistakes. The results, published online Monday in the journal *Pediatrics*, underscore recommendations that droppers and syringes that measure in milliliters — not spoons — be used to administer liquid medicines... Parents who used spoonfuls “were 50 percent more likely to give their children incorrect doses than those who measured in more precise milliliter units,” said Alan Mendelsohn, a physician and associate professor at New York University’s medical school who co-authored the study. [Washington Post](#)

Hotter weather linked to kidney stones

10 July - As temperatures increased above 50°F (10°C) in several large U.S. cities, risk of kidney stones also increased significantly researchers said. A study of 60,433 privately insured patients across five cities -- Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia - found that the maximum risk for kidney stone presentation occurred within 3 days of a high daily temperature and was likely mediated by an effect on patients' hydration. The risk was statistically significant in all cities except Los Angeles, according to the paper, published online in *Environmental Health Perspectives*. [Medpage Today](#)

NIH system to monitor emerging drug trends

17 July - An innovative National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS) is being developed to monitor emerging trends that will help health experts respond quickly to potential outbreaks of illicit drugs such as heroin and to identify increased use of designer synthetic compounds. The system will scan social media and Web platforms to identify new trends as well as use conventional national- and local-level data resources... "NDEWS will generate critically needed information about new drug trends in specific locations around the country so rapid, informed, and effective public health responses can be developed precisely where needed," said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. [NIH](#)

Safety and regulation of dietary supplements

16 July - It's been 20 years since lawmakers first butted heads over the regulation of dietary supplements. The question was: should vitamins, minerals and other naturally derived nutritional products be regulated like a food or like a pharmaceutical? The answer was: like a food. That set the stage for what critics call a “wild west” environment in which companies make health claims and bring products to market without proof of safety or effectiveness. Yet, those concerns have not slowed growth. Sixty-eight percent of American adults use dietary supplements, while annual sales have ballooned to \$32 billion a year. Still, the debate over safety and regulation continues. [NPR](#)

Social network project tackles obesity and diabetes

14 July - Making use of the ties between friends and family to promote healthy behaviors appears to motivate people to better manage their weight over the long term—and reduce their risk for obesity and diabetes—even in places with limited resources and high rates of chronic disease, according to a project led by researchers at Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) and Microclinic International (MCI), a California-based nonprofit... For the Amman project, local health workers helped establish small groups of family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors to work together to lose weight and keep it off, or make other lifestyle changes... [Similar] projects implemented by Microclinic International—in locations including Appalachia, the Palestinian territories in the West Bank, remote communities in Kenya, and rural villages in India—have suggested that groups that participate in the full curriculum, with the strongest emphasis on shared activities and mutual support, tend to be most successful at helping participants lose weight, keep it off, and gain metabolic benefits. [Harvard School of Public Health](#)

Study of organic crops finds fewer pesticides and more antioxidants



11 July - Adding fuel to the debates over the merits of organic food, a comprehensive review of earlier studies found substantially higher levels of antioxidants and lower levels of pesticides in organic fruits, vegetables and grains compared with conventionally grown produce. "It shows very clearly how you grow your food has an impact," said Carlo Leifert, a professor of ecological agriculture at Newcastle University in England, who led the research. "If you buy organic fruits and vegetables, you can be sure you have, on average, a higher amount of antioxidants at the same calorie level." However, the full findings, to be published next week in the *British Journal of Nutrition*, stop short of claiming that eating organic produce will lead to better health. [New York Times](#)

The power of making amends

14 July – It's well known that when a person takes steps to make amends for a wrongdoing, the victim is more inclined to forgive and forget. However, exactly why that happens is less obvious and poorly understood. In a recent study, scientists made substantial progress in explaining the psychological processes that make forgiveness happen. Their findings show that peacemaking efforts such as apologies, offers of compensation and owning up to one's responsibility increase forgiveness—and reduce anger—by making the aggressor seem more valuable as a relationship partner and by causing the victim to feel less at risk of getting hurt again by the transgressor. [EurekaAlert](#)

Toward more comprehensive food labeling



17 July - The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is proposing to revise the Nutrition Facts label that must appear on virtually all packaged foods in the United States. The agency's proposals are strong, urgently needed, and likely to make an important contribution to consumer behavior. But I

believe they don't go far enough — additional labeling requirements can do more to influence food choices, reduce obesity, and promote health... A stronger approach would require that the top three ingredients, the calorie count, and the number of additional ingredients be listed on the front of every package in bold, easy-to-read type (see [image] Possible New Front-of-Package Labeling.). To the harried shopper hoping to make some healthy choices, it would offer a quick way of identifying high-calorie, obesity-inducing food and of finding healthier alternatives. Because the number of ingredients in a product often reflects the substitution of chemical additives for the flavor of real food, labels reading “+5 more ingredients” or “+20 more ingredients” would be informative shorthand. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

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USAFRICOM

Democratic Republic of Congo: Description of a large measles epidemic, 2010–2013

14 July - ...Although measles mortality has declined dramatically in Sub-Saharan Africa, measles remains a major public health problem in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)... Between week 1 of 2010 and week 45 of 2013, a total of 294,455 cases and 5,045 deaths were reported. The cumulative attack rate (AR) was 0.4%. The Case Fatality Ratio (CFR) was 1.7% among cases reported in health structures through national surveillance. A total of 186,178 cases (63%) were under 5 years old, representing an estimated AR of 1.4% in this age group. Following the first mass vaccination campaigns, weekly reported cases decreased by 21.5%. Results of post-vaccination campaign coverage surveys indicated sub-optimal (under 95%) vaccination coverage among children surveyed. [Medecins sans Frontieres](#)

Equatorial Guinea: Update on polio

17 July - As of 16 July 2014, Equatorial Guinea has reported a total of 5 wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) cases, with onset of paralysis between 28 January 2014 (first case) and 3 May 2014 (most recent case). Genetic sequencing indicated that the cases are linked to the ongoing outbreak in Cameroon. [WHO](#)

Gambia: Time to 'drop the knife' for FGM in Gambia

14 July – Women's rights activists in the Gambia are insisting that more than 30 years of campaigning to raise awareness should be sufficient to move the government to outlaw female genital mutilation (FGM). The practice remains widespread in this tiny West African country of 1.8 million people, but rights activists believe that their campaign has now reached the tipping point. Two years ago, GAMCOTRAP, an apolitical non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to the promotion and protection of women and girl children's political, social, sexual, reproductive health and educational rights in The Gambia, and one of the groups behind the anti-FGM campaign, sponsored a draft bill which has been subjected to wide stakeholder consultations. [allAfrica](#)

Kenya: We prefer traditional birth attendants, say Busia mothers

14 July – Despite the waiver of maternity fees in all public hospitals, scores of expectant women still prefer the services of traditional birth attendants. Some claim that birth attendants at the government-owned health facilities are negligent, unconcerned and rude to them despite the agony they undergo during labour. They further justify their decision saying TBAs are caring and closer to them at all times unlike nurses whom they claim come to their aid only when they hear the baby cry. But there are also reports of mothers dying in the hands of the traditional birth attendants due to lack of delivery skills. [allAfrica](#)

Nigeria: 'Doctors' strike portends hardship to Boko Haram victims

14 July – Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan of Delta State has appealed to striking medical doctors to return to work, saying this is not the best time for their action in view of the Boko Haram indiscriminate bombings in some parts of the country. He made the appeal during his mid-year media parley with newsmen at the Government Press Centre, Asaba, saying with the Boko Haram bombings, victims of bomb blast and Nigerians as a whole would suffer untold hardship. Uduaghan said the physicians should return to work while frantic efforts are on-going to resolve the impasse with a view to amicably addressing their demands. [allAfrica](#)

Sierra Leone: Feeling the heat, burning the suits: reporting on ebola from Sierra Leone



17 July - NPR's Jason Beaubien is in Sierra Leone, covering the Ebola outbreak that began in March in Guinea and has spread to neighboring countries. When we spoke Thursday, he had just toured the treatment center built by Doctors Without Borders in the town of Kailahun. With 64 beds, it's the largest Ebola isolation ward ever built. Currently there are 31 patients... **Can you describe the treatment center?** It's basically a compound with a series of different tents. There are tents where people get suited up to go in. Another tent seems to be for storage, and one of the tents contains a lab. Then there's a double fence about 3 1/2 feet high, made of orange plastic mesh. They designed the fence so people can see where the patients are, so it wouldn't seem as if the patients are completely walled off... **How do the doctors record information on the patients?** Doctors go into the isolation area completely suited up, do their rounds and write down what's happening with patients. Then they stand next to the fence and shout out to people on the other side of the fence [information about each patient]. Say, for patient 105, the doctor says, "diarrhea, vomiting." Then the doctor's notes [made inside the isolation area] are burned. [NPR](#)

Somalia: UN fund offers finance for emergency measles campaign

14 July - The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has allocated 1.4 million U.S. dollars for an emergency campaign to combat measles outbreak in Somalia, which has already left thousands of children at risk of disability and death, a UN spokesman said Monday. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the funding will be used to vaccinate an estimated half a million children under five years of age in the worst affected areas of Banadir, Lower Juba and Puntland, UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq said at the daily briefing. There were more than 1,350 suspected cases of measles in March and April -- four times more than the number during the same period last year, and nearly 1,000 cases were reported in May alone, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). [Global Post](#)

South Sudan: Cholera outbreak spreads fears of potential epidemic

17 July - A cholera outbreak in South Sudan has claimed the lives of 60 people, and there are fears more will die. The disease is spreading beyond the capital city of Juba into remote areas where it's difficult to access health care. The situation is likely to get worse with heavy rains expected. [ABC News](#)

South Sudan: Rainy season worsens South Sudan crisis

13 July - The onset of the rainy season has further exacerbated the ongoing humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. The UN warns that up to four million people are at risk of food insecurity, with young children facing the highest risk of malnutrition... Some of the medical staff fear that the latest downpour will bring a new wave of admissions - and deaths. "The children are already malnourished and have very little fat to keep them warm. When it rains, they easily develop a cough or catch pneumonia, which makes their condition very serious," Helmi Emmen, a paediatric nurse at the MSF clinic, told Al Jazeera... Child mortality in Bentiu's [Protection of Civilians] POC site has reached alarming levels, with approximately four children below the age of five dying per day. Aid workers fight an uphill battle against the deplorable water and sanitation conditions in the camp, which provide fertile ground for diseases. [Al Jazeera](#)

West Africa: Ebola virus disease, – update

15 July - ... New cases and deaths attributable to EVD continue to be reported by the Ministries of Health in the three West African countries of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Between 8 – 12 July, 2014, 85 new cases of EVD, including 68 new deaths, were reported from the three countries as follows: Guinea, 6 new cases and 3 deaths; Liberia, 30 new cases with 13 deaths; and Sierra Leone 49 new cases and 52 deaths. These numbers include laboratory-confirmed, probable, and suspect cases and deaths of EVD. As of 12 July 2014, the cumulative number of cases attributed to EVD in the three countries stands at 964, including 603 deaths. [WHO](#)

West Africa states adopt new Ebola strategy

11 July - West African countries and international health organisations adopted a fresh strategy to fight the world's deadliest Ebola epidemic, which has killed hundreds of people in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. At a two-day meeting in the Ghanaian capital, Accra, officials committed to better surveillance to detect cases of the virus, enhance cross-border collaboration, better engagement with local communities and closer cooperation with the United Nations, World Health Organisation (WHO) and other partners. Ministers also recommended setting up a sub-regional control centre in Guinea to coordinate technical support. The decisions involve governments, the United Nations, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, aid agencies and the private sector. [Al Jazeera](#)

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Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – update

14 July - On 3, 5, 6, 8 and 10 July 2014, the National IHR Focal Point for Saudi Arabia reported an additional 7 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), and the death of a previously reported case... Globally, 834 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV including at least 288 related deaths have officially been reported to WHO. [WHO](#)

Pakistan: Infectious disease - Polio eradication hinges on child health in Pakistan

16 July - ...[In] May, the WHO declared polio an international public-health emergency, particularly because of the high risk of international spread from Pakistan, Cameroon and Syria. Disrupted vaccination programmes in war-torn places are partly to blame. Confronted by this, the WHO took an unprecedented step: it called for mandatory polio vaccination for everyone travelling to or from Pakistan, Syria and Cameroon, and encouraged travel vaccinations for Afghanistan, Nigeria and others... Cases of polio in Pakistan increased from 18 in the first six months of 2013 to 88 in the first half of 2014. Of these, 75% were in the regions known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in the northwest. Here, access for polio-vaccination teams is severely restricted by conflict and insecurity. Since mid-June, the situation has worsened. In the wake of government military action against Taliban insurgents, more than 800,000 people from Waziristan in the FATA have been displaced to neighbouring parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan. [Nature](#)

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Greece: Public health system problematic

15 July - Greece's public health system is "catastrophic", "scandalous and frightening" and is so bad it cannot be given a grade, a German health ministry representative has said. Wolfgang Zoeller, a former German commissioner for patients' issues, has also warned that the tight time frame imposed by the troika for health sector reform is "impossible to carry out"... From 2009 to 2011, the public hospital budget was reduced by over 25 per cent as a result of austerity cuts. Greece now spends less on public health than any of the other pre-2004 European Union members. Zoeller said the way forward lay in increasing the use of generic medication in Greece to reduce costs, and he stressed that Germany currently used 80 per cent generic drugs compared with Greece's 10 per cent. [Neos Kosmos](#)

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U.S.: 300 vials labeled influenza, dengue found at lab

16 July - The same federal scientist who uncovered forgotten vials of smallpox earlier this month also found over 300 undocumented vials at the same lab, according to the Food and Drug Administration. FDA officials say the vials list the names of other contagious viruses and bacteria, including dengue, influenza and rickettsia. Previously the government only announced it had recovered six glass vials of smallpox dating from the 1950s. The freeze-dried smallpox samples were found in a building at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, that has been used by the Food and Drug Administration since 1972.

[Houston Chronicle](#)

U.S.: C.D.C. closes anthrax and flu labs after accidents

11 July - After potentially serious back-to-back laboratory accidents, federal health officials announced Friday that they had temporarily closed the flu and anthrax laboratories at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta and halted shipments of all infectious agents from the agency's highest-security labs. The accidents, and the C.D.C.'s emphatic response to them, could have important consequences for the many laboratories that store high-risk agents and the few that, even more controversially, specialize in making them more dangerous for research purposes. If the C.D.C. — which the agency's director, Dr. Thomas Frieden, called "the reference laboratory to the world" — had multiple accidents that could, in theory, have killed both staff members and people outside, there will undoubtedly be calls for stricter controls on other university, military and private laboratories. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Experts puzzled by increase in shingles cases

16 July - For unclear reasons, shingles cases have been rising in the United States, despite the availability of a vaccine, according to experts quoted recently in the Sacramento Bee. Cases have been increasing steadily since the 1990s, Ben Balatbat, MD, an infectious-disease specialist and chairman of the Internal Medicine Department at Mercy Medical Group in Sacramento, told the newspaper. Rafael Harpaz, MD, a CDC medical epidemiologist, said shingles infections have been rising in most age-groups, not just in people older than 60 and those with weakened immune systems, according to the story. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

U.S., Mexico: Pneumonia, swine flu outbreaks in immigrant children trouble border

14 July - Officials have been working to control outbreaks of pneumonia and swine flu among the unaccompanied children who illegally crossed into the U.S. at the Mexico border, reports The Washington Free Beacon. Nearly 600 children being housed at the

Naval Base Ventura County, located north of Los Angeles, have been felled by illness... Last week, two cases of swine flu were diagnosed in unaccompanied immigrant children — one being housed in Texas and one at the California base. Naval officials stopped transfers into and out of the facility in an attempt to quell the outbreak along with quarantining ill children, the Free Beacon reported. [Washington Times](#)

U.S.: Reporting rape, and wishing she hadn't

12 July - ...Colleges nationwide are navigating the treacherous legal and emotional terrain of sexual assault. In May, the federal Department of Education disclosed for the first time the names of colleges — 55 in all, including Hobart and William Smith — under investigation for possibly violating federal rules aimed at stopping sexual harassment... Turning to the police may not offer a more equitable alternative. For example, as The Times reported in April, the Tallahassee police conducted virtually no investigation of a Florida State University student's rape complaint against the star quarterback Jameis Winston. College administrators have their own incentive to deal with such cases on campus, since a public prosecution could frighten parents, prospective students and donors... [Federal] officials estimate that up to 20 percent of college students will be sexually assaulted in school. [New York Times](#)

U.S.: Stroke incidence and mortality on the decline

16 July - Stroke incidence and mortality are declining in the U.S., possibly due to better control of hypertension and dyslipidemia, along with smoking cessation, finds a prospective study in JAMA. Researchers followed over 14,000 black and white individuals who were free of stroke at baseline. From 1987 to 2011, 7% had a stroke. For each 10-year period, there was a decline in incident stroke (incidence rate ratio, 0.76 for every 10-year interval). The reduction was only apparent in patients aged 65 and older. Age-adjusted mortality following stroke also decreased (hazard ratio, 0.80 for every 10-year interval). For this outcome, younger people saw a greater benefit. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

U.S.: Threat rises in U.S. from mosquito-borne chikungunya virus

17 July - The first two locally acquired cases of a painful mosquito-borne viral illness, chikungunya, have been reported in Florida, the health officials confirmed on Thursday. One case was reported in Miami Dade County and the other in Palm Beach County. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is working closely with the Florida Department of Health to determine how the patients contracted the virus, officials announced. Chikungunya has surfaced widely across the continental United States but until now the cases have not been transmitted by local mosquitoes, which raises the threat. All prior reported cases involved recent travelers to the Caribbean, where the virus is raging. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: West Nile virus activity by state

15 July - As of July 15, a total of 28 states have reported West Nile virus infections in people,

birds, or mosquitoes. Twenty-nine cases of West Nile virus disease in people have been reported to CDC. Of these, 14 (48%) were classified as neuroinvasive disease (such as meningitis or encephalitis) and 15 (52%) were classified as non-neuroinvasive disease. [CDC](#)

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Australia: Measles cases hit 15-year high in Victoria, prompting alert to doctors and hospitals

17 July - The number of measles cases in Victoria has hit a 15-year high prompting an alert to general practitioners and hospital emergency departments. The health department says 57 people have been diagnosed with the highly infectious airborne illness since the start of the year. Sixteen new cases have been reported since May 1. Several children were so ill that they needed hospital treatment. Two Melbourne health care workers have also been diagnosed with measles this week and people who have returned from overseas travel have also been affected. [ABC News](#)

China: Chinese town trades lead poison test results for milk

16 July - After a test showed farmer Zhao Heping's toddler grandson had high levels of lead in his blood two years ago, local officials in China's Hunan province offered the child medicine, he says – and milk. In return, Zhao says, officials asked that he hand over his grandson's blood test results. Zhao was not alone. Eight residents of Dapu, a rural town of about 62,000 dotted with smelters and chemical plants, say families of children diagnosed with lead exposure were offered milk, but only if they surrendered their test results. The milk, residents recall officials saying, would flush the lead out of the children's bodies.

[Reuters](#)

India: Poor sanitation may afflict well-fed children with malnutrition



13 July - ...[In India,] a long economic boom has done little to reduce the vast number of children who are malnourished and stunted, leaving them with mental and physical deficits that will haunt them their entire lives. Now, an emerging body of scientific studies suggest that Vivek and many of the 162 million other children under the age of 5 in the world who are malnourished are

suffering less a lack of food than poor sanitation. Like almost everyone else in their village,

Vivek and his family have no toilet, and the district where they live has the highest concentration of people who defecate outdoors. As a result, children are exposed to a bacterial brew that often sickens them, leaving them unable to attain a healthy body weight no matter how much food they eat... Two years ago, Unicef, the World Health Organization and the World Bank released a major report on child malnutrition that focused entirely on a lack of food. Sanitation was not mentioned. Now, Unicef officials and those from other major charitable organizations said in interviews that they believe that poor sanitation may cause more than half of the world's stunting problems. [New York Times](#)

Philippines: Typhoon kills 10 in Philippines but eases before heading for China



16 July - A typhoon killed at least 10 people as it churned across the Philippines and shut down the capital, cutting power and prompting the evacuation of more than 400,000 residents, rescue officials said. The eye of Typhoon Rammasun, the strongest storm to hit the country this year, passed south of Manila after cutting a path across the main island of Luzon, toppling trees and power lines and causing electrocutions and widespread blackouts. By Wednesday evening, the storm was easing in the capital and markets and public offices were due to reopen on Thursday. Some schools were to remain closed. Manila Electric Company (MER.PS) said 76 percent of the area it serves was without power, compared with 86 percent earlier in the day... Officials said 460,000 had been affected by the storm. [Reuters](#)

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Caribbean: Chikungunya outbreak exceeds 355,000 cases

14 July - The number of chikungunya infections in an ongoing outbreak in the Caribbean region saw another steep rise last week, with the Dominican Republic again accounting for much of the new activity, along with Guadeloupe and Martinique, according to the latest update from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The total number of suspected and confirmed cases rose to 355,617, an increase of 48,780 from the week before, according to PAHO's Jul 11 update. Nearly 28,000 of the new cases were reported from the Dominican Republic, while new case numbers were not listed from neighboring Haiti, another outbreak hotspot. Other areas that contributed sizable parts of last week's increase are Guadeloupe with 11,600 new cases and Martinique with 8,550, according to the PAHO report. [CIDRAP](#)

El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras: Children at the border

15 July - More than 52,000 children have been caught crossing the United States border alone since October — double last year's number. President Obama has called the surge an "urgent humanitarian situation," and lawmakers have called for hearings on the crisis... More than three-quarters of unaccompanied minors are from mostly poor and violent towns in three countries: El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Children from Mexico, once the largest group, now make up less than a quarter of the total. A small number come from 43 other countries. [New York Times](#)

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